

Is it possible to live without illusion without becoming disillusioned?

Ignorance is bliss, they say. Does the inverse make knowledge turbulence?

For the more you know, the more you cannot ignore.

Some might say, 'it is what it is'. But what exactly *is* that?

Whilst we are all human beings, the same skeletal structure on the inside. On the outside our genitals, skin colour, sexual preferences and abilities define our differences; a ready tool for stereotyping and categorising human worth.

We face racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia. All over the world, this is being resisted #metoo, #blacklivesmatter. But is anything really changing? Some consider it acceptable to present a woman's underwear as evidence against her in a rape trial. Racial profiling is common place and statistics highlight that systemic discrimination continues.

Whilst we each must breathe clean air, drink clean water and eat food to survive, the earth that sustains us, appears not to deserve the efforts required to save it, save us, from crisis. Our earth is dying, quicker every day. Climate change, biodiversity loss, soil erosion and that's just tip of the melting iceberg. Is anyone listening? It's rarely on the news, that our world is groaning under the weight of destructive human impact. The President of the free world does not believe and the majority of the population find themselves distracted by what the Kardashians say, with the football score, or drinking their troubles away.

And yet again this is being resisted. Passionate people everyday are standing up for environmental justice for all of us. Fighting against that which we all should fear and that which is already causing great suffering to those who did the least to cause the problem.

Our societies are ravaged by war, human torture, slavery and more. Which serves only to benefit the arms industry, the elite, and line the pockets of the criminal.

How can this carry on without much fuss? Why do we consent to be governed by those who choose to inflict harm on others? When it is most certainly not in our interests to do so. Some buy in to the ideology of the powerful, others tell you 'I'm not interested in politics'. But politics is in the everyday. The power to control and make others obey. Imagine, what might a political system look like built on co-operation and human rights rather than jeering and party-politics. A politics that put people and planet first.

What impact are social movements having, are they making a change? Perhaps so. But those who fight back, who take a stand on civil rights. They are demonised and criminalised. Occupy the land, take back from the 1% they said. 'Get a job, lazy scrounger', came the retort from everyday folk and arrest them came the shout from the police. When to stand up peacefully is treated as a criminal offence, what then for civil disobedience?

Our country is one of the richest and yet it is rife with poverty. Food banks, house prices, precarious job conditions all rising. For in 2019 people it seems do not need a warm bed to sleep in, a hot meal in their bellies, nor the security of wages to pay for such things. Yet flip the coin, because we are more affluent than ever. For look at all the commodities that we can acquire! Alexa, how much is the iPhone 10? Make a purchase, gain the status, and don't worry about the conditions of the workers that made it. But it's fine isn't it? Everyone has one. Focus on the small things, ignore the corporate ethics. But who pays attention to the global drinks companies, poisoning water in India, avoiding paying their taxes; are we are all too busy on Snapchat and Whatsapp?

For those who dominate the politics, dominate us all. We give our consent to the discourse of austerity, turn a blind eye to the misdeeds of elites whose casino capitalism brought our economy crashing down. Yet we are not all in it together. For those at the top can lend each other a hand, bail each other out and ignore the common (wo)man.

What are we then to do? Now that the veil is lifted and the problems are in sight. Standing on the shoulders of giants, we social scientists are told "to simply denounce the hierarchy, the endless pursuit of profit in place of well-being and peace, is not enough. We must change the conditions that make the hierarchy exist, both in reality and in the minds of our fellow citizens". We are told by others to break the "common sense"; the taken-for-granted assumptions that go unquestioned.

But for those who are stuck in the rat race, in the system, the cycle of dependency, where can they find salvation enough to stand up for their rights? To join the fight for human flourishing. What can one person do to challenge the exploitation of others through stagnant low wages and the crumbling job market? To draw attention to the plight of the people? To promote a new kind of society that respects human and environmental rights? Get another degree? Acquire more knowledge? Expose the workings of the system that perpetuates our endless inequality and destroys the life on mother Earth? How can we do this without becoming disillusioned? For the rate of depression seems only to worsen the more that you know about humanity's predicament.

And yet there is hope. For who are we really? We are human beings, with capacity for love, altruism, empathy, kindness and compassion. What might the future hold if these norms prevailed, if they were extended from our hearts to the hearts of others and to all the natural world. If sustainability was at the core of our relationship with the planet, for we are a part of not separate from it. What kind of system might allow these values rather than monetary values to prevail? How can the mind of one person contemplate the magnitude of the shift needed to new kinds of culture, society and politics that are required on a local, national and global scale? For it feels as though we are Sisyphus, stood at the bottom of the hill. The struggle is ahead, but that does not mean we should stop trying.