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Raoul Vaneigem
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Beyond the Impossible

Raoul Vaneigem

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“To deny society, one must attack its language.” – Guy Debord.

The impossible is a closed universe. Nevertheless, we possess the key to it and, as we’ve suspected for millennia, its door opens on a field of infinite possibilities. More than ever, this field belongs to us, to explore and cultivate. The key is neither magic nor symbolic. The ancient Greeks called it “poetry,” from the verb *poiein*, to construct, to fashion, to create.

Ever since market civilization instaurated the reign of princes and priests – the lamentable remains of whom continue to swarm upon God’s cadaver – the dogma of the innate weakness and deficiency of men and women hasn’t ceased to be taught, at the expense of creativity, which is the human faculty par excellence. Do not the laws of power and profit condemn the child to age prematurely by teaching him or her to work, to consume, and to exhibit him or herself on the market of slaves, where competitive craftiness stifles the intelligence of the heart and solidarity?

We are exposed to a constant denaturation in which life is emptied of its substance, while the necessity of survival is reduced to the animalistic quest for subsistence. The uncertain right to exist-

tence is acquired at the cost of a predatory comportment that converts fear into cash and profits from it.

While socially useful work – natural agriculture, schools, hospitals, metallurgy, transportation – becomes rarefied and degraded, parasitical work – subject to financial imperatives – governs the States and peoples [of the world] in the name of a financial bubble that is condemned to implode. Fear reigns and responds to fear. The populist Right recuperates working class [*populaire*] anger. It designates interchangeable scapegoats – Jews, Arabs, Muslims, the unemployed, homosexuals, people from Mediterranean countries, intellectuals, outsiders – and thus prevents attacks on a system that threatens the entire planet. At the same time, the populist Left channels indignation into demonstrations, the spectacular character of which completely dispenses with any veritable subversive project. The *nec plus ultra* of radicalism consists in burning the banks and organizing gladiator combats between cops and rioters when such combat in the arena weakens the solidity of the banking-swindling system and the States that unanimously take on base works.

Fear, resignation, fatalism and voluntary servitude everywhere darken the minds of individuals and rally crowds to the heels of the tribunes and representative of the people, who draw from their cretinization the last profits to be had from an unsteady power.

How to struggle against the weight of the obscurantism that – from conservatism to the spiteful and impotent revolt of Leftism – maintains the lethargy of despair, ally of all the tyrannies, no matter how revolting, ridiculous or absurd they are? To have done with the diverse forms of gregariousness, whose bleating and screaming punctuate the route to the slaughterhouse, I do not see any other way than reviving the dialogue that is at the heart of each person's existence, the dialogue between the desire to live and the objurgations of a programmed death.

By what aberration do we consent to pay for the goods – water, vegetables, air, fertile earth, renewable and free sources of energy – that nature provides us with? By what self-contempt do we judge

it impossible to blow away – with the living breath of human aspirations – the economy that programs its own annihilation by monopolizing and sacking the world? How to continue to believe that money is indispensable when it pollutes everything it touches?

It is in the logic of things that the exploiters attempt to convince the exploited of their ineluctable inferiority. But what's scandalous is that people who revolt and revolutionaries allow themselves to be imprisoned in the artificial circle of the impossible. I do not know how much time will pass before the bronze tables of the law of profit are broken into pieces, but a truly human society will not exist unless the dogma of our incapability to found a society on the true richness of being (the faculty of creating oneself and recreating the world) is broken.

Perhaps it would be indispensable to repeat the following tirelessly, until these life-bearing words create an opening in the petrified forest where frozen and gelatinous words consecrate the power of a coldly profitable death: yes, it is possible to have done with corrupt democracy by instaurating direct democracy; yes, it is possible to push further the experiment of the Spanish libertarian collectives of 1936 and put generalized self-management to work; yes, it is possible to recreate abundance and what's free by refusing to pay and putting an end to the reign of money; yes, it is possible to get rid of racketeering [*affairisme*] by strictly adopting the recommendation "We will take care of our affairs ourselves"; and, yes, it is possible to pass beyond the diktats of the State, the threats of the financial mafias, and the [demands of] political predators of every stripe.

If we do not exit from economic reality by constructing a human reality, we will once more allow market cruelty to rage and perpetuate itself.

The battle that unfolds, on the terrain of everyday life, between the desire to live fully and the slow agony of an existence supported by work, money and rotten pleasures is the same battle that attempts to preserve the quality of our environment against

the ravages of the market economy. The schools, natural agricultural products, public transportation networks, hospitals, health clinics, herbal medicines, water, invigorating air, renewable and free energy-sources, and socially-useful goods (made by workers cynically despoiled of their production) belong to us. Let's stop paying for what is ours.

Life surpasses [*prime*] the economy. The liberty of the living revokes the liberties of commerce. It will henceforth be on this terrain that the battle is fought.