# Common Denominator

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> There are many who do not know they are fascists but will find it out when the time comes. [...] We cannot destroy them. But we can educate the people so that they will fear fascism and recognize it as it appears and combat it.
>
> Ernest Hemingway, *"For Whom the Bell Tolls"*

**Disclaimer:** Mostly machine-translated; therefore less clean and pleasant than the original French version, despite a long and painful review process.

ALMOST EVERYONE agrees that the world is going to shit. As for the reasons behind this decline, opinions are much more divergent. I doubt anyone can reasonably claim to understand all this from the ground up, let alone me, with my totally unrelated background. Still, I'm going to allow myself to dump some thoughts here. Sitting on your hands and keeping your mouth shut all the time drives you nuts real quick; emptying your head, even if it means saying bullshit, is as vital as taking a dump. The important thing is not to do it by screaming at people in a YouTube comment section. If all the hateful trolls periodically purged their heads like me on some podunk site in a corner of the web, life would be much more peaceful...

I don't know if writing this during a heatwave is a great idea, though, but maybe it's precisely because my brain is in a weird state that I got the necessary motivation. Go figure. I ended up writing a significant chunk of it in the basement so as not to die, and to have my thoughts a bit cooler. At least, for once, I'm not just going "boo-hoo, I'm not doing well" (which doesn't mean I'm firing on all cylinders either, but hey). I run the risk of spouting clichés and other tautologies, but I think that in a messy world, overwhelmed as we are, we can sometimes forget even the most obvious things.

I might have talked about it before: since I was relatively young, I wondered and tried to detect some kind of common denominator among "the bad guys". Whether in reality or in fiction, it seemed terribly weird to me that people would do "bad" things, as that sounds "illogical". What was the reason? If the form has evolved a bit, the very foundation of this questioning has never really left me. I try to go back to "the roots of evil", to find a single element such that, if removed by magic, the impact is as substantial as possible – in a good way. It's quite treacherous, because very often

you think you've reached the end of the matter, then finally you realize that what you're looking at isn't the cause, but yet another consequence of an even deeper thing. It's kind of the same deal as ending a conflict, an argument, finding compromises and all that: looking for and targeting some specific spot to repair the situation, rather than hacking away blindly at the surface, spinning your wheels. The next step is figuring out the best ways to *fight* against this source, to correct the situation even just a little bit. That's a whole other can of worms... Suffice it to say that I risk talking out of my ass, but dialogues gotta start somewhere, and if you're afraid to speak up, it's dead on arrival. And as I was saying, the important thing in this case is perhaps not the results but rather the journey, the process. The venting, too.

Alright, let's try to get to the heart of the matter.

## Too much confidence kills confidence

If we look at both the past and our current situation, it's hard not to notice that quite a few problems are caused by people (endowed with various powers) full of themselves, with an unshakable self-confidence, who listen to practically nothing and no one.[1] They are often old: this can make them frustrated by change, not to mention the degradation of cognitive abilities. Of course, they could also have acquired an aura in the past that elevates them to their fateful position or makes their popularity rating more robust against subsequent scandals. However, fiery (even childish) youngsters, deaf to external signals, exist too. They still have everything to lose, and can build themselves a spiked shell so as not to let anyone make them lose face, as if out of fear that their budding career

[1] `https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/russophobe_poutine.png`

would be instantly jeopardized. I've always had a hard time specifically with people in professional fields who go, "Whoa I'm self-taught, I'm a badass; classes are useless, they suck", and who, as soon as you dig a little, reveal a glaring lack of rigor and a complete inability to take feedback from others. But I digress a bit.

In pretty much all the "major countries" where democracy is currently taking a hit, the people in power are of the type mentioned above. It can also be useful to take a little trip back to the past: I was watching something yesterday about 1939–1940; well guess what: if we got our faces smashed in at that time, it's largely because old dudes (notably Maurice Gamelin, Charles Huntziger, and – drum roll – Pétain) were in "Don't worry, the Ardennes are impassable, no need to put guys there" mode.[2] Despite warnings coming from fairly reliable sources (sometimes their own scouts who *saw* the enemy coming!), they stuck to their guns. Our overly vertical and centralized organization did the rest to bog us down. I think the First World War had its share of similar phenomena, with bozos who worshipped horses and still thought they were living in the Napoleonic era, while people were getting slaughtered because of their unsuitable gear. Some decision-makers didn't give a flying fuck about statistics and people's feedback. So anyway, it's to be taken with a grain of salt: since in every situation there are a bunch of people saying different things, you can always, after the fact, choose to talk about specific protagonists and say "$X$ called it; $Y$ was a dumbass". Still, party leaders, etc., are often criticized for not dialoguing enough with the opposition, and I think a huge part of the reason for this lack of dialogue is that they think they're hot shit. We tend to encourage self-confidence in everyone, but "the dose makes the poison", and exceeding a certain threshold

[2] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/L'Étrange_Défaite

quickly turns you into an asshole,[3] even if it can be good for overcoming your anxiety.

In the little galaxy of related negative aspects making people rot from the inside, there is also of course selfishness. That was the most blatant point for me when I was little: in fiction, it is not uncommon for the main antagonist to stir up shit to acquire goods or powers. We generally don't really know what he's going to do with it afterwards, but he's happy to have that power or whatever. Can this selfishness stem from excessive self-confidence? Maybe not entirely, but I wouldn't be surprised if there was a big link. Where selfishness reigns, a sense of duty and responsibility becomes a rare commodity. These qualities are in my opinion more than vital to the proper functioning of a society, and this at all levels. If there's one thing that tends to annoy me about us French, it's that everything seems to be sliding towards "just enough", or even "barely enough". It's becoming increasingly difficult to find a reliable craftsman, you get ripped off when you get your car fixed, your packages get stolen in sorting centers left wide open, etc. Even for things that might seem super simple, there is a blatant disregard for "your freedom stops where others' begins",[4] which we nevertheless try to instill in people from early childhood.[5][6] Blowing smoke in people's faces,[7] tossing trash on the ground, squatting in a handicapped parking spot... Whatever the situation, I almost systematically come

[3] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/noyades_confiance.png

[4] https://web.archive.org/web/20260624082421/https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/podcasts/les-punchlines-de-la-philo/les-punchlines-de-la-philo-du-vendredi-10-avril-2026-9531303

[5] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/liberte_punitive_elections.png

[6] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/trop_normes_alternatives.png

[7] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/amende_fume_quai.png

back to this core of selfishness and “I don’t pay attention to the consequences of my actions”.

So we deal a bit too often with leaders who aren’t as recommendable as we would like, notably because of the points highlighted above. There is a very widespread desire to kick these people out, to avoid entrusting them with positions of responsibility, but as for the method, it’s another matter entirely.

## No miracle system?

What types of organizations should be recommended? Collegial decisions would probably lead to better results, but as soon as you need a group of people, well… you have to choose these people at some point. And organize them one way or another. That just moves the problem rather than actually solving it, you know. Besides, we already have our assembly and all, but I don’t know if we can say that they make decisions by consulting each other… It’s more like a fistfight. And let’s not even talk about the American agencies which, as I write these lines, are flooded with Trump’s cronies and basically act as a rubber stamp for his delusions.[8]

Taking collectivism to the extreme and eliminating the need for representatives would result in a system of perpetual referendums, and I also see several problems with that. First off, at the risk of sounding pedantic, I’d say I always have a hard time with votes that give as much weight to people with

[8] https://web.archive.org/web/20250129182528mp_/https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2025/jan/13/both-houses-and-a-supreme-court-supermajority-how-trumps-power-compares-historically

zero arguments (“Bardella is handsome!”[9]) as to people who have researched a topic to death. Likewise, putting undecided people and ultra-convinced people on equal footing is not great; that can be fixed with slightly less binary questions,[10] but as soon as you make things a bit too complex, it pisses some people off. Besides, all this is close to the principle of polls, which are also sometimes flawed: it is hard to reach the whole population, to have a representative sample, to ask questions that don’t induce any bias… [11]

Sometimes, I also tell myself that we should let researchers, scientists, etc., make as many decisions as possible. However, ego problems and shady deals unfortunately don’t spare the research world: between wacky gurus and “fake” conferences, you always have to keep an eye out.[12] Besides, scientific writings can be twisted in ways as unexpected as they are terrible: I don’t think Darwin wanted to motivate Nazi eugenics… So there too, it’s a displacement of the issue rather than a solution, even if not everything is to be thrown away. There are also supporters of the heavy-handed approach. If you stick your nose into conspiracy circles – often very motivated when it comes to overthrowing the established order, even if the reasons are sketchy –, as well as among far-right folks (there’s a big intersection between the two), you see some pretty… well… extreme stuff. Like “They are

[9] https://web.archive.org/web/20250823094341/https://france3-regions.franceinfo.fr/bourgogne-franche-comte/cote-d-or/legislatives-2024-je-ne-connais-pas-son-programme-mais-je-vote-pour-lui-comment-les-reseaux-sociaux-influencent-ils-les-votes-des-jeunes-2986985.html

[10] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/systemes_de_vote_faucon_flan_plante.png

[11] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/sondages.png

[12] https://web.archive.org/web/20240616171820/https://coop-ist.cirad.fr/publier-et-diffuser/eviter-les-conferences-predatrices/1-differents-types-de-conferences-predatrices

traitors to the nation! They must be executed in the public square!" I will probably come back later to certain points of these kinds of demands, because there is a lot that can be drawn from them, but for the moment let's just talk about the possible consequences of this approach: personally, I would quickly fear that it would be a total mess and that we would end up with a shitty military junta that takes advantage of it to snatch power, or that kind of thing. It ends up like that in quite a few countries where things aren't exactly rosy...[13]

We always have the French Revolution in mind, in a fantasized, romanticized version; actually, it took years and was a massive shitshow.[14] In reality, it's a tall order to just swap people out on the fly. I actually fear that it would be even more complicated in our time, with technology and means of communication that mainly benefit liars, but who knows? We would, whatever happens, have to go through a period of unpredictability, of undetermined duration, and without really knowing what awaits us at the end of the tunnel. Not really my cup of tea.

Finally, of course, physical confrontation has the annoying tendency to legitimize ever more repression and violence. In some countries, this can, at the same time, play into the hands of pro-gun activists. The escalation generally ends up benefiting those we sought to fight, if they have the media,[15]

[13] https://web.archive.org/web/20260525143606/https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2025/09/WILEN/68730

[14] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%A9volution_fran%C3%A7aise#Chronologie_et_p%C3%A9riodisation

[15] https://web.archive.org/web/20260704163917/https://alternatiba.eu/extreme-droite-et-desinformation-dans-nos-gares-la-campagne-on-prend-le-relay-sattaque-a-lempire-bollore/

the power, the financial means,[16] or public opinion on their side. It also has the deleterious effect of accentuating the polarization of society. Thus, the association *Non-violence XXI* encourages seeking "a consistency between the means used and the end sought".[17][18]

I also think we've all been dumbasses on this or that subject in our tender youth, and that we must keep in mind that today's "bad guys" might redeem themselves tomorrow;[19] hating them, insulting them, and of course hitting them doesn't seem to me to be the safest way to accompany them towards this transition. Besides, people aren't all white or all black (figuratively speaking). Between the Nobel prize guy who ended up joyfully supervising mustard gas tests,[20] and Churchill who has a Wikipedia page as long as my arm *just* for his racist side...[21] You can very well do both wonderful and horrible things in your life – sometimes within the same day.

So I find myself looking like an idiot, without a solution. The opposite would have surprised me, because I am neither the first nor the last to dive into this kind of reflection. What it reveals, in my opinion, is that we can't really perform miracles

[16] https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2025/07/10/les-multiples-tentatives-de-pierre-edouard-sterin-pour-participer-a-la-victoire-electorale-de-son-camp_6620471_823448.html

[17] https://web.archive.org/web/20240902203058/https://nonviolence21.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Brochure-Non-Violence-XXI-.pdf

[18] https://web.archive.org/web/20251011163831/https://nonviolence.fr/IMG/pdf/livre_nv_ethique_et_politique.pdf

[19] https://web.archive.org/web/20260706101921/https://france3-regions.franceinfo.fr/normandie/seine-maritime/havre/video-portrait-d-un-skinhead-neonazi-devenu-moine-bouddhiste-dans-william-et-les-fantomes-2849741.html

[20] https://archive.wikiwix.com/cache/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.britannica.com%2Fbiography%2FFritz-Haber

[21] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_views_of_Winston_Churchill

on the organizational level. It follows that if we want to improve things, there's no way around it: we have to tackle, for lack of a better option, the *individuals* themselves: those who *take part* in these organizations, and the people, of course. A system that seems wonky at first glance can work surprisingly well if we put well-adjusted, reasonable people in it, etc. (The opposite situation is, unfortunately, also possible…) After all, that doesn't prevent working on both fronts in parallel: the system and the human. Making people around us less annoying is always a good thing, whatever the situation.

Speaking of being less of a pain in the ass in any situation: it's vital to resolve conflicts effectively. If we look at disagreements, we notice that, very often, the problem is simply that an element, in the middle of the subject, does not boil down to "yes or no" and involves placing a "bar". A limit, located at a given level. A measure rather than an extreme. It can be a degree of tolerance, more or less severe and marked reactions, etc. You get the idea; it varies according to the context, but there you go. Even in everyday life, examples are legion: from the time dishes can spend on a drainer before being manually dried, to kids' bedtimes, to the frequency of sweeping a floor. Legal metaphors abound, starting with the severity of each applicable sentence. Because of this, even if people base their reasoning on the same axioms, and aim for roughly the same goal, it can quickly go to shit and take on mind-boggling proportions.

Presented like this, things might seem relatively simple, but instead of *spotting* that the problem comes from this "bar placement", humans tend to just yell louder and louder. They focus on irrelevant stuff that doesn't advance the matter in the slightest. And when there are *several* "bars" to place for the same issue (it's unfortunately very common, we can't do much about it), don't even get me started. Managing these situations

requires stepping back, emotional detachment, pragmatism, etc.

# The slap on the TV

## We charge in

So we would need reasonable people in a system that would be just as reasonable. Yet, what we see rising is the exact opposite of reason: fascism. This scary buzzword flies around everywhere, and I wanted to take advantage of writing this document to see if it was absurd, for example, to call left-wing parties “fascist” as some do. So I went and read a couple of things quickly, even if it did not make me an expert on the subject. It’s good to know what we’re fighting against (or, for some, to open their eyes to those they were tempted to side with). It also avoids using the term as a dumb, meaningless insult, inappropriately. If it becomes reduced to “the enemy to fight”, we might as well use another word. Far be it from me to give you a lecture – I’m rather doing it for myself.

What immediately stands out is the anti-democratic, even tyrannical nature of such movements. Individual freedoms take a heavy hit, and it’s not uncommon to even go against classic human rights. Conversely, for the State, it’s a free-for-all: it is barely hindered, if at all, even if it’s smoking crack. Under the pretext of acting for the collective, a handful of people have free rein and can implement pretty much whatever they want quickly, without being held accountable. There is a big boss, and we don’t argue much with him. Sure, it allows going fast, but potentially right into a wall.

To boost this ability to act, you still have to acquire a certain degree of support from the people. All means are good,

and that often goes through propaganda and more generally through lying. These lies are passed off as white lies as long as they allow them to take action. Add a good dose of real and supposed heroism – possibly by telling bullshit about the history of the country and even the world –, and boom. This package leads, in extreme cases, to a cult of personality built around the leaders. A godsend occasion to go freestyle, and make the regime take longer to dismantle.

What better way to charge ahead at breakneck speed than having no official opponents? Fascism implies, almost automatically, a clear desire to weaken, silence, or even completely kick out the counter-powers. As paradoxical as it may be for people who claim to fear nothing and no one and to be ready for anything, it is important for them to silence those who speak out against them. Any dissension in the crowd reduces the power of the tyrants that much more. Where a "classic" dictatorship (which is already not great) doesn't necessarily ask you to go sing someone's praises in the street, to participate, etc., fascism requires strong mobilization, which it therefore maintains at all costs. You have to occupy public space and people's minds, a bit like when Trump invents a new piece of bullshit every day so that we only talk about him. It's often crap, but it still galvanizes his cronies. Some mask such actions behind the – very fitting – screen of "patriotism". In their eyes, more or less literally smashing the faces of anyone not linked to the movement is patriotism.

The very concept of patriotism is quite fragile and blurry: some will consider it patriotic to move to a fifty-hour week, to bail out and boost the nation,[22] while others will use the same term to defend social gains perceived as part of our identity

[22] https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2024/08/01/en-grece-certaines-entreprises-tentees-par-la-semaine-de-six-jours_6263612_3234.html

and our heritage. I think you yourselves can find examples of contradictions of this type, and probably better ones than mine. Everyone views patriotism through their own lens, so much so that, oftentimes, if we cut from speeches any sentence pertaining to patriotism, nothing of value is lost.

To maintain this dynamic of "act rather than think", a climate of anti-intellectualism is established.[23] Like with the bullying against "nerds", except here it's institutionalized. To optimize the operation, the youth is fed bullcrap and indoctrinated, oriented towards the military rather than the cerebral, like with Putin's Yunarmia, an unsettling reenactment of the Hitler Youth.[24] Surprising coming from someone who claims Nazism is his absolute enemy, but the guy is beyond contradictions at this point, and probably couldn't care less.

Nothing brings a nation to its knees quite like skewing learning at the time when people are supposed to be forming their identities. Blinders prevent them from noticing the individual freedoms and peace which, by the side of the road, although battered, are just waiting for them. Especially since, as some pretty scary accounts have shown, young people are quite malleable and receptive to this type of indoctrination.[25]

Quick aside: technically, on some of the points mentioned above, fascism is neither left nor right. Historically, there has also been some permeability at this level, with pissed-off communists and other unhinged anarchists, even if the use or not of the term "fascist" in these circumstances is often debated.[26]

[23] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/pourquoi_reflechir.jpg

[24] https://web.archive.org/web/20230307054115/https://www.watson.ch/fr/international/russie/489142440-comment-poutine-met-en-scene-l-armee-des-jeunes-de-russie

[25] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exp%C3%A9rience_de_la_Troisi%C3%A8me_Vague

[26] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rouge-brun

Where it starts to be seriously incompatible with the far left as we generally know it in France right now, however, is in excessive virilism and in the normative tendency. I have a hard time seeing the current, rather deconstructivist left going: "Oh man, the gays are pissing us off: because of them our population is less brutal; we should get rid of them."[27][28] This is just one example among others: the French far left leans towards internationalism, while fascism implies a glorification of our nation at the expense of others.

## The symptoms

Some signs don't lie, and show that something sketchy is brewing behind a party, a movement, or a personality. Stubbornness, first of all. Even when a neighboring country does something that works and that we could apply, we prefer to do dumb things because it seems vaguely intuitive to the average Frenchman. For example: Germany reduces its prison population with sentence adjustments;[29] it costs them less, *and* there's less recidivism, so they got it all right... but we don't give a shit and we practically do the opposite.[30]

These stories bring us to a nerve center of this section: populism. This notion, when used as a reproach, ends up with a definition almost as shifting as "fascism". Basically: the masses sometimes ask for dumb things because they're looking at too short a term (or lack information), and political figures agree with them (often *knowing* it's dumb) to get worshipped. And if worse comes to worst, if the decision is really too dumb, well, once the worship is obtained, they backtrack,

[27] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/droite_robuste_peur.png

[28] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/gars_pas_viril_grave.png

[29] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/blockhaus.png

[30] https://www.vie-publique.fr/parole-dexpert/285833-prisons-systeme-penitentiaire-sinspirer-dexperiences-etrangeres

citing somewhat bogus reasons or just in stealth mode, without saying anything in particular. The opportunistic nature of populism is often found in fascism, and the same goes for dishonesty. We often blame politicians for acting like turncoats, but we also say “only fools don’t change their minds”, so we have to put things into perspective: admitting you were wrong is pretty cool (even if, of course, it’s better not to have been wrong at all, but who can boast of never messing up?). Where it hurts is when you try to make people believe that you have always held such and such an opinion when that was not the case. Textbook case: the French far right, which traditionally shits on the IPCC, but which, thanks to a historic heatwave, pretends to find the reports of this organization suddenly relevant, and uses them as a basis to lecture people, going “we told you so”.[31] Beside the dishonesty inherent in the maneuver, it really gives the impression that they take us for idiots, but the worst part is that it can work.

Yes, I’m bashing the Rassemblement National; I try not to make this document too targeted either, otherwise I’d lose part of the little credibility I started with, because I want to maintain some distance. On the other hand, if I let overly obvious similarities slide without exposing the appropriate comparisons, there too I lose credibility because it looks dumb.

Speaking of dishonesty and climate, I’m jumping at the chance to point out that there is a notable difference between people who think they are doing the right thing, and people who don’t care as long as they gain something from it. Thus, some call themselves “climate skeptics”, while in fact I strongly suspect they *know* the scientists are telling the truth; if they brush all this aside, it’s solely because acting according

[31] https://web.archive.org/web/20260621162050/https://www.liberation.fr/politique/en-pleine-canicule-le-rn-regrette-quon-nait-finalement-pas-ecoute-le-giec-20260619_2LM5PQUNSZCFDFL6OYFFVDRSEM/

to the recommendations of said scientists would put a wrench in their initial plans (or even their personal profits). To me, the act of lying *knowingly* to serve one's own interests is the mark of massive hypocrites;[32] anyone who trivializes such acts should not touch positions of responsibility.

Opportunism in politics is kind of like a game of Whac-A-Mole, except you whack topics. Poof, a topic to grab by spouting random stuff; boom, you whack. Logic and the long term pay the price, but who cares: we're racking up points, so we whack, we whack. Behind the scenes, these landed blows have consequences. People get their faces smashed, but whoever whacked first gets the crown, so "too bad". I don't call that a politician, but rather an influencer:[33] ready to spout any bullshit as long as it pushes people to follow them.[34] Except here, it's not to rake in dough (well… not *only* for that), but for power.

Careful, though: to my mind, as long as their remarks are consistent and don't contradict their opinions from the day before, politicians have the right to react to everything. They are too often accused of "wanting to be talked about" or "showing off", but it's kind of their job, and good thing too if we can see how they handle various topics. Like Mélenchon reacting to the wave of "all digital" in video games; so OK, the guy is going off the rails and should give up his throne, but I don't find that particular reaction crazy at all. After all, this is yet another case of guys in suits granting themselves the right to make products we thought we had bought fair and square disappear without notice or compensation. So sure,

[32] https://web.archive.org/web/20260611113315/https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2018/sep/19/shell-and-exxons-secret-1980s-climate-change-warnings

[33] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/maire_campagne_tiktok.png

[34] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/exageration_suite.png

Twitter abuse shouldn't make politicians miss sessions in the assemblies where they are paid to sit, but in reasonable doses and in a constructive way, I don't really see the problem.

Last symptom on my list: a certain violence, which shines through in pretty much all aspects of the system. As mentioned at the beginning, we often find at the extremes a desire to stage violence with stories of stuff "in the public square", bordering on medieval. ("Fun" fact: This was all written in the original French version *before* the whole livestreamed shooting squad debacle involving Trump's officials.) Not necessarily a need to put people to death: authoritarian regimes stage arrests, even if it shocks. We notably had the guy from El Salvador, Nayib Bukele, who broadcasted a video with roughed-up thugs, with dramatic music and the whole shebang, when it's highly likely he had made deals with these same gangs beforehand.[35] Often, people condemn by behaving like those they condemn. Thugs are one thing, but the ultimate move for authoritarian regimes is to criminalize opposing opinions. The notion of "traitor" (and any similar label) is very handy for these purposes.[36] This allows committing abuses against opponents without turning people against you too much – it's an ersatz justification which, in the heat of the moment, manages to do its job.[37]

Sometimes, to understand a concept, you have to look at the word itself – its origin and primary meaning. The term

[35] https://web.archive.org/web/20251127105303/https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/07/americas/el-salvador-prison-bukele-intl-latam

[36] https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2023/04/17/vladimir-kara-mourza-une-peine-de-vingt-cinq-ans-de-prison-en-russie-aux-airs-de-vengeance_6169914_3210.html

[37] https://web.archive.org/web/20260121182534/https://www.arab-reform.net/fr/publication/tunisie-la-nation-et-ses-traitres%E2%88%99ses/

"fascism" comes from instruments of punishment, which are often found on the emblems of parties associated with this movement.[38] Not so surprising, then, that they are often a bit brutish and prone to punishments. Yet, completely reasonable people can quickly behave like monsters once placed in an authoritarian straitjacket, as famous and terrifying experiments have shown.[39] Things can therefore quickly degenerate.[40]

## The definition of balls

Paradoxically, these people we've talked about, who jump on shitty opportunities in defiance of all principles, are occasionally said to have "balls".[41] We praise them because *only they* tackle or dare such and such a thing; but fuck… Having balls doesn't necessarily mean throwing out extreme stuff or digging up totally obscure news stories. To me, it's rather having the guts to do unpopular things if they're necessary – the exact opposite of populism.

"Oh, no, we can't do that, it threatens *three* jobs! It's going to look bad!"

"Yeah but it's going to create more later on, and besides if we don't do this we're all going to croak anyway so hey, the jobs are lost eventually."

"Yes but *it's going to look bad*!"

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[38] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faisceau_de_licteur

[39] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exp%C3%A9rience_de_Milgram

[40] https://web.archive.org/web/20260128194755/https://www.francein fo.fr/replay-jt/france-2/20-heures/manifestations-en-iran-qui-son t-les-gardiens-de-la-revolution-qui-terrorisent-le-pays_7737163. html

[41] https://web.archive.org/web/20260629232806/https://www.thedaily beast.com/ufc-star-josh-hokit-drops-vile-excuse-for-appalling-whi te-house-michelle-obama-slur/

“...”[42]

Among the “historical” cases of “exhibiting balls”, we find the abolition of the death penalty, the Veil law on abortion, or... the driver’s license points system.[43] More recently, we had the lumpy skin disease epidemic: neighboring countries caught it first, so we had plenty of hindsight on what worked or not. Slaughtering entire herds is totally horrible, of course, but some leaders, farmers, and unions[44][45] precisely had *the balls* to admit it was the least worst path. The guys risked getting slaughtered with pitchforks by suicidal farmers with nothing left to lose – and whom we can understand in a way. Meanwhile, a slew of politicians from almost all sides were doing emotional pandering by focusing, as often happens, on pure feelings rather than the harsh but necessary pragmatism of numbers and in-depth studies.[46]

It’s easier to rally people to your cause by yelling things that make the crowd cry their eyes out rather than telling them “you’re going to suffer, but look at these research results to understand”. But running a country well doesn’t mean taking the easy way out to rally people. Well, on the other hand, the risk with the notion of balls is that nutjobs do wacky things saying “you’ll see, in ten years everyone will think it’s

[42] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/emplois_menaces_ou_pas.png

[43] https://mediaclip.ina.fr/fr/djc9209271403-interview-de-pierre-beregovoy-sur-le-permis-a-points.html

[44] https://web.archive.org/web/20251230163855/https://rmc.bfmtv.com/actualites/societe/sante/dermatose-l-abattage-seule-solution-pour-ces-agriculteurs-qui-denoncent-des-deplacements-illicites-d-animaux_AV-202512150336.html

[45] https://web.archive.org/web/20251108094528/https://www.fnsea.fr/communiques-de-presse/cp-dnc-17-07-2025/

[46] https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/dermatose-nodulaire-la-grande-recuperation-populiste-de-la-crise-agricole-par-melenchon-le-pen-tondelier-16-12-2025-2605431_20.php

normal", "I'm a pioneer, you can't understand"; so I strongly insist on the fact that actions must be solidly motivated. Balls must stem from a scientifically documented pragmatism.

Sometimes, too, leaders try to fake having balls, but it's all smoke and mirrors. In France, and this is often pointed out, we're champions at setting rules, but we often don't enforce them.[47][48] "Look, we took action!", and finally, behind it all, there are neither the means nor the will for the action to have any concrete effect. Just "plans", "platforms", and other commissions, just to have something to talk about.[49] It affects the State services themselves! The tax website got an "obligation" to be accessible to the visually impaired, and it's already more than twenty years late complying, at the time I'm writing this![50] And let's not even talk about empty promises... It's been ten years that the Macronists have been assuring us that soon there will be no more children sleeping on the streets,[51] while in reality the situation is getting worse.[52] When it comes to "balls made out of cardboard" (it sounded better in French), empty promises are a classic. It doesn't cost a dime, it just engages the responsibility and credibility of the speaker a bit; the experts in the field try to find a balance to be able to enjoy this joker without overusing it too much either, otherwise – let's not kid ourselves – it gets noticed.

[47] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/fumer_plage.png

[48] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/lachers_ballons_organisateur.png

[49] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/plateformes_plans.png

[50] https://web.archive.org/web/20260703213023/https://www.impots.gouv.fr/accessibilite-de-la-declaration-en-ligne-des-revenus

[51] https://web.archive.org/web/20260618074740/https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2017/07/27/discours-d-emmanuel-macron-a-la-ceremonie-de-naturalisation-a-la-prefecture-du-loiret

[52] https://web.archive.org/web/20260430171054/https://www.france24.com/fr/info-en-continu/20250828-plus-de-2-000-enfants-%C3%A0-la-rue-en-france-d%C3%A9plorent-des-associations

Ballsy actions have, among the roadblocks in their way, the fact that any somewhat restrictive incentive is frowned upon. So: sure, directly hitting the wallet (or another annoying place) without having tried other methods is not great, but come on: when you've tried everything to get people to act right, and we're all going to drop dead if they don't, and these guys are like, "Nah, trust us, we'll do the right thing without being forced to", but then they screw it up completely – well, you just have to lay down stricter rules, you know? If your eighteen-month-old throws a tantrum to go lock themselves in the sixty-Celsius-degree cabin of a car in the blistering heat, you're not going to say "OK buddy"; you're going to put them in the shade whether they like it or not. Relationships of trust are nice, but where that fails miserably, there comes a time when you have to stop the bullshit, you know. In a measured, proportionate way, so as not to sink into primary authoritarianism – but you have to show pragmatism.[53]

Having guts also sometimes means getting ahead of your neighbors, or doing the exact opposite. In politics, we still too often balk at banning or authorizing this or that thing under the pretext that other European countries haven't done it. But if no one ever sets an example, obviously, nothing moves… Typically, for ecology-related stuff, I know France is tiny, but sometimes you have to take the first step to be able to talk more seriously with the major players, act together and create a group effect.[54][55] And as I often say, the majority is not always right; sometimes, it's just that almost everyone is

[53] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/ozone_veut_peut_espoir.png

[54] https://web.archive.org/web/20260306011551/https://www.highambitioncoalition.org/work

[55] https://web.archive.org/web/20260511051308/https://denmark.dk/innovation-and-design/clean-energy

a dumbass.[56][57] Besides, the same reactionaries who go "boo-hoo we're the only ones in Europe to ban this agrochemical product", we don't hear them talk too much about the fact that we're among the only ones in the European Union to authorize the production of foie gras, for example.[58] These neighbor stories are often a double standard depending on what you want to spin...

Finally: I think honesty and maturity dictate not turning our backs on subjects because of principles – we must look even at what bothers us. I gotta say, for example, it pisses me off a bit when some people on the left act like nobody (except young girls) ever gets scared walking around the city at night.[59] Taboos like that aren't great for moving forward. But here again, watch out for excesses: you could very well spam an opponent with topics that piss them off, and that wouldn't necessarily mean the topics in question are of vital importance. Debating is not trolling.

## Boom

Why am I talking to you about real and fake balls? Well, because we have to learn to tell them apart, I guess.

At the heart of this issue, we find the notion of emotion management, closely tied to that famous short-term vision we've already mentioned. In this regard, I like to draw an analogy with people who smack electronic devices hoping to fix them. I call it "the slap on the TV", but young people don't know the whole cathode ray tube trip anymore, I think... It's

[56] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignace_Philippe_Semmelweis

[57] https://web.archive.org/web/20260707210459/https://magazine.caltech.edu/post/clair-patterson-lead

[58] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gavage_des_oies_et_des_canards#Interdiction_du_gavage_dans_le_monde

[59] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/concert_feyzin.jpg

pure impulsivity, born from an impression that "force" implies "efficiency". Sometimes, too, much like a road-rage insult, it's just the result of annoyance, and it doesn't even serve a real purpose. It's skipping straight to a "last resort" because of a feeling of powerlessness, futility, or the perception of hitting a dead end. All of this in spite of the fact that, in some cases, this "last resort" should not even be counted as a real option!

We find this "teleportation to an extreme and radical approach" in extreme politics: An immigrant commits a crime? Boom: What if we deported them all? At least then they couldn't commit anything at all! Any downsides to this approach? No clue; we don't give a fuck; we'll see later. *Too* late.

The ultimate version of this "slap on the TV" is perhaps the death penalty: we lose hope, or we're too lazy, and we just don't want to hear about someone anymore. Boom, to the scaffold! It's sorted! Or not.[60] Like with pretty much any laziness, it's admitting defeat – we don't even try. If only the deterrent value were real... but I think statistics even contradict that part.[61] It's more of a PR stunt – a costume of terror worn by leaders to play tough. At best, it's a plea-bargaining tool – once the damage is done.[62] For those among the public demanding its reinstatement, it often seems to me more like venting, a desire for revenge, rather than a reasoned opinion. Yet, to no great surprise, among these supporters of the ultimate slap on the criminals' TV, we find a non-negligible part of the far-right electorate...

[60] https://web.archive.org/web/20260413080906/https://www.amnesty.org/fr/what-we-do/death-penalty/the-death-penalty-your-questions-answered/

[61] https://web.archive.org/web/20251019133516/https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2021/08/afr050042006fr.pdf

[62] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/D%C3%A9bat_sur_la_peine_de_mort#Effet_dissuasif_sur_le_crime

Populists exploit these cognitive shortcomings and this poor emotional mastery to their advantage.[63] It's pretty simple, really, but devilishly effective. "You want us to slap the TV? Well we're gonna slap it!" Except no one, in this whole story, explains to us if it's actually a good idea or not. That should be the core of the debate, though.

But it sounds good, "We're gonna slap it"! You can get hypnotized real quick; I notice it when my dad puts on CNews (to make fun of them). [*Translation note: CNews is a hard-right French news channel constantly embroiled in controversies over hate speech and its lack of political pluralism.*] In the same way that advertisers quickly understood they could wreck us better by showing us guys in white lab coats[64] or other "serious" stereotypes, here we're dealing with guys sure of themselves, sharply dressed, reeling off shock phrases. You can easily end up finding yourself thinking "Wow they seem to know what they're talking about;[65] plus, they're *warriors*: they ain't afraid of nothing".[66] And get this: getting pissed off at something releases dopamine; you can literally get drugged up and addicted to aggression.[67] If the speakers take advantage of a well-chosen news item (but not necessarily representative of anything), with a really horrible story putting the viewer in an altered, more receptive state of consciousness, the effect

[63] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/debat_joue_sur_peur.png

[64] https://web.archive.org/web/20260520161712/https://tobacco.stanford.edu/cigarettes/doctors-smoking/

[65] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idriss_Aberkane#Sur_son_curriculum_vitae

[66] https://web.archive.org/web/20250419130510/https://www.humanite.fr/medias/experts/experts-en-rien-presents-sur-tous-les-plateaux-de-bfm-a-cnews-enquete-sur-la-plaie-des-toutologues

[67] https://web.archive.org/web/20260708142950/https://neurolaunch.com/anger-addiction/

will be multiplied tenfold. But if you turn off the TV, the spell is broken, you get your wits back:

> *Hey wait a minute, they made the shortcut between "criticizing Netanyahu" and "being antisemitic", then they minimized the Lebanese victims by sweeping under the rug the forced exile of 20% of the country's population, and then they also said this and that sketchy stuff…*

You still have to pause, though, to declutter your mind. Keeping informed is also about sweeping up every now and then, between the storms.[68] If you never take that time, you drown, because of what is sometimes called the "Gish gallop".[69] For groups like Bolloré's, the fines imposed for "breach of honesty and rigor in information" are just operating expenses, quickly recouped.[70] Even when the screw-ups are so blatant that the higher-ups have to plead guilty.[71] And once you've taken the bait from the populists:

- "Oh crap, they threw all the media to the wolves for their buddies!"[72]

[68] https://web.archive.org/web/20260604192457/https://www.blast-info.fr/articles/2026/100-politique-sur-cnews-une-fake-news-toutes-les-quatre-minutes-wXWqoeJnTPqfwWeErCOGtw

[69] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gish_gallop

[70] https://web.archive.org/web/20250601010740/https://www.francetvinfo.fr/culture/tv/cyril-hanouna/faux-policiers-de-la-brav-m-dans-touche-pas-a-mon-poste-l-un-d-entre-eux-condamne-a-une-amende-de-1-000-euros_7279929.html

[71] https://web.archive.org/web/20250319235918/https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/avortements-classes-parmi-les-causes-de-mortalite-larcom-saisie-apres-une-sequence-polemique-de-cnews-20240226_QSCYRNKYTZCETFUOE7QXV36MMA/

[72] https://web.archive.org/web/20260520131723/https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/a-single-narrative-culture-and-media-under-giorgia-meloni/

- “Damn, they rigged the electoral system!”[73]
- “Holy shit, culture is getting trashed in favor of MMA stuff sponsored by Red Bull!”[74][75]
- “Argh, they’re ramping up mass surveillance!”[76]
- “Oh, no, they’ve dismantled the anti-corruption agencies!”[77]

Too late.[78]

More generally, when something pisses us off, we can “naturally” be tempted to do something more extreme, but it usually sucks. It reminds me of my steering when I tried playing Mario Kart when I was tiny: I zigzagged from one side of the road to the other, spending most of my time in the sand, because, every time, I jerked the steering wheel too hard to correct my path.

In politics, a bit like in computer programming actually, it isn’t *impossible* to make profound changes, but you have to

[73] https://web.archive.org/web/20260430144628/https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2025/nov/02/us-redistrcting-congressional-map

[74] https://web.archive.org/web/20260422190018/https://www.jazzradio.fr/news/coulisse/42624/le-festival-jazz-a-vauvert-annule-pour-des-raisons-politiques

[75] https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2026/05/10/au-rassemblement-national-les-nouveaux-maires-ciblent-l-europe-la-culture-et-les-syndicats-ils-y-vont-plus-franchement_6687664_823448.html

[76] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/portes_derobees_narcotrafic.png

[77] https://web.archive.org/web/20260226193204/https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/anticor-perd-son-agrement-six-question-pour-comprendre-l-affaire-et-ses-consequences-1922444

[78] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/vol_elections_legislatives.png

accept the constraints inherent to such changes, write specifications, organize think tanks, define a transition period, and ensure compatibility all along the way. We're far from the "slap on the TV", you know. But once again: this doesn't mean we must abandon all ambition for profound upheaval. We just have to go about it differently than by smashing people's faces in, etc.

To make the bitter pill of a dizzying change go down, the great classic proposed by fascism is to say "we are going to forge something radically new". Typically, the stated goal is to defeat a "decadence". While these movements are not always (openly) racist at the outset, the fact remains that this approach is a fertile breeding ground for this type of excess: placing the nation above all else, and its native inhabitants above other beings, or bashing a specific social category. The question isn't even whether the designated enemies are rightfully designated: the crux of the problem is rather that it serves as a catch-all diversion, to the detriment of topics that please the leaders less.[79] And while we're at it, their strategy also frequently involves instilling a sense of urgency in the face of the enemy embodying the decadence in question. Kind of like those scam messages telling us something terrible will happen to us if we don't act within a certain timeframe – generally very short. If you let people breathe too much, they might think and foil the traps... That goes for everyday life as well as politics, actually.

I too, sometimes, want to slap the thugs and all that.[80] I even say sometimes, half-joking, that we'd need AI-boosted turrets that would put to sleep with hypodermic darts the

[79] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/pouvoir_achat_environnement.png

[80] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/rodeos_urbains.png

guys riding two to an electric scooter. But I try to take a breath and figure out where my thoughts are coming from: logic or emotions? (I'm not saying I manage it systematically, eh; that's a whole other thing...) This brings us to the last real chapter of my bullshit essay.

## Getting to the root of evil

So we were saying: making people less of assholes, in addition to allowing them to spot the assholes. Fortunately, these skills often go hand in hand. But why are there assholes, again?

I notice a few main things: thinking too short-term, lack of empathy... But that's already too abstract, too "high level"! We have to dig to find more "primitive", basic issues. A foundation which, if stable, prevents the aforementioned problems *by default*. That brings me to two things:

- education (including culture in the broad sense, and the relationship with media),
- mental health (in which I file emotion management).

It's a bit blunt, but clear: if we don't give a damn about these two things, everything goes to shit. Yeah, I know, didn't take a genius to figure that out, but I insist on the paramount importance of these aspects compared to other stuff – their near-absolute priority. Yet, if we look a little closer, oddly enough, we notice that these two areas are frequently undermined, seemingly with premeditation – hurdles we'll come back to, through the lens of exclusion.

## Education

There are certainly extreme cases like with Turkey arresting teachers by the bucketload for a while now,[81][82] but we can also be shocked by the irrelevance of the decisions and changes brought to the French education system for ages. Everything is turned upside down every other day, and we get the feeling that neither the opinions of teachers and students themselves, nor those of people dedicating their lives to didactic and pedagogical research are listened to. From there to suspecting sabotage is but a single step. As I try to say with humor in some of my "drawings", it feels like the elites are rejoicing over the progressive and blatant dumbing down of the populations.[83] This is, after all, one of the key factors in widening inequalities, serving to cement the *status quo*. So yeah, leaders still sometimes do things to calm things down, but at the same time, if they did nothing at all, it would be too obvious and they'd be dethroned, so I guess they're forced to find a middle ground so things don't look too suspicious. Kind of like double agents, you know.

Concrete examples are not lacking. In Hungary, under the reign of Viktor Orbán, the *Tanítanék* ("I would like to be able to teach") movement was born to protest against the inequality between schools, the centralization of decisions, and the nationalist and outdated side of the curricula.[84] Trump, similarly, is well known for trying to control curricula, and

[81] https://web.archive.org/web/20260704170530/https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/201117/turquie-mandats-darret-contre-107-enseignants-accuses-detre-guelenistes

[82] https://web.archive.org/web/20210118020102/https://www.ataturquie.fr/turquie-mandats-darret-contre-des-enseignants/

[83] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/temperature_ecoles.png

[84] https://web.archive.org/web/20260704191449/https://www.tanitanek.info/en/

defunding public schools – especially those that, culturally, don't please him because they are too pro-diversity.[85] He presents his measures – and the financial pressure exerted – as a way to give more choice and power to parents, but what choice will they have when many schools have been suffocated or converted willy-nilly into traditionalist sanctuaries?

In general, the big winners are the better-off people who put their offspring in private – or even religious – schools, and who will be more inclined to vote for the instigators of these laws. I know it sounds cliché, but it has been going on for long enough now for evidences to start piling up, supporting such observations and fears.

People often compare the real world to the one depicted in the movie *Idiocracy*[86] (and have been since its release, actually), but there is still a vital difference between a society that dumbs itself down trying to seek immediate gratification, and a society being deliberately dumbed down by the powers that be. Unfortunately, we are combining both aspects full blast right now.

However, education isn't *just* the education system. It's important to educate yourself a bit on your own – "enlighten yourself", I wanna say. I would recommend, for example, reading somewhat random books. Fiction[87] and non-fiction. From your owr culture as well as from foreign ones. Old and recent.

[85] https://web.archive.org/web/20260506113230/https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/four-ways-trumps-budget-proposal-slashes-public-school-funding

[86] https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0387808/

[87] https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.1239918

Goddamn, if even Harry Potter, with its author who became reactionary as all hell,[88] contributed to reducing contempt towards minorities...[89] Besides, you notice pretty fast that some ideologies lend themselves quite poorly to heroic tales.[90] If leftism is a mental illness, then I regret to announce to the Americans that they should send a good chunk of their beloved superheroes to the asylum.[91][92] A paradox joyfully exploited by the recent series *The Boys*, except that a lot of conservatives took more than three seasons to realize they were being made fun of and were busy worshipping a total asshole.[93]

Even if you feel like you aren't retaining anything in particular, or even forget everything a week or two after finishing, I think it contributes to building thought patterns, and broadens your field of vision. Even the vocabulary hoarded this way matters, including for our own thoughts – to describe what we feel, to others or to ourselves. It even has a name: emotional granularity,[94] roughly the opposite of alexithymia.[95]

[88] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._K._Rowling#Positionnement_sur_les_questions_de_genre

[89] https://web.archive.org/web/20250804205341/https://sparq.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj19021/files/media/file/vezzali_et_al._2015_-_the_greatest_magic_of_harry_potter.pdf

[90] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/meloni_cinema.png

[91] https://web.archive.org/web/20260108030211/https://remixinghistory.com/superman-and-the-new-deal/

[92] https://web.archive.org/web/20260228210723/https://comicbook.com/comics/news/7-times-marvel-comics-got-super-political/

[93] https://web.archive.org/web/20260512071401/https://www.indy100.com/tv/the-boys-right-wing-mocked

[94] https://web.archive.org/web/20260706102332/https://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/PDFs/CMJ241Fp67.pdf

[95] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexithymie#Causes_et_variables_naturelles

We can spot a bridge here with the topic that will follow: that of emotions.

I'm going to bring up something that tends to shock but comes up often: the most educated often lean further left[96] even if it hasn't always been as marked.[97][98] It's not so much a matter of "being smart" – let's steer clear of classism – but something perhaps even simpler: gorging yourself on knowledge, cultural goods, etc., exposes you to the complexity of the world, and then encourages you to apply more nuance in your words. The famous "I know that I know nothing" from Socrates, basically.[99] The exact opposite of typical far-right YouTube comments, based on aggression, cookie-cutter proposals, and short-termism. The people posting this kind of stuff are "skipping steps"; it's as if they were throwing themselves down a black diamond ski slope – barely even wearing skis – before having taken a single lesson.

I think that in a (wacky, sure) world where you'd need a "license" to tackle societal issues, and where getting this license was conditional upon reading – at random – *Animal*

[96] https://web.archive.org/web/20260623224729/https://www.ipsos.com/fr-fr/legislatives-2024/sociologie-des-electorats-legislatives-2024

[97] https://web.archive.org/web/20260705154700/https://shs.cairn.info/faut-il-desesperer-de-la-gauche--9782845978911-page-118?lang=fr

[98] https://web.archive.org/web/20260620042215/https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2018/04/25/gauche-brahmane-contre-droite-marchande/

[99] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Je_ne_sais_qu'une_chose%2C_c'est_que_je_ne_sais_rien

*Farm*,[100] the *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*,[101] and the *Little Treatise on Manipulation for the Use of Honest People*,[102] well, fascists would be an endangered species, and the "Comments" sections of the web would be wildly different... Maybe also with more standard punctuation, because honestly, someone's gonna have to explain to me why RN fans tend to put spaces on the wrong side of commas (when they use them...) or cram bunches of seven periods into random spots in the middle of their sentences. There again it reeks of a lack of reading.[103][104] Some of them look like they're rage-smashing their cell phone keyboards.

I'm trying here not to play their game of "leftism is a mental illness, lol", because far be it from me to do the "mirror" thing and treat far-right voters that way.

1. Firstly because some got to that point because of situations that ran them ragged, and have the feeling – probably partly justified – that they aren't being offered anything concrete. Kind of like the guys fighting at Lidl to get an AC unit: you think they hand out knuckle sandwiches every other day?[105] No; right there, they're going apeshit because they're borderline afraid of dying.

[100] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Ferme_des_animaux

[101] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discours_de_la_servitude_volontaire

[102] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petit_trait%C3%A9_de_manipulation_%C3%A0_l%27usage_des_honn%C3%AAtes_gens

[103] https://web.archive.org/web/20260208051909/https://campus.kennesaw.edu/current-students/academics/writing-center/open-educational-resources/pdf-chapters/punctuations-rhetorical-effects.php

[104] https://web.archive.org/web/20260706231610/https://study.com/academy/lesson/understanding-the-instruction-of-reading-standards-print-awareness.html

[105] https://web.archive.org/web/20260705052000/https://www.20minutes.fr/societe/4232401-20260702-canicule-insultes-bagarres-escorte-policiere-lidl-chasse-climatiseur-vire-chaos

2. In my eyes, it's rather a potentially transient state, a sort of mental gestation – a philosophical waiting room you can extract yourself from if you want to. The antechamber of humanity.[106] Or, to avoid reinventing the wheel, the good old allegory of Plato's cave.[107] It's not sick people I hear there, but rather the complaints of an undernourished or poorly guided mind.

3. To me, our opinions shouldn't be forced at all costs to perfectly stick to any specific political party 24/7. You can pick and choose wherever you want depending on the topics, and of course add your personal touch. From that point of view, there are tons of remarks you hear daily targeting parties that seem absurd or self-defeating to me. The lack of nuance and the refusal to dialogue, again and always... [108]

4. Finally, as always, I wish to avoid reproducing harmful opposing patterns.

It's quick to talk bullshit, but very time-consuming to correct it[109] (I'm paying that price trying to source my claims here); piling up sources of your own and knowledge from different horizons limits the damage, because they represent many puzzle pieces that, together, give a semblance of coherence. Things fall into place on their own according to confirmations and refutations. Without that, it is impossible to build a

[106] https://web.archive.org/web/20260128144757/https://rmc.bfmtv.com/actualites/economie/travail/de-l-humanite-francois-ruffin-se-felicite-de-l-evolution-de-sarah-saldmann-sur-le-travail_AV-202511130549.html

[107] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/All%C3%A9gorie_de_la_caverne

[108] https://web.archive.org/web/20260605082052/https://www.telestar.fr/actu_tv/a-cnews-ils-sentretuent-cameras-allumees-en-peril-la-chaine-aurait-recours-a-des-methodes-problematiques-1767520

[109] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loi_de_Brandolini

proper argument, and, without argumentation, any speaking out is just the ramblings of a "reactionary" or the naivety of an idealist lost in the fog.[110][111]

Forging a composite personal thought like this obviously takes a little time. A lot more time than just cracking your skull open and dumping something monomaniacal and prefabricated inside. Funneling into your head an obscure thirty-second video claiming to prove the legitimacy (or the opposite) of a political party – or anything else for that matter –, has the satisfying aspect of giving the sensation of having quickly and effectively wrapped something up, of having saved time. You say to yourself "cool, I can close this thing, stick it in a drawer, and move on to something else". But I think it's a trap, and even that it goes against the principle of learning.[112] I'm not even necessarily talking about the fact that the video in question might come from a bot account deployed by Putin[113] or Xi Jinping,[114] even though that's obviously an issue too.[115] No: what I wanted to point out is that you're never really supposed to put a subject in the closet; a questioning can happen at any time, including when you least expect it, like when tackling topics seemingly unrelated to the initial question. Furthermore, populist short-form content fully exploits mechanisms like the Dunning-Kruger effect to feed us

[110] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/argumenter.png

[111] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/argumentation.jpg

[112] https://web.archive.org/web/20260704145130/https://www.anses.fr/system/files/AP2019-SA-0152-RA.pdf

[113] https://web.archive.org/web/20260413142806/https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4ng24pxkelo

[114] https://web.archive.org/web/20260423110846/https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-67560513

[115] https://enseignants.lumni.fr/parcours/1638/election-presidentielle-de-2027-quels-risques-d-ingerences-etrangeres-en-france.html

empty rhetoric,[116] making my "trap" analogy feel completely justified. Demagogy at work.

We want everything spoon-fed, and that's quite natural, but we have to push ourselves – get used to the idea that in this matter, this is not an option. Human thought isn't cooking. There is no philosophical or political equivalent to ready-made frozen meals – just junk food. We aren't in the Matrix; you don't learn a thing instantly by strapping a device to your head. (For now, our devices tend to make us dumber instead.) If someone tries to make you believe it's possible, it's like real estate ads that are too good to be true: it smells like a scam.

We often chase the mirage of a simple solution to complex problems; we have to push ourselves: life is a mess, and if profound questions persist for centuries, it's because you can't work miracles. Revolutionary ideas can be hard to tell apart from snake oil. Personally, as soon as I hear "The problem is…", a big red flag pops up in my head, with the message "ALERT! GROSS OVERSIMPLIFICATION!". (I think I made a comic about that, but can't for the life of me find its name…)

Maybe this is one of the reasons why political parties accuse each other of being "disconnected from reality" (or the "out of touch" variant): each only has a *part* of the truth. It actually cracks me up, all these people talking about "reality" without ever having really worked,[117] while people are breaking their backs picking grapes just to have a roof and some grub.

And the media, in all this? We observe a growing rejection of those called "mainstream", like network TV channels

[116] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dunning-Kruger_effect

[117] https://web.archive.org/web/20241212162730/https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/podcasts/dov-alfon-en-toute-subjectivite/dov-alfon-en-toute-subjectivite-du-mardi-10-septembre-2024-9328548

or long-standing newspapers.[118] Truth be told, they are far from infallible, regardless of the country.[119] A scientist had fun with this by successfully circulating, based on a wonky research article, the rumor of a slimming diet based on chocolate.[120] I would, however, tend to warn against the systematic, wholesale rejection of all these media. Just like individuals, they don't get everything right or everything wrong, especially since they are shapeshifting entities.[121] But above all, as soon as you isolate yourself from all that, you become the perfect prey for some sort of predatory gurus who are even less inclined toward nuance,[122] and whose motivations (sometimes basely financial[123]) can be even harder to fathom.

The rhetoric of "people are lying to you, you must listen to me and only me, they mean you harm" weirdly matches that of cults and some kidnappers. Isolating people in such ways gives them free rein. Plus, Arcom, [*Translation note: French media regulatory body, roughly equivalent to the FCC in the US or Ofcom in the UK.*] the right of reply[124] and all that – for whatever that's worth – at least provide a form of

[118] https://web.archive.org/web/20260624215506/https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025

[119] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/politique_financement_riche_hot-dogs.png

[120] https://web.archive.org/web/20260120145215/https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/05/28/410313446/why-a-journalist-scammed-the-media-into-spreading-bad-chocolate-science

[121] https://www.lemonde.fr/le-monde-et-vous/article/2021/01/27/le-monde-une-independance-editoriale-totale-et-absolue_6067813_6065879.html

[122] https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2024/05/12/un-an-apres-sa-mise-en-examen-thierry-casasnovas-n-a-rien-perdu-de-son-influence_6232780_3224.html

[123] https://web.archive.org/web/20260707200547/https://stateofthepeople.substack.com/p/the-challenge-of-political-influencer

[124] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_of_reply

regulation against factually false statements.[125] Do you really prefer living your whole life in the Wild West?[126] I dunno, it reminds me of people who say "Nah but organic is sometimes a scam", "Fair trade is sometimes bullshit"; yeah OK, but in that case what do we do? We head to McDonald's? And also, while we're at it, since shitty humans exist, we don't talk to anyone anymore? We gotta stop using a handful of bad apples to reject the entire Earth... As often happens, you have to cross-check and multiply sources, and consult them from a certain distance: doubt everything, but not in an irremediable or pathological way.

On the flip side, how do we make people want to educate themselves? I draw a huge blank on this point. If you force their hand, you get massive backlashes like in the school system, where even when faced with cool books nobody touches them, except a handful of die-hards ready to get beat up and called "nerds" when they just did something reasonably normal.

It must be said that stuffing yourself with cultural products that aren't too "mainstream" or "trendy" is a bit like an acquired taste – the same kind of thing you encounter in music.[127] The first encounter isn't necessarily the right one; you gotta have the faith to come back to it, analyze it, try to understand why it might (or might not) be interesting, rather than staying forever on a hastily forged position. I'm afraid we have to go about it in small doses, and make it so that it becomes a bit more "normal", "cultural" to cultivate yourself.[128] ... That sounds pretty weird, said like that.

[125] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/label_info.png
[126] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/trucages_evolution_croire.png
[127] https://www.alicem.net/files/txts/zik.pdf
[128] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/culture.jpg

One of the sticking points is that for people to have time, motivation, and funds to dedicate to this kind of stuff which is deemed "secondary" (and presented as even worse than secondary by fascists), they need to have their bases covered. These people must be freed beforehand from any worries regarding basic needs: grub, housing, dealing with the kids... And sadly, now, in people's "basic needs", there's a smartphone and who knows what else. That doesn't help. In New York, the new mayor (the famous socialist who made headlines by kicking out an old fart who thought victory was owed to him) rushed to ease the burden weighing on the working classes: housing, childcare...[129] Polls indicate that residents then showed more optimism for the city's future, so we can imagine they feel less overwhelmed by dumb problems.[130]

Even though I made a distinction between culture and education, it's obvious there are bridges between the two. My rare memories of school (outside of playing) are often linked to musical stuff; a "teacher" made us listen to some Eminem or I don't remember what, and taught us the basics of rhythm, making us count the eight beats of the measures, etc. It must have taken her an hour max, and yet that's enough to plant seeds. It's by piling up simple little things like that that you make people more open, flexible, lucid, and versatile.

You have to communicate a little bit, to get the message across, even if it's not in the form of an explicit message, exactly – simply "normalizing" culture. Not in the sense of flattening it out and harming its diversity, but rather making

[129] https://web.archive.org/web/20260630124511/https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/what-zohran-mamdani-has-done-since-becoming-mayor.html

[130] https://web.archive.org/web/20260707233707/https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2026/06/26/mamdanis-favorability-rating-jumps-in-latest-poll-what-to-know/90705790007/

it “normal”. Erasing this image of “only the intellectual elite touches it”. Democratizing curiosity and showing that having interests different from “what’s trending” is not a flaw. Quite the opposite.

The “Pass Culture” [*Translation note: Government-funded cultural allowance for youth.*] seems to be getting good results,[131] so all is not lost let’s say, but that won’t be enough to redraw the cultural landscape itself. Let’s hit the brakes a bit on this spoon-feeding and these “instead of showing you diverse stuff, we’re going to throw at you *the* thing that got the most streams on platforms that screw over artists”. You get the picture. On top of that, sadly, right now, young people are prey to a more aggressive marketing (let’s even say “predation”) on the side of vapes[132] than on the side of books… The pinnacle of immediate gratification and short-term vision.

## Mental health

And here you might tell me: “Yeah but people like Zemmour, [*Translation note: Far-right essayist and politician repeatedly convicted for inciting racial hatred.*] they seem to read a lot and all, but they’re still seriously messed up!” For sure the guy ain’t Matthieu Ricard. [*Translation note: Buddhist monk and mindfulness advocate.*] That’s where our second component comes in: mental health and emotion management.

[131] https://web.archive.org/web/20260630191346/https://www.ledauphine.com/societe/2026/06/30/pres-de-cinq-millions-de-jeunes-en-ont-beneficie-la-presidente-du-pass-culture-fait-le-bilan-du-dispositif

[132] https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-04836140v1

At the risk of sounding a bit cliché, I would tend to recommend meditation and relaxation practices,[133][134][135] no offense to the Human Rights League which seems to consider this a risk for kids (?).[136] What's cool about it, I find (among other things), is that it helps trace back to the source of annoyances. Without that, I'd say "Man, shut the fuck up; you make me want to die!" all the time to everyone. Yes, I know, I'm already not that far off, so imagine what it would be like otherwise. Often, something pisses us off, we want to yell at the person who seems to be the source of the unpleasantness, but actually, if we pause for three-tenths of a second, it can go something like this:

> *Oh actually, if I'm pissed off, it's not because of this person's words strictly speaking, but because I was busy thinking about something. By talking, he interrupted me. Yet, he couldn't have guessed I was busy thinking about something super important; it wasn't written on my forehead either, you know. So there's no reason for me to yell at him like he's a piece of trash.*

It might seem trivial and totally obvious, or on the contrary you might say "lol no you're exaggerating, we never yell at people unjustly", but I see it constantly around me – and sadly still often *in* me. Even the fact that we have an itch somewhere (I mean, literally) can make us react more violently to something! As soon as we're a bit more chilled out,

[133] https://web.archive.org/web/20260626000901/https://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/07-08/ce-corner

[134] https://web.archive.org/web/20260628053101/https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2848393/

[135] https://web.archive.org/web/20260309143622/https://www.inserm.fr/c-est-quoi/a-mediter-cest-quoi-un-etat-de-conscience-modifie/

[136] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/meditation_ecole_ldh.png

and especially more tuned in to our bodies and our emotions, it naturally happens less. Both because the reactions are less intense, but also because it helps us trace back to the real source of things. This breaks the cycle of dopamine-seeking from aggression, which we talked about earlier.[137] An "I don't give a fuck!" will become (caricaturing a bit):

> *I currently have such and such a problem, which makes me anxious to the point of not having the energy needed to properly devote myself to this other issue you're trying to draw my attention to. I am deeply sorry. But perhaps together we can find a suitable way out?*

It takes practice, perseverance,[138] hindsight, and lots of self-questioning.[139] Without that, you quickly end up yelling at others or at events, when in reality the problem is within us rather than in the target of our shouting – the latter having, all things considered, no harmful impact on our lives.[140]

A buddy was pointing out to me, once, that people never stop complaining about problems that actually stem from themselves, and which are, if not totally solvable, at least mitigable through meditation or relaxation. He was telling me "I just want to say to them 'Well… Meditate'". With a bit of annoyance, you'd even want to add "What do you want me to tell you?".

Physical exercise is also highly recommended, provided it doesn't veer into some macho trip where you look down on everyone else and shoot up with sketchy products. Far be

[137] https://web.archive.org/web/20260708143802/https://neurolaunch.com/why-does-anger-feel-good/

[138] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/nombres_ronds_meditation.png

[139] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/notes_sur_pensees_tcc.png

[140] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/meditation_falafels.png

it from me to encourage you to *just* read and shrivel up – I ain't that dumb.

Things are a bit worrying when it comes to self-control and mindset, lately… You just have to talk to teaching staff to notice it: between the irresponsible parents who don't set boundaries for their offspring (and attack the staff for reasons of distressing futility, regardless of social background[141]), and the offspring in question who, inevitably, reproduce these behaviors… I won't give you the whole spiel, either, about screens in the cradle and all that.[142][143] But there you go, it's a hell of a tangled mess and I wouldn't know where to start unraveling it…

The educational environment is actually only the tip of the iceberg, in society's general situation: we end up with older healthcare workers arguing with newcomers because the latter reject the most basic rules, and (cliché but true) are glued to their phones while patients are flatlining.[144][145] I can only hope that the knots of this damn mess would loosen a bit by working on the aspects I've brought up so far…

[141] https://web.archive.org/web/20260207075133/https://www.franceinfo.fr/societe/education/scolarite/guide-parents/lycee/des-agressions-contre-le-personnel-educatif-en-hausse-selon-le-ministere-de-l-education-nationale_7782407.html

[142] https://web.archive.org/web/20260618091239/https://www.elysee.fr/admin/upload/default/0001/16/06a9854b34d98bb3e4fbf72b2b28ed3b0dd601a1.pdf

[143] https://web.archive.org/web/20260705145932/https://www.arcom.fr/actualites/campagne-enfants-et-ecrans-2026-les-conseils-de-larcom-pour-proteger-les-plus-jeunes

[144] https://web.archive.org/web/20240617233621/https://www.memoireonline.com/09/13/7362/m_Les-soignants-et-leur-telephone-portable--l-hpital48.html

[145] https://web.archive.org/web/20260118171946/https://www.adiu.fr/le-telephone-portable-responsable-de-certaines-maladies/

## Rejection

Rather than encouraging this mental training, we throw in the towel; we banish people from society. As if we were sorting fruit, not only without hope of seeing them "un-rot" but also with a certain disgust toward the specimens most battered by nature. Some political extremes view anyone with a physical or mental issue as a burden, a "weakling", or a "snowflake". Sometimes, they even see an issue where there isn't one, like in homosexuality or… in not being crazy about bodybuilding and not stuffing yourself with sketchy dietary supplements sold by influencers.[146]

It's quicker and easier, in their eyes, to get rid of such people; they even try to make us believe they deserve nothing but that. In such a context, mental health takes a backseat: struggling people are just "sissies", everything is their fault, and it would be a waste of resources to take care of them.[147]

The fact that personalities like Trump use psychiatric terms to designate those they despise[148] contributes to these weird amalgamations:

- people who didn't choose their condition find themselves depicted using the same words as public enemy number one;
- we dodge the debate by considering that the opposition isn't in their right mind anyway.

[146] https://web.archive.org/web/20250205180137/https://www.slate.fr/story/248617/podcast-audio-papacito-raptor-baptiste-marchais-nouveau-terrain-jeu-influenceurs-extreme-droite-identitaires-fachosphere

[147] https://web.archive.org/web/20260515020417/https://www.npr.org/2026/01/14/nx-s1-5677714/trump-administration-mental-health-addiction-grant-cuts-restored

[148] https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-calls-for-jack-smith-arrest_n_69038a5ae4b00c26f0707215

(Holy shit, there are nicknames like “Crazy Bernie” all the way onto the White House website, man. . . [149])

Hitler (yeah I’m jumping straight to him; I own it) ran “ad” campaigns showing deformed people decked out with slogans like “He costs you ∗a sum∗ per year”.[150] Doesn’t that remind you of something? Yeah, all the stuff that puts a supposed price tag on immigrants.[151][152][153] So OK, there are people who migrate by choice, but for those who risk a death sentence back home because they opened their mouths against a tyrant, if they hear “oh boy that’s gonna cost a lot” upon arriving, it’s not the most humane behavior ever, you know. Especially when the data invoked is garbage.[154]

More broadly, anyone deviating a bit too much from the norm is considered a walking danger and deserves little better than being cast aside.[155] As we’ve seen, fascism draws a good

[149] https://web.archive.org/web/20260704071727/https://www.whitehouse.gov/releases/2025/10/radical-lefts-cnn-stunt-fails-to-distract-from-their-shutdown-stranglehold/

[150] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aktion_T4

[151] https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2024/07/03/legislatives-2024-le-cout-de-l-immigration-fausse-idee-et-vraie-recette-electorale-du-rn_6246189_3224.html

[152] https://web.archive.org/web/20251002071054/https://www.franceinfo.fr/replay-radio/le-vrai-du-faux/le-vrai-ou-faux-l-immigration-coute-t-elle-54-milliards-d-euros-a-la-france-chaque-annee-comme-l-affirme-la-deputee-rn-gisele-lelouis_6021698.html

[153] https://web.archive.org/web/20251017133055/https://www.publicsenat.fr/actualites/politique/cout-de-limmigration-taxation-financiere-contribution-a-lue-les-revendications-economiques-du-rn

[154] https://web.archive.org/web/20241230145911/https://www.humanite.fr/societe/immigration/la-migration-est-une-opportunite-pour-loc de-limmigration-est-un-atout-pour-lemploi-et-la-croissance

[155] https://www.alicem.net/files/pics/helico_avion_trump.png

part of its strength from popular fervor and uniformity;[156][157] dragging around people "not like the others" isn't handy for charging headfirst.

We're drifting away from mental health, but what I was getting at is that it's easier to insult than to help. It's like in all fields, really: between destroying and repairing, if you're looking for the easy way out, the path is quickly found... Without necessarily going as far as forced euthanasia German-style (which some, a year ago at most, seemed nostalgic for...[158]), you can quickly end up with a hierarchization of people, based on more or less wacky criteria. A kind of caste system which, even if it doesn't say its name, is almost as deleterious.

As if we didn't have enough biases and crappy biological mechanisms as it is: be aware that oxytocin, a hormone initially known for "cool" stuff like social bonding and sometimes dubbed the "happiness hormone",[159] also ends up pushing us towards aggressiveness and exclusion – among other radical behaviors – against those perceived as outsiders to our group...[160] Enough to feed, for an even worse reason than usual, the most reactionary politics. Basically, you feel so good in your little group (virilist or racist or whatever else) that it'll encourage you to lay it on thick and throw a fit at the others.[161] It's creepy.

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[156] https://web.archive.org/web/20260623173325/https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-ufc-white-house-troops-tickets-b2986285.html

[157] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coupons_nos_cheveux_conform%C3%A9ment_au_mode_de_vie_socialiste

[158] https://web.archive.org/web/20250410075452/https://www.liberation.fr/politique/le-depute-de-dordogne-sebastien-peytavie-menace-par-le-site-neo-nazi-democratie-participative-20250406_YNJFWVTQPJBANKLRDWS4UKSFWM/

[159] https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ocytocine

[160] https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/7854_2017_13

[161] https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1015316108

Some might tell me “Well if our body works like that, it must be justified, right?”, but our society’s organization evolved way too fast compared to our body. Like the whole stuff about rushing towards sugary and fatty foods as if our lives depended on it, to stock up just in case tomorrow is a famine day. Plenty of mechanisms have become anachronistic and a recipe for disaster.

So, instead of “slapping the TV” in a nervous, blind, and childish reflex, let’s shake ourselves up a bit to fix it properly. Lend a hand and an ear when possible, and society will only become more resilient against brutal and unjust regimes. And if, even after reading all this, you’re still one of those dreaming of the dawn of these same brutal regimes, well… absorb diverse cultural goods and meditate; what do you want me to tell you?

## Semblance of a conclusion

We are finally nearing the end of this document which, I admit, quickly took on a much larger scope than I expected. (“It escalated quickly”, as they say.)

I’m not exactly at my best when it comes to talking with people lately. Whether it’s about serious topics like here or not. Relationships between people seem so complicated to me that sometimes I don’t even have the strength to try anymore. There are so many parameters to take into account, and so many random-looking aspects… Sometimes things take on proportions that are beyond me, and make me regret getting involved.

I don’t know if I’m in any position to have any impact other than by quietly writing in my corner, without constraints. Vocal exchanges, even if they have their perks, often go too fast

for their own good, and poorly handle the branching nature of some subjects. You end up having to sort, filter, and generally do so in a more haphazard than calculated way. Yet, I hate being aware that things have been left aside, unanswered – in the same way that when someone doesn't finish a sentence, I feel like I've failed at life, as if I'm missing something crucial. It's a somewhat absurd but nonetheless notable source of suffering for me.

Speaking of sorting: writing this document will have allowed me, to a certain extent, to separate the inevitable from what isn't. Plus, it forced me to do some instructive research. But deep down I'm also a bit jaded, because I realize that:

1. There's a big, poorly designed biological foundation, and a handful of shitty hormones are setting the world on fire, through people convinced their thoughts have more rational bases than that.

2. You end up having to write fifty pages just to say, at the end of the day, something along the lines of: "Avoid acting like the bad guys in movies; it's not cool."

Oh well, at least I tried.

By way of goodbye, I'll add a note with positive overtones. The *Movement for a Non-violent Alternative*, in a manual they published,[162] explains:

> *Joy is an act of resistance when the enemy wants to tarnish everything. Humor is also an antidote to violence, resignation, and fear.*

[162] *Citizen manual for non-violent civil defense*, available for sale on their site and also available (freely?) in PDF, archived by me here: `https://web.archive.org/web/20260705140431/https://nonviolence.fr/IMG/pdf/manuel_citoyen_pour_dcnv_v2.pdf`

I guess I have to keep posting dumb comics on my website, then. Even if I don't have a crazy big audience. And I have to keep trying to be less depressed, too. Tough. Especially under these circumstances. But this is a start.