

## Ignorance and the Most Hopeful Question by Rich Norman

To ignore, is an active form of ignorance...a wish of sorts. To ignore is to say: "I wish not to know that." Denial, is one of the most primitive defenses, and the choice to ignore a stimulus, is an extension of this defense. Although there is much obvious utility in being able to ignore something, in certain circumstances the result is often not what one might expect. Often, one can "extinguish" a behavior by ignoring it, which amounts to not reinforcing the behavior, but as is so often the case when we apply simplistic behaviorist psychology to complex human behaviors and motivations—the result may be less than ideal.

Social psychology has long understood that frustration leads to aggression, and if left unresolved, that aggression will become depression. In humans, and many other animals as well, frustration leads to aggressive behavior—to hate. Indeed, to be ignored puts one in a unique and ugly position, where one's desires to obtain approval and involvement of the other, are pitted against the hatred and aggression caused by the frustration of being ignored. The ultimate slight! If I am nothing but a gadfly, well then, I shall bite! Every naughty child knows: better a swat, than naught. I know that in my case, the aggressive outweighs the submissive quickly enough, and I personally detest being ignored.

I come from the east coast, and most east coast residents are quite extroverted and aggressive compared to folks out west. Portland was the ultimate eye-opener. It shocked me. I had never seen it, seen such strange behavior! When walking, no one will meet my eyes...all ignore and look at the pavement. Shopping, I push my cart into the aisle, and the product I need is past her, past the fearful woman and her child. She sees my approach, and quickly looks away. I stand, and wait. She ignores, hoping I will reverse, turn tail, perhaps as afraid of confrontation as she, and slink off in fear. I sense that she refuses to meet my eyes, and am incensed to discover she ignores my direct question! "Would you please move aside so I may pass?" Her gaze is fixed ahead, staring at the canned food, ignoring me. The insult, coupled with her weakness, bring up the temper of a schoolyard bully in me, and my father steps in, his voice issuing from my lips, "When I ask you a direct question—*look at me*—NOW!—Move aside!" Sometimes the effect is that of an imperious condescension, sometimes it is that of weakness, but in every case: To ignore someone, is to be rightly hated.

These days, the opportunities to ignore people are multitudinous—from email which goes unanswered, to letters, to calls which are "answered" but the point never "heard"—it seems as if we are ignored from all sides! However, this short-sighted view mistakes the important, the vital, for the trivial. To be ignored by one particular person is more intolerable, more damaging and irreparable than all the rest combined. Most of us survive by extinguishing hope itself, we ignore and refuse to hear the one person, the only person who really matters... ourselves. It is *we* who create the universe, the universe is but our dream, and so, we ignore ourselves, and insult, refuse and disgrace—everything. Here is what I mean:

Modern man has been constructed around error. Error is at the very core of modern

mental construction—in almost every case, a fundamental error is at the nexus, the very connective center of modern personality. This leaves us hopeless, and, in the very most hopeful position. We are the product of a guilty dream, and indeed, we dream all the world into being each moment. I detest mysticism so I will explain myself: In dreams, we assemble unsaturated memory traces, uninteresting aspects from the last few day's life experience, and give those unimportant things symbolic meaning as we place them into a narrative. Likewise, each day all the world is but a dead thing, a potential memory trace, a perception free from endemic quality, an object free from meaning, a "what if" to which we assign affective/emotional value, and hence, give definition. Eg., One person may look upon my pet mouse as a disgusting creature most ugly and grotesque, another may find it cute. The mouse is the same, a neutral perceptual substrate, it is the affect with which it is endowed which give the mouse its perceptual and experiential quality, not any quality in the object itself. The mouse is as all the universe is to us—a symbol. Hence the notion—we dream all the world into being each moment. The problem lies not in the universe, but in the dreamer who has created it.

The most Hopeful question:

What is illness but a poorly crafted dream—what is unhappiness but a dreamer with broken eyes—what is hope but change—what is truth but an assault upon our broken dreams—what is the highest hope of mankind but the knowledge, *that he may yet dream again?*

To walk away from the fact, so very useless, the fact of our unshakeable belief: to recast our world—it is this that we may dream. Our dream, is to dream again. No less than that. To understand why, why you are the way you are, the error and the height which is you and all of us, the question so poorly summed, the error can be reformed, re-dreamt and re-known!—the error is but a piece of history and a fake! All the world can be re-dreamt, the dreamer free from the fact! We are both the dream and the dreamer—indeed the dreamer is but a bit of his own dream, and so, even he can be reclaimed, his world and himself—hoped and dreamt—*anew*. Of course, quite naturally—such hope comes at a price.

First, one must look plainly upon the problem. The guilty dream is but a wound most desperate, a wound holding us close, and holding us—forever sick. A pill will not cure this dream, this darkness is not shed with pretty thoughts and forgetting—never! Only those willing *to look and never forget*, only those such as you or I have this strength—only we might both wish, and wish it so—even *wish* to know. . . *this*. Yes! Let us know—even this! Only then will we become worthy of a new dream—only then have we earned the right—to dream again.

So, my friend, I hold the choice before us both and tease you, in hopes you will find strength enough to be curious, and perhaps—to look. Are you strong enough? Here, look, read with me and know of it—for only then might we begin...to dream again. The universe is ours! So shouts my dream of the world and life—a silver shout to light the blackness—to find the world borne out—a spark snaps the void awake to sudden laughter and warmth, bright and shining is the day dreamt again and anew, a dream as brightness,

a dream to crack open the guilty stupid heart of man until it spills itself anew, re-founded in a spring of tears and light. Read of our sullied error, of Prometheus, and our silver hope swallowed beneath ugliness, now free...read of Native Psychoanalysis. Here my friend, go to: [www.richnorman.com](http://www.richnorman.com) and follow the link to the psychology journal. To begin a new dream is a simple and daring thing, it begins where your fear holds you blind and mute, as an invisible question, a question we can not hear but to ignore—until Strength finds Hope awake and dreaming, and decides...*to look*.

Oregon resident Rich Norman, editor in chief of *The Journal of Unconscious Psychology*, is a writer and musician with degrees in philosophy and music. Known as "The Laughing Recluse," he is the author of books spanning philosophy, psychology, and novels, with topics ranging from psychoanalytic theory to existential philosophy, verse and fiction. All text in this column is printed with the permission of, and remains the sole property of, the author, Rich Norman. Contact: [rich@richnorman.com](mailto:rich@richnorman.com)