



Greta Thunberg: Cathedral Thinking

Talare

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Aktivist

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My name is Greta Thunberg. I am sixteen years old. I come from Sweden. And I want you to panic.

I want you to act as if your house was on fire.

I have said those words before.

A lot of people have explained why that is a bad idea. A great number of politicians have told me that panic never leads to anything good.

And I agree. To panic unless you have to is a terrible idea. But when your house is on fire and you want to keep your house from burning to the ground then that does require some level of panic.

Our civilization is so fragile it is almost like a castle built in the sand. The façade is so beautiful but the foundations are far from solid.

We have been cutting so many corners.

Yesterday the world watched with despair and enormous sorrow how Notre-Dame burned in Paris. Some buildings are more than just buildings. But Notre-Dame will be rebuilt. I hope that its foundations are strong. I hope that our foundations are even stronger. But I fear they are not.

Around the year 2030, 10 years, 259 days and 10 hours away from now, we will be in a position where we will set off an irreversible chain reaction beyond human control that will most likely lead to the end of our civilization as we know it. That is, unless in that time permanent and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society have taken place, including a reduction of our CO2 emissions by at least 50 per cent. And please note that these calculations are

depending on inventions that have not yet been invented at scale. Inventions that are supposed to clear our atmosphere of astronomical amounts of carbon dioxide.

Furthermore these calculations do not include unforeseen tipping points and feedback loops, like the extremely powerful methane gas escaping from rapidly thawing Arctic permafrosts. Nor do they include already locked-in warming, hidden by air pollution, nor the aspect of equity, nor climate justice, clearly stated throughout the Paris Agreement, which is absolutely necessary to make it work on a global scale.

We must also bear in mind that these are just calculations, estimations, meaning that the point of no return may occur a bit sooner or later than that. No one can know for sure. We can however be certain that they will occur approximately in these time-frames. Because these calculations are not opinions or wild guesses. These predictions are backed up by scientific facts, concluded by all nations through the IPCC.

Nearly every major scientific body around the world unreservedly supports the work and findings of the IPCC.

We are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction and the extinction rate is up to 10,000 times faster than what is considered normal, with up to 200 species becoming extinct every single day.

Erosion of fertile top soil. Deforestation of our great forests. Toxic air pollution. Loss of insects and wildlife. The acidification of our oceans.

These are all disastrous trends being accelerated by a way of life that we, here in our financially fortunate part of the world, see as our right to simply carry on.

But hardly anyone knows about these catastrophes or understands that they are just the first few symptoms of climate ecological breakdown.

Because how could they? They have not been told. Or more importantly, they have not been told by the right people, and in the right way.

Our house is falling apart.

Our leaders need to start acting accordingly.

Because at the moment they are not.

If our house was falling apart our leaders wouldn't go on like you do today. You would change almost every part of your behaviour as you do in an emergency. If our house was falling apart, you wouldn't fly around the world in business class, chatting about how the market will solve everything with clever, small solutions to specific, isolated problems.

You wouldn't talk about buying and building your way out of a crisis that has been created by buying and building things.

If our house was falling apart, you wouldn't hold three emergency Brexit summits, and no emergency summit regarding the breakdown of the climate and ecosystems.

You wouldn't be arguing about phasing out coal in fifteen or eleven years. If our house was falling apart, you wouldn't be celebrating that one single nation, like Ireland, may soon divest from fossil fuels.

You wouldn't celebrate that Norway has decided to stop drilling for oil outside the scenic resort of the Lofoten Islands, but will continue to drill for oil everywhere else, for decades.

It's thirty years too late for that kind of celebration.

If our house was falling apart the media wouldn't be writing about anything else.

The ongoing climate and ecological crisis would make up all the headlines.

If our house was falling apart, you wouldn't say that you have the situation under control, and place the future living conditions of all species in the hands of inventions that are yet to be invented. And you would not spend all your time, as politicians, arguing about taxes or Brexit.

If the walls of our house truly came tumbling down, surely you would set your differences aside and start cooperating.

Well, our house is falling apart. And we are rapidly running out of time. And yet basically nothing is happening.

Everyone and everything needs to change. So why waste precious time arguing about what and who needs to change first?

Everyone and everything has to change. But the bigger your platform, the bigger your responsibility. The bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty.

When I tell politicians to act now, the most common answer is that they can't do anything drastic because it would be too unpopular among the voters.

And they are right, of course, since most people are not even aware of why those changes are required. That is why I keep telling you to unite behind the science. Make the best available science the heart of politics and democracy.

The EU elections are coming up soon and many of us who will be affected the most by this crisis, people like me, are not allowed to vote. Nor are we in a position to shape the decisions of business, politics, engineering, media, education or science. Because the time it takes for us to educate ourselves to do that simply does no longer exist. And that is why millions of children are taking to the streets, school-striking for the climate to create attention for the climate crisis.

You need to listen to us, we who cannot vote.

You need to vote for us, for your children and grandchildren.

What we are doing now can soon no longer be undone.

In this election, you vote for the future living conditions of humankind.

And though the politics needed do not exist today, some alternatives are certainly less worse than others. And I have read in the newspapers that some

parties do not even want me standing here today because they so desperately do not want to talk about climate breakdown.

Our house is falling apart. The future as well as what we have achieved in the past is literally in your hands now. But it is still not too late to act. It will take a far-reaching vision. It will take courage. It will take fierce determination to act now, to lay the foundations when we may not know all the details about how to shape the ceiling.

In other words, it will take cathedral thinking.

I ask you to please wake up and make the changes required possible.

To do your best is no longer good enough.

We must all do the seemingly impossible.

And it's okay if you refuse to listen to me. I am after all just a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl from Sweden. But you cannot ignore the scientists, or the science, or the millions of schoolchildren who are school-striking for their right to a future.

I beg you, please do not fail in this.

Taggar

2010-tal, 2019, Fridays for future, Kvinna, Miljö och klimat

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