

The age of empathy

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I found this weekend depressing.

Partly that was the result of having a ferocious cold.

Partly it was lowish mood in anticipation of my father's funeral this week (it has taken an age to happen).

Then the result in Brazil was bad.

And, of course, there was the approval of Brett Kavanaugh. Even if he never committed a crime, that a person so deeply misogynist could be confirmed as a member of the US Supreme Court on the basis of a strictly partisan vote shows a break down in all the norms of decency that underpin representative democracy as the price of loyalty to a party that has lost touch with the most basic of respect for large parts of the population, and women in particular.

What is depressing is that this does not even seem like an accident. It appears very deliberate. And that to me stinks.

But it also suggests something else: it suggests that breakdowns such as this, grim as they are, can and, I think will, be the catalyst for the changes that are coming closer.

Of course I can misread mood, and I am under no illusion about the fact that the Republicans and populists in general have significant support, but what I think will happen is that a moment will arrive when anger will spillover and people will simply declare that they have had enough of being abused.

There is a chance that will be brutally suppressed. That has happened before, of course. But when I look at young people I see too many who think that equality is implicit in all their values and cannot now be abused by anyone, even if they are not oppressed. They are from an age of empathy. And although it feels like we are a long way from that this weekend I think the dinosaurs are dying. I remain optimistic that there will be change.

But it requires an act of considerable faith on occasion.