

What The Virus Said

Anonymous

March 26, 2020

You'd do well, dear humans, to stop your ridiculous calls for war. Lower the vengeful looks you're aiming at me. Extinguish the halo of terror in which you've enveloped my name. Since the bacterial genesis of the world, we viruses are the true *continuum* of life on Earth. Without us, you would never have seen the light of day, any more than the first cell would have come to exist.

We are your ancestors, just like the rocks and the seaweed, and much more than the apes. We are wherever you are and also where you aren't. Too bad for you if you only see in the universe what is to your liking ! But above all, quit saying that it is I who am killing you. You will not die from my action upon your tissues but from the lack of care of your fellow humans. If you had not been just as rapacious amongst yourselves as you were with all that lives on this planet, you would still have enough beds, nurses, and respirators to survive the damage I do in your lungs. If you didn't pack your old people into nursing homes and your able-bodied into concrete hutches, you wouldn't be in this predicament. If you hadn't changed the whole expanse of the world, or worlds rather, that just yesterday were still luxuriant, chaotic, infinitely inhabited, into a vast desert for the monoculture of the Same and the More, I wouldn't have been able to launch myself into the global conquest of your throats. If nearly all of you had not become, over the last century, redundant copies of a single, untenable form of life, you would not be preparing to die like flies abandoned in the water of your sugary civilization. If you had not made your environments so empty, so transparent, so *abstract*, you can be sure that I wouldn't be moving at the speed of an aircraft. I only come to carry out the punishment that you have long pronounced against yourselves. Forgive me, but it's you, after all, who invented the name "Anthropocene". You have awarded yourselves the whole honor of the disaster ; now that it is unfolding, it's too late to decline it. The most honest among you know this very well : I have no other accomplice than your social organization, your folly of the "grand scale" and its economy, your fanatical belief in *systems*. Only systems are "vulnerable". Everything else lives and dies. There's no "vulnerability" except for what aims at control, at its extension and its improvement. Look at me closely : *I am just the flip side of the prevailing Death.*

So stop blaming me, accusing me, stalking me. Working yourselves into an anti-viral paralysis. All of that is childish. Let me propose a different perspective : there is an intelligence that is immanent to life. One doesn't need to be a *subject* to make use of a memory and a strategy. One doesn't have to be a sovereign to decide. Bacteria and viruses can also *call the shots*. See me,

therefore, as your savior instead of your gravedigger. You're free not to believe me, but *I have come to shut down the machine whose emergency brake you couldn't find*. I have come in order to suspend the operation that held you hostage. I have come in order to demonstrate the aberration that "normality" constitutes. "Delegating to others our nutrition, our protection, our ability to care for our way of life was a madness"... "There is no budgetary limit, health has no price" : see how I redirect the language and spirit of your governing authorities ! See how I bring them down for you to their real standing as miserable racketeers, and arrogant to boot ! See how they suddenly denounce themselves not just as being superfluous, but as being *harmful* ! For them you're nothing but supports for the reproduction of their system – that is, less than slaves. Even the plankton are treated better than you.

But don't waste your time reproaching them, pointing out their deficiencies. Accusing them of negligence is still to give them more credit than they deserve. Ask yourselves rather how you could find it so comfortable to let yourselves be governed. Praising the merits of the Chinese option compared to the British option, of the imperial-legist solution as against the Darwinist-liberal method is to understand nothing about the one or the other, the horror of one and the horror of the other. Since Quesnay, the "liberals" have always looked with envy at the Chinese empire ; and they still do. They are Siamese twins. The fact that one of them confines you in its interest and the other in the interest of "society" always amounts to suppressing the only non-nihilist conduct : taking care of oneself, of those one loves and of what one loves in those one doesn't know. Don't let those who've led you to the abyss claim to be saving you from it : they will prepare for you a more perfect hell, an even deeper grave. Someday when they're able, they'll send the army to patrol the afterlife.

You ought to thank me, rather. Without me, for how much longer would those unquestionable things that are suddenly suspended have gone on being presented as *necessary* ? Globalization, competitive exams, air traffic, budgetary limits, elections, sports spectacles, Disneyland, fitness gyms, most businesses, the National Assembly, school barracking, mass gatherings, most office jobs, all that automatic sociability that is nothing but the reverse of the anxious solitude of the metropolitan monads : all of that was rendered unnecessary, once the *state of necessity* asserted its presence. Thank me for the truth test of the coming weeks ; you're finally going to inhabit your own life, without the thousand escapes that, good year bad year, hold the untenable together. Without your realizing it, you had never taken up residence in your own existence. You were there among your boxes, and you didn't know it. Now you will live with your kindreds. You will be at home. You will cease to be in transit towards death. Perhaps you will hate your husband. Maybe your children won't be able to stand you. Maybe you will feel like blowing up the *décor* of your everyday life. The truth is that you were no longer in the world, in those metropolises of separation. Your world was no longer livable in any of its guises unless you were constantly fleeing. One had to make do with movement and distractions in the face of the hideousness that had taken hold. And the spectral that reigned between beings. Everything had become so efficient that nothing made any sense any longer. Thank me for all that, and welcome back to earth !

Thanks to me, for an indefinite time you will no longer work, your kids won't go to school, and yet it will be the opposite of a vacation. Vacations are that space that must be filled up at all costs while waiting for the obligatory return to work. But now what is opening up in front of you, thanks to me, is not a delimited space but a gaping emptiness. I render you *idle*. There's no guarantee that yesterday's non-world will reappear. All of that profitable absurdity may cease. Not being paid oneself, what would be more natural than to stop paying one's rent ? Why would

a person unable to work go on depositing their mortgage payments at the bank ? Isn't it suicidal, when you come down to it, to live where you can't even cultivate a garden ? Someone who doesn't have any money left doesn't stop eating as a consequence, and who has the iron has the bread. Thank me : I place you in front of the bifurcation that was tacitly structuring your existences : *the economy or life*. It's your move, your turn to play. The stakes are historical. Either the governing authorities impose their state of exception on you, or you invent your own. Either you go with the truths that are coming to light, or you put your head on the chopping block. Either you use the time I'm giving you to envision the world of the aftermath in light of what you've learned from the collapse that's underway, or the latter will go extreme. The disaster ends when the economy ends. The economy *is* the devastation. That was a theory before last month. Now it is a fact. No one can fail to sense what it will take in the way of police, propaganda, surveillance, logistics, and remote working to keep that fact under control.

As you deal with me, don't succumb to panic or denial. Don't give in to the biopolitical hysterias. The coming weeks will be terrible, oppressive, cruel. The gates of death will be wide open. I am the most devastating production of the devastation of production. I come to reduce the nihilists to nothingness. The injustice of this world will never be more *outrageous*. It's a civilization, not you, that I come to bury. Those who desire to live will have to construct new habits, ones that are suitable for them. Avoiding me will be the occasion for this reinvention, this new *art of distances*. The art of greeting one another, which some were short-sighted enough to see as the very form of the institution, will soon not obey any etiquette. It will sign beings. Don't do it "for the others", for "the population" or for "society", do it for your people. Take care of your friends and those you love. Rethink along with them, decisively, what a just form of life would be. Organize clusters of right living, expand them, and I won't be able to do anything against you. I am calling for a massive return, not of discipline, but *of attention*. Not for the end of insouciance, but the end *of all carelessness*. What other way remained for me to remind you that salvation is *in each gesture* ? That everything is in the tiniest thing.

I've had to face the facts: humanity only asks itself the questions it can no longer keep from asking.

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