

DAVID LE BRETON

# FREEWHEELING

A SENTIMENTAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF CYCLING

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Like walking, the bicycle is one in the eye for the ultraliberal values of our contemporary societies. It is an invitation to calmly experience the world, to taking one's time, to feeling alive. It engages you permanently in the sensoriality of your surroundings, in the smells, the landscapes, the sounds. Biking is also a gentle way of reconnecting with time and space. It takes the cyclist where he wants to go, at his own pace, without fear of delays, without having to drive for hours looking for a parking spot.

The bicycle has a rich history that goes back more than a century. It has accompanied social movements and fueled sociability in different ways from one generation to the next. If the first cyclists were among the wealthier classes, enthusiasm grew in popular circles until the Fifties, when cycling was largely neglected due to the saturation of cities and roads by automobile traffic. In recent years, the bicycle is used by an increasingly wide and diverse population that demands bicycle paths, repair shops, and a peaceful sharing of the road. Bicycles have become an emblem of political ecology, combining physical activity, the pleasure of quickly cutting through traffic and joyful roaming. The monopolization of urban space by cars is increasingly being questioned.

A cycling revolution, a promise of a more hospitable city, is underway and pedaling boldly.

**DAVID LE BRETON** is a French anthropologist and sociologist. He teaches at the University of Strasbourg and is a member of the Institut Universitaire de France and a researcher at the Laboratoire des Cultures et Sociétés d'Europe. He has published numerous works about the sociology of sensations and space that have been widely translated.

## PRAISE

“At a time when the bicycle is making a dramatic comeback in our cities, David le Breton signs here a true declaration of love combined with a sound historical background. The bicycle is today an emblem of ecological awareness but, in the past, it was also a symbol of female emancipation, of social struggles, or of resistance during the Second World War.” **Respire magazine**

deborah@agenceborahdruba.com phone +33142544389 mobile +33622081500

www.agenceborahdruba.com