

**OUR SOCIETY IS
SICK – BUT
HERE'S THE
CURE**

A RESISTER'S HANDBOOK



LUKE ANDRESKI

DARK GREEN BOOKS

The cure

***Our society is sick
but **here's** the cure***

A Resister's Handbook

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Dark Green Books

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Much of the text in this volume comes from Luke Andreski's 2021 book ***Short Conversations About Everything That Matters – Volume 2: During the Storm***. If you love this, read that.

International readers: Please celebrate and take pleasure in the British spelling.

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What's wrong?

The lies pandemic

1: Greed is good

Most of us are aware of the features in modern culture which jeopardise human survival:

- > The large corporations¹
- > The deregulated market economy²
- > Eco-destructive human behaviour³
- > The super-consuming, hyper-polluting 0.1%⁴
- > A media controlled either by governments or the super-rich⁵

These human-made phenomena combine to sustain a socially divisive and eco-catastrophic narrative: the chosen world-view of state elites and the relentlessly acquisitive 0.1%.

In my book *Short Conversations: During the Storm* I've described this narrative, not entirely hyperbolically, as a mind plague: malign, viral ideas which are causing us harm.

Ideas like these:

- We're competitive by nature, so that's how we should behave
- The economy self-balances... Don't interfere!
- Poor? It's your fault...
- People need the fear of poverty and joblessness to goad them, otherwise they'd be lazy
- Folk are just another resource ('Human Resources') to be exploited or used
- You're a small cog in a big machine. There's nothing you can do to change things
- Greed is good
- Wealth and power are admirable
- Nations are more important than people

All these ideas divide us from one another, encourage atomisation and alienation, and feed the industrial machine which is blindly destroying our biosphere.

2: Diagnosis

But it's easy to diagnose this problem – and I'm not alone in doing so. As Leonard Cohen observed, 'everybody knows' we're the casualties of an asymmetric comms war, where nation states or the billionaire owners of the media act as super-spreaders of concepts which serve them well but badly

fail the rest of us. As Cohen put it, “The rich have got their channels in the bedrooms of the poor”.⁶

So we need more than a diagnosis. We need to be able to defend ourselves. We need a vaccine against the mind plague, and a cure for the infected.

3: The cure

I’ve spent a long time thinking about diagnosis and cure and I believe I’ve found something.

I’m going to share it with you in the following chapters.

I’ll talk about a ‘shield of values’ and a ‘wall of truth’. These are two sides of the same coin: vaccines against malign, viral ideas; a cognitive firewall against our 21st Century pandemic of lies. You could describe them as ‘weapons of resistance’ in the comms war being waged against us.

And I’m going to talk about the cure – techniques like the Socrates Bomb, Chaplin’s Stiletto and The Alternatives Ambush – techniques which target the socially divisive and eco-destructive concepts with which we’re being overwhelmed...

You could call these ‘weapons of attack’.

We're fighting a war against a cognitive virus. The concepts embodied in the mind plague need to be rendered harmless. If we're unable to achieve this – and if we fail to achieve it soon – then human civilisation and the biosphere that sustains us may well be jeopardised.

This isn't alarmism.

Take a look at where we're heading as a species and a civilisation and you'll see it for what it is.

It's simply common sense.

4: Join me

I hope you'll find this account – this *Resister's Handbook* – useful, and perhaps even essential.

I hope you'll 'get the jab' and join me in applying the cure.

References/Notes

1. See 'A short conversation about corporations' on Dangerous Globe: <https://dangerousglobe.com/news/a-short-conversation-about-corporations/>.
2. See 'A short conversation about the economy' on Dangerous Globe: <https://dangerousglobe.com/news/a-short-conversation-about-the-economy/>.
3. See 'A Short conversation about a perfect storm' on Dangerous Globe: <https://dangerousglobe.com/news/a-short-conversation-about-a-perfect-storm/>.
4. See 'Public Enemy No.1' on Dorset Eye: <https://dorseteye.com/public-enemy-no-1/>.
5. See 'I brought a newspaper and then I bought another' on Dorset Eye: <https://dorseteye.com/i-bought-a-newspaper-and-then-i-bought-another/>.
6. From 'Tower of song', track 8 on Leonard Cohen's 1988 album I'm Your Man.

Protect your integrity - *The shield of values*

1: They're out to get me

Everyone's trying to sell you something, or take something off you or get you to do something.

Everyone's out for themselves.

No one can be trusted.

People are greedy.

People are lazy.

It's a dog-eat-dog world.

That's how I sometimes feel.

But it's far from the truth, isn't it?

These are just lies that we're being told – or it's people behaving that way because of the lies they've been told.

Our media is our enemy – and much of our schooling too. We're victims of cognitive imperialism – and the invading empire has established its outposts in the hinterlands of our minds.

2: Values that sicken

This is the message our media keeps hammering home:

- Selfishness is king
- Greed is queen
- Profit is our God
- The economy's our religion
- Ownership's our temple
- Wealth is our sacrament
- Ruthlessness is admirable
- Acquisition is commendable
- Always want more
- Winner takes all

Happy now?

I'm not sure I am.

3: Unhappy world

"Me neither."

And that's the interesting thing, isn't it? This obsession with having more, needing more and buying more – it isn't making any of us happy. In fact, the very reverse.

The human world is filled to the brim with unhappiness.

We've been infected by ideas about the supreme value of money and possessions, and it's not doing any of us much good.¹

"Apart from the privileged 0.1%..."

And there's the irony. I think it's harming them, too.

We need to do something about that harm.

We need to protect ourselves.

4: Surprise

I've a surprise for you.

"A nice one, I hope."

It's something you can't live without.

"I'm intrigued."

You won't be disappointed...

"I won't?"

It's a suit of armour.

"Armour?"

Hm. I can see that sounds a little disappointing to you... Well, maybe not armour. Perhaps more of a shiny, chainmail shirt...

"Like Frodo's?"

Well, maybe not quite up to his standards. I've no mithril to hand.² Perhaps not a chainmail shirt. Perhaps more of a shield.

"A shield?"

Yes, that's it. A shield.

“For medieval battle re-enactment?”

No, for something much more modern. It’s a shield to ward off the ideas that make us unhappy. It’s like a software firewall, but for the mind.

“You’re right. I’m not disappointed.”

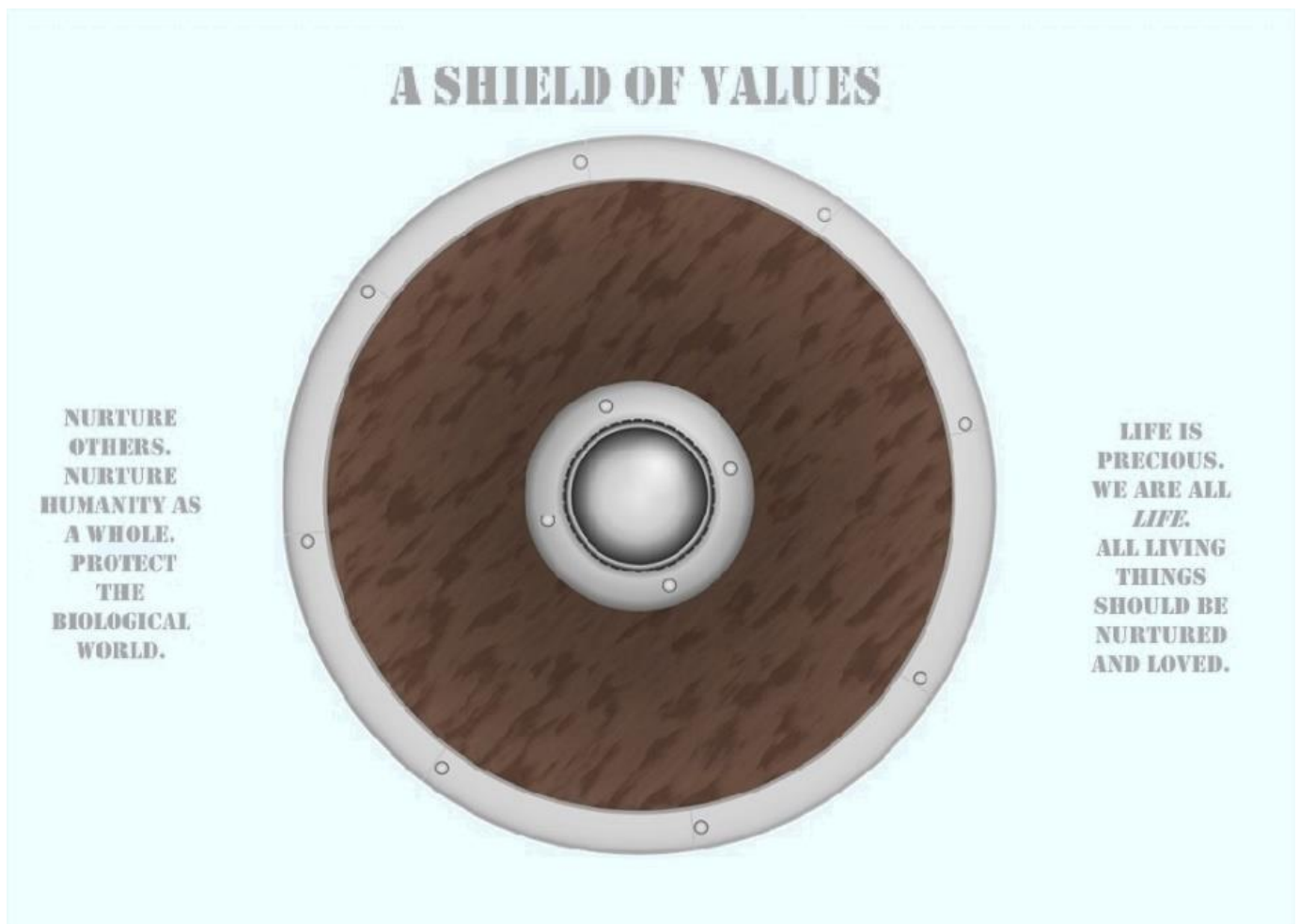
I’m glad.

“Everyone should have one.”

I call it a Shield of Values. It takes a little setting up.

“Will you show me?”

It’ll be my pleasure.



5: The instructions come with the box

The frame

Any shield needs a frame. That's what gives it its shape and makes it distinctive, makes it *a thing*.

The shield we're building – a shield of values – needs to resist the self-harming, eco-destructive concepts jeopardising the modern age. It needs a straightforward frame that out-simplifies the lies.

A frame like this:

- (i) Nurture others.
- (ii) Nurture humanity as a whole.
- (iii) Nurture and protect the biological world.

That's it. Core moral objectives so simple and uncontroversial they feel like common sense.³

Objectives that give your shield its shape.

Ribs

Just like the human chest, a shield needs ribs: to hold the frame in place, to ensure it keeps the shape you're trying to give it. The ribs for our shield are the values which underpin our objectives. Values like these:

- (i) Life is precious.
- (ii) We are all *life*: water in the same river; sparks from the same fire.
- (iii) All living things, to the best of our ability, should be nurtured and loved.

These are the ribs of your shield: supple, simple and easily understood – a straightforward commitment to all living things.

The spine

But what imbues these values and objectives with authority – makes them grab your attention, your imagination, your commitment? What gives this frame of ours its strength?

Any shield of values – any morality, in fact – needs a backbone, a spine, otherwise it becomes just whim: a pick-and mix selection of values and aspirations chosen almost at random from the normative chaos our society keeps thrusting down our throats.

Some people use God as their source of moral authority – but, since many don't, we won't.

Here's a source of authority that anyone can use:

Life.

Life itself.

Life is our tangible, ever-present, utterly evident source of authority, purpose and meaning. Where else can purpose come from except life?

Dead stuff has no purpose – other than the purpose given it by things that live.

Purpose originates from life... and life's ultimate purpose?
Life itself.

We see this embodied in the vast complexity of the biosphere, in evolution, in the desire of every living thing to *live*.⁴

Morality doesn't work without something bigger than ourselves to commit to. That's what stops it being just 'personal inclination'. The ethical systems which bind communities, societies and civilisations together need community-, society- or civilisation-wide justifications... and what simpler and more straightforward justification can there be than a commitment to the very essence of what we are: to life itself?

The centrality and agency of life give the spine of your shield its authority and strength, supporting the ribs which in turn support the frame.

Skin

Now we have the frame, the ribs and the spine – but shields also require a skin.

What kind of skin does a shield of values need?

It needs a lie-deflecting but truth-porous skin of immediately accessible, easily applicable, quick-fire principles that derive directly from the frame and ribs and spine...

A skin like this:

- (i) We're all equal.
- (ii) We all have the right to be free.
- (iii) Within your capacity and the opportunities given you, seek the fulfilment of all humans everywhere.
- (iv) Do not cause humans or other lifeforms to suffer.
- (v) Do not seek power – seek only your fulfilment and the flourishing of others.
- (vi) Do not seek wealth – seek only your fulfilment and the flourishing of others.
- (vii) Do not idolise individuals – idolise only their good actions.
- (viii) Do not idolise possessions – possessions should serve humanity and the thriving of all life.
- (ix) Do not idolise artefacts: organisations, traditions, constitutions or nations. These artefacts should serve humans and humanity, not the reverse.
- (x) Do not wait to do good until others do good also. Take the first moral step, the second moral step and the third.
- (xi) Be honest.
- (xii) Be kind.

Strap

So we have our shield of values: frame, ribs, spine and skin. It's well-made and strong. But it needs to be a shield anyone can pick up and use, to defend themselves from the corrupting values and narratives of a greedy and heartless world. Our shield needs a buckle and strap to hold it tight against our arms.

Universality is that strap. The universal applicability of our values. The universal applicability of being alive, of valuing life. This is our shield's grip and buckle and strap. This is how we bind the shield to us. This is what allows us to stand together, shoulder to shoulder, holding up our shields, resisting the bombardment of a captured press, a spineless media, the super-spreading of socio- and eco-destructive propaganda and lies.

Our shield is universal, just as life is universal.

It's there for anyone to use.

Anytime.

Anywhere.

6: Defensible

Our shield is made. A shield of values for our Age of Lies.

Frame: Your objectives; your core moral aims.

- Ribs:*** Your values, supporting those aims.
- Spine:*** The authority for your values, arising out of life itself.
- Skin:*** The principles you deploy in everyday life.
- Strap:*** The universal applicability of your values, arising from the universality of life.

Now let your elbow be an anvil, your legs two pylons... and brace yourself solid as a rock.

Nothing wicked, nothing malign, no pandemic of lies can penetrate such a well-made shield.

References/Notes

1. Money or possessions, and happiness, above a certain threshold, are not proportional. See DeAngelis, Tori (2004). Consumerism and its discontents. American Psychological Association. Link: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/jun04/discontents>. But our predicament is worse than this. The *pursuit* of money and possessions, as a societal objective, is corrosive, creating inequality and environmental harm.
2. Mithril – a substance invented by J. R. R. Tolkien (1892–1973) in his lovely fantasy novels *The Hobbit* and *The Lord Of The Rings*.
3. I provide a rationalist justification for these moral objectives in my book *Intelligent Ethics* (2019).
4. There are of course exceptions – suicide amongst humans; some creatures sacrificing themselves in the reproductive process or undertaking behaviours which benefit their species or group to their own peril – but the latter can be seen as contributing to life's perpetuation on a greater scale than the individual, and the former can be seen as a result of consciousness interfering with a primordial drive.

Resist the noise - *A wall of truth*

1: A trip to Mars

We were talking about survival. Individual survival and species survival.

“Survival’s something I take a personal interest in.”

Me too.

We were talking about enemies. The enemies who are putting us all at risk: the corporations, the media, the greedy and power-hungry 0.1%.

“And you said...”

...that it’s not people or the organisations they run that are our true enemy – it’s the ideas which infect and sustain them.

I remember saying that.

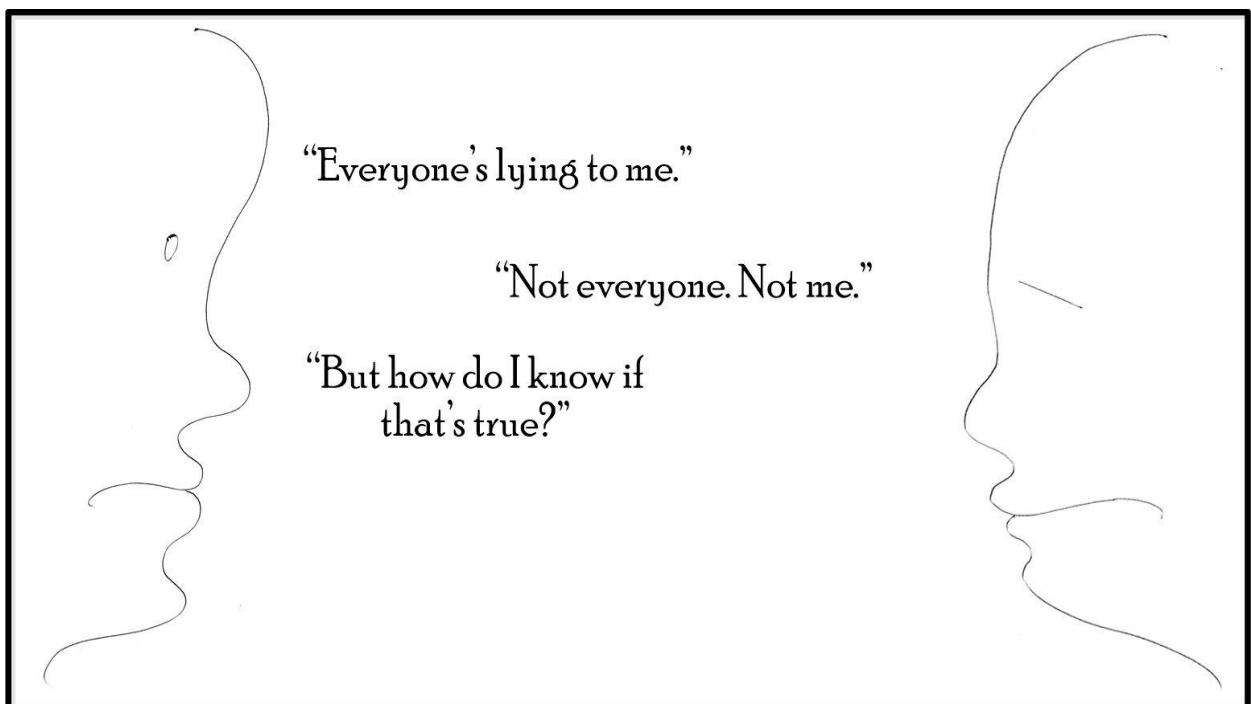
Invasive eco-catastrophic and sociopathic concepts are the real danger.

If you built a fleet of spaceships and sent the hyper-polluting, over-consuming 0.1% to Mars (preferably in the company of their patron, Elon Musk), in the blink of an eye another conceptually-infected 0.1% would take their place.

To survive, as individuals and as a species, we need protection from the 21st Century mind plague: the plague of misinformation, disinformation, spin, propaganda and lies. We need a wall. Like a castle wall, or the reinforced walls of a safe room. Only better.

“A wall?” you ask. “Not a shield?”

We need a shield of values, that’s true. That’s key to assessing the morality of the ideas or proposals we encounter. But we also need a wall of truth.



2: The two hemispheres of identity

There are two components of the human mind which make you who you are:

- (i) Your values.
- (ii) Your map of the world.

Your values help you decide what's good or bad, what you do or don't want to do. They determine your objectives. You could call the aspirational, value-led, goal-targeting *you* the right hemisphere of your identity. Without these, what sort of identity would you have?

"And the left hemisphere?"

That's the picture you've constructed of what the world looks like, of how the world is. It's your understanding of what's out there, what's real.

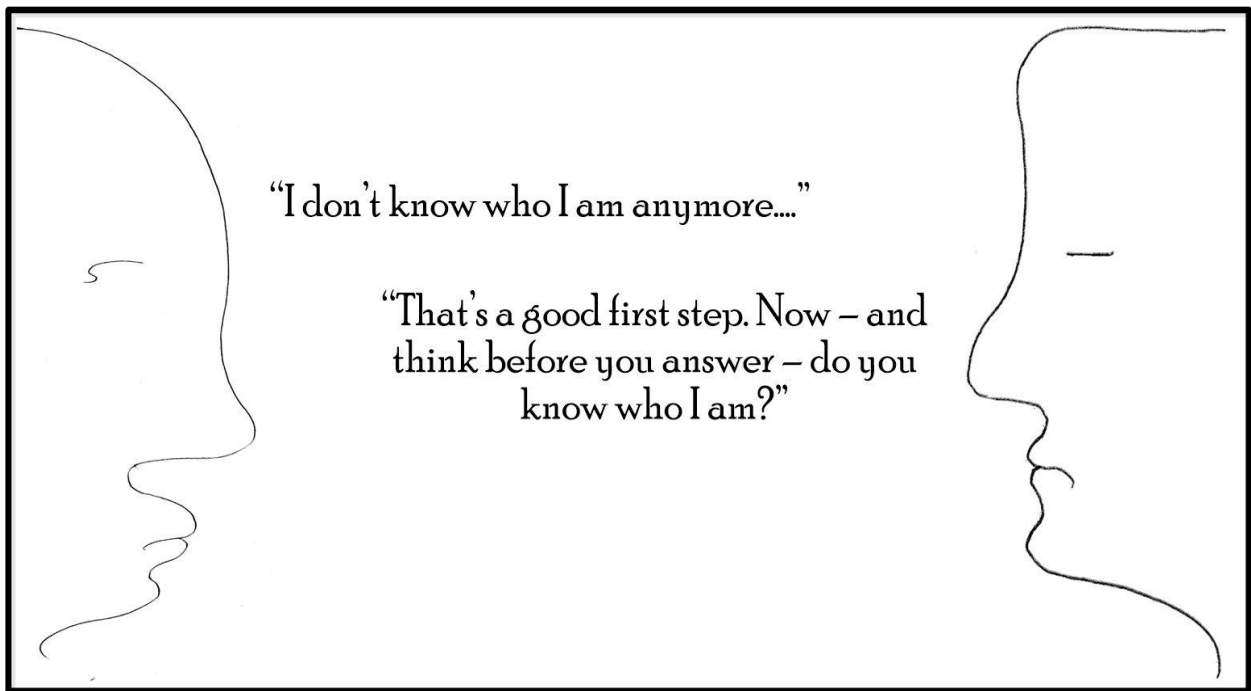
Neither of these two hemispheres is useful by itself: they're like the hemispheres of the brain; each hemisphere needs the other.

Knowledge without purpose (your map of the world without values) is just that: pointless knowledge. What's it good for, if you haven't even determined what *good* is?

And purpose without knowledge? That's worthless, too.

What can anyone achieve – what's the use of values – if you know f*** all?

Values and knowledge climb each other's shoulders like an infinity engine. Each step of the way empowers you, clarifying your purpose, deepening your understanding. And there's no limit. The breadth, consistency and coherence of your identity can always grow.



3: Grit

But engines need protection. It's crucial to exclude the dust and grit. And the engine of your identity – perhaps the most important engine there is – needs doubly protecting. You need a shield of values for the right hemisphere, and a wall of truth for the left.

We've already worked out how to build a shield of values. Let's try our hand at assembling a wall of truth.

4: Foundations

Walls needs foundations. That's a given. Not foundations of sand. Not foundations that melt at the first hint of rain. Rock-solid foundations.

But what's rock-solid enough to support a wall of truth?
"How about facts?" you say.

It's a nice suggestion. I like facts. But what do facts rely on?
What's the foundation on which facts sit?
"Reality?"

I think that's it. Reality. It's what everything, in the end, has to rely on. The rock that bears the weight of the world.

"We've talked about reality before."

Yes, I like reality. There's not enough of it around.¹

We're talking, of course, about objective reality – not the relativistic *my reality/your reality* of the disingenuous. Not the specious *everyone's got their own reality and they're all equal* kind of reality.

That's just part of the mind plague. It's a deliberate misuse of language, intended to attack our confidence about what is or isn't true.

No. The foundation we need for our wall of truth has to be the real thing. What the word *reality* was invented to describe, what evolution designed your senses to discover, what you can never truly avoid no matter how hard you try.

The reality you wake up to in the morning and go to sleep in at night. *Verifiable reality*. Coherent, consistent, universal reality.

That's the rock-solid foundation our wall needs.

Reality.

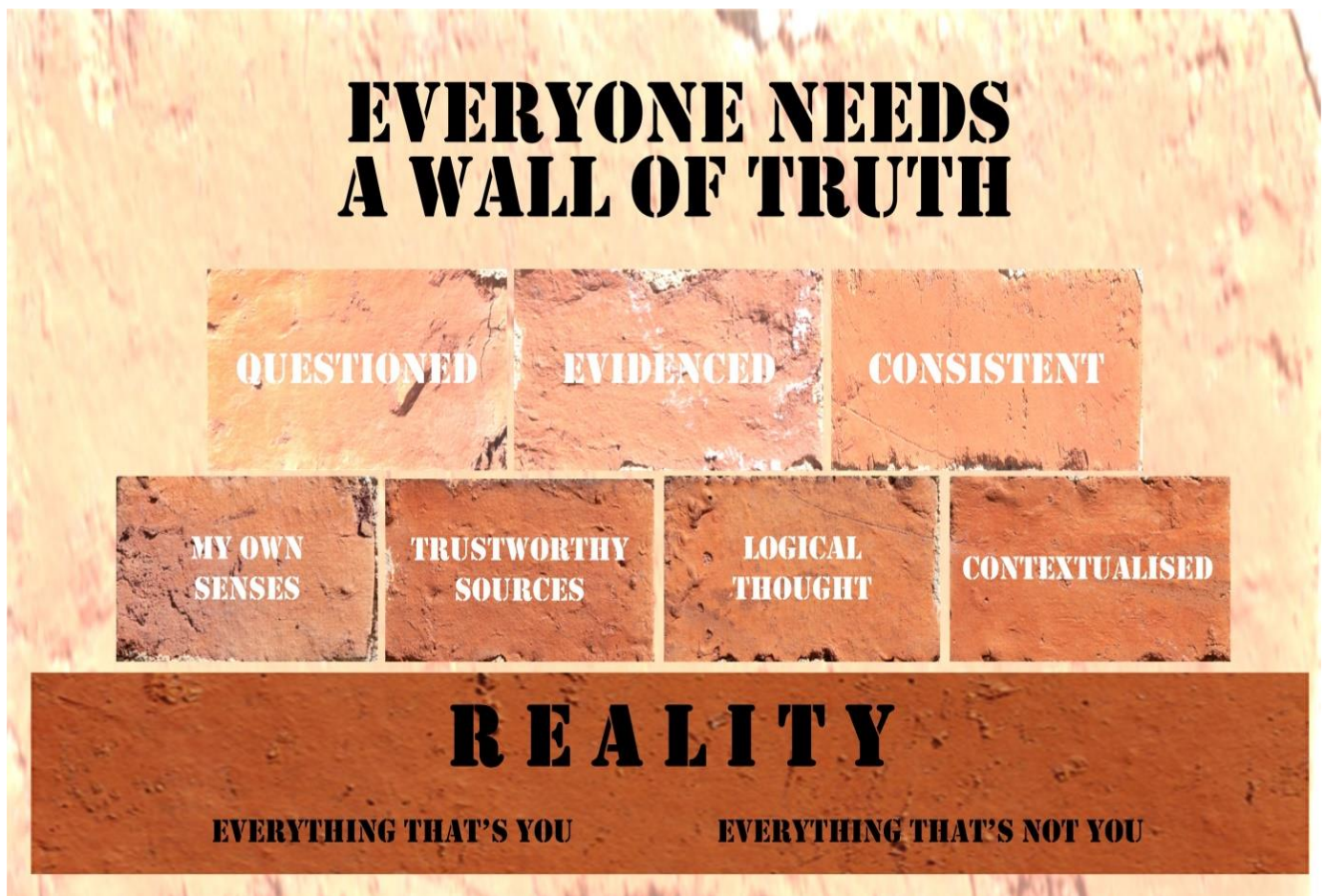
We'll build on that.

5: A wall of doubt

Walls need building blocks, too. It's sometimes useful if they're the same shape and size, but that's essentially a bias born of our industrialised appetite for conformity.

The wall of truth has seven building blocks, essential but different, equal but diverse.

Here:



Let's consider each in turn.

Building block 1: your senses

Your senses – your eyes, ears, nose, skin, tongue – evolved to perceive. They're not a filter. They're not a drawbridge or a veil, whatever Aldous Huxley might have said.² They are your best possible means of accessing the real.

The validation of your own senses is a fundamental building block in your wall of truth which you can use again and again. Keep your eyes open. Listen up.

Be alert to all around you.

Observe your own feelings and reactions.³ Exercise your powers of perception. Then exercise them again as you validate and check.

Building block 2: your sources

The fundamental criteria for truth – of doubt and validation – apply not only to your own immediate perceptions but also to all other sources of information or influence.

Whether your source is video or film, social media or libraries, a book, a podcast, a politician or a teacher, these questions always apply:

- Are they consistent?
- Are they reliable?
- Do they provide evidence?
- Are they honest?
- Is their expertise relevant to this particular information or suggestion?

If the answer to any of these questions is “No”, then it’s possible your source wants to influence you in ways which are self-serving, manipulative or even malign.

An important ‘tell’ with dishonest sources is their motivation. Are they greedy, power-hungry, narcissistic or selfish? If the answer to any of these is “Yes”, then the likelihood of honesty is reduced in direct proportion to how strongly these descriptions apply.

Ensuring the reliability, honesty and consistency of your sources is another essential building block in your wall of truth.

Building block 3: logical thinking

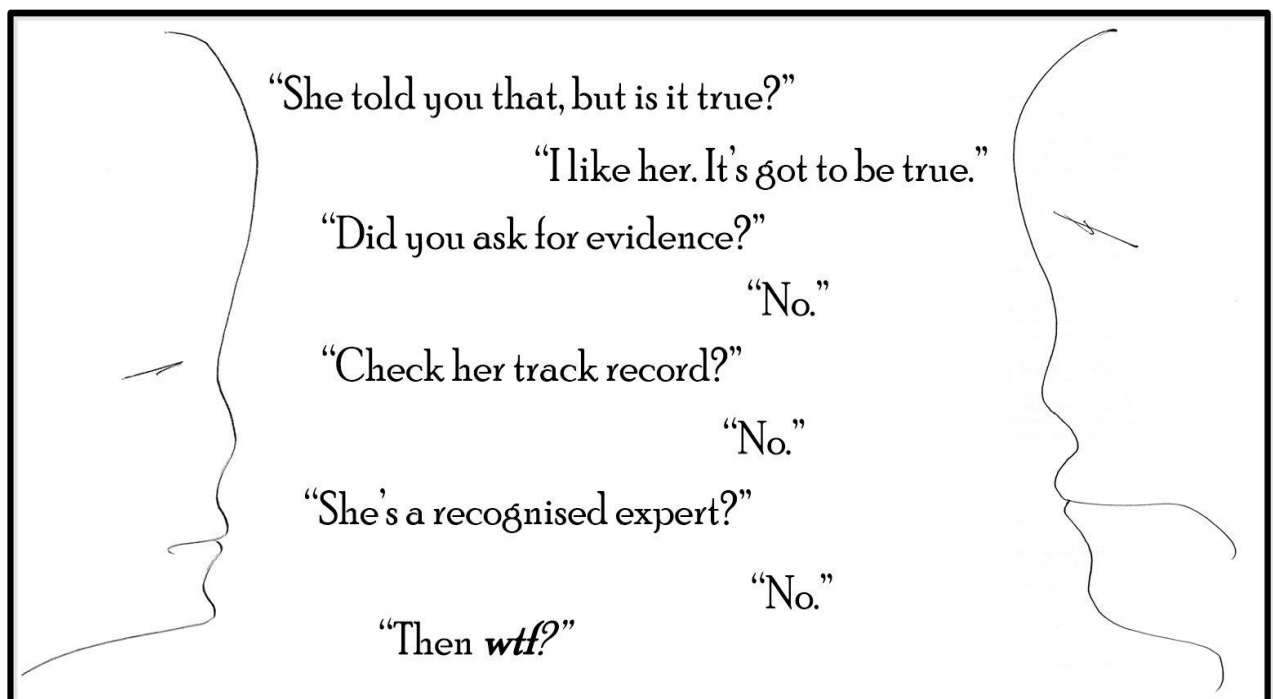
Truth doesn't always strike you in the face. It sometimes needs thought.

Your logical thought and assessment, your critical thinking and analysis, or simply ensuring your thoughts are logical and clear, is your third building block. No wall of truth is complete without it.

Think.

Think hard.

Don't let someone or something else do your thinking for you.



Building block 4: context

The world is full of facts – the particulates of human knowledge. They don't exist in isolation. They effect one another. They have implications. They form contexts into which other facts fit.

When assessing the truth of something, it's essential to consider the context. Where does it sit in the big picture? What are its practical and ethical implications? How does it line up with your pre-existing map of the world? Which needs further validation and change: the alleged new fact, or your prior understanding?

Contextualisation – putting things in their ethical, social, practical or personal contexts – is an essential building block in your wall of truth. A fact's not fully understood if you're unable to see the facts it effects.

Building block 5: doubt

Here's a strange thing: the most powerful and essential building block in your wall of truth sounds like its enemy. It's *doubt*.

Doubt delivers us from lies.

Doubt is our species' greatest survival skill: the doubt implicit in questioning the world, in deriving theories, in questioning those theories, in improving our understanding until it draws closer and closer to objective reality.

Doubt is the powerhouse of the modern world: the mother of medicine, the father of science.

Question everything.

Use doubt to chisel out handholds on the real.

Building block 6: evidence

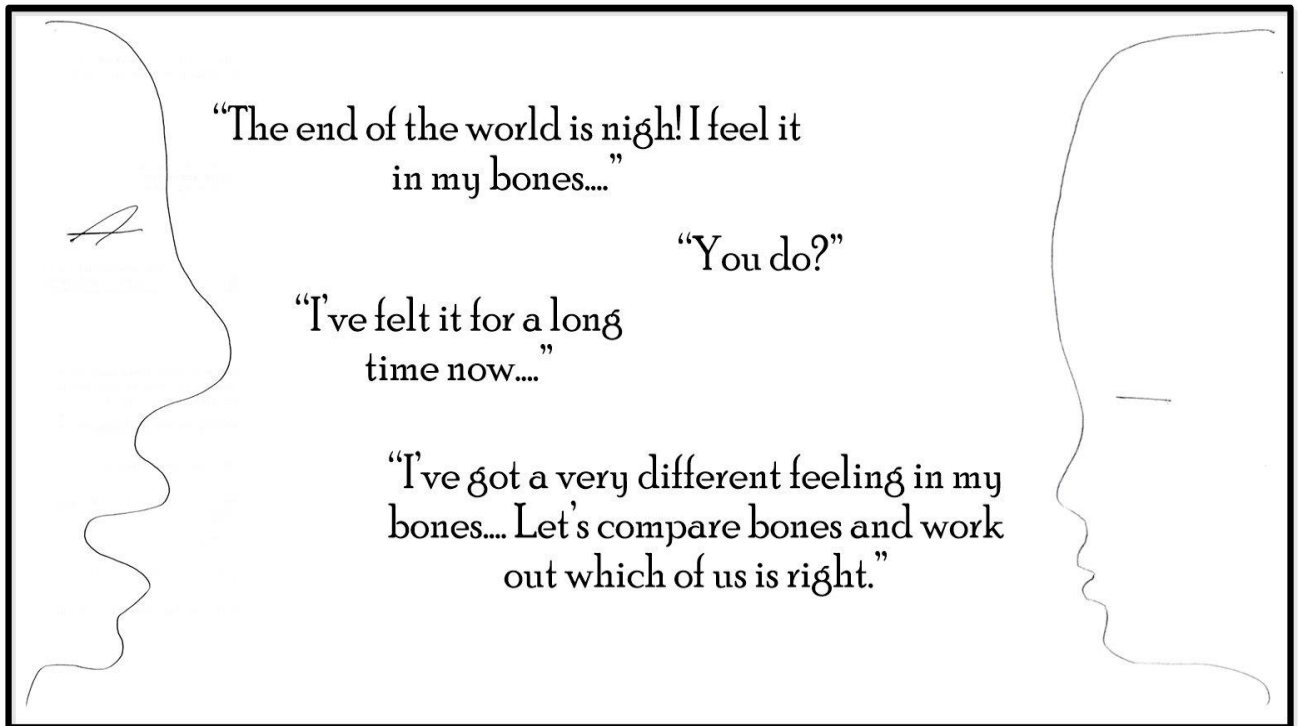
Truth is evidential. If there's no evidence for a truth, you can't know it's true. "I've got an intuition", "Everyone knows", "I can feel it's true", "It's true because I say it's true" or "It's true because X, Y or Z tells me it's true" aren't good enough. Anyone can *say* a thing's true. We can all have totally different and conflicting intuitions or feelings about what's true. None of that's strong enough to be a building block in the wall of truth.

I'm not talking about deductive truth. You know that already.
I'm talking about the truth about our world.

There's got to be evidence for that kind of truth.

It's got to be based in verifiable reality.

And it's got to come from the immediacy of your own senses or from honest, reliable and knowledgeable sources.



Building block 7: consistency

No wall will stand for long if its parts don’t fit together.

Facts need to be consistent. That’s the nature of the universe.

Values need to be consistent. That’s the nature of morality.⁴

Each of the hemispheres of your identity – your map of the world and your morality – depend on this consistency. That’s the nature of logic.

Inconsistency is the crack that lets ignorance in.

Strive for consistency. Resist the inconsistent.

6: Mortar

Now you have the building blocks for your wall of truth: your perceptions, your sources, your analysis, your evidence, context, consistency and doubt.

So what holds all these building blocks in place? Can you just pile them one on top of the other and hope for the best?

That rarely works when building walls.

You need mortar.

Something that binds it all together.

The mortar that holds your wall of truth in place, which connects it to its foundations, is *you*.

You are the mortar: your thinking, your endeavour, your commitment to truth, your perceptions, your honesty.

The wall of truth is not like a prison wall.

It's not like a sea wall.

It's not impermeable.

It's porous.

It keeps the lies at bay but lets the truth in.

And you're the gatekeeper.

You do the work.

7: Survival

We each of us need a wall of truth.

I've shown you what it looks like, what it's made of.

If we're to survive the 21st Century pandemic of lies, if we're to preserve the biological world, if we're to thrive in the physical world, we need a firewall for our minds: a shield of values; a wall of truth – and we need it quick.

This is your user manual.

Defend yourself.

Affirm your morality.

Get to grips with reality.

Build that wall.

References/Notes

1. *Ed, am I allowed this joke?*

Ed: Just this once...

2. Aldous Huxley, 1894 – 1963, author of, amongst others, *The Doors of Perception* (1954).

3. Intuitions, feelings, hunches, emotions, even empathy and imagination are secondary data. They may suggest something's true, but whatever they're suggesting still needs to pass through the wall of truth – to be questioned, evidenced and shown to be consistent – for you to be sure.

4. See my discussion of Moral Logic in *Intelligent Ethics* (2019).

Attack the lies - *the Socrates bomb*

1: Shrapnel

Let's talk about the Socrates Bomb.

"That sounds unpleasant."

More than unpleasant. It's lethal.

"Is 'lethal' moral?"

It's not lethal for people. It's lethal for lies.

2: Munition

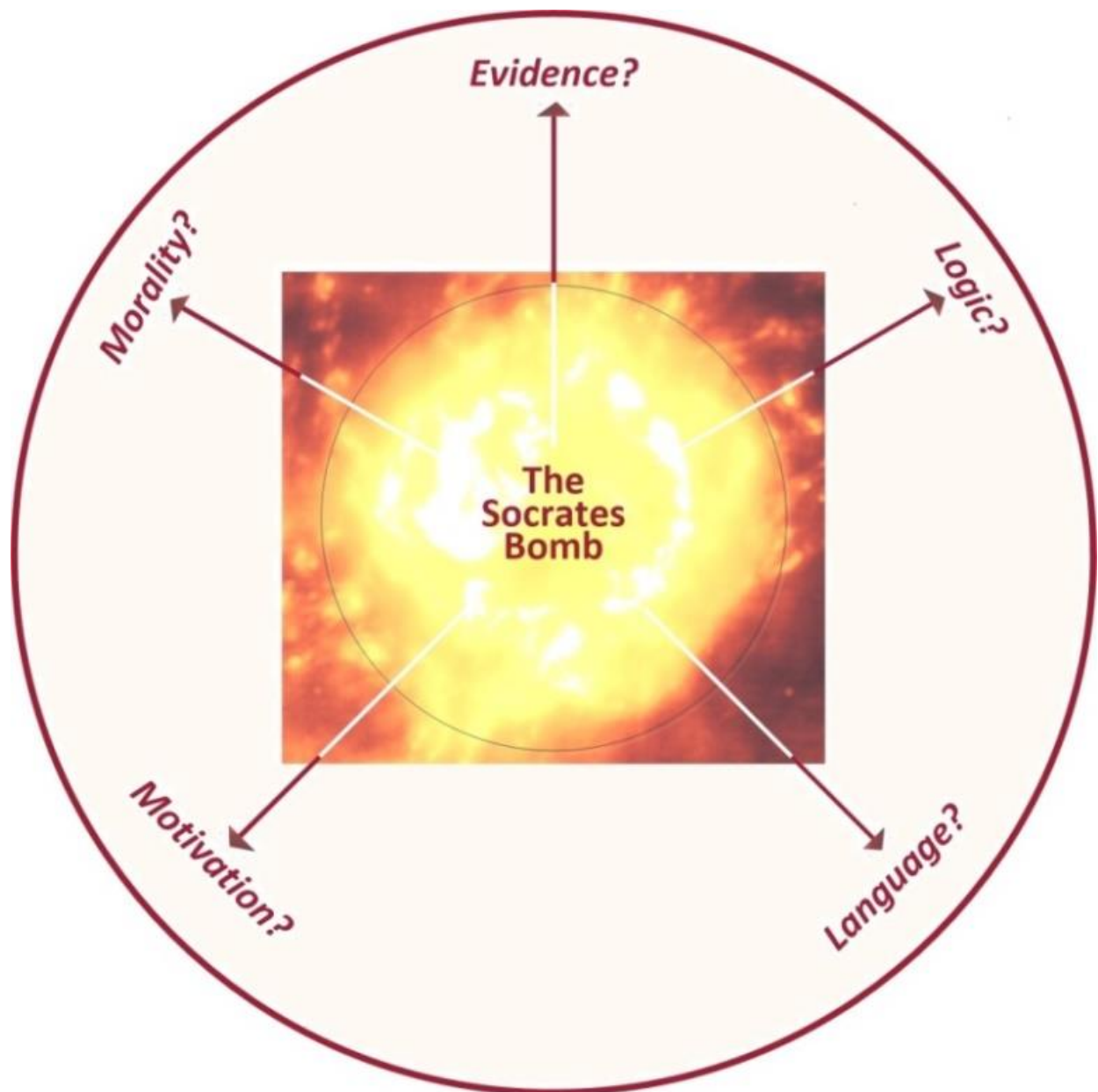
The Socrates Bomb is an anti-propaganda incendiary device for use in cognitive conflict. It's a front line armament in our battle against the 21st Century pandemic of lies – a cluster munition for deployment against disinformation and deceit. As it explodes it shatters into fragments of different shapes and sizes. Its shrapnel includes:

- The evidence shard
- The logic sliver
- The language splinter
- The motivation particle
- The morality needle

On impact each of these fragments itself explodes, fanning out in an ever-widening destructive wave.

It's a powerful weapon.

Amongst the splinters and shards there'll be the perfect sliver that skewers the lie.



3: Namesake

Socrates was a philosopher who lived in ancient Greece two and a half thousand years ago. He was a remarkable man. Many consider him the father of modern philosophy. He believed that by questioning what we think we know we can strip away our ignorance – our blind faith in meaningless phrases, our adherence to unfounded assumptions, the weak and illogical concepts to which we unwittingly cling in everyday life – and so partly reveal, like shadows against a stone wall, what is fundamentally true.¹

Then, once we've established the fundamentals, we can build from there a valid, or at least a more accurate and consistent, picture of the world.

To some extent René Descartes' approach was similar.² Clear away the unfounded dogma, get down to the nub of things, then carefully and meticulously construct a world view from the ground up.

Aside from its lack of empiricism, I like this approach.

You could say I'm a Socratic Cartesian Empiricist.

"I'm a Socratic Cartesian empiricist."

Haha – very funny – but I'm glad there's now two of us.

It's not that you can deduce the world from basic axioms, but that by repeatedly questioning what's known (or claimed to

be known), you can whittle away the lies in our culture, drawing ever closer to the truth.

Socratic Cartesian Empiricism is really just an extension of the scientific method to the unscientific worlds of political and public belief.

4: Insobriety

“I always liked Socrates.”

Did you know him well?

“In a way.”

It’s a shame he drank himself to death.

“Drank – ?” you ask. “I thought – ?”

It wasn’t voluntary – and the drink that carried him off is one you only drink once.

“Hemlock...”

Yes, hemlock.³ An unpleasant tippie. Best avoided.

All the same, he left us a wonderful gift. A weapon against disinformation, propaganda and spin. A munition for the demolition of lies.

Let’s take a look at how it works.

5: Evidence

The evidence shard is one fragment of the Socrates Bomb. It's a fragment which shatters, on coming into contact with lies, into splinters like these:

"How?"

"Why?"

"Where's the proof?"

"Who told you?"

"Where are your facts?"

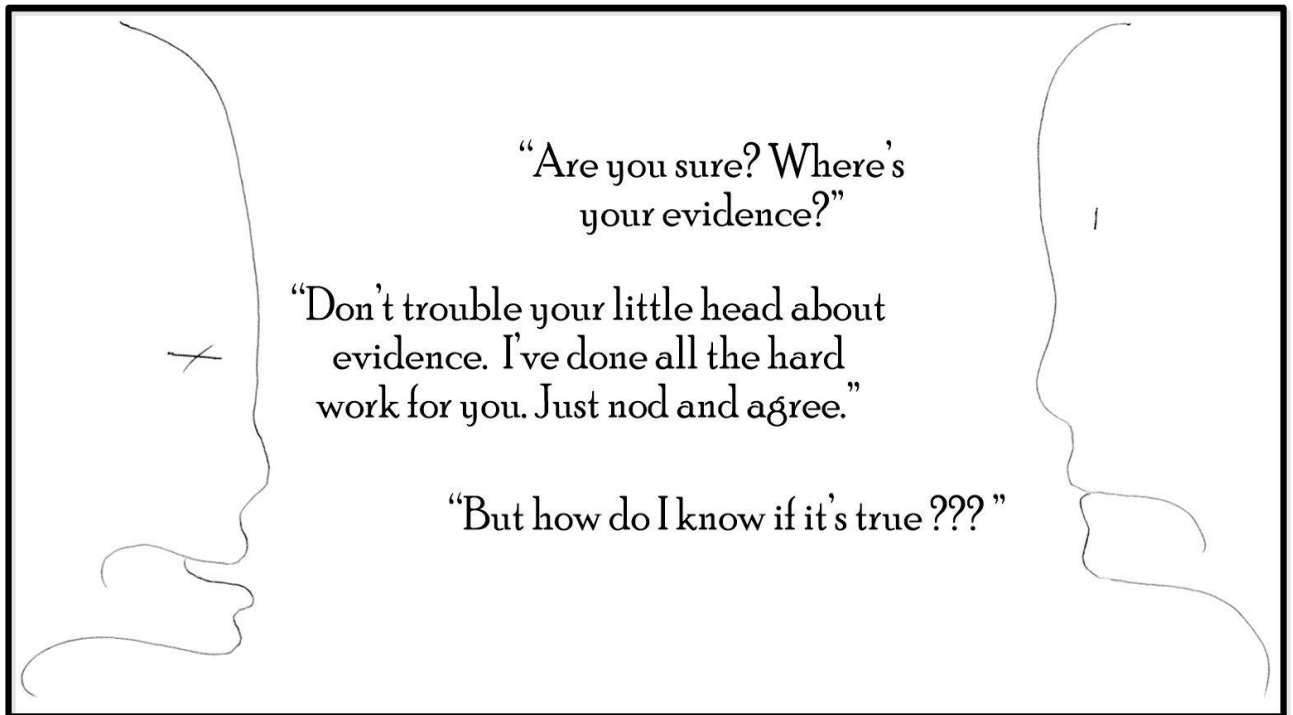
"Is your data selective?"

"Demonstrate."

"Show me."

"Where's the evidence?"

Evidence is an essential building block for truth. If you've got no evidence, you've got no way of demonstrating something's true... And if you've got no way of demonstrating something's true, how can you know it's not a lie?



6: Logic

Logic is another shard in the Socrates Bomb.

On impact it splinters like this:

“Does that really make sense?”

“Does ‘A’ actually follow from ‘B’?”

“Do your facts truly necessitate the acts you propose?”

“If we take what you’re saying to its logical conclusion, don’t we end up with something absurd?”

“When you say ‘All’, don’t you really mean ‘Some’?”

“When you say ‘Everyone’, don’t you really mean ‘The people I agree with?’”

“Is what you’re now saying consistent with what you’ve said before?”

“Is what you’re saying consistent with what your associates say you’re saying?”

“Doesn’t what you’re saying conflict with other positions you claim to support?”

Logic and consistency are central to common sense. Skewer the illogical and destroy the lie.

7: Language

The language splinter is needle sharp. It attacks the words being used, the way they’re strung together, the ways they’re misapplied, their propagandistic intentions.

Ask questions like these:

“Do you even know what your words mean?”

“Are you using emotive language just to bypass our intelligence?”

“Are you using aggressive language to intimidate and mislead, or to avoid answering the question?”

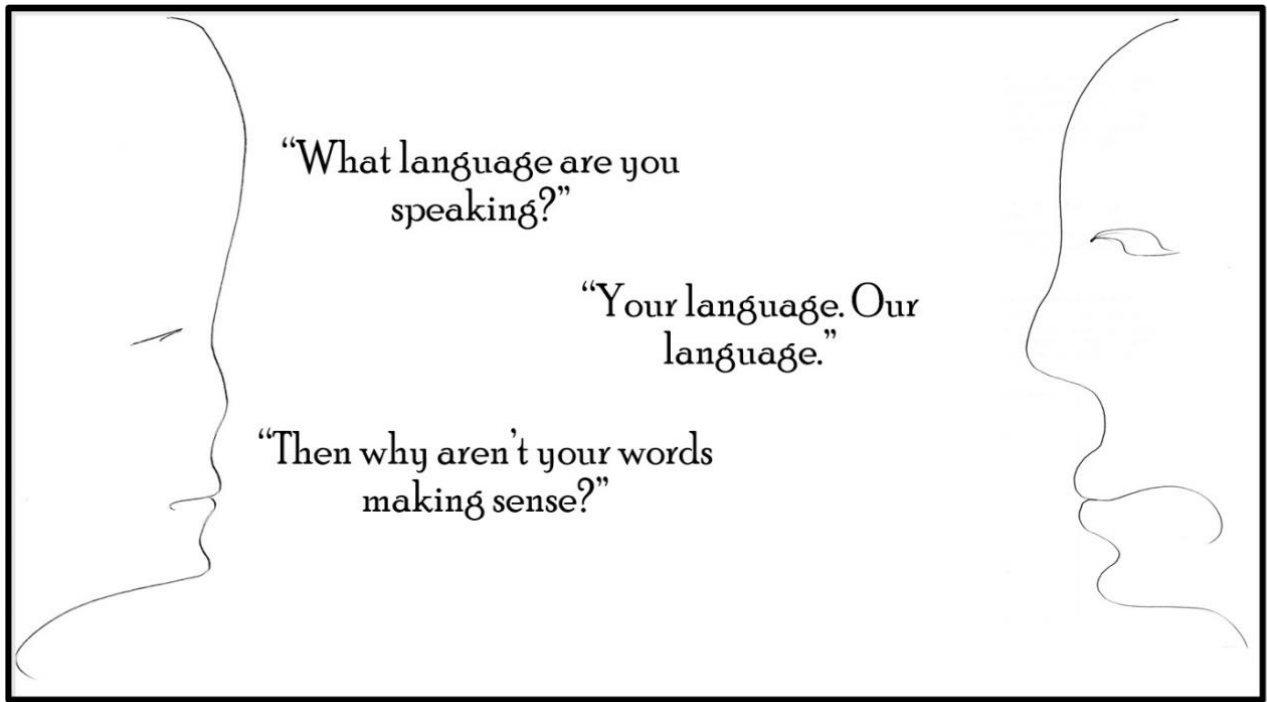
“Are you using nostalgic and prejudice-laden words because you’ve nothing more rational or moral to say?”

“Are these slogans an attempt to infantilise your audience?”

“Are you using words like those in order to manipulate or bully?”

“It’s a great sounding slogan... What the f*** does it mean?”

Bullies and liars use words as weapons: emotional, manipulative, bludgeoning and dishonest.
Attack their use of language. Expose the bullying and the lies.



8: Motivation

Here’s a golden rule of human interaction:

Always question the claims of those in positions of authority and power – or of those seeking positions of authority and power.

This applies to the powerful, the power-seeking, and those who speak for them. Client journalists, state outlets and the

corporate media may entertain and distract – but their honesty is never guaranteed. They invariably serve those who own or control them.

Ask,

“Who pays you?”

“Whose interests are you serving?”

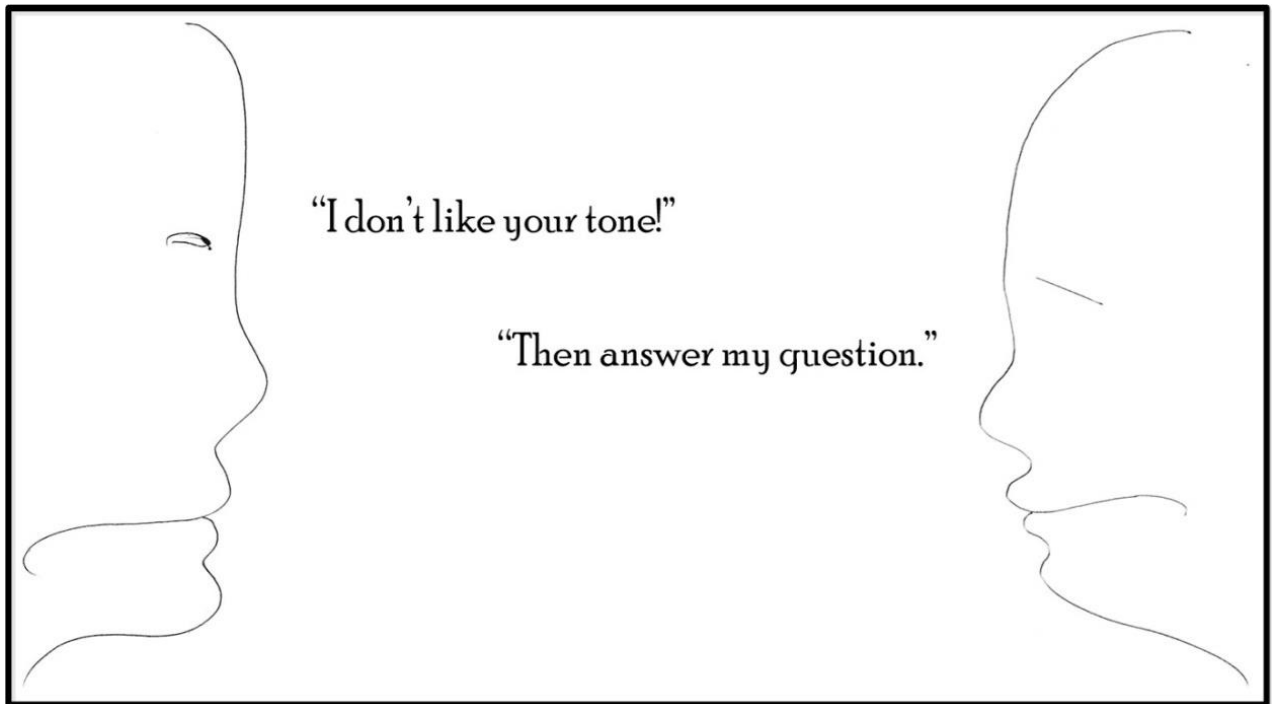
“What are you trying to achieve by telling me this?”

“What are your motives, or the motives of those you speak for or represent?”

“Why would someone provide me with this information or these alleged facts? Are there hidden motives of which I need to be aware?”

“What’s your agenda?”

Questions like these strike at the heart of the self-serving and propagandistic. Motives are a far better indicator of outcomes than words. Unveil their motives and you may reveal a deeper and potentially explosive truth.



9: Morality

The most powerful fragment of the Socrates Bomb for attacking socially divisive and eco-destructive propaganda is the morality question. It explodes on impact like this:

"What's the morality behind what you're saying or doing?"

"Does what you're claiming, doing or proposing encourage others to act with integrity, honesty and kindness?"

"If I go along with what you're saying, or the information you're presenting, will the outcomes be moral?"

"Does what you're telling me enable others to flourish? Does it benefit all human communities? Does it protect the biological world?"

"Is this a claim an honest person would make?"

"Is this a claim a person of integrity would make?"

“Is it moral?”

The 21st Century pandemic of lies is inherently malign. Anything which jeopardises the survival of humanity and the biological world is immoral. That’s part of what morality means. Questions of integrity, honesty and morality reveal the lies and propaganda for what they are. These questions are a weapon which immoral narratives find it difficult to withstand.

10: The gift

Propaganda, demagoguery and lies kill the greatness in us – just as they killed Socrates on a calm and sunny day in ancient Greece, almost two and a half thousand years ago.⁴ They make us squalid. They make politics dirty. They divide us from one another.

But Socrates left us a gift.
It’s something propagandists and demagogues hate.
It’s a weapon against the lies.
A bomb.
The Socrates Bomb.

Use it.

References/Notes

1. Socrates (470–399 BCE) – a philosopher who lived mostly in the Athenian city state of ancient Greece. The ‘Socratic method’ is the art of questioning, questioning and questioning again until we reveal what we don’t know and, if we are lucky, what perhaps we do.
2. René Descartes (1596–1650 CE). Descartes believed that the fundamental axiom at the heart of all knowledge was “I think, therefore I am”. My reservation about this axiom is that it appears to give ‘thinking’ primacy, with the material world taking a secondary role – thus also encouraging a perceived duality between matter and mind. I prefer a less pleasing to the eye assertion: “Because of what I am I can think. I’m thinking. Therefore creatures that can think like me exist.”
3. Hemlock, a flowering plant in the carrot family Apiaceae, native to Europe and North Africa. Highly poisonous.
4. I’m hazarding a guess here – as no one now alive knows what the weather was like on the day Socrates died.

Laugh them out of town -

Chaplin's stiletto

1: The drain

"Sometimes you sound like a gurgling drain."

I do?

"Yes. When you're laughing... At something dreadful... At some new horror."

Ah, yes... I see.

I can explain.

It's a way of relieving the pain.

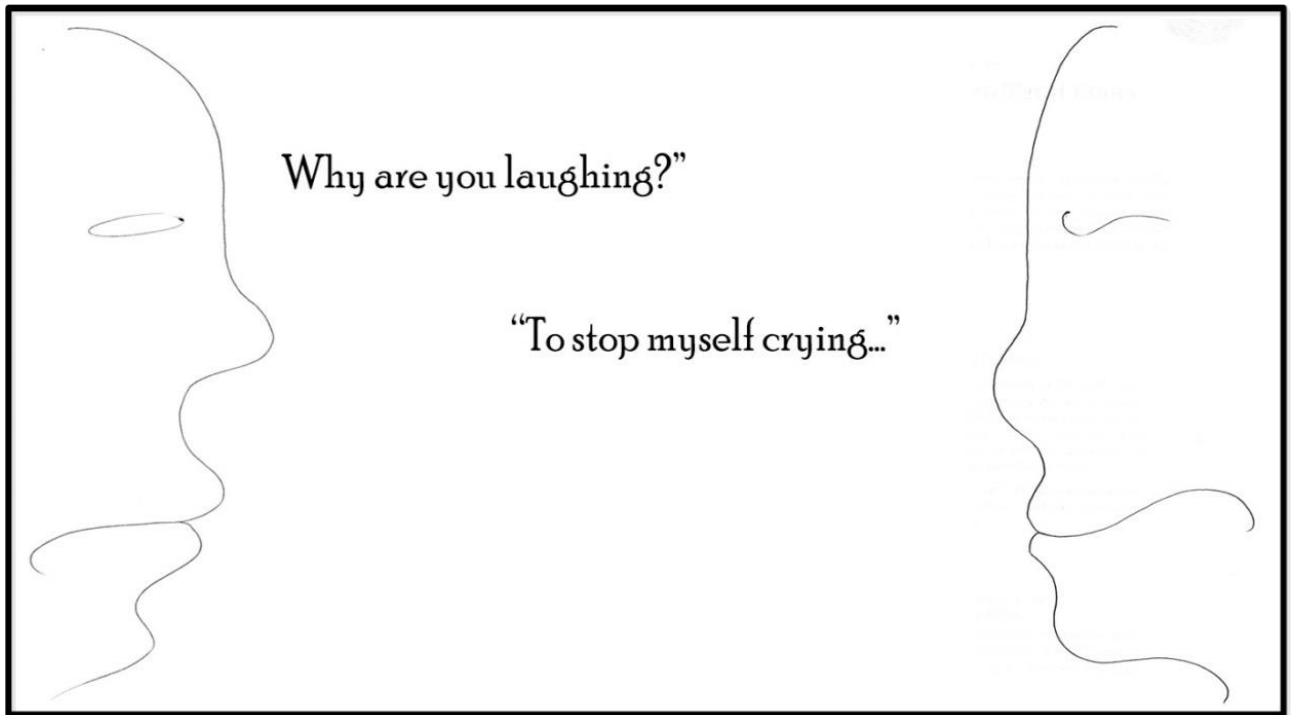
2: The blade

Laughter is a safety valve, a catharsis. It helps us deal with the bad stuff in life, the appalling hand which Fate sometimes deals us. It helps us cope with unfairness, inhumanity, cruelty, greed.

Laughter brings things down a peg – makes them seem less overwhelming.

When you laugh at an oppressor it reminds you that they're vulnerable. It makes your oppression feel as if it might not last forever, as if it's not set in stone.

Bullies and authoritarians hate being laughed at. They experience your laughter as a thin, sharp blade, pushing in through their bellies and up towards their sociopathic hearts.



3: Solvent

And it's more than just an *impression* of weakness that laughter reveals in the powerful. Laughter *actually* weakens them.

It acts like a solvent.

"Laughter dissolves stuff?"

It does. Authority and power rely on consent. Our consent may be reluctant. It may be fearful or resentful. It may simply be unthinking or complacent. But it's consent all the same.

“What about police? What about the army?”

You can laugh at them too.

Laugh at the police, the army, the structures of law and bureaucracy, and you humanise the bastions of power. Laugh at the powerful and the wealthy and you weaken their authority. You reveal power, privilege and its enforcement as something made by us, something consented to by us, something which need not exist. You begin to dissolve the consent that holds them in place.

4: Diapers

Laughter deliquesces power and reveals truth – and with these twin strengths it’s an essential tool in tackling the 21st Century pandemic of lies.¹

You see, many of the concepts and narratives broadcast by the corporate or state-controlled media rest on absurd assumptions at which we all should laugh.

‘Greed is good’?

Hahaha! If that were true why are the greedy such needy little f***ers? And why is a world in hock to greed so profoundly at risk from resource depletion and climate change? Greed *good*? Greed is in fact squalid to the core. The greedy are like adults in babies’ diapers, smiling while their dung’s warm, squirming miserably as it grows cold.

'The economy's self-balancing'?

Haha! That's a good one! Tell me another!

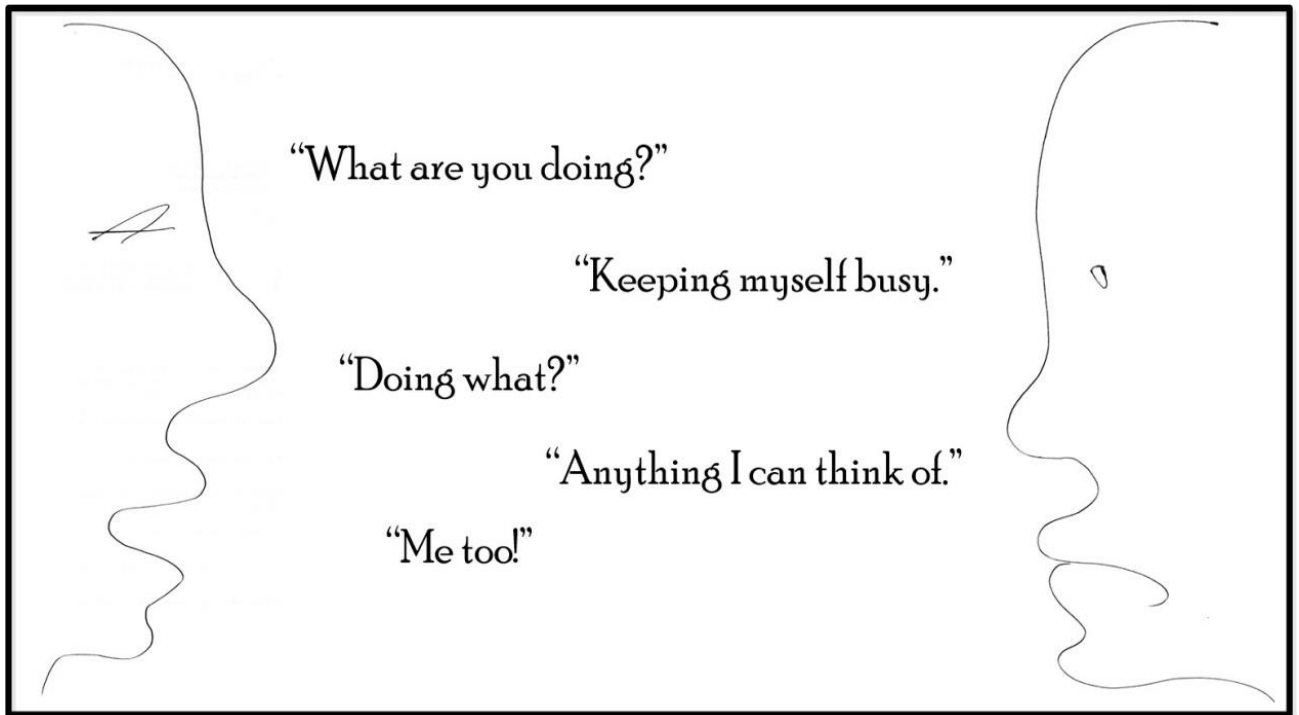
The economy's a roller-coaster of recession and depression, boom and bust. Leave the economy to itself and inequality spirals out of control while the environment is destroyed. Self-balancing? Well, only if you call a bomb-site balanced.

'People are born idle and need precarity to goad them'?

Hahaha! Do you live in the same world as me? Haven't you noticed how busy, noisy, frantic, chaotic, productive and twitchy our culture is?

Most of us aren't idle enough. Even when we should be idle we find innumerable ways to keep ourselves busy... ways which are often pointless or harmful or both.

Show me a truly idle person and I'll show you a corpse.



5: The stiletto

Laughter is a powerful weapon against the concepts which sustain our unfair and unequal world. It lets us mock the bad stuff: corrupt politicians; corporations designed to ignore the harm they do; economies which encourage over-consumption and predation; a news media corrupted by wealth.

No matter how grim the topic, there's always a way of looking at it which lets you laugh.

I call it Chaplin's Stiletto – a weapon which attacks the overriding narratives of the corporate media and the establishment: laughter that's sharp as a knife and never loses its edge.

6: Irony

It's a weapon you can forge in irony.

"Haha – forged in iron-ee! That's funny!"

Hm...

"Ah – ok... Not a joke. I see. Forged in irony, then..."

Like this: Blair and Bush were good, decent politicians. They were Honest Joes who wanted to liberate the Middle East for its people not its oil...²

"Hahaha – yes, I see. Irony."

And greed... You know what? It really is good! Look how happy everyone is!

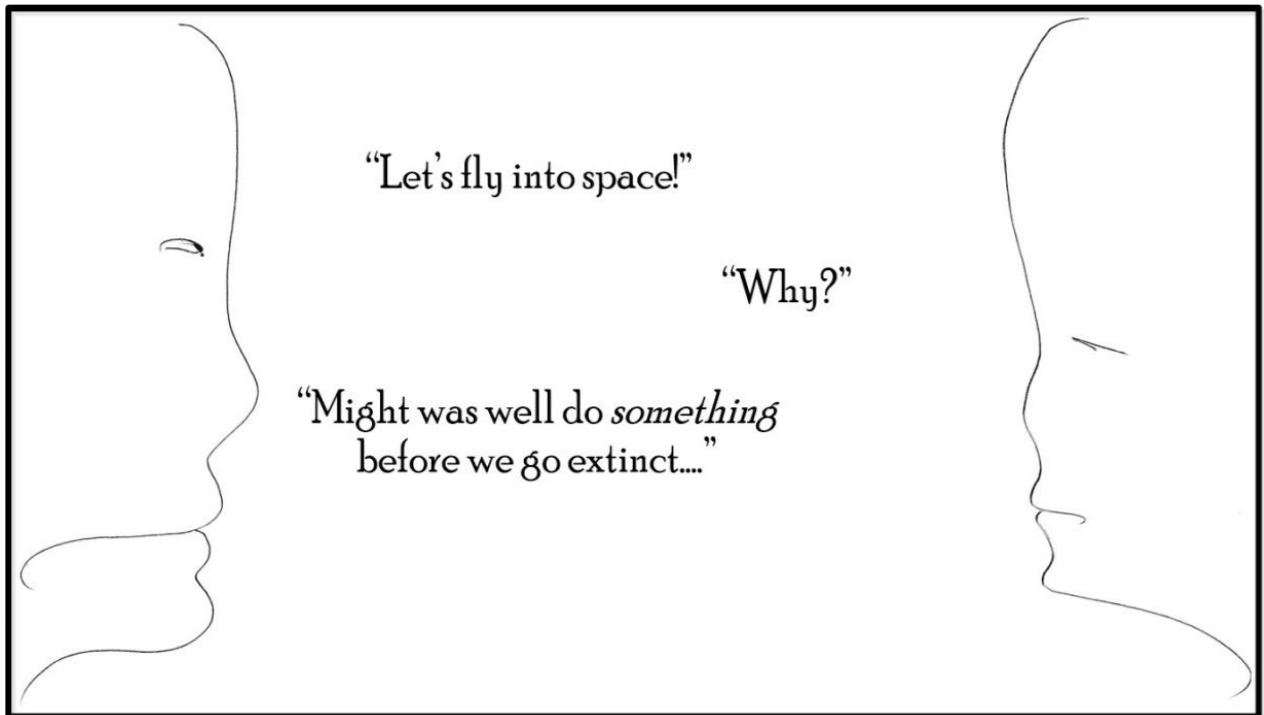
"You're trying to get one over on me now. Yes, very good..."

'Greed is good'!"

And did you know how important it is for a species facing ecological breakdown to give a handful of billionaires joy rides in space? It's a crucial step forward in saving the world...

"Yes, that is ironic. And a little sad."

Irony can do that. Pathos, too.



7: Sarcasm and parody

Chaplin’s Stiletto can be forged from sarcasm – a harsher, coarser form of irony. Like this:

‘Another war? I can’t wait!’

‘Politicians award themselves a clean bill of health? Surely not!’

‘The rich say the rich shouldn’t be taxed? Are you kidding me?’

‘Failed in life? Tried blaming foreigners?’

It can be forged from parody:

- Donald Trump³ as a spoiled infant, raging in his cot
- Vladimir Putin⁴ as a rodent, slinking through the sewers

- Benjamin Netanyahu⁵ with a nuclear arsenal half-hidden in his pocket
- Boris Johnson⁶ as a man with buttocks for a face....

8: The surreal

The needle-sharp blade of sceptical, political humour can be forged from absurdism and the surreal:

- Politicians as Earth-sized time bombs, ticking their way toward Armageddon
- Corporate billionaires as cock-shaped spaceships with fins and legs
- So-called ‘strong leaders’ melting away like Dali’s clocks...
- The rich chewing over the bones of the poor

Extreme imagination exposes the absurdity hidden behind the propaganda. Do the concepts of neoliberalism truly deliver anything other than the absurd? They’re set to deliver an unliveable world. Is that absurd enough for you? Do the policies of conservative nationalism actually *conserve*? Or do they erode freedoms we once enjoyed, putting up walls where none existed, stifling creativity and joy?

Does populism serve the populace? Or does it simply
monetise outrage and fear?
Making money out of fear seems pretty surreal to me...

“You’re gurgling again.”
Sorry – I can’t help myself.

9: Juxtaposition

Chaplin’s Stiletto can be forged in the flames of juxtaposition
– highlighting the moral repugnance of an aspiration or belief
by placing it side by side with another which reveals it for
what it is:

- The great white hunter in a multi-racial city street...
- Super-yacht sunbathers amidst drowning refugees...
- Politicians claiming not to be racist beside images of the Klu Klux Klan...
- ‘Green’ Exxon side by side with oil refineries belching out smoke...
- A child with a balloon beside a prison wall

10: Exposure

And humour can be found in exposure – because the concepts of our 21st Century mind plague invariably ally themselves to the worst aspects of human nature: narcissism, selfishness, power-hunger and greed.⁷ When politicians spout well-meaning platitudes it can be amusing, even if only in the darkest of ways, to ask “This you?” – while providing quotes from their more candid expressions of self-interest and bile.

‘Then vs. Now’ comparisons can reveal the depths of false promise and hypocrisy to which the powerful and their spokespeople so regularly stoop.

And simple observations on priorities can do the same:

There’s money for species-endangering nuclear weapons.

There’s not enough for medicines for the poor.

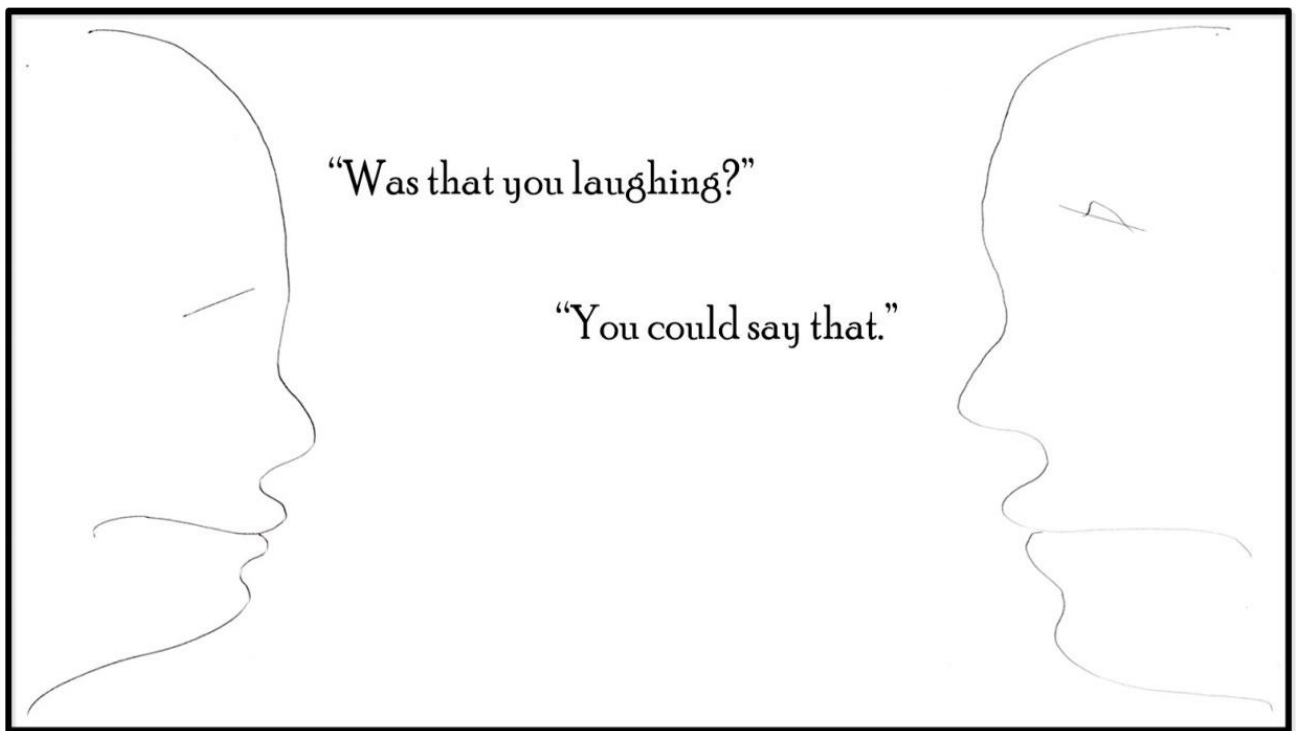
Let’s focus on a politician’s infidelities or feuds.

Let’s ignore their policies which stifle democracy.

Let’s talk about sport.

Let's ignore the fact that climate change will in all likelihood bring all sport – and perhaps everything else – to an uncomfortably hot and sticky end.

You might not think these things are really all that funny... but when you hear my gurgling laughter you may just discover that you are gurgling too.



11: Battle

We've talked in earlier discussions about how 'the rich have got their channels in the bedrooms of the poor'.⁸

We've talked about weapons of resistance against the messaging of the rich:

- A shield of values⁹
- A wall of truth¹⁰

We've talked in detail about the Socrates Bomb, a weapon of attack against the socially divisive and eco-catastrophic narratives jeopardising our world.¹¹

Here's a second weapon of attack.

Chaplin's Stiletto.

Laughter.

Humour.

Satire.

Irony.

A release. A catharsis. A revelation. A weapon...

...and a natural reaction when faced with overwhelming odds.

Laugh as you prepare for the onslaught of lies.

Laugh in the face of danger.

Then step forward into battle – and bring your hilarious, eviscerating, empowering, gurgling, irrepressible laughter with you.

References/Notes

1. The 21st pandemic of lies is discussed in above, but for a quick introduction to the concept see <https://dangerousglobe.com/news/the-21st-century-lies-pandemic/>.
2. Tony Blair, Prime Minister of the UK from 1997 to 2007; George W. Bush, President of the United States from 2001 to 2009. They have yet to be indicted for their war crime of orchestrating the illegal 2003 invasion of Iraq.
3. Donald Trump, President of the United States from 2017 to 2021 (thankfully one term only). A divisive and morally repugnant leader.
4. Vladimir Putin, President of Russia since 2012, though also previously in the office from 1999 until 2008. A recognised authoritarian.
5. Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister from 1996 to 1999 and 2009 to 2021. Charged with corruption while in office.
6. Boris Johnson, depriving some village of its idiot for an unreasonable amount of time, has inflicted himself on the UK as Prime Minister since July 2019.
7. You may wonder why this is so.... I'd suggest two factors contribute: (i) People who push the dominant neoliberal narratives of our society are those whose success is dependent on those narratives; (ii) A large element of the greedy and selfish aspirations encouraged by our media reflects a mistaken view of human nature, seeing greed and selfishness as both a dominant force and 'natural' –

and suggesting it therefore makes sense to adopt a system which accepts, utilises and even encourages these traits.

But (a) human nature is malleable and our behaviour remarkably plastic, so there is no reason why we shouldn't choose better and more moral traits to encourage; and (b) our instincts for cooperation and fairness are no less dominant than selfishness and greed. The evidence for this can be seen in the countless cooperative activities and practices which sustain our society.

8. Cohen, Leonard. From "Tower of Song" on the album *I'm Your Man* (1988).
9. See 'A short conversation about a shield of values' above or here: <https://dangerousglobe.com/news/everyone-needs-a-shield-of-values/>
10. See 'A short conversation about the wall of truth' above or here: <https://dorseteye.com/the-wall-of-truth/>
11. See 'A short conversation about the Socrates Bomb' above or here: <https://twitter.com/EthicalRenewal/status/1413193961867464714?s=20>

The moral attack - *Kate's garrotte*

1: Infection

It's well known that our society is infected by concepts which make us unhappy, damage our communities and endanger the biological world. These concepts infect us, we become contagious, then we infect those around us.

We know the sort of concepts they are. They look like this:

- You need more
- Take, don't give
- Winner takes all
- Greed is good
- Appearances matter
- Those in power deserve their power
- Those with wealth deserve their wealth
- It's your fault you're poor



2: Virus

Some of these concepts simply misinterpret Darwinism and human nature. Some are demographic falsehoods. Some are empirically false. All lead us toward a dangerous outcome for our species and the biosphere.

I consider them viruses – contagiously malign concepts which are part of a mind plague that's harming us all.

3: Concepts

When we take on – are infected by – concepts like these we become the sort of people who harm ourselves, who harm

others, and who harm the environment on which we all depend.

You'll find people like this everywhere you look: on tube trains, on billboards, haranguing you on social media, patronising you from the news channels.

Sometimes you'll even find them looking back at you from the mirror.

It's a cognitive pandemic.

An illness that's making our society sick.

4: Vaccines

So how do we address viruses of this type – viruses which infect and influence human cognition? How can we reduce the 'r' rate – the speed at which they spread, their degree of infectivity?

Well, we deal with pandemics like these in the same way we deal with their biological cousins. A program of mass vaccination is required while, in parallel, we develop cures for the infected.

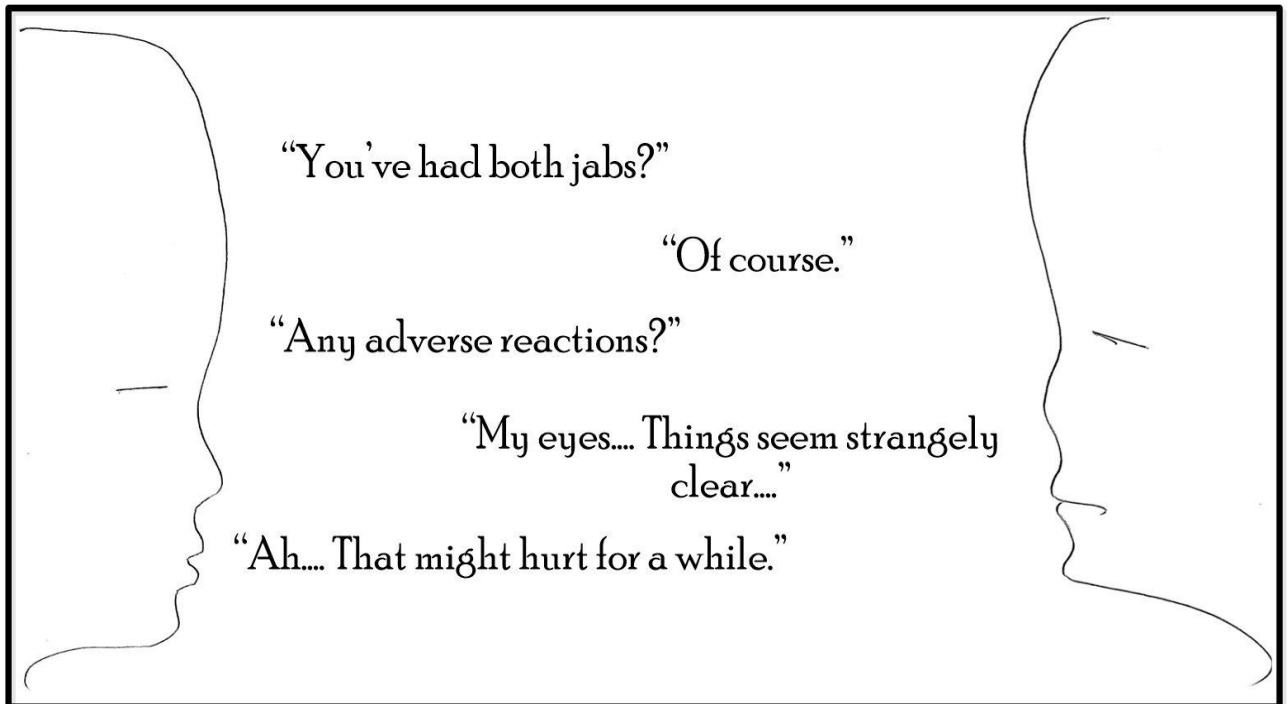
The good news is that vaccines are available. They're easily produced, universally accessible and simple to self-administer. Developer kits can be found in earlier chapters in this book. There's no patent, copyright or licence for them.

No corporation, unaccountable international court or legal system can stop you from applying them. They're freely accessed, freely assimilated and they protect the cognitive freedom of your mind.

Take the shield of values jab and the wall of truth jab and you're pretty much immune.¹

5: Cures

But vaccines by themselves are not enough. With much of the human population already infected, we need to take the fight to the germ. We need cognitive weapons that can attack the virus on its own terms, in the public and social realms, in the cognosphere where disinformation and fake news begin. The infected need their cure.



The first antiviral we looked at was the Socrates Bomb. It brings the Socratic Method into play in the areas of Evidence, Logic, Language, Motivation and Morality.² The ribonucleic strands of the virus are disrupted as the Socrates Bomb explodes. *Everything* is questioned until the truth is finally exposed.

A second antiviral is Chaplin's Stiletto, which uses humour to attack the effects of propaganda and spin.

Now we need to talk about a third: Kate's Garrotte.

6: Passion

Kate is a friend of mine. Or, perhaps I should say, she was. Kate was vital and passionate and clever. She was passionate about life, music, friendship... and she encouraged those around her to be passionate too.

But Kate's dead now.

She's been dead a while.

She died young.

"I'm sorry... That's really sad..."

It's more than sad – but being sad is the last thing Kate would have wanted. Isn't that true of all good people when they die? Rather than being sad, Kate would have wanted us to carry on her legacy by being happy, by being creative, by being vital and passionate and clever.

But I'm sad all the same.

7: Trust

Kate used to talk to me about trust. It's one of the ten thousand things she was passionate about, but it's one we talked about near the end of her life: how trust is broken in our society, and how it needs to be rebuilt.

"Anyone would have to be vital and passionate and clever to take on a challenge like that," you say.

I agree. And they'd have to be brave, too.

After all, who trusts anyone or anything anymore? Trust *is* broken, all across the world.

Politicians? Experts? Journalists?

They're only in it for themselves, aren't they? – Lining their pockets while the rest of us struggle to get by...

Lawyers? Academics? Students?

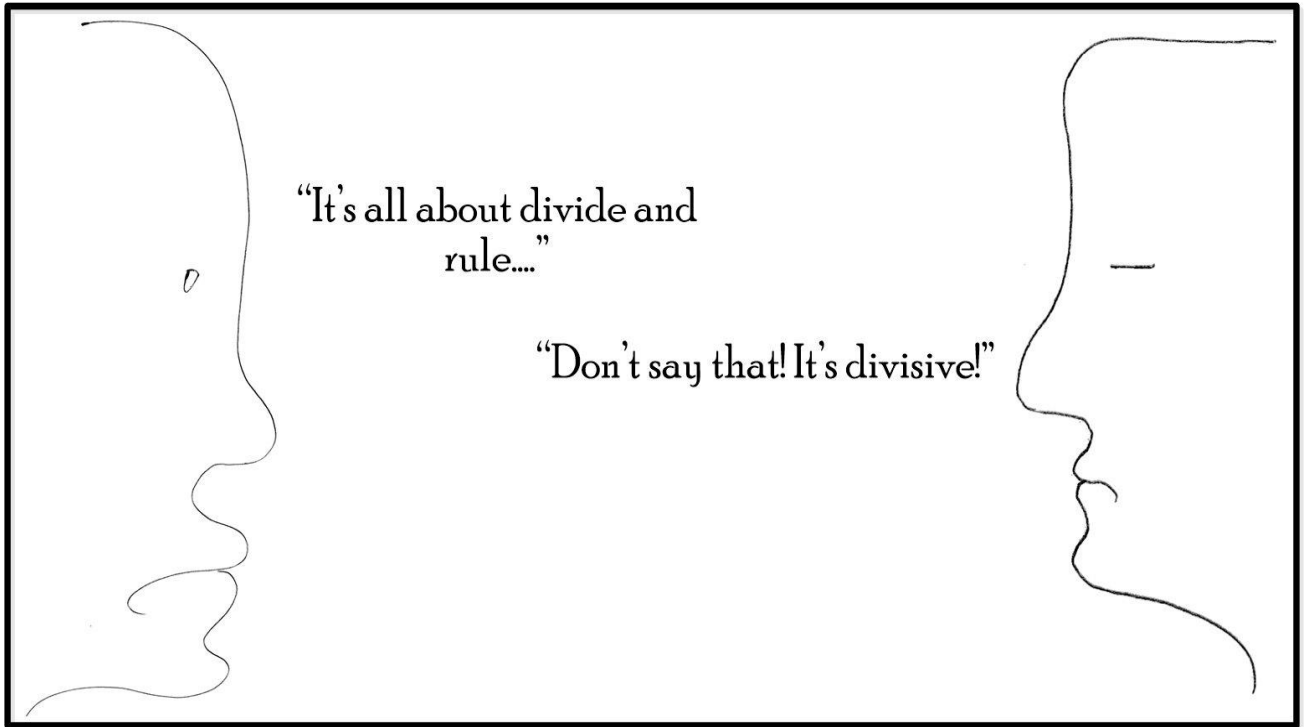
Isn't selfishness at the heart of everything they do?

A world without trust is a bad place to be.

It leaves us atomised and divided. It destroys our effectiveness as individuals and as communities. It undermines our sustainability as a species.

And, on top of all that, it makes us easy prey for the power hungry and the corrupt.

Divided, untrusting, isolated, we're easy to manipulate and rule.



8: Challenge

The truth-twisters, the *your truth/my truth* folk, the monetisers of resentment and rage, work to keep the fires of distrust burning. They want to ensure we distrust the wrong people and the wrong ideas – people and ideas that count against them, people and ideas which ask us to think for ourselves, which make us harder to control.

Kate, even when she was dying, wanted to find a way to determine who and what to trust – so that we could put aside those that don't deserve our trust and raise up those that do. She wanted to rebuild trust in our communities. She wanted to re-establish trust in our broken world, and to rediscover what it means to trust and to be trusted.

“She had ambition, then.”

Yes, it was no small challenge... and she had too little time.

“It’s a shame.”

It’s more than a shame. It’s a crime.

9: Ambition

I’ve kept looking since she’s gone.

“She’d have liked that.”

I think I’ve found a way.

“She’d have liked that, too.”

It’s called Kate’s Garrotte.

“She’d want to be remembered for a garrotte? I’m not sure I would...”

I think she’d be Ok with it. As well as being vital and passionate and clever, Kate was also pretty tough. Those who worked with her and for her have told me as much. So I doubt she’d have been squeamish about squeezing the life out of lies.

How else can you re-establish trust, if you can’t tell truth from deceit?

10: Instructions

Here's how Kate's Garrotte is made...

The wire:

Only trust a concept or proposal if it encourages you to be moral.

Left handle:

If you don't trust a concept or proposal, don't trust its source.

Right handle:

If you don't entirely trust a person or a source, question everything they propose or claim.

That's it.

You've got your garrotte.

Now pull it tight.

11: Algorithm

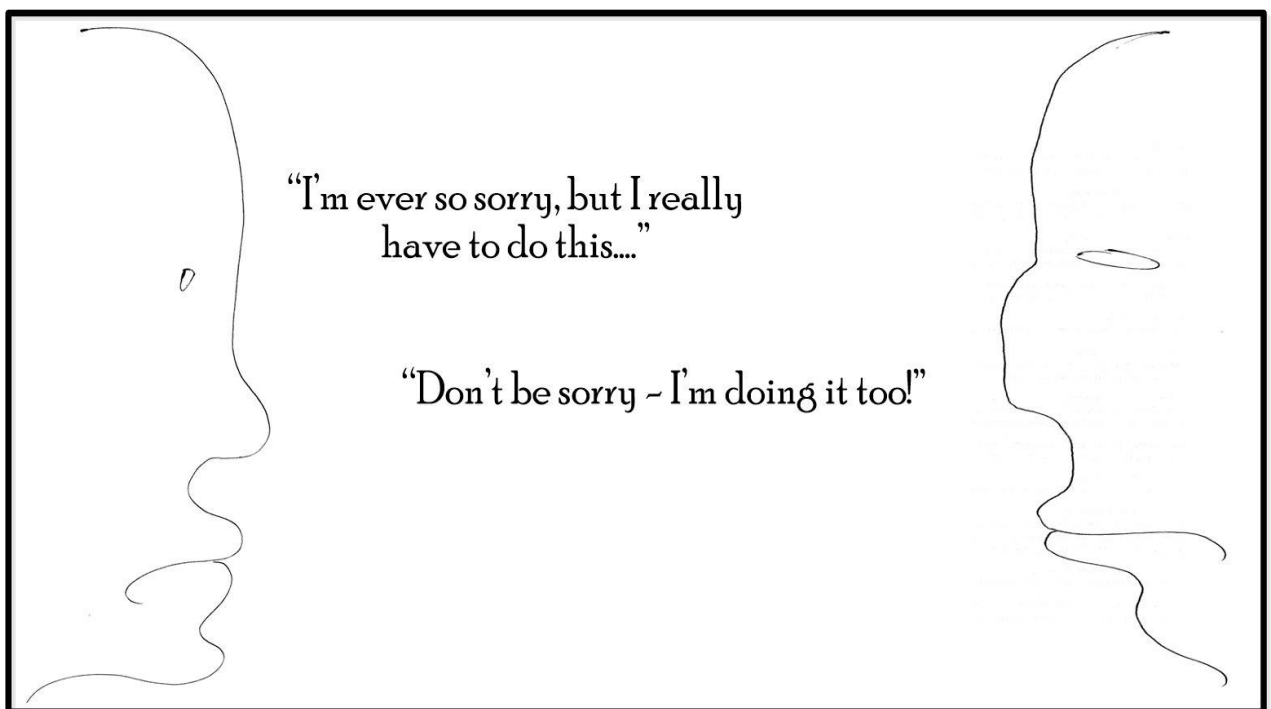
It's is a kind of algorithm:

- A. Only trust a concept...
- B. If you don't trust a concept...
- C. If you don't trust source...

You can apply it to the message... and you can apply it to the messenger.

Go to your cognitive armoury. Select Kate's Garrotte...

...and watch as the sinews strain and the pips squeak until at last what can be trusted, what might be true, trickles from the husk of the lies and disinformation that we're fed, day in, day out.



12: A scythe and a flail

You say, "I like it, even though it sounds a little harsh. But haven't you just postponed the difficult bit? Kate's Garrotte

seems to be saying, 'Only trust a person or a claim if they're moral' – but doesn't that assume you know what moral is?"

But we do.

"Do we?"

Don't we?

You see, we've already used Kate's Scythe to bring the lies to their knees.

"Kate's Scythe? She's got another antiviral up her sleeve?"

I told you she was talented.

It's a second algorithm.

It works like this:

Does a claim, proposal or alleged fact encourage you to be honest and consistent?

Does it encourage you to treat the needs of others as of equal significance and importance as your own?

Yes?

Then it's moral.

No?

Then it's not.

That's the '*moral-proposal/claim-checking*' algorithm: Kate's Scythe.

As for people and sources, the messenger not the message, we've got Kate's Flail.

“Kate’s Flail?”

Yes. It works like this:

Is this person, organisation or source honest and consistent?

Do they consider your needs as of equal importance and significance to their own?

Yes?

Then they’re moral.

No?

Then they’re not.

That’s the ‘moral-*person/source*-checking’ algorithm: Kate’s Flail.

So now you can determine whether a person, a source or the data they present are moral. If not, you step in close with Kate’s Garrotte.

13: The asymmetric comms war

Kate’s Scythe. Kate’s Flail. Kate’s Garrotte.

We need these weapons because we’re fighting a guerrilla war against a media and an establishment programmed for civilisational self-destruct. We’re in an asymmetric comms war and we’re already deep behind enemy lines. In fact, they’re winning, they’ve been winning for a while, and we’ve almost no territory left to defend.

So there's no alternative to guerrilla tactics: close contact, intimate, ruthless.

There's no alternative to brutal honesty, to using Kate's Scythe, Kate's Flail, Kate's Garrote, because the stakes are so high: the future of our children, the survival of our society, the sustainability of our world.

14: Kate

Kate was a friend of mine.
She died heart-breakingly young.
She believed in trust.

Kate thought it was crucial we find a way to work out who and what to trust, and how to rebuild trust in our broken world.

The armoury I've described is a small part of her legacy.
It's my gift to Kate, her gift to me.

And now it's yours.

Use it for yourself.

Use it for Kate.

Use it for us.

References/Notes

1. See 'A short conversation about a shield of values' and 'A short conversation about the wall of truth' above.
2. See discussion of the Socrates Bomb above. A useful acronym for the 'fragments' of the bomb is 'ELM', where the L and the M are both to the power of 2.

Tell it how it is - *the truth* *grenade*

1: Truth

Here's a truth grenade:

You've been treated like garbage.
The establishment doesn't give a damn about you.
You deserve to be listened to.

2: Aspiration

And another:

You want hope.
You want safety and security for your children.
You want to feel part of something special.

3: Equality

A third:

You don't want to be talked down to.

You want to be treated as an equal.

You want a say in the things that effect your life...

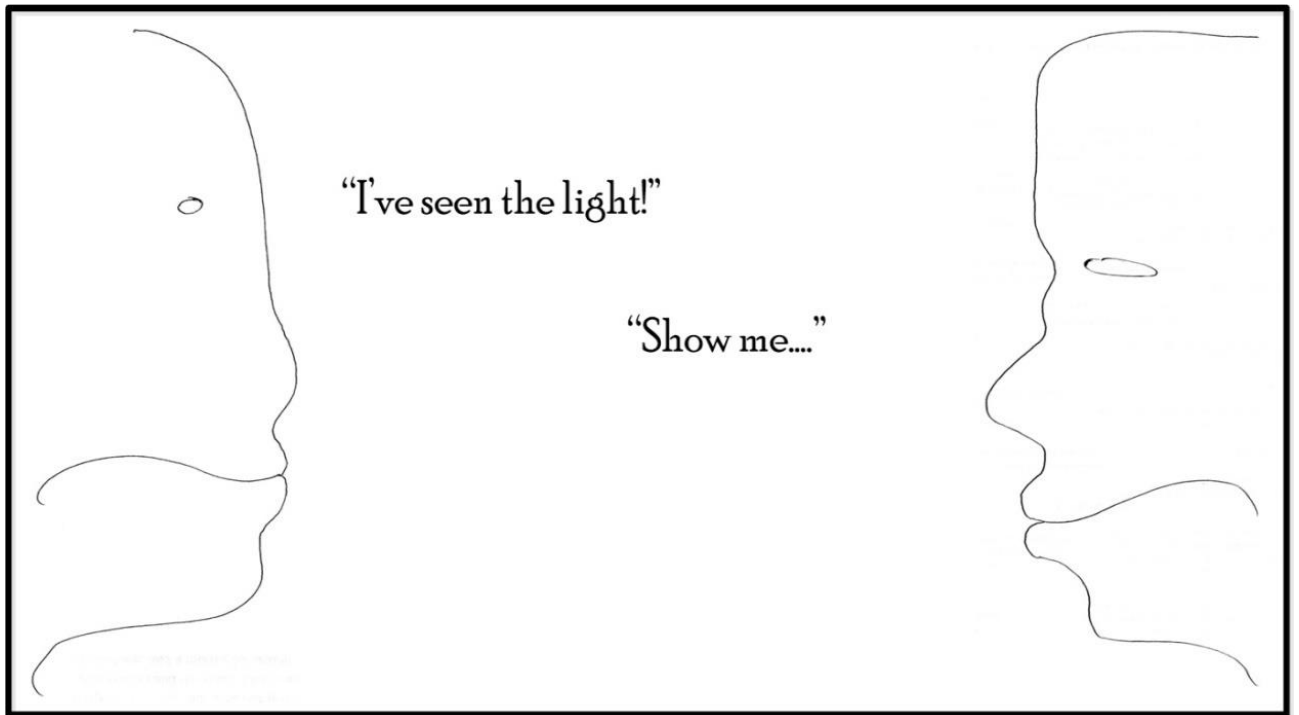
4: Happiness

Some people call these 'stun grenades' or 'flash-bang' munitions.

They shock and disorientate you and leave you gasping for air...

In the right time and the right place they explode through your consciousness and expose – in a burst of light – something you were already primed to recognise as true.

They're *epiphany ordnance* – an essential weapon in our battle against the 21st Century pandemic of lies.



5: Epiphany

There are other equally fundamental truths which more and more of us are at last alert enough to recognise:

Our economy doesn't work for the poor.

Half of us (*50% of all humanity*) struggle to meet our basic needs.

10% of us (*800 million of us*) live in what the World Bank describes as extreme poverty.

In a world of incredible productivity and wealth most of us aren't really very happy.

These are difficult truths to hide from. Deny them and they'll eventually explode in your face.

6: The Boomerang Technique

But there's a problem.

These epiphanies contain such blinding revelations that it's easy to hide lies and propaganda behind the glare.

The manipulative take advantage of this – creating the oddity that truth grenades like these are often used by liars.

We see this in modern politics in almost every nation on Earth: truth used as a cover for the 21st Century pandemic of lies.

Populists, authoritarians and the oligarch-owned media lob a few of these grenades into the fray, then, beneath the smoke and noise, they send out their ground offensive of lies.

Donald Trump. Jair Bolsonaro.¹ Benjamin Netanyahu.

Johnson, Putin, Marine Le Pen.²

Narendra Modi.³

They're all masters at deploying these truths while simultaneously attacking the rights and freedoms of the very people to whom the truths apply.

If we're to have any chance of resisting the lies beneath the veneer of truth, we must be willing to grab the truth

grenades before they explode. We have to intercept primed and ticking munitions and boomerang them back across enemy lines.

It's a difficult manoeuvre.

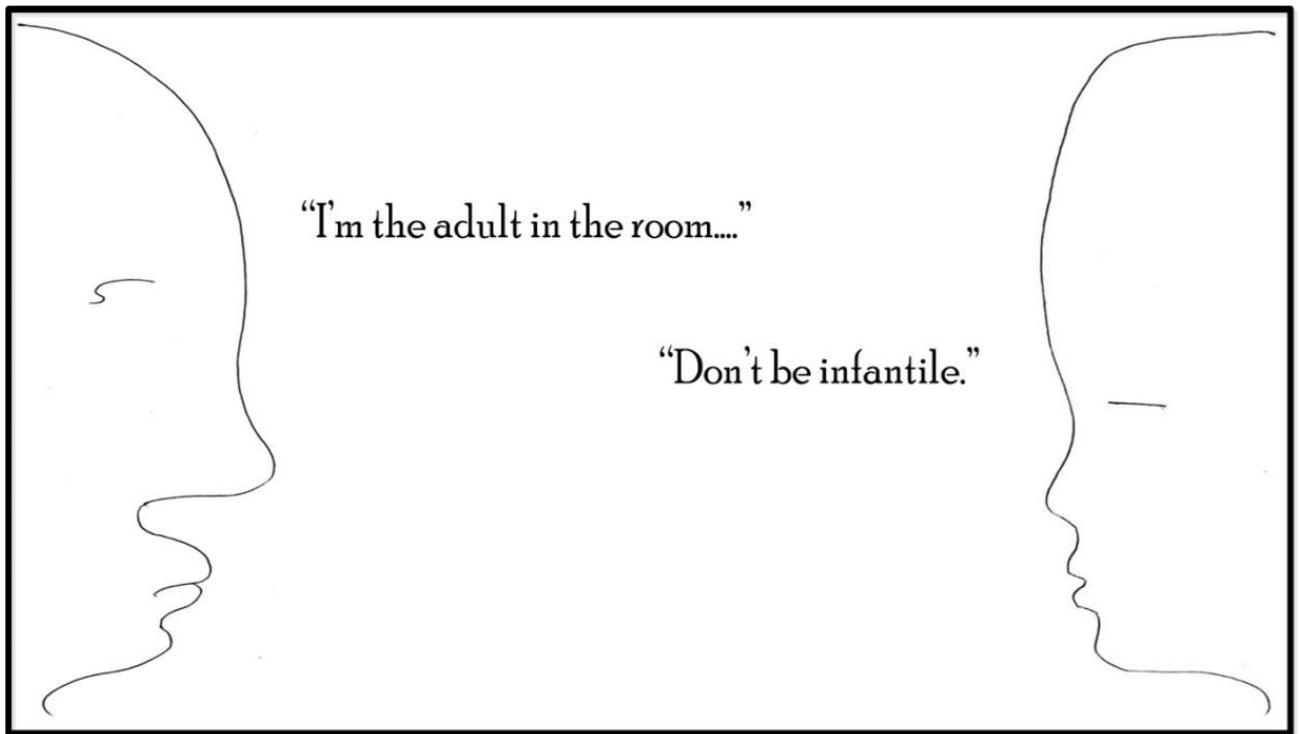
It's particularly tricky for those who're unwilling to see these profound insights for the truths they are.

7: Honours

Those who believe in and benefit from the status quo, those in positions of power, those who're bedecked with honours and well integrated within the establishment, those who're wealthy and living comfortable lives, the complacent and the ethically lazy – if that's you, then you'll find it hard to embrace the truths the populists exploit. You'll find yourself blindsided.

We've seen this happen with the rise of populist leaders and governments all across the world.

As far as ordinary folk go, the blindly privileged, the securely propertied and the complacently well-to-do, the 'centrists' and 'moderates' who describe themselves as 'the adults in the room', are part of the problem – because they're unwilling to accept that a problem really exists, a problem that only radical change can resolve.



8: Adults

If you don't grab the populists' truth grenades the moment they land, if you don't embrace these truths, if you don't recognise that the pin's already been pulled, that there's no hiding from the reality of what's been exposed – then the explosion will take you by surprise. You won't even understand what's happened. You'll find yourself confused and uncertain. If the worst comes to the worst, you'll try to bury your head even deeper in the sand.

Look at Hilary Clinton⁴ after Trump won the US presidency in 2016, blaming the FBI director James Comey... Russian

interference... free airtime for Trump... and even the outgoing president, Barack Obama... rather than the truths that Trump had so cleverly hijacked to make millions of ordinary Americans vote for him:

You've been treated like garbage.
The establishment doesn't give a damn about you.
You deserve to be listened to.

Look at privileged politicians, commentators and intellectuals all across the globe when faced with populism...
They appear clueless as the truth grenades explode around them.

You need to grab those grenades.
You need to acknowledge those insights.
You need to make them your own.

9: Life on Earth

But insight and reflexive responses are not enough. Once you've boomeranged these truths back to the enemy you need something of substance to support them – an armoury of truths of your own... something to fill the Ground Zero that populists fill with lies. Truths like these:

Everyone deserves fairness – particularly those who've been deprived of it until now.

There are 8 billion of us – and we're all burning in the same fire, drowning in the same flood.

We're smart enough to help each other. We don't have to scrabble and fight to be the last fool left alive.

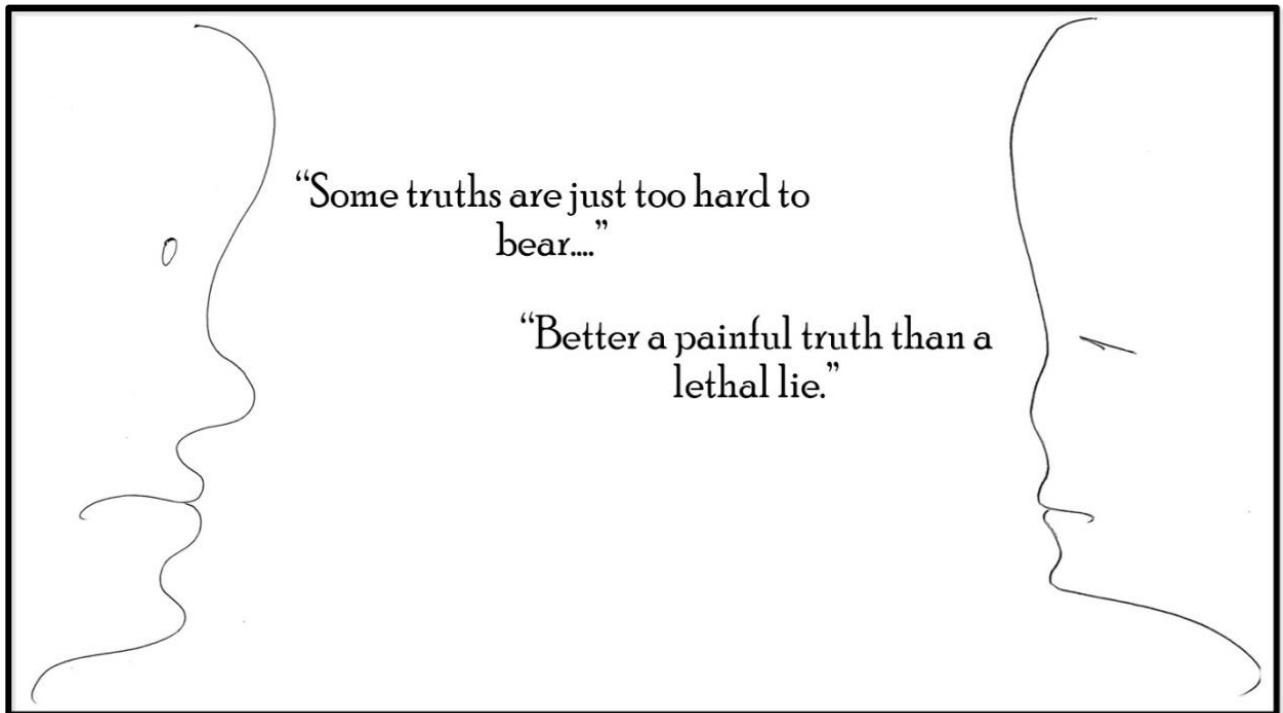
Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent.

Kindness and encouragement work; punishment doesn't.

If we f*** the environment we're f***ed too.

There's no longer any need for poverty.

Your parents should have taught you how to share...



These statements are like exploding white phosphorous – glaringly obvious and true. In the incandescent light of their explosion they’re impossible to ignore. If we share these truths, if we light up people’s minds, the populist propaganda drifts away like the residues of poison gas, blown from the trenches by the wind.

10: Assault troops

Truth grenades are cognitive munitions which scatter the enemy’s lines.

They’re an essential part of our weaponry against disinformation and spin – against false narratives which

pretend that greed, selfishness and power-hunger are good,
that they benefit ordinary people in their struggle to survive.

But truth grenades don't throw themselves.

We need assault troops of honesty, fusiliers of truth.

We need grenade throwers for our truth grenades.

Join us.

We have the armaments – but our weapons are worthless if
you're not at our side.

References/Notes

1. Jair Messias Bolsonaro, president of Brazil and enthusiastic killer of rainforest since 2019.
2. 'Marine' Le Pen, leader of French far right party National Rally, who would seemingly welcome fascism back into their country.
3. Narendra Damodardas Modi, prime minister of India since 2014. Yet another expert in populist nationalism and xenophobia.
4. Hilary Clinton, presidential nominee in 2016 of the Democratic Party of the United States. Over-confident of winning the race to become president and blindsided by the Trump campaign.

Offer something better - *the alternatives ambush*

1: Chemical warfare

Anyone would think we had some sort of death wish.

“Me and you?”

No. Humanity. The human race.

“In what way?” you ask, clearly sceptical.

Well, for one, there’s the chemical war we’re waging against our own species:

- Particulates spewed out from our use of wood, diesel, coal and other fuels, particulates which we then inhale
- The pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers we pour over pastures and farmlands, which then permeate our food chain
- The microplastics we discharge into water sources, ending up in the water we drink
- The mass consumption of sugar, trans fats, processed meat, salt
- The wholesale use of barbiturates, opioids, nicotine, caffeine, alcohol and other painkillers, tranquilisers and stimulants

- The moisturisers, make-up, deodorants and sun-blocks we smear all over our skin
- The ammonia, phosphorus, nitrogen, volatile organic compounds and bleach¹ we use to clean our workplaces and homes

These are repeated, multiple acts of species self-harm.

“We’re hardly doing ourselves any favours, are we?”

I’m surprised we’re still walking.

2: WMDs

And that’s just where it begins...

“Don’t say there’s more...”

There’s more.

We’re deploying weapons of mass destruction against the environment on which we all depend. Weapons like these:

- Soil depletion
- Water exhaustion
- Desertification
- Deforestation
- Greenhouse gas production
- The mass production of domestic and industrial waste
- Plastics discarded into oceans and rivers

- Herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers disrupting ecosystems
- The decimation of insects
- The extinction, or near-extinction, of countless other lifeforms
- Oil spills
- Mining waste
- Urban and farming sprawl

And, as if that's not enough...

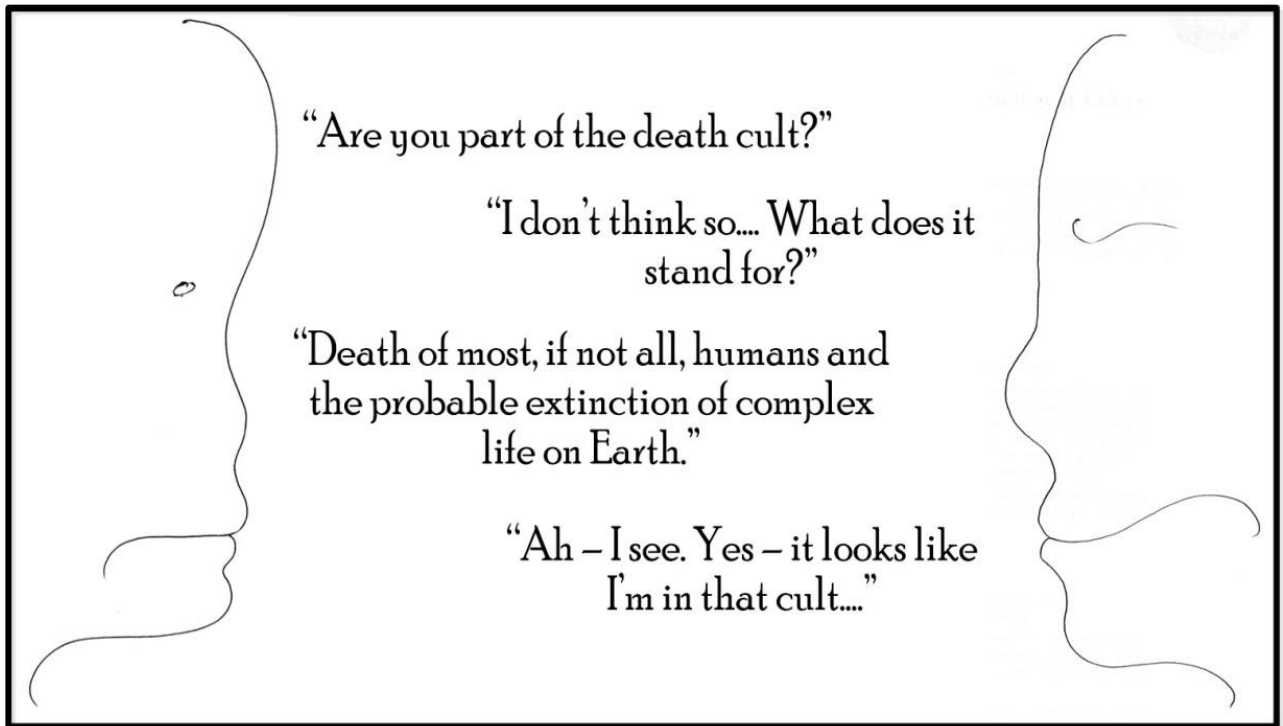
"No, you can stop there, if you like."

Just one last thing?

"Just one? Ok... If you insist."

Well, there's the kill shot... How could I not mention that?

The nuclear weapons we're holding in reserve for our moment of environmental Armageddon.²



3: Ideas

“F*** me – it’s looking grim.”

Sometimes it feels that way.

“I work hard to be positive. I’m not sure you’re helping.”

I’d prefer to be open-minded about risk than hide my head in the sand...

“I want to do something about it.”

About being positive?

“No. About the mess we’re in. About the nightmare reality you’ve just described.”

But you are doing something. It’s what these conversations are all about. We’ve been finding the root cause of our war against ourselves... so we can begin to put things right.

“And we’ve found that root cause?”

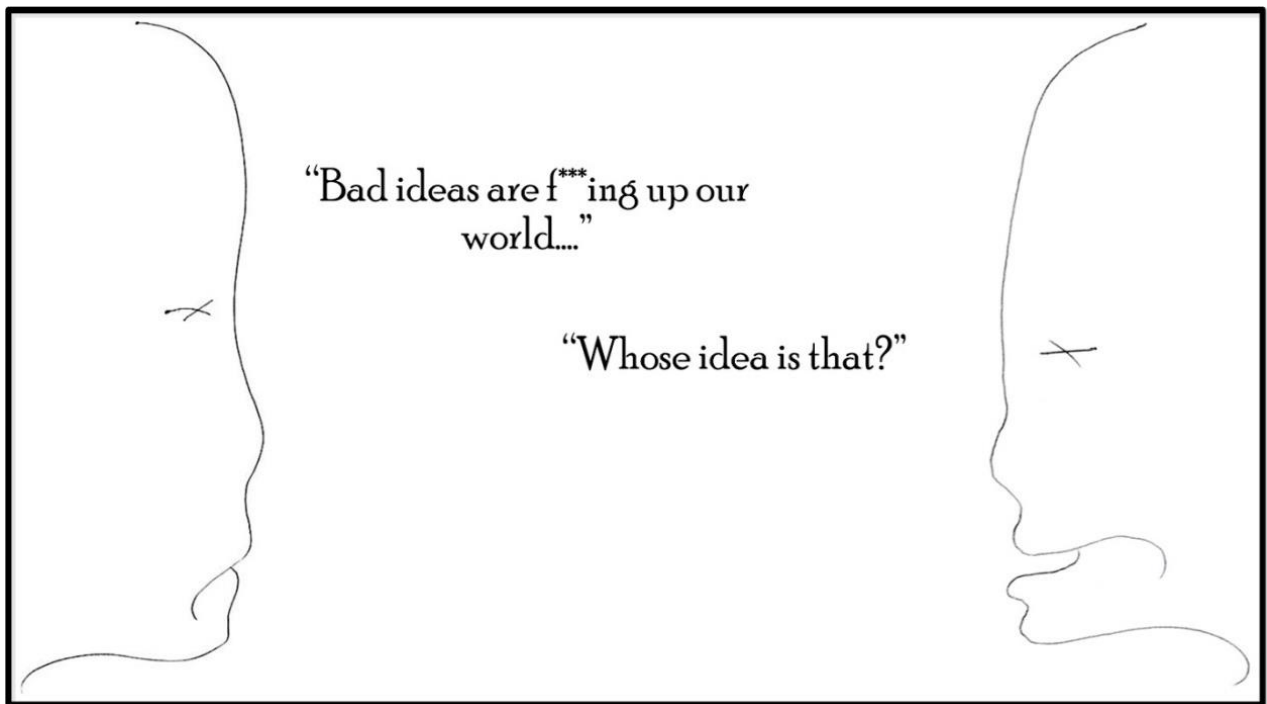
I think we have.

“Ideas?”

Yes – malign, viral ideas. They’ve infected our society like a plague.

Ideas like these:

- The biosphere can survive anything we throw at it
- Let’s keep consuming more and more – there’s no reason not to
- Waste doesn’t matter
- Technology will save us
- Don’t mess with the economy – it’s bad for business
- Don’t mess with business – it’s bad for the economy
- Nation states are more important than people
- Corporations give a f***
- We’ve got a free media and a free press – you better believe it
- Voting occasionally means you live in a functioning democracy
- The world’s like it is because that’s how it’s got to be
- Little folk can’t change things; we’re just pawns in the big folk’s games



4: Relevance

“But we’ve found ways to resist those ideas...”

We’ve found thought vaccines: a shield of values, a wall of truth. And we’ve found cognitive antivirals, too – like the Socrates Bomb, Chaplin’s Stiletto, Kate’s Garrotte, the Truth Grenade...

Antivirals like these take the harmful, eco-destructive ideas and question them, laugh at them, assess them, challenge them... and expose them for the lies they are.

“But? I can sense there’s a ‘but’...”

But we can go one better.

We don’t even have to waste our time on those ideas. We can simply make them irrelevant.

5: Turning the other cheek

You see, sometimes the best way to deal with a problem is to step around it. It's a different kind of 'turning the other cheek'.

You ignore the assault.

You step outside the fray. You go beyond the bad ideas. You outshine them. You leave them behind.

You offer something better.

I call it The Alternatives Ambush.

6: Better ideas

The ideas overwhelming our society? The socially disfiguring affirmations of greed and selfishness and the lust for power?

They're not great ideas. They're not even clever.

There are better ideas on offer – ideas like these:

- We can coexist with a thriving biosphere – it's not too late
- Consumerism doesn't make us happy – let's try sufficiency
- Waste is stupid. Let's stop doing it
- Don't wait for technological miracles – there's stuff we can fix right now
- Let's mess with the economy *to make it fair*

- Let's mess with businesses to make them ethical
- People are more important than nations
- Corporations don't give a f***. Let's make them give a f***
- It's time to free our media from the clutches of millionaires, corporations and the state
- Let's fix our democracies so they can't be bribed and manipulated by the powerful and the wealthy
- Our world can be happier and fairer – we've got the genius and capability to achieve that
- Changing society is a numbers game... so add yourself to the numbers

7: Kindness

"I like those ideas," you say. "And how about, 'Isn't it time to be kind to each other?'"

Yes, perfect. Kindness is the foundation stone of all life-affirming philosophies – and it's at the heart of the eco-sustaining alternatives we're discussing here.

Be kind.

It kinda makes sense.

8: Creativity

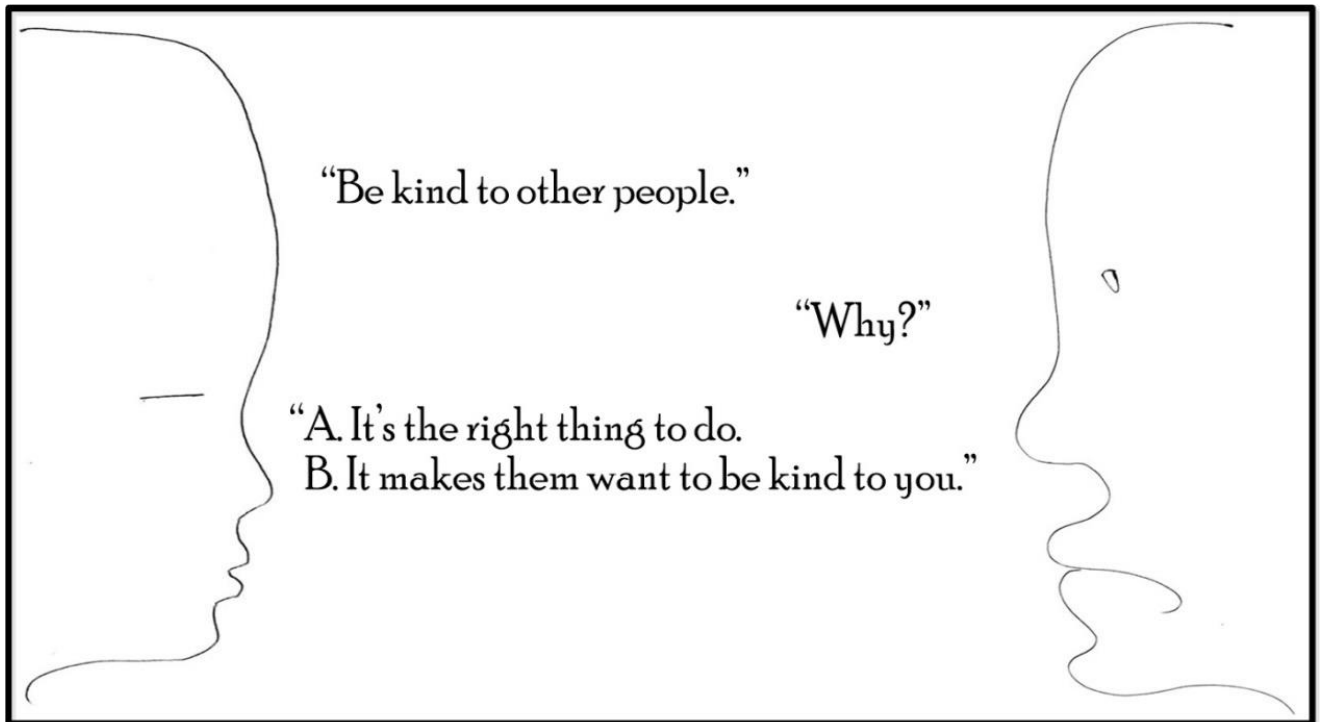
So, for those of us who sometimes struggle to stay positive, there's good news:

- Humans are geniuses of creativity and imagination
- We're amazing at problem-solving
- There are countless ideas a thousand times better than the slack-jawed, eco-destructive, self-harming narratives which currently rule the roost

Alternatives are there for the taking.

Insightful, creative and compassionate people keep dreaming them up... Wonderful ideas which make the malign concepts of the 21st Century mind plague look outdated and stale.

It's time to run with those new and better ideas. It's time for radical change.



9: The difference

“Oh, alright, then!” objectors cry out, jiggling from one foot to the other. “What would you do? What would you do that’s so different?”— as if this is some sort of a challenge... as if there’s no possible or conceivable substitute for the social and environmental clusterf*** we’ve managed to contrive. Well, here, for a start:

- A Green New Deal³
- A Universal Basic Income⁴
- The decentralisation of power⁵
- The decentralisation of wealth⁶
- Universal Basic Services⁷

- The democratisation of our democracies⁸
- Re-building for resilience⁹
- Re-engineering for sustainability¹⁰
- Prioritising fulfilment and happiness over profit and growth¹¹
- Encouraging cooperation instead of competition¹²
- Educating for critical thinking, creativity and compassion¹³
- Deprioritising possessions¹⁴
- Re-prioritising people and communities¹⁵
- Educating for sharing... because there's enough to go round¹⁶
- Embracing a new ethics suited to our new age

These are powerful and feasible alternatives to the mess we now inhabit – and there are plenty more like them. Great ideas keep knocking at the door. It's time to let them in.

10: Hope

Can't do it?

"A lot of people will say that."

It's not how the world works?

"They'll say that too."

It's too difficult or expensive or unworkable?

"And that."

Well, tell them not to be so short-sighted and scared.

There are 8 billion of us.

We're astoundingly energetic, productive and capable.

Can't do it?

There's almost nothing we can't do if we turn our minds to it.

Can't do it?

There's barely anything 8 billion of us can't achieve if we want it done.

All we have to do is come up with the ideas... plan how to put them into action... then give them a try.

References/Notes

1. Bleach: primarily sodium hypochlorite.
2. There are roughly 13,500 operational nuclear warheads in existence, with over 90% of these held by the United States and Russia. Approx. 9,500 are in service, with the remainder awaiting dismantlement.

These remain a major threat to the biosphere and human survival, should a full scale war take place either deliberately or in error. For additional detail on nuclear weapon numbers, see Davenport, K; Reif, K; Kimball DG (2020). 'Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance'. www.armscontrol.org. Link:

<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat>.

3. Various formulations of a Green New Deal have been proposed, which combine a call for economic justice, new jobs in green technology and a radical 'greening' of our industries and infrastructure. A scheme of this kind is essential to the survival of our civilisation and perhaps our species.
4. Rutger Bregman makes a powerful case for Universal Basic Income in his book *Utopia For Realists* (2014), Bloomsbury.
5. The decentralisation of power gives people a say in the decisions which affect them, their families and their communities, through devolved and improved democratic processes, local budgeting and citizens assemblies.
6. According to the Credit Suisse Global Wealth Report, the world's richest 1 percent, those with more than \$1 million, own 43.4 percent of the world's wealth (see www.inequality.org: <https://inequality.org/facts/global-inequality/>). So, if this were shared out decently, everyone could be near

demi-millionaires. Of course, it's not quite that simple, but a lot of waste is also incurred in hoarding wealth and in protecting hoarded wealth; and a lot of productivity lost from the disenchantment and poverty-induced ill-health of the poor. So it doesn't seem beyond the realms of imagination that we could alter our mechanisms of wealth distribution to better serve humanity as a whole.

7. Universal Basic Services (UBS) can be seen as an alternative to a Universal Basic Income (UBI), but I see no reason why they shouldn't go hand-in-hand. Provide UBS in terms of housing, electricity, water, education, sports facilities and health care; provide UBI where you wouldn't want your decisions to be determined by universal provision, e.g. food choices, entertainment, leisure activities, non-earning vocations.
8. For a range of suggestions on how to restore democracy to the so-called democratic nations, see 'A short conversation about democracy' in my book *Short Conversations: During The Plague* (2019), Dark Green Books.
9. Re-building for resilience – namely, decentralising sources of energy, water and food so they are less susceptible to extreme weather events or large-scale civilizational disruption.

10. Re-engineering for sustainability – as point 9 above, but with the additional priority of protecting and preserving the biosphere.
11. Any morality suited to the 21st Century will recognise the ethical imperative of prioritising human happiness and fulfilment over the making of profit – especially in a world where we now have the technological capacity to provide our entire population with sustenance, shelter, healthcare and education.
12. In a world of 8 billion humans encouraging cooperation instead of competition is now not only a moral priority but one that's essential for our survival.
13. The world's education systems are in need of an overhaul. Learning needs to become a happy experience, not an anxious or punitive one. And, in our age of mechanisation and AI, schools should be teaching skills which machines don't yet have, e.g. the 5 Cs:
 - Communication
 - Cooperation
 - Creativity
 - Critical thinking
 - Compassion
14. How do we deprioritise possessions? Well, we re-educate ourselves to see that possessions should never take priority over people. Possessions should serve humans and humanity, not the reverse.

15. 'Re-prioritising people and communities' speaks for itself. A moral society puts people first, not wealth, not power, not nation states, not archaic forms of government or law, not royal families or venerable castes. People. Ordinary people. Us.
16. We need to re-educate ourselves in the art of how to share... Greed and acquisitiveness have become a threat to our survival as a species. Sharing, fairness and community ownership are now critical survival criteria.

Finding peace

1: Moving on

We've talked about the enemies of our civilisation and biological world:

- the corporations
- the growth economy
- the oligarch- or state-controlled media
- the greedy and power-hungry 0.1%

“Enemies in terms of jeopardising social cohesion and environmental sustainability?”

Yes, in precisely those terms – the enemies who're endangering us all.

But then we moved on.

“It wasn't great having so many enemies, was it?”

It wasn't... 0.1 percent of eight billion people... That's a big number of enemies. It's not moral and it's not useful.

2: The microscope

So we looked beyond ‘enemies’ to the ideas that drive them.

“Like putting a virus under the microscope instead of just inspecting the rash...”

Exactly. And we discovered something important.

“I got there first.”

You did. And you helped me catch up.

It became obvious, the closer we looked, that we’re living in the disinformation millennium – an age of propaganda and lies. We saw that behind the people and organisations which we’d come to think of as our enemies there is something more subtle at play: something using people as sock-puppets, taking them over, making them act against their own interests and against the interests of our species as a whole.

“Like Invasion of the Body Snatchers?”

Yes just like that.¹

“Or David Icke’s lizards...”

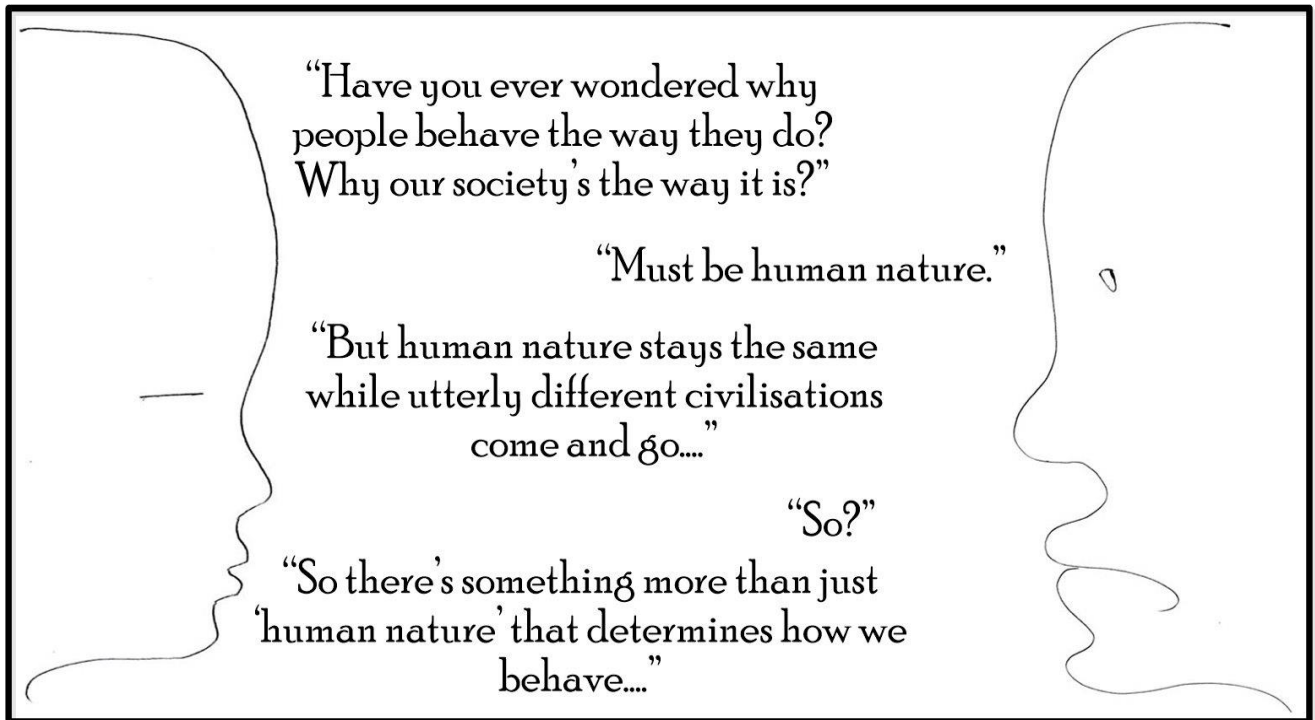
Like that, too. But not lizards.²

“Ideas...”

Yes, ideas. Malign, viral ideas. They’re the body snatchers.

Eco-destructive and socially divisive ideas.

They’re the lizards.



3: Infestation

Dangerous ideas have infected our society. Harmful narratives and concepts are driving the environmentally damaging and species self-harming behaviour that we see all around us. Cognitive algorithms are undermining our autonomy and disabling or subverting our morality.³ These ideas and algorithms harm us, and they prevent many of us from even recognising that harm.

These malign ideas replicate themselves in our minds and then we share them with others.

They're a virus. They're an infection with the potential to destroy our world.

4: Protection

But we can defend ourselves.

“We found vaccines...”

Yes: a shield of values; a wall of truth. Vaccines that protect our identity, our cognitive autonomy. The ideas can still get through to us, but they’re harmless because we see them for what they are.

“And we didn’t stop just with vaccines.”

No.

“We identified cures, too.”

We did. Because a lot of people are already infected. For them, it’s too late for a vaccine. They need antivirals.

And we found antivirals... Like these:

- The Socrates Bomb
- Chaplin’s Stiletto
- Kate’s Garrotte
- The Truth Grenade
- The Alternatives Ambush

These antivirals attack the ideas which make up the mind plague, questioning them, ridiculing them, making them irrelevant.

“That’s the best approach, isn’t it, in the end? Making the bad ideas irrelevant. Simply growing beyond them, leaving them behind?”

I think it is.

5: The journey

It’s been quite a journey.

“I enjoyed every minute.”

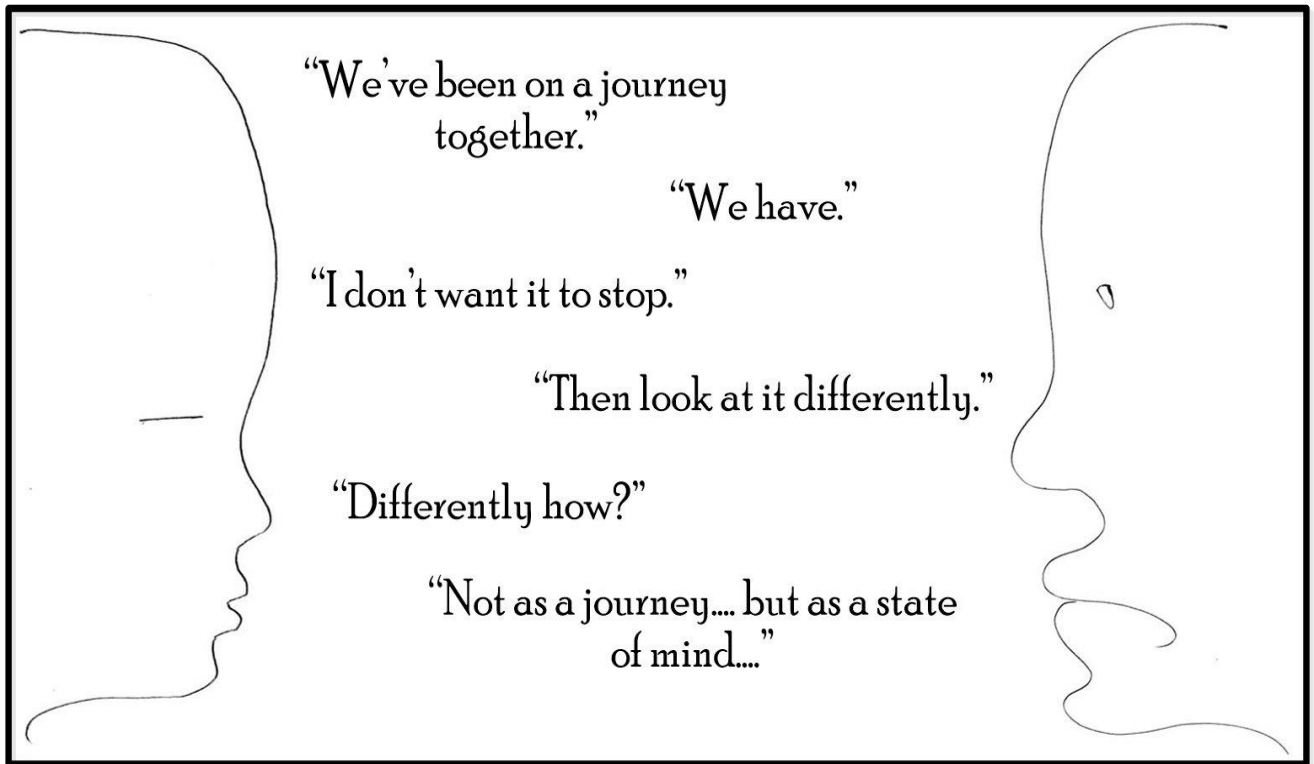
I have, too. It’s been important for me, in a very special way. As we talked it felt as if something changed inside my mind. I felt somehow less divided, somehow more complete.

“An epiphany.”

An epiphany which you shared with me... Yes, that’s exactly how it felt.

We’ve been through this together and you led the way.

I’ll always love you for that.



6: The millstone

It’s hard to put into words how precious it was, that moment when I stopped thinking of people as enemies; when I began to see that it was *ideas* that were our enemy, instead.

It was as if – as if a tremendous weight had lifted from my shoulders – visceral and *real*. I felt a sense of unburdening, of lightness. I’d hated those feelings of hatred. Who wants to hate other people?

“It hurts on the inside.”

It does. And it’s psychologically unhealthy.⁴ It’s a kind of self-harm. You can sense that, can’t you, when you experience

hating? – That it's best to avoid hating other people if you possibly can, that it does you no good.

Ideas, on the other hand... Why would you hate ideas?
Sometimes I feel repugnance for them.
Sometimes disdain.
But hatred?

Hate has almost no traction on ideas at all.

7: Evidence

Interpretation, analysis, understanding, deciphering, unravelling, explaining. Those are the tools you bring to bear against ideas. Ideas need to be explored, justified, proven, tested, evidenced... and, if unjustified or unevidenced, dismissed.

Bad ideas – stupid and malign ideas – are our enemy. They're the root cause behind the chaos of our calamitous age.

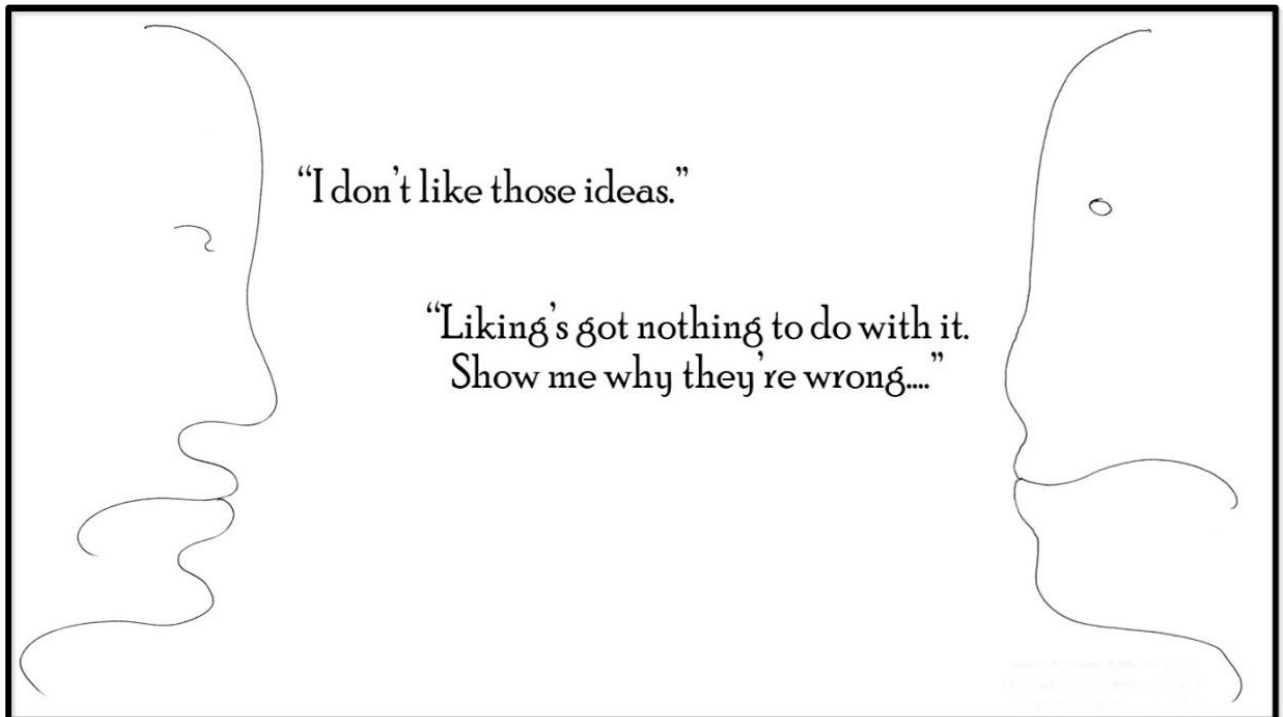
They're the virus behind the pandemic of lies...

But they are, in the end, only ideas.

And the ways they can be challenged, the techniques for assessment and understanding, they're techniques we can share.

Anyone in the world, at any time, in any place, if jolted into thought, can use the vaccines and antivirals we've discussed.

They can use scrutiny, clear thinking, integrity, honesty. They can use the Socrates Bomb, questioning an idea's evidence, logic and language. They can use Kate's Garrotte, Kate's Scythe and Kate's Flail, determining if a narrative or concept is encouraging us to be moral. And they can use the Alternatives Ambush to show that there are better ideas waiting to replace those which are doing our species so much harm.



8: An inner calm

As I went through this transition – from seeing people as my enemies to seeing ideas as the issue – I felt myself grow calmer.

“I did, too.”

I began to breath more deeply.

“Me too.”

I found a centredness and purpose which my anger had taken away.

“I did, too.”

It was something we shared – a parallel evolution: the recognition that ideas are endangering the human world, that ideas are fuelling climate change, that ideas are bringing about the sixth great extinction event, that ideas are supporting and enabling racism, misogyny, homophobia, inequality and our system of global unfairness and waste. It’s a truth that seems obvious as soon as you see it – that bad ideas, a Frankenstein’s monster birthed by human genius, are now dragging us towards the edge of the precipice.

9: A better idea

And yet they’re just ideas.

That’s all they are.

Archaic, stale, recycled, unevidenced and unjustifiable ideas.

Ultra-capitalism, neoliberalism, nationalist conservatism, authoritarianism?

They’re just slack-jawed, counter-productive and harmful ideas.

We can do something about these malign ideas.

We can do something about the mind plague that's infected our society.

"I've always thought so. I was never willing to give up."

And you were right to think that. You were right not to give up.

We can expose these ideas for the nonsense they are.

We can out-reach and out-shine them.

We can replace them with better ideas, with sustainable ideas, with humane, compassionate and generous ideas.

"And you know what?" you say, a glint in your eye.

Tell me.

"We can replace them with ideas that actually work."

References/Notes

1. Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956). Director: Don Siegel. A science fiction horror, telling the story of a covert alien invasion.
2. Alex Abad-Santos (2015). Lizard people: the greatest political conspiracy ever created. www.vox.com. Link <https://www.vox.com/2014/11/5/7158371/lizard-people-conspiracy-theory-explainer>.
3. Ideologies, religions and rigid or controlling belief systems can be seen as behavioural algorithms, determining people's actions and bypassing their autonomy.
4. Bhattacharya, S (2003). Brain study links negative emotions and lowered immunity. New Scientist. Link: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn4116-brain-study-links-negative-emotions-and-lowered-immunity/>

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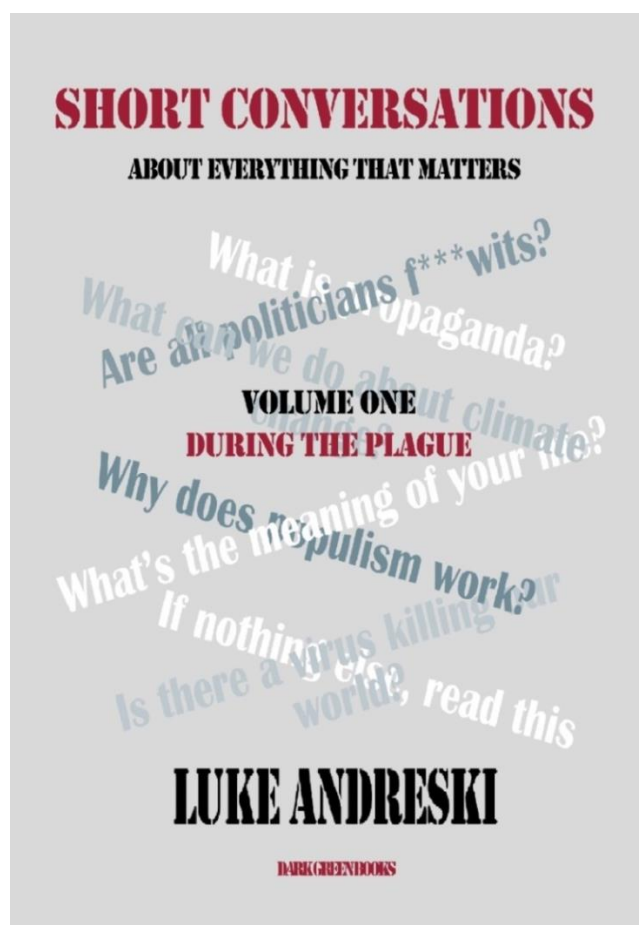
We won't achieve anything
if we don't change minds

Also by Luke Andreski....

Short Conversations During the Plague

Can we become cleverer? Is a better world possible? Is eating meat a crime? Can we trust politicians? Is our media broken? Is democracy dead?

Our political firestorm from a socialist, humanist, environmentalist and – despite how many of us often feel – a positive perspective...



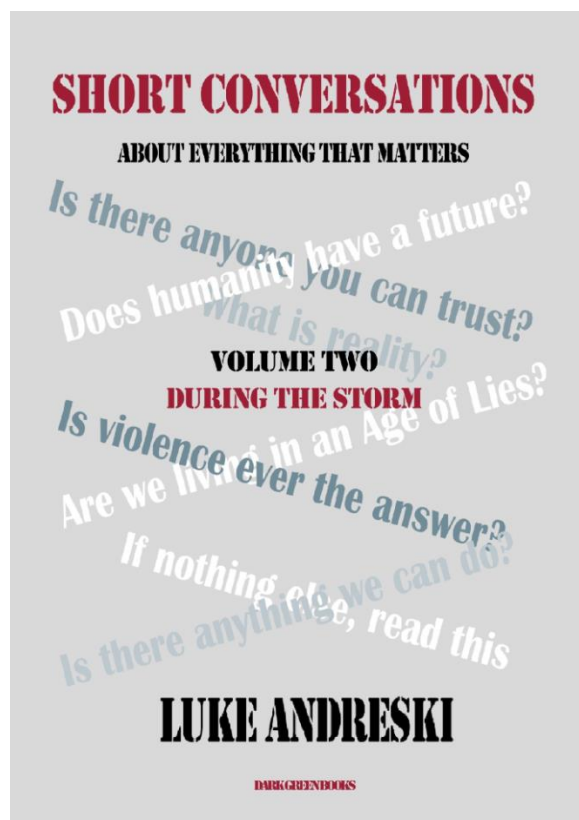
Short Conversations During the Storm

Short Conversations: During the Storm engages you in a conversation – a conversation about the enemies of the 99% and of the environment that sustains us.

It looks at the structures beneath the asymmetric war we've declared upon ourselves and asks, "What is the root cause of the greed, power-hunger and corruption of the 1%?"

Short Conversations: During the Storm offers an answer to this question and identifies a peculiar sickness at the heart of our world.

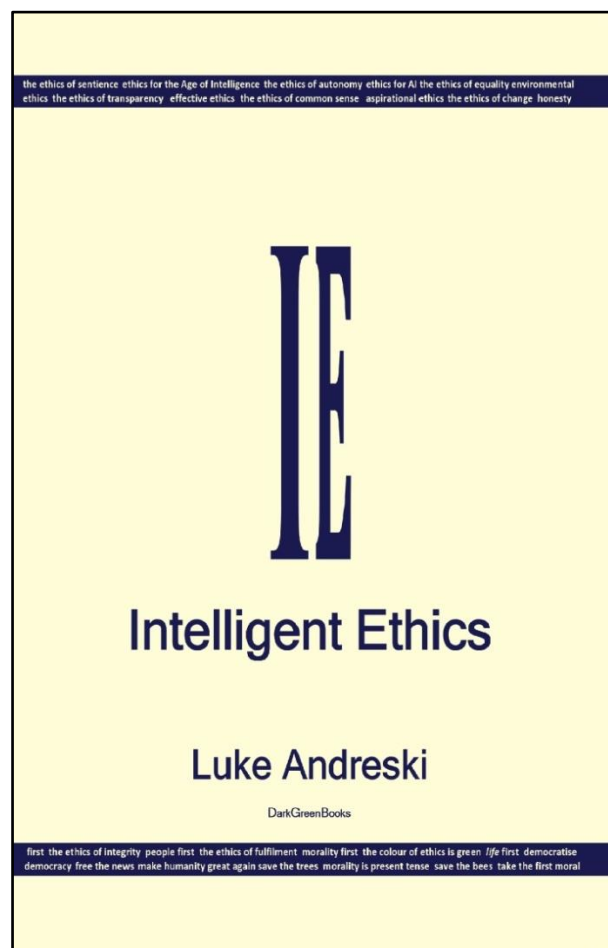
But it brings more than just a diagnosis to the table – it also outlines vaccines and a cure...



Intelligent Ethics

Intelligent Ethics is a blueprint for survival. We are at a point in human history when the dangers we face present a seemingly intractable barrier to a future of promise and hope. Yet that future is not beyond our reach.

It is, in fact, surprisingly achievable.

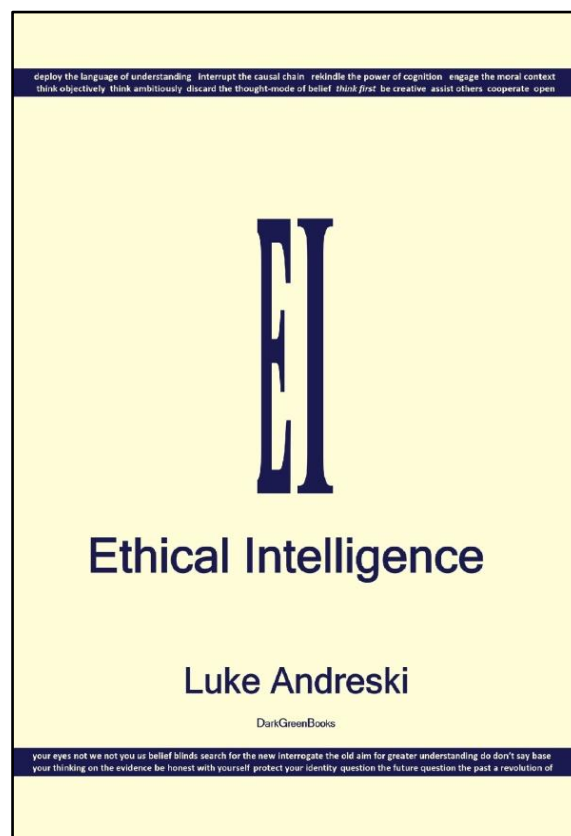


Ethical Intelligence

Ethical Intelligence is a guide to decisive and effective thinking in a world of fake news and the polarization of belief. The human world is a human creation. Society, commerce, traditions, laws, borders, banks and nations are things we make. We have volition in respect to them. We can choose how they should be.

But if we are to make such choices, if we are to reorganise our world on ethical lines, then we need to see the social world clearly for what it is. We need to unshackle our minds and liberate the power of sight.

Ethical Intelligence offers techniques and methods for achieving this.



Luke Andreski

Luke Andreski is co-founder of the @EthicalRenewal and EthicalIntelligence.org cooperatives and a campaigner for social justice and the environment.

His books on politics and ethics are widely available, and many of his articles have been shared on independent news media.

Luke's most recent project was a second volume of *Short Conversations*, where he looked at the 'mind imperialism' of our ruling elites and offered tools and techniques for cognitive and ethical insurgency. Much of the content for this ebook comes from that volume.

You can connect with Luke on LinkedIn:

<https://uk.linkedin.com/in/luke-andreski-ethics>

On Wordpress: <https://lukeandreski.wordpress.com/>

Or via the EthicalRenewal co-op on Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/EthicalRenewal>

Please also visit: www.ethicalintelligence.org

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Byline Times

London Economic

Creating Socialism's *Critical Mass*

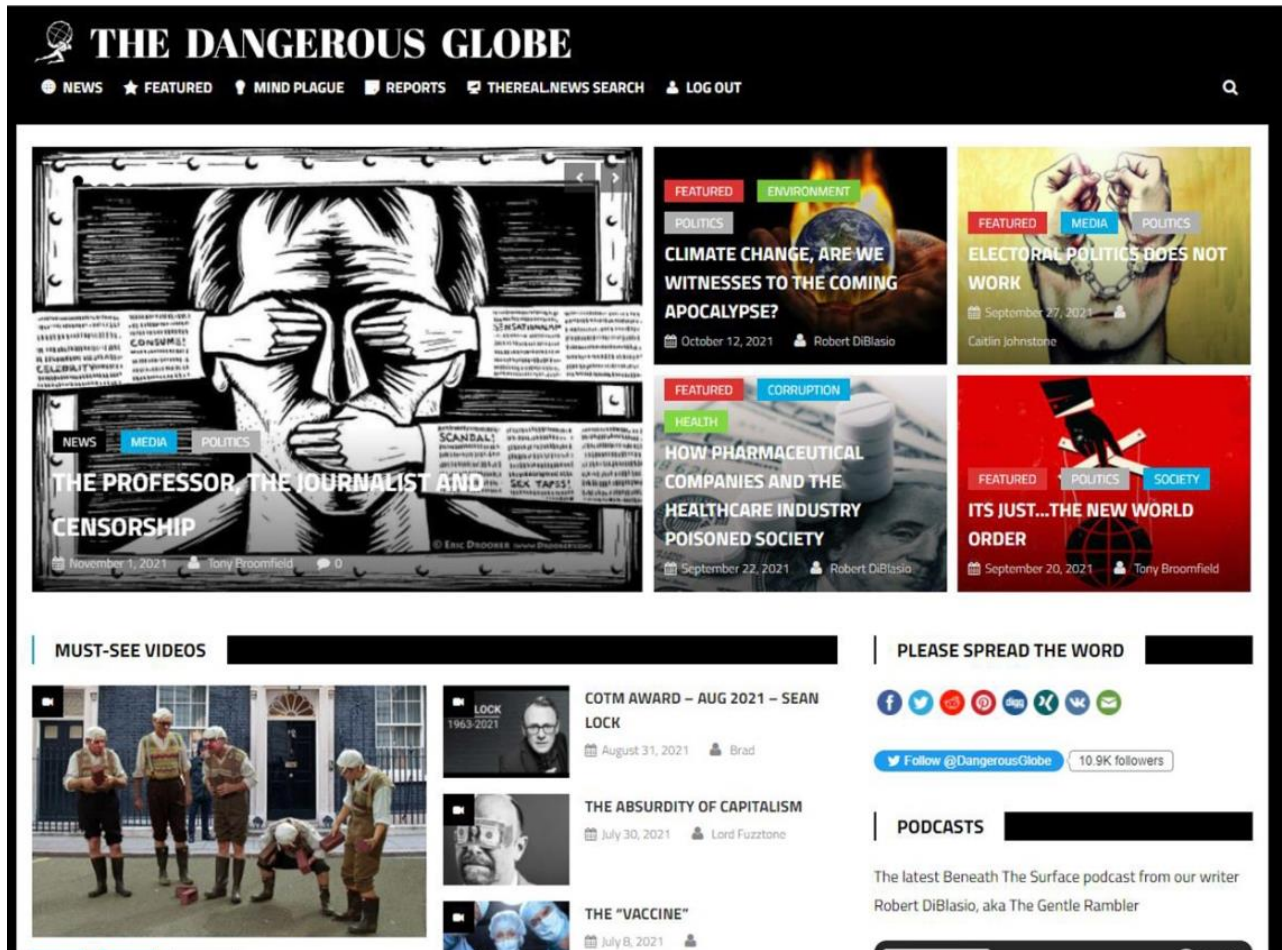
Double Down News

Evolve Politics

Novara Media

Left Foot Forward

DangerousGlobe.com

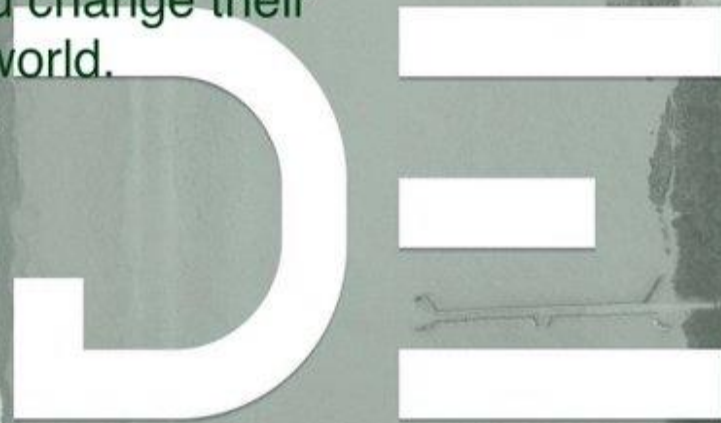


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be published with the
intention of informing and
empowering people to learn
about and change their
world.

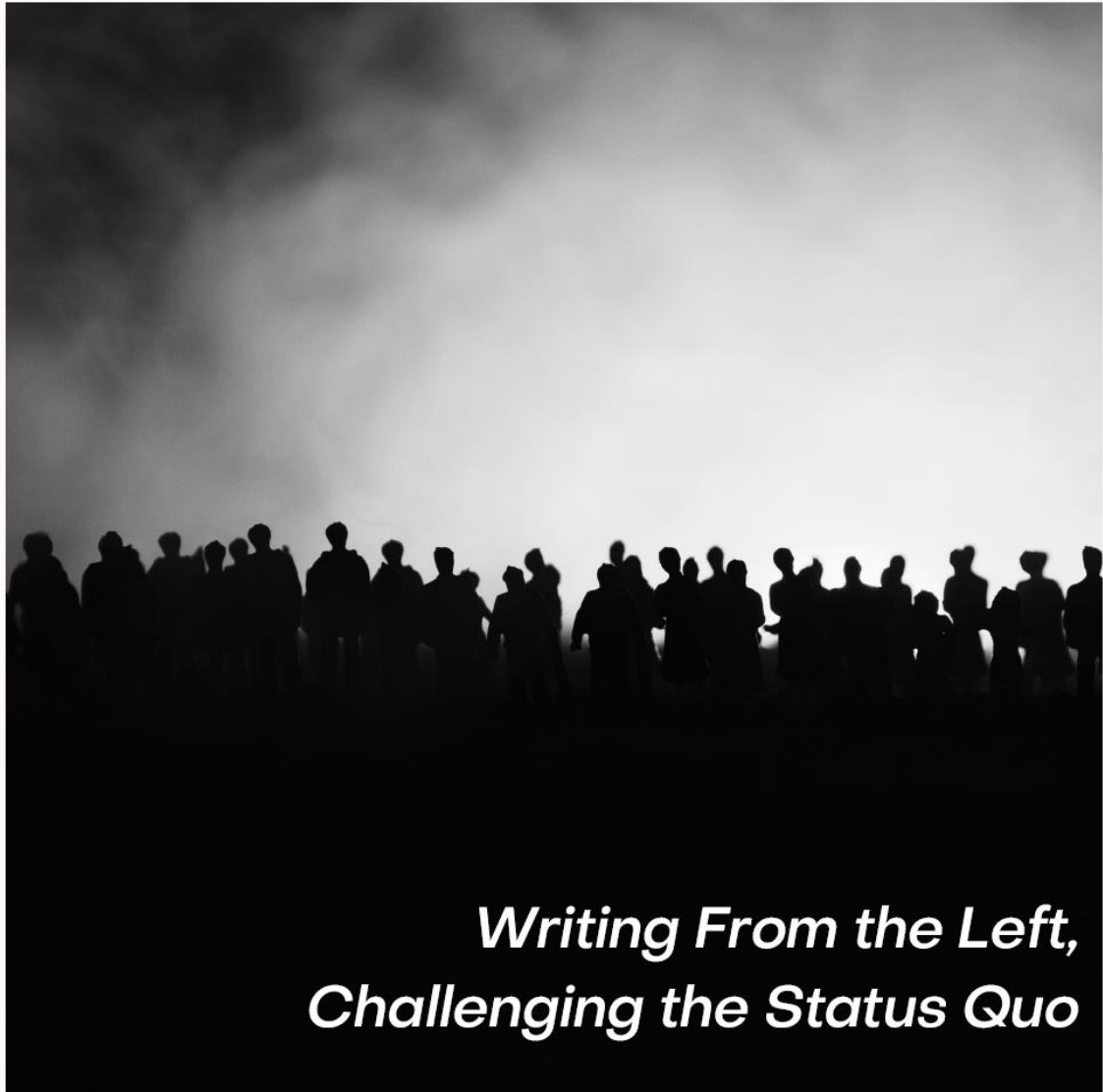


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LUKE ANDRESKI

HERE'S A TRUTH GRENADE:

YOU'VE BEEN TREATED LIKE GARBAGE.

THE ESTABLISHMENT DOESN'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT YOU.

YOU DESERVE TO BE LISTENED TO.

AND ANOTHER:

YOU WANT HOPE.

YOU WANT SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR YOUR CHILDREN.

YOU WANT TO FEEL PART OF SOMETHING SPECIAL.

**THESE ARE DIFFICULT TRUTHS TO HIDE FROM.
DENY THEM AND THEY'LL EVENTUALLY EXPLODE
IN YOUR FACE.**

LUKE ANDRESKI IS CO-FOUNDER OF THE @ETHICALRENEWAL AND ETHICALINTELLIGENCE.ORG COOPERATIVES, A CAMPAIGNER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE ENVIRONMENT, A WRITER, PHILOSOPHER AND POET.

DARK GREEN BOOKS