

On the Crucial Import of Good Spiritual Sense Making in Times of Crisis



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Note: This is the lightly edited, updated, and expanded transcript of an oral talk given by Dr. Marc Gafni towards the end of March, 2020. The original talk is found [here](#).

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By Dr. Marc Gafni

Welcome, everyone. It's a hard time. It's a painful time. What we want to do in this short article is what we might call sense making.

Making Common Sense

It's a time when we need to do sense making – both personal and collective.

Part of meeting this challenge – and any challenge – is having a common thread, a shared understanding of the truth, both subjective interior and objective exterior truth, based on the best information we have, the best cumulative wisdom we have drawn from all of its sources, contemporary as well as ancient. We might call this shared sense making common sense. We need common sense making to understand everything that is happening and our place in it. But it is not only an interior necessity for our internal well-being and sanity – which of course has enormous impact on our external health [see Psychoneuroimmunology and all of the extensive literature on the feedback loop between interiors and exteriors] – but it is more than even that. It is deeper than that. This is a moment where we need to come together deeply – as One People, One World, One Cause, One Love, One Heart, to fight for the common good against a common enemy. And yet although it is not New Age, politically correct, it is appropriate to call a virus that kills people a common enemy. Obviously viruses are not the enemy. We are each constituted by 380 trillion viruses. We are viruses. But this particular virus that is killing us is in this moment our enemy. To fight it and other deadly mutations of the virus in the future we need however not only to create a vaccine but to do deeper sense making and understand as best as we can the deeper fact patterns that caused the virus. To do that we need common sense or common sense making, a shared story, a narrative thread of meaning that we can all locate ourselves inside of...

The first piece of sense making we want to do is to understand the cause of this virus; human beings naturally search for meaning and part of meaning is causation. What caused this virus?

The Global Intimacy Disorder: The Fact Pattern That Was Cause for Corona

I was moved to give this talk after many super-intelligent and good people sent me a video entitled something like “Thank You, Coronavirus.” That video was just one example of bad spiritual sense making taking place in the middle of an acute crisis. The crisis itself is a function

of what we have called a Global Intimacy Disorder. Tragically, the video thanking Corona, is an expression of the same intimacy disorder that originally created the fact pattern that caused the virus and its spread.

Let me gently point out at the outset that saying the virus is a derivative of a Global Intimacy Disorder is not a woowoo statement. It is the simple truth. It is the fact pattern of causation that according to our best understanding it, or some version of it, generated Coronavirus.

Both, the inception of the Coronavirus and the failure to be ready for its arrival, are rooted in what can only be accurately described as failures of intimacy. These failures of intimacy are not the exception but the virtual rule in our societies. They are expressions that characterize what we have called the Global Intimacy Disorder.

Let's look for a moment at the inception of the virus.¹

Poor populations in the wet markets of China began to eat – out of economic necessity – what came to be called bushmeat. To get this bushmeat, the forests are despoiled. Wild animals – snakes, bats, rodents, pangolins, and others – dislocated from their natural ecosystems are left in the open, vulnerable and unprotected. They are hunted ever more widely and their meat – bushmeat – is then sold in the wet markets.

The animals are slaughtered without regard to their pain or to any standard of sanitation. Bushmeat became the fare of the poor. It was this kind of meat which became a core feature of the wet markets of China.

Animals slaughtered painfully in front of customers, in front of other animals including their own kin, are a regular feature of the wet markets.

¹There is also quite a lot of probably credible information that Covid-19 is a genetically engineered virus developed in the Wuhan P4 lab arguably for bioweapons. It would be major understatement that developing bioweapons that could sicken and even kill hundreds of millions of people is an ultimate failure of intimacy. Whether the virus then spread to the wet market or via other channels at that point becomes irrelevant. There is probably credible information which seems to strongly indicate that the Chinese communist party [as distinct from the Chinese people], which is tragically known for what can only be described as classical ethnocentric evil, appears to be directly running the research programs at the lab. Evil at its core is a failure of intimacy.

Against what appear to be ostensibly credible reports of the non-human source of the virus including numerous papers in respected journals that report on research in the Wuhan P4 lab to generate a virus that would cross species from animal to humans (see for example this documentary of The Epoch Times: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/coronavirusfilm>), there are counter-reports in ostensibly credible sources affirming the natural source of the virus (see for example this article from ScienceNews: <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/coronavirus-covid-19-not-human-made-lab-genetic-analysis-nature>). This is but another example of our broken information ecology. It also points to the fact that what often appears to be science is in fact the willing or unwilling tool of larger forces, be they political, economic, ideological, or other. Those forces may be both benign or despotic. It is virtually impossible for a lay person to discern between them - hence our broken information ecologies, themselves a primary source and expression of our Global Intimacy Disorder.

The wet markets – part of the standard fare of a desensitized world – brought together the banality of unchallenged and almost unnoticed cruelty to animals together with an abandonment of elementary health standards when it comes to the poor.

But this is not an exclusively Chinese problem. The cruelty to animals that characterizes Wet Markets is equally evident, yet more hidden from the public eye, in the American factory farms that are the meat source of most of the people listening to this talk.

Both the pain of the animals and the health hazard were split off from our consciousness as it did not seem to affect us directly. We went on with our lives. We lived non-intimate lives split off from the cruelty around us.

That is but one of myriad expressions of the Global Intimacy Disorder. At some point some poor guy ate a bat in Wuhan, China, the virus jumped from the bat to the person, and Covid-19 was born. It is not that viruses are bad. Viruses per se are an intrinsic part of our health and wholeness. But when a virus that is native to the plant and animal world jumps to the human world – directly caused by human intimacy disorders – then a pandemic cycle begins.

Of course we knew, another respiratory pandemic was on its way. We knew that "microbes not missiles" had become the major global threat. But we ignored it. Many leading-edge thinkers, writers, think tanks, and others warned that catastrophic risk was imminent, soon to be followed by existential risk. In particular, there were numerous serious books and papers telling of the coming of catastrophe. But again, we split off from all the highly credible and well-researched warnings that we received.

Why? Because almost all of those who might have acted, self-identified as separate selves. In the success story of the separate self, success is defined solely by the win-lose metrics of prosperity and status.

What does this have to do with stopping a pandemic? Taking a stand to stop a potential pandemic would have meant taking a stand against the various structures of economics and politics that were invested in ignoring the threat. Taking that stand would have threatened one's place in the win-lose metrics success story. Stopping a pandemic that had not yet arrived and for which one did not seem directly responsible was not a way to advance one's standing in the win-lose success game of either politics or economics, or even journalism.

So in a cascading set of failures of intimacy and collapses of integrity, all those who could have acted, one by one, ignored the call of love and let the status quo, with its quarterly reports and other measuring systems of the win-lose metrics, triumph over the multitudes of serious steps we might have taken to make our society antifragile and to protect against the coming plague. The Global Intimacy Disorder is virtually always cause for either global action paralysis or global action confusion.

We Never Dispel the Mystery

That does not mean that by identifying the Global Intimacy Disorder that we will ever dispel the mystery of suffering. Suffering is mystery. We will never dispel the mystery with our sense making. The mystery will always remain. But it is the mystery itself that invites our sense making.

We have to find our way into the mystery. We need basic sense making principles - as the Coronavirus rages around us – from which to orient, to find our way, to act, and to deepen.

We live in a moment of decentralized sense making. We cannot rely at this point on the government, the church, or the alternative churches of the human potential movement in its New Age varieties.

Our information ecologies are broken. Our sense of larger patterns and larger worldviews has been fractured and fragmented. We need to sense our way back to a vision of goodness, truth, and beauty, based on the best information – in the interior and exterior sciences that we have available to us.

By exterior sciences I mean all of the hard sciences and soft sciences with their means of measurement, experimentation, and data collection. By interior sciences I mean the science of spirit, as codified in the great traditions of premodernity coupled with the wisdom sources of modernity and post modernity.

Outrageous Pain, Outrageous Beauty, Outrageous Love

The second dimension of sense making is not about cause but about response. Whatever the cause, how do we respond to the Virus?

We live in a world of outrageous pain, and the only response to outrageous pain is Outrageous Love.

Yet, even as we experience outrageous pain, the outrageous beauty of Kosmos never ceases even for an instance. So it is concurrently true that we live in a world of outrageous beauty. The only response to outrageous beauty is Outrageous Love. We can never disassociate from the lap of LoveBeauty and LoveIntelligence that in-forms us in every second.

We celebrate and laugh out of one side of our mouth and we cry in despair and often agony out of the other side of our mouth.

The outrageous pain is real; and in these days we feel the pain of the Coronavirus, which is now a collective pain across the world. Think of the five Italian doctors who came out of retirement knowing that they were vulnerable but they were healers and could not sit by idly. They all died, heroes of Outrageous Love. We celebrate them and we mourn them. And the tragedy deepens. People are dying and people are often dying alone because of the appropriately necessary but tragic fear of contagion. A single mother contracts symptoms in Atlanta, Georgia and goes home early. No one checks up on her and she dies at home witnessed by her daughter who does not

know what to do. The sick and the dying are not numbers or invisible points on a graph. They are people who love and cry and laugh and make love and yearn.

Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die, Who by Pestilence

The ancient prayer that Leonard Cohen sang:

*Who shall live and who shall die,
Who shall reach the end of his days and who shall not,
Who shall perish,
Who by famine and who by thirst,
Who by earthquake and who by plague,
Who shall have rest and who shall wander,*

Governments are working feverishly – private initiatives and individuals are working feverishly – to save lives, to flatten the curve, but we’re not doing enough. We have known about this pandemic for years. Catastrophic risk and existential risk have been on the table. There has been and still continues to be a failure of concerted action driven by multiple sets of ego dynamics, both personal and political, coupled with predatory opportunism. All of this is still – as of this writing – blocking our capacity to act decisively.

What Needs to Be Done Now?

Will we be able to flatten the curve? What are the time frames? There’s an enormous amount that we don’t know and an enormous amount that needs to happen now.

And there are gorgeous people all over the world who are stepping up and stepping forward to love this moment open with competence. Karuna – deep, radical love in Sanskrit – in response to Corona, sacred activists doing so much of what needs to happen now. And there is so much more that needs to be done.

If you have a particular skill, a particular gift, and are not sure who to contact please feel free to find me and I will try and help connect you to the right people in your sector. And wherever you see a need that you can fill – go for it – don’t wait for permission of the King. You are the King. Corona is Karuna and it is also Coronation. You are the King. It is a time for hyper-agency and action. We are all royalty. We are all heroes. We are all responsible for the Kingdom of Earth. Let us act together, holding hands.

At this moment, in response to many emails and questions, with your permission and grace, I want to talk to you about the sense making that we need to do. In particular, I want to address some of the spiritual sense making that has dominated the conversation and has been heavily circulated in many circles.

Now, sense making must take place in the context of action. So clearly the very first thing that needs to be done now is to heal the sick, to have enough ventilators, to have enough beds in

hospitals, to not collapse the medical system, to not collapse the economy – because the economy is about people, about the supply chains that make sure that everyone has access to basic necessities. It's about survival in the most essential of ways.

Catastrophic Risk: Dress Rehearsal for Existential Risk: Never Waste a Tragedy

Let's take the United States just as an example. Seventy five percent of the families in the United States live from paycheck to paycheck. That itself is tragic and a function of our broken system. It is an expression of a world based on efficiency and short term profits – which creates complicated and fragile systems. Complicated systems are vast networks of parts, think the world financial system, that are artificially strung together, with no inherent connection between the parts and are therefore not antifragile – easily subject to severe disruption and breakdown. Part of what makes the systems vulnerable is that they are complicated and not complex. Complex systems [think Brazilian Rainforest] are made up of parts that are inherently allured to each other.

One of the central factors that denudes complicated systems of allurements is the narrative of identity held by all those who form the system. Everyone understands themselves as separate selves competing for success – with the win-lose metric being the animating motive and structure of the narrative. That so many in the system are caught in a success story based on win-lose metrics means that quarterly profits and personal advancement – the ways to win the success story game – almost always triumph over building a resilient system that is anti-fragile. Subject a fragile system to stress and it teeters on collapse. So, doing everything that needs to be done short term to hold the system needs to be first on everyone's list. And then we must make sure NOT to go back to business as usual. There is nothing more tragic than to waste a tragedy. And Corona is but the first run of catastrophic risk which itself is a dress rehearsal for existential risk.

Evolving the Source Code of Culture and Consciousness: The Evolution of Love – More Than Ever the Urgent Moral Imperative of Our Time

We must restructure society. The urgent imperative of our time is to evolve the very source code of culture and consciousness. And it must start with a set of shared narratives. We need a new Universe story, a new narrative of identity, a narrative of community, a new story of our power. A new narrative of desire.

At the Center for Integral Wisdom and the Foundation for Conscious Evolution we have been talking about catastrophic risk and existential risk – what we refer to as the second shock of existence – and our response to it for the last decade. We are deep in – working literally day and night – to articulate a set of source code narratives that we understand as having the capacity to take us through this 11th Hour and create a society more beautiful than we have ever seen. At this moment – poised between utopia and dystopia – that is the ultimate moral imperative. It is also a

great joy and privilege and we will – with all of our energy and passion – remain fully focused and committed. But that is for a different conversation.

Love the Moment Open: First We Must Join Hands, Share Resources, and Heal Suffering Now – We Are Love in Action

Right now, all of us must step aside, everything must stop, and we need to turn towards the outrageous pain of this moment. The present trumps the future. Now trumps tomorrow – at least for now.

We must love this moment open with activism.

WE MUST BECOME LOVE IN ACTION.

And we can. Because we are. WE ALREADY ARE.

Because that is who we truly are in our most essential identity. We are unique configurations of Evolutionary Love. We are unique configurations of Outrageous Love. To begin to live from that place is what it means to be lived as love. That is the great invitation of this time. It is the great joy of this time. It is the only true joy in the midst of the tears. We are unique configurations of Outrageous Love committing the Outrageous Acts of Love that are ours and ours alone to commit.

That is what it means to be an Outrageous Lover. If you hurt then I hurt. And when I hurt I need to alleviate the pain. When you hurt I need to alleviate your pain. If you hurt I must act. If I hurt I know you will act.

We are One Love and One Heart and One World and One Body. Your joy is my joy and your pain is my pain.

That is the core of spirit. Isaiah, the great prophet, mystic, and poet, channels the Divine Voice in his prophecy when he writes as God,

“In all of your pain She [Goddess] is in pain with you.”

This is the core realization of Divine *pathos* and Eros in the interior sciences. God or Spirit – or whatever name you want to use – is the Infinity of Power.

Spirit – or infinity – does not need finitude in any obvious way. And yet spirit reaches beyond the limits of its own infinite self-absorption and allows him-/ her-/ itself to feel the pain of other, to cry the tears of other, to be moved and blown up in *em-pathos* by the suffering of other.

Spirit moves to *em-pathos* because the Infinity of Power is also the Infinity of Intimacy. The greatest power is to transcend narrow self-interest and narrow experiences of self and to know that in all of your pain I feel pain – and in all of your joy I feel joy.

That radical intimacy between infinity and finitude is born of intimacy. Intimacy means shared identity + mutuality of recognition + mutuality of *pathos* + mutuality of purpose. That is what it means to be in love. To be in love is to enter intimacy with you. That means we have a level of shared identity + mutuality of recognition + mutuality of *pathos* + mutuality of purpose. It was William Blake who said something like “*Eternity is in love with the productions of time.*” To be in love with reality is what it means to be an Outrageous Lover or what we have called *Homo amor*.

To be in love is to be alive. We don’t want to exile being “in love” into one romantic expression with one person for your whole life. That does not mean you cannot have a gorgeous monogamous relationship with one person for your whole life. Of course, you can.

But don’t limit being in love to that frame. Fall in love with ideas. Fall in love with men, women, children, old people, the ocean, trees, projects. Be in love – as God is – with the productions of time. That is what it means to participate in Spirit. That is what it means to be part of a participatory universe. First and foremost, it means that you expand your circle of intimacy – your circle of mutual *pathos* beyond your narrow love list.

Where there is outrageous pain, you do not look away. Even if you cannot solve it. You feel it and you respond with Outrageous Love. You participate in the pain of Spirit in exile, who feels the pain and joy of reality. That is what it means to be *Homo amor*. That is the beginning of a new Human and a new humanity.

The amount of pain, dislocation, disruption, and suffering is intense and real and we need to respond to it. And the only response to outrageous pain is Outrageous Love.

To be an Outrageous Lover is to incarnate as your core identity – your unique configuration of Outrageous Love.

What does that mean?

What does an Outrageous Lover do?

An Outrageous Lover feels the joy and pain of others beyond his own personal agenda or needs.

And in response to that mutuality of *pathos*, an Outrageous Lover commits Outrageous Acts of Love.

Which ones?

As an Outrageous Lover, you commit those Outrageous Acts of Love that are a function of your Unique Self. They are waiting for you. You are the only one who can stand on the abyss of darkness and say – “Let there be light” – in that very particular and unique way that is yours and yours alone.

But of course you are not really alone because you are joining hands with all of the unique selves around the world who each committing their unique outrageous acts of love, and from that joining of hands the Unique Self Jazz Symphony begins to play, creating new music, new love, new value, new iterations of the good the true and the beautiful.

Be the Hero of Your Life by Being the Hero of Your Neighbor's Life

It's not just the Italian doctors who are being the most incredible Outrageous Lovers, unbelievable beyond imagination.

It's all of us and each of us who need to be, who are needed by All-That-Is, in this very moment, to be heroes.

We need to protect our elderly who are more precious than precious. We need to provide every resource we can. We need to share our homes when it's appropriate within the context of physical distancing. We need to share our resources, which means our money and our time.

We need to take care of everyone and everything we can right now even as we need to participate in and support the articulation of the new story. The new story is the source code evolution that will take us through the future and can turn potential dystopia of a far more intense kind than we've ever known into genuine utopia. That is the evolution of the source code that we just talked about a few minutes ago.

We need to plunge into the present with open hearts and open resources and be the heroes in this moment. At the same time, we need to hold the memory of the future, tell the New Universe Story and the new story of identity – Who Am I? Who Are We? – and be the heroes of the future.

But right now, we need to share our hearts. We need to join hands. We need to respond to outrageous pain with Outrageous Love. We need to be heroes not only of our own stories but of our neighbors' stories, of our friends' stories. Think about all the people who don't have the luxury of physical distancing. Think about the homeless, the people in prisons, think about Bangladesh in the same breath as Manhattan. One Love – One Heart. Support both if you can and keep your heart in the present and in the possible future at the same time.

That's the first dimension of sense making. Any sense making which skips the immediate need in front of us is not kosher.

There is great value in meditation, there is great value in quieting the mind. There is great value in locating ourselves in the larger field of consciousness. There is huge value in personal and collective practice in which we locate ourselves in the larger field.

Any Sense Making That Cannot Be Spoken This Week in a New York Hospital Is Not Kosher

But any sense making which does not plunge into the immediate need of distinct individuals suffering this moment – is not kosher. I am going to very gently cite one example here. Don't bother looking it up. It did not appear online so you will not be able to identify who wrote this. That is not the point. I don't want to shame or attack anyone. We just need to share what kind of spiritual sense making is non-sense in this moment in time.

“You know, I believe everyone realizes that when you look directly in the moment for the ‘I,’ the story that comes out of the past of who I am, the identity, it is never possible to find someone. It is only possible to find a story. The individual appears when you are pulled away by the habit of distraction, but you can never find the individual in reality, which is now. You can find thoughts and sensations, but you cannot find a person. The obvious byproduct is that the unity that we are, the consciousness that we all are, influences everything because the separate individual is imaginary. Every single thing is being orchestrated by the highest intelligence. So, nothing can ever be wrong. Things are only wrong in the mind, which is born out of the past in which you've never existed. It's a fantasy of wrong. So, it is to let go of the fantasy of wrong, the fantasy of concern. You look for these thoughts and who is choosing them. You never find anyone. It is all just appearing. You let the appearance go, you remain connected with the heart, and then you feel totality and it is obvious it is all playing the only way it can. The feeling of it is the feeling of love and light.

So, don't be troubled with mind thoughts. They are only habits that have no inherent reality. Just rest where the beauty lives, in the moment, which remains undisturbed. Undisturbed.”

Undisturbed Is Not Kosher: Be Disturbed and Rest and Act at the Same Time

The first dimension of sense making is what can I do right now to take care of somebody – a real individual who is suffering – for real: Who needs my help? The first step is to let yourself be DISTURBED.

And then rest in the great ONE and then be disturbed and then ACT AS LOVE, BE LIVED AS LOVE, COMMIT YOUR OUTRAGEOUS ACTS OF LOVE.

My teacher Nachman of Breslav once wrote that the reason that God created the human experience that Spirit might not be real – he called it *Heresy* – we might call the same position *Spirit as social construction* – was so that at the time of suffering, the human being would realize that it is all up to him or her and there is no Spirit in which to hide. Nachman of course knew of the ultimate depth and reality of Spirit and he also knew that we were born – *just in time for a time like this* – so that in this moment, we could be disturbed and commit our Outrageous Acts of Love. That is, in the language of Abraham Kook, a student of Nachman's as well, “*Heresy which*

is Faith.” We deny the caricatures of God and consciousness in order to BE God and consciousness.

Triumphing Over Natural Selection

This moment is the opposite of natural selection. The myth is that randomness and natural selection drive reality in a direction in which the weak and the vulnerable are somehow dispossessed. But actually natural selection is but one of the factors that drives evolution [as Stuart Kaufman and so many others have pointed out.

There is however a deeper drive – the arc and context in which the mechanism of natural selection is one of multiple factors in the evolutionary process. The underlying driver of evolution is the progressive deepening of intimacies. From quarks which form atoms to atoms which form molecules to molecules which then intensify their intimacy in a “second Big Bang” to awaken as cells, the *telos* of evolution is the evolution of intimacy which itself is the evolution of love. This is not the moment for a full unpacking of this idea, but those of you who have been studying with us for the past several years are deeply familiar with the structures of thought in the sciences that serve as a powerful foundation for this understanding. [I super hope you read and respond to the two books that we are now releasing that Barbara Marx Hubbard and I worked on intensely right before she passed, on the nature of the Intimate Universe and the evolution of intimacy as the core driver of evolution]

Beyond the Four Old Stories: Success, Romance, Victim, & Separate Self Hero

At the human level of consciousness, as love becomes self-aware and evolution itself awakens inside of us, we are done with the dominance of natural selection. We cry a resounding *No* to natural selection and a resounding *Yes* to life. We realize that who we are as a society is how we take care of our weakest and most vulnerable.

So, this is a moment to move beyond what we’ve called in our conversations *Homo sapiens sapiens*, which is the egoic expression of the human separate self, whose core narrative is insipid and thin. The separate self human lives in four stories:

A Success Story Driven by Win-Lose Metrics

and / or

A Victim Story

– I am defined by my violation.

and / or

A Very Small Love Story

– In this constricted story, love ceases to be the motivating force of Kosmos and instead becomes mere human sentiment. Love loses its reality in the human heart as the heart of existence itself in which the human heart participates and becomes rather a very narrow romantic love story between two separate selves. Maybe it also includes some family and a couple of friends, but it excludes all of the rest of reality. In this story, love means just romance between me and one other person; so our love lists get very short.

and / or

My Own Very Private Hero's Journey

– Here I work with my wounds and trauma and seek my separate self heroism that has very little to do with the rest of existence. This is not the hero who is needed by All-That-Is; this is the psychoanalytical self-absorption of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey.

The New Story Is the New Identity: From Homo Sapiens to Homo Amor

We need to move beyond those stories and locate ourselves as *Homo amor*. We need to invoke in ourselves the new human and the new humanity.

Homo sapiens sapiens needs to be realized as *Homo amor*.

Autonomy and Communion Are Resolved in Ecstasy

It is as *Homo amor* that I know that love is real. Love is not weak; love is strong. Love is not mere human sentiment; it is the animating and motivating heart of existence itself. Love does not overwhelm autonomy. Autonomy is an expression of self-love. But the clash between autonomy – in the sense of the autonomy of separate self – and communion is resolved in ecstasy – the larger ecstasy of Kosmos. The clash between autonomy and communion disappears in the larger fields of both ecstasy and intimacy. Imagine you are dancing with your beloved. You both follow, you both lead. You dance. The clash between autonomy and communion relaxes in the higher embrace of intimacy.

Who Am I?

Homo amor knows the answer to the question of *Who Are You?* Or said in first person, *Who Am I?*

Who am I? I'm an irreducibly unique expression of the LoveIntelligence, LoveBeauty, and LoveDesire that is the animating Eros and energy of All-That-Is – that lives in me, as me and through me – that never was, is, or will be ever again other than through me. As such I have an irreducibly unique perspective and an irreducibly unique quality of intimacy, which taken together foster my unique capacity to give my Unique Gift into my unique circle of intimacy and influence. That is me.

I actually recognize and feel that the LoveIntelligence and LoveBeauty and LoveDesire that is the initiating and animating Eros of All-That-Is lives in me, as me, and through me – and therefore I have the capacity to be that Outrageous Love, to be that unique configuration of Evolutionary Love that reality needs right now.

Literally, evolution moves through me. I AM evolution. I am a unique configuration of Evolutionary Love and, as such, I have Outrageous Acts of Love to commit.

That's my response to life in general, and in this moment, that's absolutely my response to the Coronavirus.

So that's context one and that needs to be said super clearly, and everything else that we are sharing with you in these days through the Center and the Foundation which talks about how to transform, how to be more, how to turn this fate into destiny is only after this core context of Outrageous Love activism is clear.

In the current political moment, we stand with the few social and political thinkers who are correctly proposing that American society use this crisis as inspiration to restore the social safety net, create an inclusive and efficient public health system, and deliver such important social goods as affordable housing. Those proposals are courageous and urgent. But the way they are being framed in the language of old liberal agendas will not work. These calls, which we have heard before, are doomed to failure unless they are based on new and accurate stories. Our new universe stories and narratives of identity, community, power and desire can actually create new trajectories in society.

These new narratives must move beyond what has been termed “polarity politics” and effect a new synergy of the best of conservative and liberal concerns for society, not only in the United States but around the world. What unites us in these new narratives is far greater than anything that divides us. Transformative action that can genuinely change the game emerge from the radical, source-code changing sense making we are talking about. At present, this kind of sense making is almost nowhere to be found, neither in spiritual nor political visionary communities.

So, now is the moment to recognize that this kind of source code evolution is the categorical imperative of this moment. Let's shout it from the rooftops and enact change that wells from our deepest understanding of who we are, where we are, and why we are here.

Now let's go to step two. We have to do now an even deeper level of sense making but only after that first level is fully addressed: In which order do we do sense making? Nothing else matters. The first dimension of sense making is to act! Outrageous Love is as Outrageous Love does. Evolution is Love-in-Action. I am Love-in-Action. So that's where we start.

Yay! Brothers, sisters, remember Avicii?

Oh, if the sky comes falling down, for you

There's nothing in this world I wouldn't do

So we're together in this. That's one.

Do We Thank the Coronavirus?

Now, let's go to the second step in our sense making reality consideration. Should we all thank the Coronavirus because for many people it has brought unexpected blessings of spirit and insight?

Here we have to be very careful. We've got to be very careful of two fallacies, which are really one, that appear now all over the internet.

They are different versions of something like: "I want to thank you, Coronavirus. Thank you, Coronavirus, because you've opened my eyes. I'm now realizing I should spend more time with family and my values are getting realigned. Thank you for showing me what's important. Thank you for reducing pollution. Thank you for reconnecting me with myself. Thank you, Coronavirus." There have been dozens of expressions of this sentiment that have appeared on platforms all over the internet. Here is the text from one of the videos:

*Thank you Coronavirus
Thank you for shaking us and showing us
We are dependent on something so much bigger than we think.*

*Thank you for making us appreciate the luxury we lived in
Abundance of products... freedom... health...
And realizing we were taking it for granted.*

*Thank you for stopping us and make us see how lost we were in the 'busy-ness'
Not having time for the most basic things.*

*Thank you for letting us put aside all our problems
We thought were so important...
And showing us what is actually important...*

It sounds innocent enough. But it is not okay. Now, while factually the Coronavirus may well catalyze all of these good reflections and reevaluations of our priorities in our lives – when a tragedy happens, we move to turn the fate of the tragedy into the destiny of transformation – that is beautiful, that is good – but we don't thank the Coronavirus.

That's really important. You cannot thank the Coronavirus. The Coronavirus is a deadly virus that kills people.

That is bad spirituality. Why? Because people are suffering and that suffering is directly related to the virus. To thank the virus is therefore a gross failure of intimacy.

So, I want to give you a litmus test for good or bad spirituality, for good or bad sense making. Ready?

If you can say it in the ward of an Italian or New York or Indian hospital right now then it's kosher, then it's a good thing to say.

But if you cannot speak it out loud in the ward of an Italian or Indian or American hospital, right now, this week – as these and so many other places are going through wrenching pain, and doctors are dying, and health care workers are dying, and the numbers are exponentially increasing – if you cannot say it in the ward of a hospital in the throes of the virus, then it's not kosher.

Don't Say it. It's Wrong.

That's super important. That's our second dimension of sense making.

The Law of Attraction and the Punishment for Sin Thesis: Where New Age Meets Fundamentalism

With your permission, I want to try and go into this third bit of sense making somewhat more deeply.

There are two classical forms of this kind of wrong sense making. One of them happened in all the traditional religions of premodernity. It was called punishment for sin. It was and is a form of sense making.

People wanted to understand: Why am I suffering? So, the answer came back: You're suffering because you sinned. Your suffering is punishment for your sin. One modern example of this is the fundamentalist preachers, not few in number, who attributed the AIDS pandemic to the "sin of homosexuality."

Now, we recoil from that. We immediately say, "We would never say something like that. That's absurd. That's why we left the church." We feel complete revulsion and anathema for that kind of fundamentalist religious position. But actually precisely that kind of position lies at the center of an enormous amount of what's called alternative spirituality today or New Age spirituality or Human Potential spirituality.

Almost precisely the same structure of consciousness lives in those sense making communities as does in medieval sense making. That idea of punishment for sin, which still exists in all the fundamentalist churches in the world today, lives side by side with a precisely similar position which says: "You've attracted that into your life." You are suffering because your vibration attracted that particular form of trauma or violation into your life. These are versions of the law of attraction which dominates New Age thinking. If you were vibrating at the right frequency you wouldn't have attracted this pain into your life. Here is one of the most subtle and

sophisticated versions of this position which I have seen actively circulated on credible spiritual lists during this time.

“The other side of this is that WE can influence the virus.... If we harness our increased coherence, our evolving, higher frequencies, and our focused intention, we can set up a resonance with this virus and bend it to a less virulent form. This will not only save thousands of lives, but get people out of quarantine earlier, and enable the human body to incorporate the positive aspects of the DNA more quickly.”

The moderator of the list – incidentally a list of great human beings and serious spiritual practitioners – responded to this post by saying,

“I like the last paragraph, that you put up here, dear ..! The virus might especially like this connection, it might be longing for this even!”

Again the assumption is that higher frequency coherence and focused intention can set up a resonance with the virus which will save lives. The natural implication is that it is our failure to establish a higher frequency that is at least in part at fault in the spread of the virus. The quote above is at least fairly nuanced and sophisticated on certain levels. Most are far less so.

Shockingly, one of the formulators of the law of attraction, Abraham Hicks, is reported to have said – just hold onto your seat for a second – that the Jews who went to gas chambers were vibrating at the wrong frequency. That’s, of course, an especially obscene expression of this new age principle, but we actually hear variation of it all the time. In a recorded conversation that I had with my colleague Byron Katie, she deployed a different version of the law of attraction – your thoughts create your reality – to explain a painful story of holocaust suffering which I shared with her. I love Katie but I was shocked both by the naivete and the dogmatic clinging to an obviously wrong stance. Naturally the notion that your thoughts create reality is a good start point to demand some version of a culture of responsibility instead of a culture of victimhood. But there are real victims in the world. And for a third party, spiritual teacher or otherwise to suggest that their thoughts created their victimization is obscene.

Both the New Age move and the Fundamentalist move are saying the same thing: What appears to be random suffering is in one way or another your fault.

We don’t actually thank the Coronavirus. Viruses that kill human beings do not deserve thank you notes. And we didn’t attract the Coronavirus into our lives because we were vibrating at the wrong frequency. That’s not true.

The Coronavirus is a pandemic. The virus needs to be neutralized. So the notion that we ‘attracted’ Corona into our lives through some interior vibrational or other flaw – and therefore we need to thank it for up-leveling our vibration or transforming us – is not kosher. It’s actually obscene. It’s one of the reasons that alternative spiritualities don’t take hold even though they often have an enormous amount of good in them.

Stay with me, let's take this slow and steady, feeling deeply and thinking clearly so we can do good sense making.

Let me give you an analogy just to make it a tad more clear. I lived for many years in the State of Israel. The State of Israel is a complex and beautiful place. It's beloved to me. My children live there, my mother lives there, many friends, many students, many colleagues live there. There's no question that without the Holocaust of the European Jewry during World War II there would be no State of Israel today, or at least it would have taken decades longer until it was established. But we don't thank the gas chambers which were central tools in the Holocaust which killed 12,000 people a day in Auschwitz. We don't thank the gas chambers. The gas chambers performed evil. A virus, like a gas chamber, is an unconscious structure, not an inanimate structure like a gas chamber but an unconscious animate structure – a virus kills people and causes suffering – so we don't thank the virus any more than we would thank the gas chambers. It's really important to get that at a super, super deep level.

Job's Comforters

So if you are in for it let's take this just a little bit deeper. I want to root this for you in some important ancient sources which engage in an important piece of parallel sense making. Remember, we are all capable of sense making. We all have to be sovereign human beings, capable of doing our own sense making, but we need to train, we need to practice. We need to study and access wisdom sources that train us in sense making. So allow me to cite one of the most relevant sources for the kind of sense making that we are doing here.

There was a man named Job in the ancient sacred texts. He stars in the book in the bible that bears his name, the Book of Job. Job suffers. The Book of Job is the story of his suffering and, more centrally, of his response to his suffering and the response of the spiritual teachers of his day who appear as his four friends. Job is an archetype of his own private Coronavirus. His friends come to Job and they begin to explain to him why he suffers. "Hey, Job, let us tell you why you're suffering." One friend says, "You can become a better person. You've got to thank your suffering." The other person says, "You sinned. You're being punished." A third person says, "You attracted the suffering into your life for this or that reason." All of his friends offer New Age or Fundamentalist explanations for Job's suffering.

Job basically says to them, "Fuck you. Your explanations degrade my suffering, degrade me, and degrade God." And he rejects all of their theodicies – all of their spiritual explanations for suffering. He experiences their explanations as failures of intimacy. He needs his friends to feel his pain, to meet him in that pain, to embrace him, to hold him, and to find him ventilators and find him medicine and care for his children who are sick. And in this sacred ancient book, God sides with Job against his comforters. At the end of the book, God/Spirit appears out of the whirlwind. Spirit or God holds Job. God says in effect, "Job, I agree with you. Fuck those spiritual explanations. I am not interested in them. That is not cool. That's not godly. That's not spiritual. It's not okay." The essence of the Divine revelation in the whirlwind was not theological content but the experience of the Divine presence. In radical goodness and clarity of revelation, the questions of suffering are not answered, they simply fall away.

I want to add one thing to this, because it's super important. So God sides with Job in the Book of Job and he rejects the bad sense making of Job's friends. We call those people in culture "Job's comforters." That's not a compliment. We reject Job's comforters in a fundamental way.

Now, let's go the next step. I'll give you another example.

Outrageous Pain Reloaded: Beyond Victim Shaming and Beyond Control

So, we live in a world of outrageous pain. When we thank the pandemic [or the gas chambers] we are turning away from the outrageous pain. But it is even more serious to say – as we have heard – that the virus can be avoided by changing your vibration.

When we do that we are blaming the victim. Because in effect we are saying that the one who suffers brought it into their life because of sin or the law of attraction or a vibration that was too low. There are all forms of victim shaming. What we are saying to the victim is: You "manifested" this suffering. You are responsible for it. You actually created it yourself.

Now, stay close with me friends and let's make sense together, okay? What's the impetus for this move, whether it appears as punishment for sin or you attracted it into your life because your vibration was too low?

Why do we do this? It seems at first glance that we want to be pious, whether in the fundamentalist sense or in the New Age sense. On the surface it seems noble and spiritual. There is a sense of taking responsibility. It seems like we are refusing to be victims and taking some sort of personal responsibility which we consider to be mature and honorable. If I am suffering, it must be that the Kosmos is punishing me. I must have sinned or, in the modern terms, somehow attracted this into my life.

And there is of course some truth to this. But on a deeper level, it's not actually pious, it's not actually spiritual, it's not actually religious, it's not actually a noble form of taking responsibility.

Hubris Disguised as Piety or Self-Responsibility

It's actually a form of Hubris or arrogance. It's a refusal to bow before the mystery. It's a refusal to recognize our unknowing. It's a desperate bid for control. You see, I desperately want control.

The human ego frantically grasps for control. There is nothing more shameful to us than to be out of control. There is also nothing more frightening than to feel like you have no control. To live without control is so very painful. So we refuse to be in the uncertainty. Uncertainty means no control. So we seek to take back control at all costs even when that means saying that people who suffer must have attracted it into their own lives. Try and track this in your interior. You see someone who suffers. You are afraid that it might be you next. So you seek a reason to explain why they are suffering and you are not. Moreover it empowers you to avoid suffering – you now have some degree of control, if you change your internal vibration and don't attract it into your life then you will be safe. And we all yearn for safety. That is part of being a living creature, to seek safety and survival. We do that by seeking control.

If I am suffering because I've sinned, well, I now have a measure of control, because I can stop sinning and therefore I won't be punished and I won't suffer. So while actually the punishment for sin sounds very spiritual and pious, it's not. It's a move for control. In the exact same way, while the new age move, the law of attraction – “you attract it into your life” – sounds very self-responsible and mature, it is – like the fundamentalist move – hiding a desperate bid for control. If you change your vibration, if you don't attract it into your life, it won't be there, so now you have a strategy that allows you to control the suffering. So, notice, it's not a spiritual move, it's not a pious move. It's a bid for egoic control.

Now let's make this super clear: The bid for control is on many levels valid, necessary, important, and honorable. But it has its limits. There is a moment where we must surrender before the mystery. It is not that we stop our activism. We never stop our activism. Rather, at least in the realm of sense making, we relinquish the arrogance of thinking that we can understand or control everything and anything. We begin to cultivate the capacity to stay in the mystery – to be in the cloud of unknowing.

Full Power and Full Surrender

Here is the paradox of being alive. To be alive is to be in love – with life, with yourself, with beloveds, with Source, with all of reality. You don't just drift along in a haze of love, however. You cultivate the love. You discern reality's most wondrous beauties. You see reality naked – more than naked – in her or his most outrageous revelations. You study science, you plumb the interior depths of the mysteries that live in your depths. You allow reality and all of your beloveds to blow your heart open again and again. And at some point you love so much that you are willing to give up control. Not because you want to. Because you have to.

You know the depth and beauty of reality – of your beloveds – and there are things that you don't understand. You cannot wrap your mind and heart around them. But you know the goodness of your beloved, so you trust. You surrender into deeper love. You don't give up your intellect. You don't become submissive. Quite the opposite. You become more audacious and more potent and more powerful. Even as you deepen your surrender. To love is to seek maximum control for the sake of the good, and to love is to give up control in the face of the mystery while never losing ultimate trust in the goodness of reality, which breathes you into life anew in every second.

There is a place where control gives out, where answers give up, where you find yourself before the void. You cannot traverse the void with intellect. You cannot traverse the void with philosophy. You cannot traverse the void with answers. But you can traverse the void with silence. You can traverse the void with song. You can traverse the void with Outrageous Love.

Let's breathe for a second and try and hold this, integrate it into our interior. Now before we go on, let me try and add one more distinction here, which is also super important.

The Intimacy Disorder of Thanking the Coronavirus

You see, if a friend would call me and say, “Marc, I got the Coronavirus, and I’ve got to tell you, I’ve transformed. I just have to thank the Coronavirus,” so if a person suffering says that, “My genuine experience is that I want to thank the virus because it’s given me so much,” they have a right to say that. The person suffering has a right to say that and we have to honor that self-experience, but you can’t say it for other people. In other words, you can’t be healthy with your film crew, feeling great and looking great, while people are dying in hospitals all over the world and say thank you to the Coronavirus. I understand that your intention might be good and I totally get that all the people who have done that have good intentions and that they’re wonderful human beings in a thousand ways, but it’s really bad sense making. So that’s a big deal.

But it is deeper than even that. It is of course true that many people are experiencing what I might call “simple pleasures” during this time. And those simple pleasures are really entirely innocent. Meaning, more time at home. Time with family. Time to have conversations that were never had, time to practice, time to imagine and begin to live life deeper, wider, and higher than before. That is beautiful and good. But we still don’t thank the Coronavirus. Because to thank the virus is a failure of intimacy. It is not to be able to feel beyond my own feeling or my own narrow circle of intimacy.

This is a moment when we need to evolve our circles of intimacy. Remember how we began our conversation. The fact pattern of the Coronavirus is sourced in an intimacy disorder. It’s an expression of a Global Intimacy Disorder. So to thank the Coronavirus because it is bringing you and your family hidden gifts, while 16,000 New Yorkers, or Italians, or Pakistani may die over the next two weeks. Well, that is an intimacy disorder.

The Moses Story: All Spirituality That Deadens Our Sensitivity to Pain Is Not Kosher

I want to really go deeper with you in all of this if you are up for it. Remember that in sense making we want to draw on models from the past, to access the best wisdom of the present and even plug what one of my favorite philosophers, Gabriel Marcel, once called “the memory of the future.”

So let’s go back to one of the most shocking ancient texts in human history, which is super relevant to this moment. It is a text from the ancient biblical book of Exodus which has the story of the Israelites’ liberation from slavery into freedom. So God... [Think, Spirit or Outrageous Love – remember, the God you don’t believe in does not exist, so don’t get hung up on the word God.] Spirit says to Moses: “I’m going to take the Israelites out of Egypt. It won’t be easy. There will be suffering. But the suffering will be part of a process of liberation. Go tell Pharaoh that God has a message for you: Let my people go.” Moses says, “God, I don’t want this job. I’m a little busy. You’ve got the wrong guy.” Now I am not citing the text word for word in Hebrew – which is my preference, I love this text and I love Hebrew – but you get the idea.

There’s this whole conversation between Moses and God in which Moses wants to get out the job of being God’s messenger. Don’t we all?!

But we all have a message. And there is no feeling more empty than being a messenger who has forgotten his/ her message. So, Moses represents the idea of *messaging* in history. Marc has a message. James has a message. Claire has a message. Mickey has a message. To be a human being is to have a message. But it's deeper even than that. It is not really to have a message but to BE a Message.

Back to our story line here. God is persuasive. Moses takes the job and agrees to go to Pharaoh. God says to Moses, "It's not going to be easy. There's going to be a long process of ups and downs before this actually happens, but it's going to happen. There is going to be suffering along the way, but it is for the greater good, for the sake of the liberation." Again I am not quoting verbatim but the meta-content and sense of the text.

So Moses goes to Pharaoh and says, "Let my people go," and Pharaoh says, "Fuck off, man. Not only am I not going to let your people go, I'm going to oppress them even more." And he adds to the quota of bricks that the Hebrew slaves are required to make every day.

So now what should Moses do at this point? God is his spiritual teacher. God told him, "I'm going to take these people out of Egypt. They're going to suffer along the way, but it's going to be for the greater good, for the sake of liberation." Moses should be good, right? It is happening exactly as his spiritual teacher predicted and he has God him/herself as his teacher.

But Moses is not good. Moses doesn't say, "This is God's spirituality. God has a plan." But why not? Moses is talking to God him/herself. Could there be a better spiritual teacher. But Moses rejects this kind of spirituality even if spoken by God. Instead, Moses turns to God and says,

"Lama Ha'raota La'am Hazeh?"

"Why are you causing these people to suffer?"

Moses rejects "divine theology" crying out:

"I will not be your messenger if you make the people suffer. It's not okay. I don't care about your theology, God, and I don't care about your plan. These people are suffering. And I am Homo amor. I am an embodiment of Outrageous Love and I stand with the people against suffering. All suffering, even when you tell me it is part of your plan."

The point of the text is stunning. And it's wildly relevant and important.

Whether the word you want to use is God or Spirit or the Tao or the implicate order, or whatever you want to call the LoveIntelligence and order of the Kosmos, the core point is the same: We never allow spirituality by any name, New Age, Fundamentalist, or otherwise, to deaden our sensitivity to suffering.

Never Look Away

Now I want to be clear. Corona is our fate. We do need to look at the biggest picture and understand how to turn the fate of Corona into the renewed destiny of Karuna [Outrageous Love in Sanskrit]. We do have to turn Corona into Coronation in which we usher in a new era in which every human being and every animal are part of the royal family of life. But to go to the big picture too fast, while people are suffering, gasping for breath, that is not okay. It is another form of intimacy bypass. It is another expression of the intimacy disorder.

I know it is super intense. I know. We are holding hands in this together. In a time of outrageous pain, *sometimes you need to step closer, sometimes you need to step back, but you can never look away.*

When we see suffering, we hold the person suffering. We protest even when that protest is seemingly against God or Spirit. Because our protest against Spirit is the voice of Spirit itself. Our protest against God or any force that sanctions suffering is the voice of God herself. But most importantly, we get going. We get active. We become activists. We become Love-in-Action. That's unbelievably important.

This is deeply related to the teaching that we adduced above. One of my teachers, Nachman of Breslov, a great master who died about 150 years ago, says the reason there is heresy or atheism in the world is so you don't think that it's about anyone else but you. It's your job. When you see suffering, it's your Outrageous Acts of Love that need to be committed, that need to heal and that need to transform the suffering.

So let's not thank God for the Coronavirus or thank the Coronavirus for our spiritual growth. Let's thank God for every breath we take, for every moment of transformation and let's BE Divine, let's BE God's hands, God's lips, God's outstretched arm, God's embrace and God's love. Let's become God in action.

The Fear of Death: The Skull Grins at the Banquet

So let's hold this for a second. We got this so far? Okay. So let's breathe. Are you breathing? I know we're doing a lot and I super appreciate you staying with it.

What we're doing here is sense making in a time of crisis, which is super important. We need to do it with so much humility, so much love, and so much audacity.

So let's take another step and deepen our sense making.

Why is this moment so painful to everyone? Why is it so urgent to everyone? If someone would have told you four weeks ago that the restaurants, cafés, bars would all close, that there would be no public assemblies, no ball games, no weddings, no confirmations, no parties, that millions of people would be instantly unemployed, that economies would grind to a halt, that roads would be empty, that the administration would say to wear masks outside, who would have believed it? But somehow, without any real advance coordination, the entire world mobilized, and we have shut down a huge part of the world. The world has moved at virtual hyper-speed into lockdown.

How did that happen?

I mean, let's get real. According to some reports, 10 million children died last year of hunger and hunger related diseases. The opioid epidemic has killed millions of our friends and neighbors. Remember Rwanda when we saw – as the world watched – 800,000 people killed in 100 days? And yet we did not mobilize!? Are the lives of ten million starving children less precious than the lives being lost in the impending tragedy – according to predictions horrific – but possibly on a significantly smaller scale? What moves us now?

Tens of millions of people die every year – unnecessary deaths – and we ignore them. We ignore them. Why? Because there is a Global Intimacy Disorder. We split off that which does not affect us directly. Because we don't feel like these deaths are going to affect us. Our ability to ignore the suffering of others is the fundamental failure of intimacy. The ability to transcend that failure of intimacy is precisely the movement from *Homo sapiens sapiens* to what we have called *Homo amor*.

We will come back to this in a few minutes but for now let's follow the thread of our inquiry.

Economic structures, failures of healthcare, poverty, malnutrition, all of these kill massive numbers of people, and yet we split off our awareness of the suffering, because we don't personally feel challenged by the fear of death.

So, we've got to remember that the Coronavirus is doing something, not mystically – in a realm only accessible by the eye of the heart – but in the realm of a hard exterior fact pattern. This is what's actually happening – it's visible to the eye.

Coronavirus is actually introducing, for the first time in history, a fear of death from which no one can easily feel excluded. Originally we thought the virus could only seriously harm the elderly with underlying conditions and could only be transmitted with certain kinds of physical proximity. That allowed us to exclude ourselves from the fear of Death. It turns out to be much more variable and complex. Everyone is potentially a victim. No one can easily exclude themselves entirely from the fear of death. It may be true that the American death toll from Corona will not exceed that of the flu last year, which was around 80,000 lives. Every life is infinitely precious. So clearly we cannot talk about “just 80,000 lives.” And God forbid it could be much more – exponential in its effect in terms of numbers, new mutations, failure to prevent recurrent infections because the strain slightly mutates so that acquired immunity does not protect the new strain, etc. But in doing our sense making we can and must ask: Why did Corona stop us in our tracks? And the answer is clear. Because of the uncertainty and novelty of the Coronavirus, because there is no known vaccine at the moment. So again for the first time in history, we have a global fear of death, where no one is obviously excluded.

That does not mean that the fear of death has taken over all of our lives. It has not. But the fragrance of the fear of death is there for virtually all of us.

The skull grins at the banquet. This is almost unprecedented in history.

[I am not going to compare this to Bubonic plague or Spanish flu in this conversation because it is not the point of our sense making exploration.]

What Corona has done is to get underneath our Denial of Death which, as Ernest Becker reminded us in his book by that name, always lurks in our consciousness. All of the sudden it is about us.

The Narcissist Exercise

To get this let me share with you an exercise that I often do when I am in despair – often to a point of extreme anguish, such that I can barely breathe – over some dimension of my own personal suffering. I call it the narcissist exercise. I go over the particular experience of suffering that I am having. I then ask, “Did anyone else ever have this same experience before me?” The answer is *Yes*. Then I ask a second question, “Were you, Marc, aware that other people suffered from this malaise or injustice before you did?” The answer is *Yes*. Then I ask a third question. “Well, Marc. Were you utterly wracked with anguish before you personally experienced this form of suffering? Were you able to function effectively and be filled with joy even though you knew that this form of suffering was happening around the planet at the very same time?”

Well, when I think honestly, I can say that I felt the pain but the answer is still, *Yes*. I was often filled with joy in my personal life even though I knew other people were experiencing this kind of intense pain. Well then, I ask myself in the final question of this series of self-inquiries, “What's the difference between now, when you are abjectly suffering, and then, when you knew other people were having the same experience but you were in joy in your personal life?” The answer of course is simple: Now I AM SUFFERING. “Ahhhhhhhh”, I say to myself, “the reason this hurts so much is because it is YOU.” So that means I only suffer at that intense level when it is ME – then I must be a narcissist.” “NOOOOOO! I am not a narcissist” – and immediately the pain lifts somewhat. I am able to re-engage life with joy and energy, even as my heart is opened just a little bit deeper to all the people around the world who have suffered the experience of pain from which I had just been suffering.

So, if I can deploy the same principle in reverse: The reason the fear of death is so strong that we are able to virtually shut down much of the world is that no one is excluded from the potential reach of the threat.

The First Shock of Existence: The Death of the Human Being

[Now, the fear of death is what we can refer to as the first shock of existence.](#) The first shock of existence is when the fear of death is born into reality. It's in the prehistoric period, sometime after early hunter-gathering [according to some historians the existential fear of death is already present in hunter-gatherer societies] when we move to early horticultural, which is farming with a hand instrument, and then we move to agrarian, which is farming with a plow. We begin to have surplus grain, surplus food. We have time on our hands. We start to think about our lives.

We're not worried like the hunter-gatherer about the elephant or mammoth or lion who's going to kill us this afternoon potentially, so paradoxically we can begin to think about death not in terms of warding off an immediate threat, but in terms of what we might call "the existential fear of death." Because we are defending against that, we have time to think. We think, "Oh my God, I'm going to die." The ego structure – that we developed after we emerged from humanity's early sense of being almost coextensive with nature – becomes afraid. I realize that my farming community, with my stable home and existence, are ephemeral. I am going to die. So we're going to call that the first shock of existence. This is the fear of death.

Now there is an enormous amount that we do – as Ernest Becker once again reminded us – to engage in the Denial of Death.

But what's happening now, in these Corona crisis times, is that the fear of death that we usually displace either to the end of our lives, or displace its threat onto others, rears its menacing head.

This is the fear of death writ large on the global and personal scroll of life at this moment.

Generally we displace this fear even though it's happening around the globe to hundreds of thousands and millions of people—literally millions of people are dying unnecessarily – but we displace the fear of death because we feel like we've got another 10, 20, 30, 40 years. Enter the Corona crisis stage, and all of a sudden the fear of death, this first shock of existence, has entered into our living rooms and is demanding a response. That's the virality of fear which has animated the not necessarily illegitimate pandemic panic.

So we have mobilized. But we have mobilized out of fear, not out of love. We have mobilized because of the widespread, virtually no one left out, nature of the fear. That is not good or bad. It is simply the interior fact pattern of what has happened.

Four Tastes to the Fear of Death

There are many tastes to the fear of death.

But four elements are central.

There is a fear of nothingness.

Death may be oblivion.

If death is oblivion, then I will lose not only myself but the precious connections to all that I hold dear and love.

There is a fear of the pain of the body.

The body will betray me, and that betrayal will be painful.

There is the fear of accountability.

Life itself is filled with injustice. Death is the door to justice in most great traditions. We know in our bodies that reality should be fair. We know that there is a vast difference between a life lived as Hitler and one lived as Mother Teresa. In death, the promissory note of fairness is potentially

paid. It is that promissory note that in many ways makes life bearable. And yet it creates a fear of death, not only for Hitler, but for every ordinary human being who has something hidden. That was Woody Allen's point in his epic movie *Crimes and Misdemeanors*. The good character in the movie – a rabbi – dies of cancer. His brother, by contrast, murders his mistress, so his wife will not find out and leave him and...gets away with it. Allen's point is clear: The notion that reality holds one accountable in the course of a lifetime is not true. Death is often the first moment of accountability.

But there is a deeper fear of death. It is the fear of accountability in an entirely different fashion. It is the fear of not counting.

The fear of death is the fear of insignificance, the fear of living a life that does not matter. This is the fear of being a side effect in your own life. Or closely related, the fear of living a life that is not your own. It is the fear of insignificance. It is the fear that you did not live the life that was yours to live. Your ladder was perched against the wrong wall, so all of your climbing was in vain.

But perhaps the greatest fear of death is to die when your death is not held in a larger story of existence. If you have no universe story, no narrative of identity, no narrative of community, desire, Eros or *ethos*, then the fear of death will destroy you. But if you are able to access the inner knowing that places the fear of death in a larger context, then death reveals its true nature as a night between two days.

The First Shock of Existence Activated Our Inner Gnosis

That is exactly what happened in history. The first shock of existence pressed the human being into disclosing meaning. The eye of the heart and the eye of the spirit were pressed into service. The result was the great religions, the result was great art, the result was great music, the result was law and the cornerstones of civilization. It is of course true that many of these great revelations were mediated through distorting prisms resulting in the horrific pain inflicted by the ethnocentric bias of virtually all of the great traditions.

But it is also clear that the fear of death – the encounter with mortality – generated a depth of vision and understanding of human nature that invited the human being into a larger story where he could at least in potential participate in immortality. The fear of death focused our attention inside. When we went inside, we accessed in our own interiors the deepest wellsprings of the interior face of Kosmos. The fear of death generated some of the great beauties and critical movements of ethics and Spirit and religion – religion which originally meant *religare*: to reconnect, to realign with the nature of reality. So the fear of death entering into reality generated this explosion of Spirit, this new spirituality.

But many of us have left the old religions behind. The intuition of immortality was priceless but the ticket price demanded by each religion was too high. Every religion claimed in one form or the other that eternity, or immortality was available only to its adherents and only in exchange for various forms of submission, which ranged from doctrinal, psychological, theological, political, and economic. We are children of Voltaire who led the liberation of the corruptions of religion's many shadows with the battle cry, "Remember the Cruelties." And those cruelties were often bound up with the ethnocentric prisms of all the premodern religions which mediated

between human beings and the Infinite. But we throw out the baby with the bathwater. While we rejected the ways of obedience and submission that were demanded by the religions, their essential intuition – the realization of the first shock of existence – remains powerfully resonant and true. To transcend the fear of death we need to make our life a triumph. It is only the well-lived life that does not fear death. Postmodernity however moved to savagely deconstruct all previous narratives of the well-lived life. Indeed postmodernity claimed that the very idea of a well-lived life was itself a social construction of reality, not backed by the universe.

It is into this vacuum that we have articulated the notion of Unique Self. Indeed Unique Self Theory is one of the core linchpins of what we have termed CosmoErotic Humanism.

The Realization of Unique Self

The central knowing that is crystalizing in this evolutionary moment, sourced in the interior sciences, is that each of us is a [Unique Self](#), with a unique perspective, quality of self, and capacity for action. Our Unique Self is not simply our talent as separate monadic units. According to the best of the interior and exterior sciences, we are each not fundamentally apart but rather part of the larger whole of existence. But we are distinct parts. Each of us are unique emergents of the entire system. We are unique configurations of the larger field of life and consciousness. And therefore, we each have a Unique Gift to give that is needed by the whole. That is our core identity.

As Unique Selves we fear death only when we have been afraid of life, when we have not lived the life that is ours to live. We do not have to die fearing that our ladder was perched against the wrong wall, and our climbing was in vain. The weakness of the old religions was that they each claimed to be the sole right wall. Each demanded obedience to its particular form, against all others who were called infidels. Only the coin of absolute obedience to their particular ritual forms – not to a universal *ethos* – gave passage to eternity.

In the deepest sense the fear of dying is of not having lived your Unique Self – the life that was yours to live. It is the fear of dying and not having made the contribution that your very cells know is yours to make. The way to transcend the fear of death is therefore clear – to live your story, your Unique Self, to the fullest, giving your Unique Gift, writing your poem, singing your song, and being the unique configuration of intimacy and desire that reality intended in its incarnation as you.

These are the revelations newly pressed into our knowing by the contemplation of death, the original first shock of existence.

The Unique Terror of Death in this Corona Crisis Moment: A Time Between Worlds, a Time Between Stories.

But this new knowing, the Unique Self story of identity within the larger context of a CosmoErotic Humanism has, as we all know, not yet entered culture. In our Corona moment, however, we are caught denuded of story.

Modernity and postmodernity threw out the baby of premodernity with its sullied bathwater. The great traditions became identified with their great shadows. That was at least for a time understandable. But the result has been a collapse of story. We are at a time between worlds, a time between stories. The crucial gifts of the transcultural perennial truths shared by virtually all the great traditions were lost. One of those shared truths was the understanding that it is not over when it's over – that what we call death is indeed a portal into a deeper reality of consciousness. However one might want to tell that story, the great traditions were able to locate the truth of the continuity of consciousness as a shared human truth. This was a core part of the shared gnosis of humanity. But when modernity and postmodernity discarded this gnosis, nothing was left in its place.

Without a larger story rooted in genuine gnosis to hold us, the fear of death turned into a terror that needed to be a-void-ed at all costs.

This has created two distinct movements in our culture. The first is an obsession with busyness, entertainment, and diversion so as not to have to face that terror. This is one form of what we have called in other writings pseudo-Eros, the covering-up of the emptiness with imitation-Erotics which dull the terror of mortality.

The second has been to make death the enemy. The frantic obsession with life extension and even immortality – what has been called the War on Death – is a direct expression of this terror.

Because we have ripped death from its mooring in a larger weave of sense and meaning, we are left in this Corona moment, only with its terror and not with its essential gifts. For it is only death which confronts us demanding that we find our own deepest integrity. To borrow William James phrase, “*It is only death that makes life a genuine option.*” Or as Rilke wrote, “*Death is our friend precisely because it brings us into absolute and passionate presence with all that is here, that is natural, that is love.*” Without death, life all too easily devolves into the Picture of Dorian Gray. In Oscar Wilde’s classic by that name the protagonist does not age. But without the process of aging, decadence sets in. We have lost connection to death’s blessings so we are left only with her ugly terror.

None of this – of course – suggests that our moral passion at this moment dares to be invested in anything other than healing. This is a moment where we must rage against death and do battle with all the promethean force of human dignity. It is in that sense that the prophetic mystic cries out [Isaiah 25:8] “*Let Death Be Swallowed Forever.*”

But when the battle is not set in the dialectical context of a larger story of death, then we are left only with the fear that devolves into terror when it is denuded of narrative. The prophet both speaks against death even as he tastes the eternity that lives beneath the flow of time.

All of this is the particular contemporary Corona crisis expression of the first shock of existence – the fear of death rearing its head mediated through this postmodern moment, a time between stories, where the sacred heroic battle against death, which requires all of our moral, economic, and political passion, remains untempered by a larger narrative of meaning. The result is that the

inner knowings activated in prehistoric times by the first appearance of the first shock of existence are missing and thereby inducing a worldwide terror.

The Second Shock of Existence: The Death of Humanity

But actually there's a second dimension to the Coronavirus. The virus is the explosion of catastrophic risk – which we have been warning about for quite some years – onto the public stage. Everybody pretty much thought the systems were too big to fail. That they would just keep on going one way or the other. Many of us wrote that the combination of the win-lose metric and the extended “complicated” system optimizing for efficiency instead of resiliency was vulnerable to a thousand different forms of Black Swans. Our core infrastructures had become inherently fragile and catastrophic risk scenarios were just a matter of time. All of this began to be visible to a limited extent in the financial meltdown of 2008. But it has become unmistakably recognizable with the eruption of the long awaited and long predicted Corona crisis.

And of course this risk that we're facing, which is catastrophic risk, is actually a dress rehearsal for what we might call existential risk, or what we've called in our circles for the last decade or so, the second shock of existence. But what we mean by the second shock of existence has been recognized by dozens of thinkers around the world. Existential risk, or the second shock of existence, means not the death of the individual human being; it means the potential death of humanity.

To do any sense making in relation to the Coronavirus is to realize that it has evoked both the first and the second shock of existence.

That is the realization of our collective sense making.

The Coronavirus actually brings together both the first shock of existence – the fear of death which presses into the life of every human being – it's now unavoidable, we can't split it off – but it also has the fragrance of the second shock of existence.

Because catastrophic risk, which is now manifest as the global corona pandemic – a global risk where all of a sudden everybody is interconnected – and it affects the entire globe – actually raises the specter for a looming [probably in the next decade] existential risk. That means risk through climate change, ecosystems destabilization, rogue weapons, exponentialized destructive technologies, runaway machine learning and AI, methane gas under the tundra, peak oil and peak phosphorus, resource depletion based on resource extraction models which feed exponential growth curves based on fractional-reserve banking, the Bretton Woods economic structures, completely fragile, complicated, spread-out systems that are radically vulnerable to myriad forms of attack. This is of course but one list of possible causes for existential risk. These causes are fully real and yet we've split them off from our awareness, another example of the Global Intimacy Disorder.

And then, seemingly out of nowhere [with the operative word being seemingly] the potential catastrophic risk of the Coronavirus brings existential risk into our hearts and into our living rooms.

So the fear of death is all of a sudden radically present. The skull grins at the banquet in the form of both the first and second shock of existence.

The Fear and Shame of Death in the First and Second Shock of Existence

Now here is a pivotal inquiry! We know that the fear of death in the first shock of existence – even what we might call the shame around death – is the fear or shame of not having lived our Unique Self.

What is the fear or even the shame around death in the second shock of existence – the death of humanity?

The fear or even shame of death that we confront with the second shock of existence – the death of humanity – is the fear or shame at not having realized our capacity to create a new humanity – or what we have called a Unique Self Symphony. It is the fear that the human being has not made the monumental leap from *Homo sapiens* to *Homo amor*.

To really get this is to understand the pregnant nature of this moment in time.

The Second Shock of Existence Activates Our Inner Gnosis

Just like the potential death of the individual human exploded a new level of Spirit, a new level of meaning in the world, because it pressed us into our own interior realization. Just like the first shock of existence created a first wave of proto-universal spirituality, now the second shock of existence needs to create a second wave of genuine universal gnosis and spirituality.

That is hugely important. What is the deeper sense making that seeks to emerge from the second shock of existence? We don't only need at this moment to be medical activists or even economic activists to heal the virus. That's for sure – no questions asked, hands down – the very first thing we need to do. That comes before everything. That trumps everything. Anything else would be a failure of intimacy. But we also – in honor of the sick and the dead – dare not to waste the tragedy. We must allow this moment to spur us – to press into our interiors – and invite the potential second shock of existence into our hearts – not in a way that paralyzes us, but in a way that inspires new levels of insight and realization – precisely the insights and realizations that will be necessary to prevent the second shock of existence from ever happening.

Recapitulation of Our Original Sense Making: Global Intimacy Disorder as the Fact Pattern That Caused Corona

So now let's recapitulate – in response to catastrophic risk and potential existential risk – the crucial piece of sense making with which we began.

I want to say it carefully so you understand it's not thanking the Coronavirus and it's not saying in some abstract woo-woo way that our low vibration attracted it into our lives or some abstract failure of love created the Coronavirus.

No, the Coronavirus is a direct result of a fact pattern.

That fact pattern is a failure of intimacy but not as a woo-woo idea, not as a New Age claim, not as a dogma. It's simply the fact pattern.

Now, stay with me. It's really important to understand. What's the fact pattern that caused the Coronavirus itself, and what's the fact pattern that caused us to be completely unprepared for a pandemic that has been predicted by many. [To name but one example, Bill Gates described in detail a version of this pandemic in a TED Talk five years ago viewed by seven million people. But it's not just Bill Gates. There have been dozens of other books and papers from super-credible sources.]

There have been multiple streams of information – post Swine Flu, SARS, MERS and Ebola, multiple prior mini-pandemics – that a major pandemic was virtually inevitable in the short term. We actually knew this was coming. We knew that it would be microbes and not missiles. We knew that if 10 million people were going to be killed in this decade it was most probably going to be a pandemic, so why weren't we prepared? That's what we need to understand.

First, the fact pattern: Where did the Coronavirus come from? As we noted when we started, according to the best surmises out there right now, it came from the Wuhan market in China. I want to repeat what we said early on just so we can hold it together. What's the Wuhan market in China? It's a wet market. Poor people who can't afford sanitized food go to a wet market. Animals are caged all through the market, often slaughtered in front of the customer, clearly not sanitized, clearly not healthy in any kind of sustained way, clearly cruel.

So, there's a split-off intimacy at play here. First, we've split off the animals. We live in an age for which we're going to have to atone in 100 years for the unbearable cruelty to animals. You want to eat a lamb chop, so you take a lamb and you put it in a cage for three months and you fatten it – it can't quite move and it suffers intensely for months, true and real pain – just so it will be succulent enough to stimulate your taste buds for a few passing moments. Really?

Animals, by the way, are distinct. There are not just generic animals. There is not just Daisy the cow. Each cow is distinct. Each cow is unique. Each cow has its own experience of reality. Each lamb does. So, we take – not generic lambs but a particular lamb with a personality – and subject it to torture for the sake of our fleeting pleasure. Lambs aren't human obviously, but lambs are actually real, living, sentient, alive creatures that feel and suffer. The mechanism that allows us to perform these cruelties is split off intimacy. We buy the lamb chops in a package at the supermarket. In doing so we willfully disconnect from the history of that package. The lamb's suffering disappeared. Mary never had a little lamb. There are only lamb chops. All of this is before the wet market cruelties in China. That's just standard practice.

Now we turn to the wet markets in China and we feed masses of our poor by slaughtering animals in front of the people who are about to eat them. We slaughter a dog's partner in front of the other dog. Really? So, we've split off both the animals and their suffering and all of the population that eat this form of bushmeat. The indigent population that relies on wet markets is

one that we don't actually nurture or take care of, so they actually have little choice but to rely – at least in part – on the wet markets.

[I'm completely uninterested in the argument that it's part of China's culture and therefore we can't critique it. In India, widow-burning was part of culture. We should critique it. All over village society in rural India today the caste system is still at play in horrific ways. We should critique it. The wet markets are not okay, but we split them off. They are split off intimacies. But the wet market cruelties are just a hyper-expression of the kinds of cruelty that are already happening all over the civilized world.]

So the fact pattern of society today on multiple levels is a Global Intimacy Disorder. That's not a woo-woo statement. That's not a New Age claim. That's not a fundamentalist dogma. That's the fact pattern of reality. We live as separate selves, struggling for our own personal success in the rat race of a success story culture measured by win-lose metrics. We try and wrest some modicum of meaning and love with a very narrow group of people that we call our "loved ones" and we split off everybody else.

Whoa!

That's a Global Intimacy Disorder.

So, when we split off the wet markets in Wuhan, China, the fact pattern is that some poor guy who's eating a bat there gets infected. Of course, deadly viruses don't distinguish between boundaries. In an international, global world, germs travel first class and the virus goes viral, the direct product of our split-of intimacies.

Between the Intimate Universe and the Unbearable Intimacy of Catastrophic Risk

So, it's actually a new world. You see, in the Middle Ages, what was the connection between China and London? There were some trade connections, there was the Silk Road, but they were practically invisible. That's why Marco Polo became so famous. Marco Polo was the exception who broke the rule. He was a highly rare representation of a connection between Europe and China.

Today we live in a sometimes unbearable intimacy of civilizations colliding.

I just spoke to a friend of mine a few minutes ago – a CEO in Europe who just closed 80 stores for several weeks at least, crashing employees, crashing families and possibly crashing the company – as a direct result of the wet markets in China. As of this article, [some 95 thousand people have already died](#).

So, we live in a new world today, in which the mystical truth of the interior sciences that it's one world, One Love, One Heart, and one global body is now an incarnate pragmatic political, social, economic, and medical reality. That's a big deal.

That realization is part of the new emergent from the second shock of existence. You see, the possibility of the death of humanity is precisely because it's a global civilization.

Virtually all of our great civilizations have collapsed. But for the first time we have a global civilization. Unless we up-level, there is no reason to think that our global civilization will not collapse. Since none of our civilizations have made it – they've all collapsed – and we now have a global civilization but we haven't actually corrected those patterns that caused the prior collapses – and we've added a whole series of factors, specifically exponential technology which can destroy a world in a way that bows and arrows and even B-52 bombers can't – then why would we think our global civilization would not explode and thus realize the second shock of existence?

My dear beloved friend, [Barbara Marx Hubbard](#), who passed away a year ago, often used to say that the watershed of World War II was when we realized we don't have a story of meaning equal to our power. That mushroom cloud above Nagasaki and Hiroshima spoke of a power to destroy reality itself through exponential technology. But we did not generate a new story equal to our power.

Said simply, since all civilizations have been destroyed, and we're now a global civilization coupled with exponential tech, and we've not corrected our course – well, that's existential risk – that is the second shock of existence: the potential and even probable death of humanity – unless we up-level.

It is precisely in this sense that the second shock of existence needs to press us inside to generate new *gnosis* and new meaning. We have to create new qualities of love. We have to generate new qualities and levels of intimacy.

In the unbearable intimacy of a global civilization, we have to actually choose the Intimate Universe, which is the most accurate new narrative of reality.

It's actually the understanding that reality at its core is a love story, not a woo-woo love story, not a Harlequin romance but an ontological – a for real – love story.

When we say the universe is a love story, we don't mean a Pollyannaish love story. Rather we understand that the universe with its inherent free will is a love story filled with agony and ecstasy.

But reality actually IS a love story. Reality is driven by allurements. Subatomic particles are allured together. They're drawn together and they form a new whole, a new intimacy.

That new intimacy is an atom.

Intimacy means shared identity + mutuality of recognition + mutuality of pathos + mutuality of purpose.

That's the beginning of a new story.

Intimacy drives evolution. Evolution is the progressive deepening of intimacies.

Intimacy is not merely a human experience. Intimacy is the actual experience of Kosmos all the way up and all the way down. Evolution is the evolution of intimacy.

So, when we begin to understand that evolution itself is the progressive deepening of intimacies – that intimacy is shared identity plus mutuality of recognition plus mutuality of *pathos* – which means we can feel each other – then we can act from a sense of shared purpose.

This intimacy equation is true all the way up and down the evolutionary chain. For example, at a subatomic level, as subatomic particles become atoms, atoms become molecules, molecules become macromolecules, molecules become cells, single cells evolve to multicellular life. All the way up the evolutionary chain we have deeper and wider intimacies, new wholes.

Reality is actually animated by Eros, and Eros actually is the experience of reality seeking new intimacies.

It's Eros all the way up and all the way down. We actually live in a CosmoErotic Universe.

You know the word *amor*? So, *amor* or amorous means love. We live in an amorous Kosmos. We live in an Intimate Universe. That's actually the reality. That's not a dogma. That's actually the best reading of evolutionary science, systems theory, complexity theory, its derivative chaos theory, quantum physics, and, most importantly, all of the interior sciences of Spirit emergent from all the great traditions, drawn together in new visions of perennial philosophy and evolutionary spirituality.

The Intimate Universe is real. The universe is a love story.

Reality actually is not just a fact. We actually know today that reality is a story. There is not just an eternal universe. Even Einstein thought there was an eternal universe until he realized the cosmos itself is evolving.

The first Big Bang: the evolution of cosmos, matter. Cosmological evolution.

Then it big bangs, it explodes again, and life emerges, followed by the great story of the evolution of life. Biological Evolution.

Then life explodes again into self-reflective human beings. Cultural evolution.

Wow! The universe is a story. There's a narrative arc to Kosmos. We go from matter, the physiosphere, which then triumphs and fulfills itself in the biosphere, which is life, which then triumphs and fulfills itself in the noosphere which is mind.

Each layer births the next layer and no layer is only instrumental – merely in service – to the higher level. Each layer, each dimension of reality has its own dignity, its own beauty: matter, life, and self-reflective mind.

Once cultural evolution begins, the human being and humanity go through many levels of evolution – all in the context of the noosphere, the level of the world of mind. Self-reflective humans go through many levels of development, of emergence, interior and exterior, until *Homo sapiens* are finally confronted by this incredible moment where we’ve developed huge depths of exponential technology.

We’ve also developed beautiful ideas of universal human rights, social mobility, modern medicine, and we’ve exploded life on the planet. We’ve gone from half a billion to seven and a half billion in 150 short years.

But the story line has been flawed. Why? Because our notion of the human being has been that of a limited separate self, with no genuine interiors, who is trapped in a win-lose metric that drives a success story, which itself drives exponential growth and efficient but not resilient systems. As we saw above.

And yet somehow on this incredible journey we have hit this moment when we are confronted with the second shock of existence. Meaning the exponential technologies that we’ve developed in the realm of *techne*, of exterior technology, have created our capacity to destroy ourselves. The skull grins at the banquet, the potential death of humanity.

So, what’s our response?

Our response is – just like matter fulfills itself in life and life fulfills itself in mind, the self-reflective human – so the human being goes through levels of development and *Homo sapiens* fulfills itself as a new human and new humanity.

Homo sapiens fulfills him/herself as *Homo amor*, in which we realize that every human being is a Unique Self and every human being is part of the Unique Self Symphony and no one’s outside of the circle, and it really IS One Love and One Heart. And every human being is defined not by their job – which is pretty important because in short order we’re probably not going to have jobs in the same way as we have up until now as we move towards machine learning and AI. The problem for human beings then is not going to be exploitation. It’s going to be that a large proportion of human beings will become – from the perspective of jobs – largely irrelevant.

Homo Amor = Unique Self and Unique Self Symphonies: The Emergents from the Second Shock of Existence

So, now we begin to understand, No, no, no, I’m not just my job.

There’s actually a new narrative of identity. There’s a New Universe story. The New Universe story is the universe is a love story. Evolution is the love story of the universe.

Who am I in that love story? I'm a Unique Self. I'm a unique configuration of Evolutionary Love. I have a Unique Gift to give. I have a poem to write, a song to sing, a way of being, laughing, loving, and living in the world that no one else but me can do.

And I'm needed by All-That-Is, I'm desired by All-That-Is, I'm chosen by All-That-Is. I'm recognized by All-That-Is. I'm loved by All-That-Is.

That's the experience of being a Unique Self – a Unique Self in an evolutionary context, an Evolutionary Unique Self. That is the experience of *Homo amor*.

So that's a new narrative of identity which is the response of Spirit to the second shock of existence.

So, within this larger context we can declare clearly that the fact pattern of the Coronavirus is that it comes from split-off intimacies. We ignore suffering – the suffering of the animals, the suffering of the poor that are eating at the wet markets. Then even though we know a pandemic is in the offing, we don't focus on it, because we somehow think it won't affect us, we somehow split off the possibility. We think that somehow the poor or the underprivileged, someone else is going to be affected. We don't actually take seriously our obligation to create a global *ethos* for a global civilization and take responsibility for humanity. We're too caught in our success stories. We're too caught in working out our traumas. We're too caught in the ways we've been wounded or insulted. We turn our attention away. We get caught in the egoic games of political maneuvering. We get caught in the win-lose metrics, the win-lose struggle that defines even our democracies.

We never realize *Homo amor*. We defund central agencies that need to actually deal with and prepare for pandemics. That's a failure of love as a fact pattern.

So, we're at this pivotal point in human and world history.

We live in a world of outrageous pain. We also live in a world of outrageous beauty. The only response to outrageous pain is Outrageous Love. The only response to outrageous beauty is Outrageous Love.

We live in a world of elegant order, of dazzling beauty and complexity.

Even as I talk to you, there are some 37.2 trillion cells inside of you and all of them know exactly where each other are. They're in complete communication, in every second.

What does that mean?

Millions of miles of nerve cables are running through my body – a structure of dazzling beauty in each one of us that defies imagination, that all of our exponentialized supercomputers couldn't even begin to manifest.

That's true right now.

If you look at the space between us now, how our mirror neurons are interacting, the interference waves that are actually dancing with each other in this moment to allow for this communication – if we would actually put everything happening that allows for this communication, as it were, on a virtual reality screen in front of us, we would faint in ecstasy, just dazzled by awe.

Our lives, friends, are filled with beauty and terror, but in the end the beauty wins.

We have to stand for beauty against the terror.

We have to transform pain into love. We have to stand for suffering. We have to do sense making in a way that honors the dignity of suffering. And we have to actually respond to the call, invitation, and demand of this moment: this moment in which the first shock of existence can be sensed by everyone and the second shock of existence lurks at the door. For catastrophic risk reminds us of existential risk.

This is the time. We were born just in time for a time like this.

This is the time to heal. This is the time to get ventilators. This is the time to do everything we can to protect each one of us and all of us and especially the elderly among us.

Each elderly person is precious beyond imagination. Every human being is precious beyond imagination. And we have to be pressed into service and go so deeply inside that we actually articulate a new vision of the new human and the new humanity. From *Homo sapiens* to *Homo amor*. The new *gnosis* that births the new human and the new humanity from the depth of the second shock of existence.

Da Vinci was confronted with the Black Death. He could not go to every village in Europe to heal. It was too much. Instead he went inside. The plague pressed him into new *gnosis*. And what was ultimately born from Da Vinci and his Renaissance friends was a new story of the human being and humanity. We are once again confronted by a plague at the level of potential catastrophic risk, raising the specter of existential risk, the second shock of existence. We need – as Da Vinci did of old, to tell a new story of God, the human being, and humanity – and the interaction between that holy trinity,

It's ours to do.

Thank you.