

i watched the disability debate last night
by claudewittmann, May 17, 2018

part one: next morning

today, as i do every day, i deny my own social vulnerability. this is a habit, a second nature. i deny my wiring and i melt into the collective nervous system, the dominant (aesth)etics. it gives me the illusion that i am part of something. and that maybe, improbably, i will find there the right words at the right time to fight for the existence that a lot of others naturally have.

deep inside, i am, still,

isolated.

in a liquid corner of my brain that dedicates itself to loop survival threats in order to save me the embarrassment of screaming them out.

part two: abstract table

i abstractly sit at the table with each of the parties as i experienced them last night during the debate.

i face a Green. i hear that they know that it is not possible to live on the current social assistance rates and i hear that they believe it possible to raise them to the Ontario basic income pilot project level, i.e. to 75% LIM. i could live on that. they say they would also end the claw-back of ODSP. i feel grateful. some truth is spoken. unfortunately it is spoken by somebody who will not lead our province.

i face a Liberal. they use a language that somewhat seduces me. i feel there might be some agency coming back to me after loosing it slowly over long years of austerity politics. i hear "more money in the pocket of individuals, allowing them to make the choices that they need to make and preventing some of the crisis that we are seeing today. we have to do that with a strong economy". i hear about a new definition of spouse, about reducing the claw-back on my earnings, i hear about a full exemption of the asset limit. i do not understand why the claw-back is not declared illegal right now and i have no assets, but at least, some of my human rights seem to be considered. am i going to get more agency though? no, there is absolutely no hint of a true overhaul of the system. i will get a meager 3% increase of my allowance, i.e. \$34/month. this is a slap in the face given the fact that the Roadmap for Change that they commissioned recommended more increase. and it is surely ridiculous in comparison to the cost of life. who am i right now? déjà vu. i face the Liberal who wants to understand, seduce me into their (aesth)etics, but do not (know how to) listen. too attached to their values or too afraid of mine. there is no relationship. maybe because i am still ugly in their mind and coming closer feels dangerous to them.

i face a PC. their shadow is even darker. on their stolen land, i have nothing to say and i do not even exist but for my sarcasm, dark humour and self-denial. they send blades against barriers to accessibility, but while doing so they blatantly show their assumptions about my way of being and they build enormous walls between us. cold and senseless. in their minds, my life is going to get better after they cut corporate taxes, freeze my allowance and match me with an employer apparently of their choice through a matching agency. really? keep me poor, cut services and decide who i work for. how different is this from marginalization, oppression and enforced labour? i listen to more. inside. sadness, nausea, terror, depression, morbidity. and then, i remember that the PC also wants to invest 1.9 billion in mental health and addictions and so, i drift. i imagine myself strapped in a mental health research lab helplessly surrendering to a scientist trying to find the best politically correct radiative invasion of my brain to treat the crisis that the PC oppression has triggered. full circle. as i am strapped in the mental health hospital, i cannot rebel anymore. isn't this handy? safer for me and for them. far from each other.

i face a NDP. i hear about a lot of investments in housing and promises on employment. 5% increase of my allowance in the next few years. \$57/month. higher increases for people living on OW. a tiny bit of relief for them. \$57/month is clearly not enough.

who am i, right now? do i exist?
i observe, my truth.

there is disappointment, disorientation. but, there is a bit of grounding because 5% is what the Roadmap suggested and the Roadmap was partly written by Indigenous individuals and groups I respect. and my throat is not closed down. my voice is not suppressed or strapped. something must be speaking to my values. the NDP wants to raise taxes, evaluate the basic income pilot project, establish another independent panel to think long term, introduce universal pharmacare and dental care. finally raising taxes. and "universal" as opposed to "targeted". universal means that it is assumed that we are all equals. just like we are in the face of death. everybody has the same access to the service, without having to justify it, beg for it, work towards it, plead for it, fill forms for it. i am going to get the same dental care as my wealthy landlord. universal touches my heart and my mind. i feel heard in my needs and i feel heard in my chosen values. universal is about another (aesth)etics than the Liberal's push&pull or the PC's oppression. universal defines a relationship i can enter into. and so i drift. i imagine staying in this relationship and speaking my need for a larger increase of all the social assistance rates. i imagine visiting my MP.