'Failed liberalism left us without masks': Covid-19 crisis exposed Western liberal democracy, brought back ideals of 'sovereignty'

By: RT
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The Covid-19 pandemic lifted the veil on Western democracies' failures, but the media has had no interest in exposing how liberalism and free-market ideologies are silent killers, French philosopher Michel Onfray told RT France.

RT France: Maybe a few more weeks of quarantine, it's not really a surprise; what is your reaction to that?

Onfray: It is obvious that the president of the Republic is stumbling around, that he is rowing here and there, that it is his slogan *"at the same time"* – at the same time to the left and to the right, to the right, to the left, we don't really know what we are doing. There were other policies available, other policies that he did not choose. It would have been possible to quarantine very quickly, individually, personally, in order to individually test people on a massive scale. It would have implied quarantine of course, but not the quarantine of the whole population, of the whole of France. Look how it went in Taiwan, look how it went in Germany: the Germans have less than one hundred deaths – it's still too much, but it's far from the situation we know in France. *[At the time of publication, Germany has confirmed 149 cases – editor's note.]* So yes, there was another policy available, but we know that Macron has only one mindset, which is Maastricht's mindset, according to which the market rules. And we see that in such a situation – the virus being everywhere on the planet – the market can't rule. We rediscover…

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RT France: But Michel Onfray, is it really Emmanuel Macron's fault? Because clearly it seems that the problem lies in the lack of tests and available masks; we just did not have the means for such a policy. Isn't it a policy that should have been thought of and foreseen way before?

Onfray: Of course. But you know that Macron was in Hollande's government, that Hollande gets along with Sarkozy, that Sarkozy got along with Chirac, and that eventually Chirac got along with Mitterrand. In other words: since the departure of de Gaulle in 1969, there has only been one policy in France. It is the policy of liberalism, it is a policy which gives power to the market; the gift package is in itself not so important. There's some vaguely left-

wing politicians, some vaguely right-wing politicians, but they are Maastrichtian liberals. I am talking about the global policy of all those people.

So here, of course, Macron is not responsible for all this, but he is responsible for following this line. And because of this line, there are no masks – and this is why he says that masks are useless. He does not have any tests, and this is why he says that tests are useless… whereas he should really say that there are no masks because of France's incapacity as part of Europe; that there are no tests because of France's incapacity as part of a federal Europe which itself aims to create a global state where the capital reigns supreme. As nobody is interested in geopolitics, geostrategy, or even politics anymore… well, we discover that the king is naked and that, when there's a pandemic situation, liberalism can't rule, because old things come back: sovereignism, borders that need to be closed, the sovereign state, the ability of the head of state to choose, the power of the police and the military… It's fantastic. I've been saying for twenty years that those things are essential. Because of the situation, sovereign ideals are coming back in style.

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RT France: The first round of local elections took place, and the quarantine was implemented late even though we already had the means to do so… How do you interpret that? Was it to avoid some costs, or it was all simply an underestimation of the danger?

Onfray: I think that Emmanuel Macron's youth and his innocence (in the etymological sense of the word) explain that. He is not a statesman. He was put where he is by the deep state: journalists, economists, tax experts, the world of finance… He is just a straw man. He doesn't know anything but the liberal mindset, and eventually he doesn't know what to choose. What does 'political' mean? We can go back to Carl Schmitt and others: it is the art of taking decisions. We can go back to de Gaulle's 'Edge of the Sword': the leader must be able to choose what needs to be done, which direction should be taken.

But Macron doesn't know. It's *"at the same time."* He's not against the left, he's not against the right. He's happy to say that you need to quarantine yourself, but at the same time you need to go and vote; that one shouldn't go out, but it's ok if it's a football match between France and Italy; that it's forbidden to go out, but at the same time it's ok to take part in a sporting activity… Emmanuel Macron is not a leader, but quite the opposite: he is a young man who came to power though he wasn't even 40. He had with him the national assembly, the senate, more or less all the newspaper outlets (except maybe two or three of them, though I'm not even sure). And he screwed everything, because we now understand that this young man doesn't know what 'political' means. He is the straw man of capital, of liberalism, of the golden calf… The coronavirus suddenly reveals how all this works. This is what I have been criticizing for years: how it works. Now the curtain has been lifted up, and we see the mechanics, and that the king is naked.

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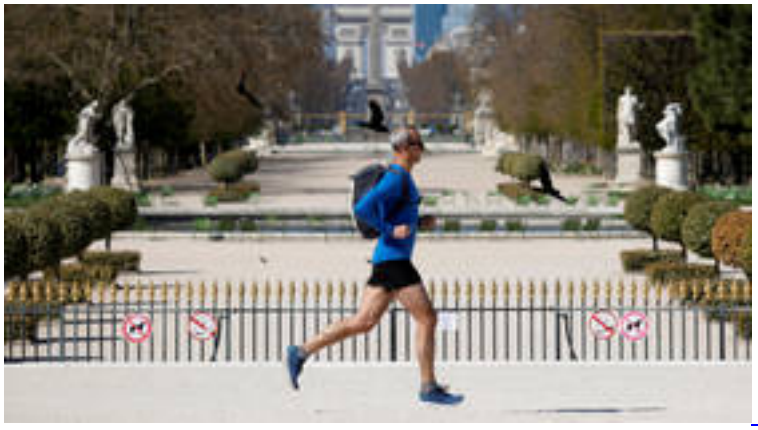
RT France: Today, in a pretty ironic turn of events, China comes to the aid of Europe, Russia too… Even Cuba, which helps Italy. What do you think that implies?

Onfray: It means that all those people who have been presented as 'illiberal', as 'dictators', as new forms of Adolf Hitler, etc… make policies. I am not saying that I agree with their policies. I am not saying that I agree with Erdogan's way, with Trump's way, or Putin's way; I am just saying that those people understand what 'political' means, and that we forgot what it meant as we think that capitalism must rule. What's Macron's goal? Liberal Europe's goal? CIA-backed Europe's goal, since the end of the Second World War? A *"universal state,"* according to Junger's terminology. A universal state which is really a global state, at the head of which are some people who consider that the rest are expendable and that technicians, technocrats, people who think they know, must rule.

Suddenly, we discover all this. We discover that this huge machine which implements capitalist policies is absolutely unable to cope with such situations. Only the people who understand the notion of the political can cope with that. I'm not defending the Chinese government; I'm just saying that Chinese knew how to solve the problem. I'm not saying we need a dictatorship, I mean that we need people who can decide. There's Nietzsche's beautiful phrase: *"A yes, a no, a straight line."* Indeed, we can agree with a leader, we can say yes to a leader if his line is clear. Today's head of state does not have a clear line.

RT France: Emmanuel Macron says his policies are going to change, including those which deal with France's European neighbors, like EU's deficit rules… Do you think that there will be a 'before' and an 'after'…?

Onfray: I’d like that, but I don’t think so. Think about François Fillon, when he was Sarkozy’s prime minister. He was telling us that the state was bankrupted and that it was impossible to raise the minimum wage for the poorest. But then they found money to bomb Gaddafi, who was the head of a secular state which contained Islamic terrorism. We know the story: no money for the poor, but enough to bomb an Islamic secular state. Here we discover that when we want to find some money, we find it. So now, the whole economy is collapsing, but we can find money for companies, for people who can’t go to work, suddenly all those sovereign policies…
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RT France: But here, it’s a question of life or death, it’s a public health…

Onfray: So what? Were you under the impression that when a farmer was hanging himself everyday it was not a matter of life and death? That when people fall into alcoholism, drug addiction or depression, it’s not a matter of life and death because they were jobless, because they were poor? Those are invisible deaths, so I guess that’s ok. It’s obvious that capitalism kills on a daily basis. Here suddenly we see coffins, so of course there’s a reaction. Nowadays, people need pictures to think, that’s really problematic. They can’t think if they don’t see a pile of coffins. If you show it, they suddenly think that there’s something to be considered in this situation. If every day we’d shown the face of a farmer who killed himself, we would have understood that there was an epidemic because of liberalism, that liberalism was killing people.

But media outlets who are reflecting the capitalist ideology do not have any interest in showing this. At the time of argentic pictures, we needed photographic developers. Well, this virus is a kind of photographic developer showing the reality of today’s picture. We are in an *“illiberal dictatorship”* (to use their own terminology) when we are following Schengen’s logic. Maastricht’s Europe is illiberal. The liberal ideology, which was supposed to solve any issue, doesn’t solve anything. This monster which was supposedly going to make us able to compete with Russia, China or the US isn’t even able to produce masks. It’s falling because of its inability to produce masks for doctors it is sending to their deaths.