

## ***Is the Virus our Vaccine?***

### ***COVID-19: Chinese Curse, Causing Crisis and Collapse; or Canary in the Coalmine and Catalyst for Change?***

**Rory Spowers**

*'This essay by Rory Spowers is the best overview of our current situation I have found and a genuine contribution to collective sense-making, including many actionable items.'*

Daniel Pinchbeck

### ***'May You Live In Interesting Times'***

Considering the purported Chinese origins of COVID-19 (C-19), it seems apt that two expressions I have heard repeated most since the pandemic emerged, should not only be associated with Chinese culture, but also convey the inherent paradoxes of our time. The first - 'May you live in interesting times' - appears to be a blessing, but is in fact known as the 'Chinese curse'. On deeper investigation, it appears that any connection with China is in fact apocryphal, the expression being cited as a poor translation from another Chinese saying by British statesman Joseph Chamberlain, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It seems likely that the origins of C-19 might always be

shrouded in equally mysterious, ambiguous origins. But could this virus itself, which appears to be a curse for humanity, ultimately prove a blessing for the future of life on earth? Is the virus therefore the metaphorical 'vaccine' that we all need to wake up and save ourselves from an inexorable and inevitable demise? Or might even some vaccines themselves, as some doctors are now suggesting, prove to be the vectors for the virus they are supposed to cure?

The second expression is the Taoist ideogram *wei-chi*, which translates as both crisis *and* opportunity. As we will see, this appears to be supported by both historical events and our own personal experience. Deep systemic change, on a personal or societal level, is always catalysed by crisis. Personal psychological 'breakdowns' are often implicit for 'breakthroughs' to become possible; addicts have to hit 'rock bottom' for radical healing to emerge. Even a transformative mystical experience can be regarded as a 'spiritual emergency' – from which we can 'emerge and see'.

The maverick 'anti-guru' Indian teacher UG Krishnamurti - not be confused with the more famous J Krishnamurti - usually referred to his enlightenment as his 'calamity', also coining the expression of the 'de-clutched mind' to describe what this nebulous term actually denotes. Dr John Vervaeke, a Professor of Psychology, Cognitive Science and Eastern Religion at the University of Toronto, colleague of Jordan Peterson and one of the leading commentators on our 'crisis of meaning' within the 'intellectual dark web', has highlighted some of the cultural 'step changes' that emerged from the Bubonic Plague in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Dr Zachary Stein, another leading writer

and philosopher in this landscape, talks of this liminal space we find ourselves in, unmoored and cast adrift in this ‘time of pure potential and change, between worlds’, during which we can ‘reshape ourselves as spiritual, scientific, and ethical beings’

Fittingly, both expressions point to the inherent paradoxes of the new reality we now find ourselves in. And, perhaps even more pertinently, this discomfort we feel when confronted by ambiguous information, reveals some fundamental flaws within the mainstream science that has informed our shared notions of consensus reality for hundreds of years.

### ***Materialism and Systems Theory***

As Einstein so famously declared, ‘You cannot solve problems from the same level of consciousness that created them’. There is much to suggest that the new level of thinking we need to cultivate is an ability to think ‘systemically’, to learn be more comfortable with uncertainty and shift our focus from a purely ‘reductionist’ view of the world, to a more balanced perspective that integrates insights emerging from areas of science known as Systems Theory.

As many have observed, future human survival now requires us to shift from a world-view built upon separation, homogenisation, competition and control, to one of interdependence, diversity and co-operation, more comfortable with uncertainty and more adaptable to change. This correlates with insights from ancient indigenous

wisdom through to the different ways the two hemispheres of the brain process information, as popularised by leading thinkers like Iain McGilchrist in his seminal work *The Master And His Emissary*.

Perhaps the most famous examples of the inherently paradoxical nature of reality are those drawn from the insights of quantum physics. How can something be both a particle and a wave at the same time? What mechanism can possibly explain 'spooky weirdness' such as 'quantum non-locality', whereby particles separated by vast distances can impact each other? Our notions of reality are simply not equipped to deal with such information, since it flies in the face of all that we appear to observe in the world of space-time around us, constructed from linear, causal relationships. But as physicist Neils Bohr once said, 'The opposite of one great truth is often another great truth.'

Why is this of any relevance to us now? Like many of us, I have spent the last few weeks digesting information about this pandemic, from across the spectrum – from mainstream news outlets, independent podcasts, virologists and epidemiologists, to the most extreme conspiracy theories. I have disappeared down numerous rabbit holes and been temporarily seduced by multiple narratives, from an intentional or accidental release of a human-engineered bio-weapon, to the potential role of 5G. Like the rest of us, I have been struggling to make sense of what is going on, trying to find one narrative that I feel approximates most closely to the truth. And, every time I have tried to start writing this, new information has arisen to make me

reconsider my position. By the time anyone else reads this, it may well have changed again.

However, my primary intention here is first to examine various explanations of how this crisis evolved; then take a look at the various ways we have responded; and finally, explore the possible scenarios of how the future might unfold. Along the way, I will suggest that our understanding of all three areas is compromised by an obsolete scientific framework, which fails to integrate some fundamental insights into complex phenomena, afforded by emerging sciences that have arisen in the last few decades, such as Chaos and Complexity Theory, or often known collectively as Systems Theory. Before we focus on the crisis itself therefore, we need to take a look at how these insights from 'systems thinking' might shed new light on the situation, enabling us to navigate our way through this crisis and perhaps even redesign some of the core drivers within our culture in the process.

Over the last few hundred years, the key factors influencing the direction of our now global civilisation have been increasingly determined by a particular scientific paradigm, known as Reductionism, or Materialism. Catalysed by luminaries such as Newton and Descartes, this approach introduced a division between the material, physical universe - that could be measured and quantified empirically, thus constituting 'reality' - and the non-physical world, that could not be measured and quantified, and therefore did not really exist - or even be seen as a legitimate area for scientific research.

Since human feelings and emotions, such as love and compassion, or the domains we might call spiritual or metaphysical, could not be measured empirically, they were dismissed as being irrelevant. All focus went on the observable physical universe, which was increasingly deprived of intelligence and life. In turn, we separated consciousness into the three-dimensional confines of atomised individuals, usually down to just the human brain itself. Awareness and our capacity to self-reflect, was seen as an 'epiphenomenon', some mysterious faculty that had arisen from complex neuronal firing within our brains and was peculiar to humans.

As this approach gathered momentum, giving us ever-deeper insights into the building blocks of the physical world, we became convinced that we could understand the complexities of an evolving universe, by reducing it to ever-smaller components and treating it as a clockwork machine. This yielded extraordinary insights, laying the foundations for seemingly miraculous advances in numerous fields, from medicine to engineering. However, by the middle of the twentieth century, many influential thinkers had begun to see serious flaws in this world-view, which could not account for myriad observable phenomena, such as emergent properties in complex biological systems. How and why do capacities for self-regulation and self-organisation arise in natural systems as the complexity of the system increases?

As the emerging science of ecology evolved during the twentieth century, shifting the focus of study from the components of an

ecosystem to the relationships within it, other scientists applied these principles to their respective fields of study. One oft-cited example that catalysed Chaos Theory is that of Edward Lorenz. Studying climate systems and weather forecasting at MIT, Lorenz was following the prevailing scientific dictum that, given sufficient levels of data, all natural systems were deterministic and predictable.

In the winter of 1961, while in a hurry to test his computer, Lorenz rounded one of his numerical inputs down to 0.506 from 0.506127. Leaving his computer to run the model, he returned from a coffee break to find that the model had produced a wildly different outcome to a previous test run with the extra three decimal places. This was the origin of the so-called 'butterfly effect' - that a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil could start a tornado in Texas. The key insight here was that a tiny incremental tweak to a complex system could have very dramatic and unpredictable consequences down the line.

In popular culture, the 'butterfly effect' has become perhaps the most well known concept from the sciences of Chaos, Complexity and Systems Theory, even becoming the title of a Hollywood movie. However, there are a number of equally important insights from these new sciences that may well prove crucial for humanity to integrate for the future survival of the species and much of life on earth. And there is much to suggest that the 'meta-crisis' now unfolding around the globe, from biodiversity loss and the climate crisis to the C-19 pandemic itself, are the downstream consequences of a scientific world-view that fails to balance reductionist materialism with this more integrated, holistic and systemic view of

reality. Sadly, few people within any position of global influence appear to exhibit even a basic understanding of fundamental 'systems thinking' concepts, or basic ecological laws, and are therefore incapable of making sense of what is unfolding, let alone make informed choices and decisions.

Until a few hundred years ago, every culture across the globe recognised the natural world as being alive. However, as the scientific advances of the Enlightenment afforded deeper revelations about the universe, from the microscopic to the cosmic, western culture increasingly dismissed anything that it could not account for within a predictable, deterministic, empirical universe. As already stated, if it could not be quantified and measured, it did not have any scientific validity and was irrelevant.

For several decades now, we have been witnessing the disastrous consequences of treating nature like a machine. From the disruption of the carbon cycle, the consequent climate crisis and the collapse of whole ecosystems, to the decimation of the living topsoil and the micro-biome of the human gut, the trajectory is essentially the same at all levels: the failure to appreciate the living intelligence of complex biological systems and the imposition of simplistic linear solutions - from geo-engineering to chemical fertilizers and antibiotics. As US satirist HL Maecken observed, 'For every complex problem, there is a solution which is clear, simple and wrong.'

## ***A Systems View of Life***

As biological systems increase in their complexity, developing more reciprocal relationships, interactions and flows between individual components, from individual cells to organisms within whole ecosystems, so does the capacity for self-regulation, self-adaptation and self-organisation. This capacity is known as *autopoiesis*.

Similarly, as systems evolve to higher levels of complexity, they give rise to 'emergent properties', new characteristics that did not exist before. For example, intelligence and even life itself are regarded as emergent properties of complex systems.

Similarly, increases in complexity and diversity are also directly linked to resilience and immunity. The Irish potato famine for example, was caused by farmers growing one type of potato, in contrast to indigenous farmers in Bolivia growing up to fifty different strains in one field. With the imposition of corporate monocultures, India's 200,000 strains of rice have been reduced to less than 15 within a few decades. This shrinking of genetic diversity within our staple food crops and a reliance on vast rain-fed monocultures within a rapidly shifting climate system is creating the perfect storm for a collapse in food security.

Since the complexity of the bacteria in our micro-biome are now thought to account for some 80% of our immune system health, there is now a recognised link between compromised gut health and lowered immunity, which is in turn directly linked to the health of the soil. We now know that living topsoil produces serotonin and

dopamine, two of the dominant neurotransmitters within humans. And we also now know that most of our serotonin is produced in the gut and depression is often directly correlated with poor gut health. There is also new research suggesting that Monsanto's ubiquitous glyphosate agro-chemical Roundup, now detected in over 70% of rainfall samples drawn from the globe, is linked to disturbances in our dopamine system and therefore also implicated in the depression pandemic that encircles the globe.

Similarly, our simplistic approach to topsoil, replacing 84 trace minerals with three synthetic chemicals - nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, or NPK - alongside a barrage of synthetic pesticides, herbicides and fungicides, has effectively depleted and destroyed topsoil around the globe, thus compromising our food systems and human health. It has only recently been recognised that there are more microbes in one teaspoon of organic living topsoil than all the humans that have ever lived and as many interactions in the microbiome as the neural networks of the brain. The sheer complexity of soil biota, mycelium networks and the microbial systems in the human gut, are beyond our abilities to comprehend.

Another important term to understand is *homeostasis* - the balanced equilibrium conditions that life requires to flourish. As James Lovelock's Gaia Theory has so conclusively shown, a stable climate and an atmosphere that optimises conditions for complex life forms to flourish, has been created by countless interactions between living systems, from phytoplankton in the oceans to microbes sequestering carbon into soil. Similarly, the health of the human body is

maintained by seeking homeostasis, like the sweating of a fever enabling us to expel internal heat from the system.

However, when homeostasis is disrupted, from human interference in the carbon cycle through profligate fossil fuel use, to the introduction of synthetic chemicals in topsoil, or the human body itself, which are alien to the entire evolutionary process, we see unforeseen consequences arise. When we remove the top predators from food chains, whole ecosystems are impacted, leading to 'trophic cascades', causing the collapse of food webs and extinction of species. When insects and crucial pollinators like bees disappear, we see 'reverse trophic cascades', as the food for other species in the web disappear. Even one course of antibiotics can decimate complex gut flora evolved over a lifetime and be difficult to rebuild to their original balance and complexity.

In summary therefore, resilience, immunity and life itself, all thrive with increasing diversity and complexity. Capacities for self-regulation, self-adaptation and self-organisation, all increase at all levels of the systems. When diversity and complexity are compromised and diminished, the reverse is true, at all levels of the system. And these principles can be applied at all scales, from cellular networks to social systems and the biosphere itself. But what relevance does this all have to our current predicament?

If the official narrative is correct - that the virus is *zoonotic*, or jumped from bats to humans via an intermediary host such as pangolins - then that is a further symptom of our collapsing global

ecology. As biodiversity diminishes around the globe, habitats and food webs are threatened, resilience within ecosystems is compromised and something like a pathogenic virus is more likely to spread between species, mutate and cause problems. But there are few people within the mainstream media that even suggested this correlation - that C-19 might be just as much of a warning about our collapsing global ecology as the bush fires in Australia and some insect populations falling by as much as 95%. Through this lens, the virus could be seen as humanity's 'canary in the coalmine'.

It could also be argued that the susceptibility of our civilisation to the virus, and the Orwellian nightmare of technocratic surveillance capitalism being the only answer, have also been driven by a process of cultural homogenisation, in turn driven by a western model of neo-liberal globalisation and supported by a redundant scientific paradigm. As identified by Joseph Tainter in his definitive study of previous civilisations, *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, one hallmark of collapse is an increasingly binary political polarisation and the rise of extreme ideologies, such as fascism and religious fundamentalism.

### ***Humanity's Bifurcation Point***

We now find ourselves rapidly approaching what systems thinkers call a 'bifurcation point' - or a fork in the road. As the tension between the polarities within a system creates increasing instability, the system reaches breaking point, resulting in a seismic jump from one 'steady-state' to another, seeking homeostasis. This quantum

shift can either be a regression to a previous and more primitive state of lower complexity, or a higher and more complex state, giving rise to new emergent properties.

Jim Rutt, a 'deep systems thinker' from the Santa Fe Institute, sees four potential scenarios for this shift, all of which most of us would regard as regressive. A move towards neo-fascism, as we are already seeing around the globe; neo-feudalism, as most of humanity becomes enslaved to a technocratic elite; what he calls a neo-Dark Ages, where we revert to a more primitive society, devoid of sophisticated technologies; or just pure unbridled chaos.

It seems highly likely that we will see elements of all four scenarios played out in different parts of the globe over the coming years. Realistically, whatever evolves from here, both good and bad, things are going to get messy. Thankfully, Rutt also adds what he calls The Fifth Attractor, an alternative fifth scenario, which could guide us towards the new models that need to emerge from the collapse of the old and provide us with a new upgraded operating system for civilisation. But how can we apply these insights to our current predicament and what can we call do to help try and co-create this Fifth Attractor scenario?

### ***'Downstream Symptoms' or 'Upstream Causes'?***

As the pandemic took hold, lockdowns were imposed and panic buying proliferated around the globe, one aspect of collective human

behaviour struck me as the ultimate indication of our disconnection from nature - the quite bizarre fixation with hoarding vast stashes of toilet paper. Why were more people squabbling over rolls of tissue than over food? Seemingly, many of us are more concerned with what to wipe our bottoms with than with feeding ourselves. As a metaphor, this seemed to extend to our focus on 'downstream symptoms' rather than 'upstream causes' and again can be seen as a consequence of our linear and simplistic view of a causal universe.

On the whole, the predominant world-view, informed by reductionism and materialism, tends to deal with complex problems by addressing 'downstream' symptoms, as opposed to looking upstream, so the problem never arises. And, almost invariably, the application of these downstream solutions to the symptoms, leads to compounding unintended consequences further downstream. The loss of soil fertility leads to ever more chemical fertilizers, causing more nitrate run-off, more algal blooms, diminishing biodiversity and ecosystem collapse. We now need 400 times more fertilizer to achieve the level of soil fertility we had when they were introduced.

Likewise, pharmaceutical medicines, which merely repress downstream symptoms of chronic conditions and inevitably cause systemic side-effects, which in turn lead to other drugs to address those symptoms, until the average 80-year old patient in the US is on an average of over ten different medications. Iatrogenic illness, death from the so-called 'side-effects' of the drugs - but are actually just 'effects' - that are supposed to be curing people, is now the third leading killer in the US.

Our fixation with dominion and control within an unpredictable universe has also fuelled the rise of our risk-averse culture. Our over-obsessive concern with 'bad bacteria' and 'germs' has created an over-sanitised environment in which children are left unexposed to pathogens that are crucial for building healthy immune systems. As some epidemiologists have suggested, we may well find in the future that our current lockdown policies prove to have been an over-reaction to the risk, sabotaging the possibility of us developing 'herd immunity' and ensuring that the virus continues to haunt us for many years to come. Prominent environmentalist and vaccine campaigner Robert F Kennedy Jr, has been among those suggesting that self-isolating might even be making it more likely for many to fall ill, reducing immunity through fear and anxiety, catalysing depression and preventing many from making essential visits to hospitals. We are social creatures and need connection - not more separation.

Meanwhile, we seem to be incapable of responding to major existential risks, such as climate change and biodiversity loss. As Charles Eisenstein observes, our current systems need an enemy to fight - be it terrorism or a virus. But when confronted with the truly complex issues of the ecological crisis, our institutions completely fail to make an adequate response - partly because that requires questioning the entire economic paradigm upon which it has been constructed. The solutions presented to these complex crises are what Naomi Klein calls Disaster Capitalism – solutions that most of us can see are 'clear, simple and wrong'.

Few can dispute the wonders and miracles of modern medicine when dealing with accidents, emergencies and acute conditions requiring intervention. But when dealing with chronic conditions - such as cancer, autoimmune and neurodegenerative diseases - mainstream medicine can prove woefully inadequate, resorting to aggressive, toxic drugs like chemotherapy to attack an enemy, like cancer cells. As an industry, it is not encouraged to look upstream at preventative healthcare measures, such as nutrition, or ways of removing toxic chemicals from our food, air and water, since our narrow thinking and our economic model do not justify that.

In the same way that we have an arms industry made more profitable by war, we have a healthcare industry that is more profitable by keeping us sick and issuing more prescriptions. At the same time, while it is crucial to integrate more systemic approaches to human and planetary health, we need also to recognise that conventional allopathic medicine has a role to play. Few of us rush off to find a homeopath after breaking a leg.

And this leads us to another important point. Surely the time has come for us to transcend this very black and white dialectic, where we swing from one polarised position to another, typified by our two party political spectrum? If you are anti-capitalist, you must be a communist. If you are anti-nuclear, the assumption is you wish to cover the country in wind farms. This discounts any possibility for alternative political ideologies or social systems, like the possibility for decentralised and distributed energy, developed according to

regional needs. What is suitable for London for example, is probably not suitable for the Scottish Highlands, or Cornwall.

Similarly, I am not suggesting that we discard and discount the insights of Materialism, but that if we are to cultivate more accurate 'sense-making' about the world around and within us, then we need to integrate these insights with the more integrated and holistic thinking provided by Systems Theory. Rather than only looking for answers within ever more microscopic building blocks of the sub-atomic universe, we also need to look at the relationships between them and the whole system itself. As one Sufi saying puts it, 'You think you understand two, because one and one make two, but you also have to understand and'. Unless we wish to keep repeating the same mistakes, using the same thinking that created the current 'meta-crisis' to try and solve it, then our sense-making needs to integrate this core insight - that we live in a world of relationships, rather than just separated objects. As theologian Father Thomas Berry, described by *Newsweek* in 1989 as America's 'greatest living philosopher', used to point out: 'The universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.'

Without taking this step, we will continue to subjugate the collective health of the whole system - from topsoil to the human body and the biosphere itself - to the apparent benefits of the individual. One of the great insights from recent conservation projects is that attempts to save a species within an ecosystem are usually doomed, again creating unintended downstream consequences. However, once the

focus shifts upstream, to raising the health of the *whole* ecosystem, the health of every component within that ecosystem is also elevated.

### ***Competition, Collaboration and Co-operation***

Once again, many elements of the competitive and individualised culture we have created have been instilled by a specific interpretation of science. We are constantly told that humanity is programmed by essentially greedy and selfish traits, despite abundant anthropological evidence to the contrary. For over 95% of our evolutionary history, as *nomadic* hunter-gatherers, we lived in peaceful, egalitarian societies, typified by lack of private ownership. As soon as we settled and started farming, conflicts arose and civilisations developed. When Darwin's theory of evolution appeared, elements of competitive advantage were seized upon to support the colonial and imperialist policies of expansion, promulgated by the Industrial Revolution.

Although Darwin wrote more about ecological co-operation and collaboration than competition, this was discounted from the discourse, leading to deeply ingrained notions about 'survival of the fittest' and an economic paradigm of linear growth and competition being the only viable model. In the process, we atomised collective systems and instilled within them what systems thinker Daniel Schmachtenberger calls 'competitive rivalrous dynamics'.

Even though two people might work for the same company, or political party, ostensibly working for a shared common goal, the

system prevents them from doing so, since it incentivises sociopathic tendencies, as two colleagues compete for better positions and salaries. As a result, the top positions in our political and economic institutions are populated by the most sociopathic people in society, driven by the goals of wealth and power. A recent study suggested that over 30% of the upper management in Forbes 500 companies could be officially classified as sociopaths.

Perhaps the greatest challenge we face is how to re-purpose these core drivers within our culture, so that we can create an alignment of interests at all levels of the system, from the regeneration of topsoil and coral reefs, to our economic and political systems and the biosphere itself. Daniel Schmactenberger call this the 'omni win-win', whereby we re-design global civilisation to work like the cells and organs of the human body, in which all elements are both sharing and exchanging resources, as well as working towards the health of the whole. Again, this need not imply we sacrifice all competitive elements, as these clearly play a role within all ecological and social systems. Rather like the balance between Materialism and Systems Theory within our scientific paradigm, these competitive drivers in our economic and political systems, must also be balanced with the collaborative and co-operative behaviours that are equally intrinsic to human nature. But before we look at the C-19 crisis through a systemic lens and as an opportunity for systemic change, let's take a look at the various narratives that have been presented about what brought us here and what we might see unfold in the future.

## *The Origins of C-19*

Ultimately, the ecological angle that I have presented strikes me as an obvious explanation - but new information is constantly arising and many scientists from various backgrounds have been challenging the mainstream media's version of events from the start. Dr Francis Boyle from the University of Illinois, who drafted the US Bioweapons Act, is among those who maintain that the virus contains evidence of 'gain-of-function' abilities, proving it was developed as bio-weapon. Other credible sources and various politicians from around the globe, have also asked for further investigation into the possibility that it was either an accidental or intentional release from the Wuhan bioweapons facility a few miles from the Wuhan seafood market.

Although we may never know for certain about the true origins of the virus, it is worth noting that this sort of research has been well underway for many years in laboratories around the world. Twenty years ago, activists in this area, like the South Korean geneticist Dr Mae Wan-Ho, were ringing alarm bells about genetically engineered 'stealth viruses', which could be used to infect whole populations via vaccinations and activated at a later date by external triggers, such as extra- and ultra-low frequency sound waves.

At the same time, other activists were highlighting emerging trends within nanotechnology, such as 'self-replicating nanobots' and other nanotech devices, small enough to be administered in vaccines. So, it would be naïve for us to think these technologies do not exist and,

due to the laws of 'technological determinism', someone, somewhere, will be developing the most extreme versions of them.

One curious anomaly that could support an intentional Chinese agenda is that flights from Wuhan were allowed to keep taking people around the globe, when all internal flights to the rest of China had been stopped. And the way things are unfolding, it would be hard to imagine a more ingenious political tool for advancing economic agendas, consolidating power and fast-tracking all the tools required for 'surveillance capitalism'.

Which brings us to 5G and the world of conspiracy theories, popularised by people like David Icke, Sacha Stone and others. One video that went viral at the start of the crisis was Dr Thomas Cowan, an American doctor who referred to the work of Arthur Firstenberg, an American activist and author researching the impact of Electro-Magnetic Fields (EMFs) and radiation on biological systems. The theory they presented was that pandemics have always arisen in the wake of new EMFs being deployed around the globe.

The Spanish Flu of 1918 therefore, was triggered by the implementation of radio wave technology, which is why it evolved initially within military bases. The Hong Kong Flu of 1968 was due to satellites interfering with the Van Allen belts, which shield the earth from harmful radiation. There are also references to some 300 separate scientific studies in the wake of the Spanish Flu that repeatedly failed to prove proof of contagion, even after taking mucous from infected patients noses and squirting it directly up the

noses of healthy volunteers. There are also reports of the disease appearing in various parts of the globe too quickly to be ascribed to purely physical transmission, since global air travel was yet to have appeared. And when one looks up the symptoms for the 'radiation pneumonitis' syndrome that is being implicated, as a direct result of 5G being activated, this all sounds tantalisingly plausible - dry cough, shortness of breath, fever. Was C-19 an elaborate cover-up for the sickness the 5G roll out was projected to inflict?

Cowan, along with virologists cited by Icke and other conspiracy theorists, such as Dr Andrew Kaufman, have also suggested that the illness is in fact caused by *exosomes*, expelled as a toxic reaction from cells exposed to an external trigger, such as 5G radiation. Exosomes and viruses are considered notoriously difficult to differentiate. Correlations have also been drawn between hotspots of infection and the activation of 5G, such as Wuhan itself. However, as the pandemic continues to play out, this correlation appears to be specious. And the sheer weight of professional medical opinion from people on the front line seems to refute any notion of 5G as the root cause.

At the same time, it seems undeniable that EMFs have an effect on biological systems and 5G could quite possibly be a factor, having been shown to impact the micro-biome and therefore lower the immune system. Dr Rashid Buttar for example, refers to over 2,000 independent studies that have raised the alarm about the human health impacts of 5G. It is clearly a crucial part of the technocratic agenda to encircle the globe with the 5G SMART-grid, which the Internet of Things (IoT), automated cars, surveillance capitalism and

the drone economy, will all be dependent upon. I have yet to speak to a single person who is actively asking for 5G and there is no doubt that it has been introduced in a covert and sinister manner, with almost zero public debate and scientific scrutiny. We are assured by the industries involved that there is no evidence for adverse impacts on human health - but we've heard that before about numerous technologies and materials, from nuclear power and DDT, to asbestos, thalidomide and Monsanto's Roundup.

Much of what Icke and other conspiracy theorists have presented appears to be credible and conforms to what many of us probably already suspect. Yes, it does seem highly suspicious that Bill Gates, now re-invented as a self-proclaimed 'health expert', along with the World Economic Forum and Johns Hopkins University, ran a coronavirus pandemic simulation exercise, called Event 201, just six weeks before the first case appeared. Yes, it does seem highly suspicious that alternative positions challenging the official narrative are being removed from platforms like YouTube, under the auspices of dangerous and misleading misinformation. Yes, there is a huge amount of evidence that vaccines are not only dangerous and ineffective - as evidenced by Dr Buttar, Robert F Kennedy Jr and others - but potentially implicated in the cause of the disease itself. Yes, there is huge scope for manipulation of data and statistics due to inaccurate PCR testing that only highlights genetic material associated with the virus, or through the attributions to causes of death. Yes, the vast majority of patients who have died have also had up to three other underlying health conditions that will have compromised their immune response, such as hypertension, diabetes

or heart problems. Yes, this volatile situation will play into the hands of powerful political and economic agendas, accentuate asymmetric power and be used to validate the imposition of controls on civil liberties that would not normally be acceptable. And yes, like with 9-11, we are unlikely to see those fully rolled back, if and when the crisis subsides. We will most likely never see the world 'return to normal', or as things were prior to C-19.

However, it is quite a leap from there to suggest that this whole crisis has been manufactured and manipulated at every turn by a sinister, satanic cult at the heart of the global elite. Again, this is where systems thinking may shed new light on our analysis. Our linear, reductionist perspective usually demands that we follow a chain of events to find a single root cause. We are always looking for someone or something to blame, as our dualistic systems, based upon binary dominion and control, demand that we have an enemy.

But Systems Theory and the recognition of an interdependent, interconnected universe, would suggest otherwise, since any apparent 'root cause' is always embedded within another set of relationships, the confluence of events which enabled that cause to arise. Ascribing such powerful agency, to so few people, over so many complex factors, with so many possible outcomes, just does not tally with human experience. I am reminded of Hitchcock's classic movie *Dial M for Murder*, in which the protagonist has concocted an ingeniously convoluted scheme for murdering his wife, only to find that the whole plan unravels from the very first moment, due to unforeseen circumstances.

Although much of what Icke and others flag up may appear perfectly valid, there is a point where conspiracy theorists take credible data and plausible speculation, to impose greater levels of intentional agency and meaning. Is it not equally plausible that the technocratic elite genuinely believe that their covert agenda, should it exist, is motivated by humanitarian interests, however much we may disagree with them? No doubt they will benefit personally, but is it really necessary for us to ascribe such levels of dark and evil intent to their agendas? Icke often seems to contradict himself, creating another 'enemy' in the form of the global cult he refers to, thereby presenting another matrix of fear in itself. He defiantly rants on about rejecting the imposition of other belief systems, while continually pedalling his own – often in a belligerent fashion, which seem at odds with the spiritually evolved position he purports to operate from.

So, although it is important that we listen to voices from across the spectrum, we also need to be careful about those that replace one dominating narrative promoting fear and anxiety with another. We need to move beyond this simplistic black and white binary view of the world, which is intrinsic to the problem itself. I would suggest that the vision Bill Gates and the tech elite have for the future of the planet are again the product of an erroneous and redundant way of looking at the world. Along with his passion for biotechnology and food systems based on GMOs - a whole area of science whose efficacy has been discredited time and time again - Bill Gates reveals his reductionist beliefs. He probably does see nature and life itself as

operating like binary computer code, which can be spliced, tampered with and re-written by human ingenuity and without impunity.

Like most people I know, I have zero desire for 5G, AI and the post-biological future espoused by Transhumanists and The Singularity. Quaint as it may sound to the scions of Silicon Valley, some of us still think that we operate within biological bodies, with biological needs, within a biological planet. But perhaps this is how the C-19 crisis will be regarded in ten years time: as the bifurcation of humanity, between those of us that buy into the techno-utopian dream of a post-biological future - attaining immortality through AI connecting consciousness to non-living entities - and those of us that still find joy in the mystery and beauty of the natural world and all those areas of human existence deemed to be of no consequence by materialists?

However, whether or not this is driven by the sinister and intentional designs of an evil cabal remains to be seen. As astute systems thinkers like Charles Eisenstein and Daniel Schmactenberger have observed, it is very easy to connect bits of data from the past to support a narrative that you wish to project onto it, while discarding the data that suggests otherwise. Within the scientific community this is known as 'confirmation bias', making it difficult for new thinkers to challenge any accepted dogma within an established scientific paradigm. Maybe Icke *will* be proved correct on all counts and there are 'shape-shifting reptilians' calling the shots and climate change is 'just another hoax conspiracy' - but it seems unlikely and we have precious little evidence to support either argument. Like the

virus itself, the spread of fear, paranoia, misinformation and dis-information, are also following exponential trends.

Before dismissing all alternative scenarios however, we should bear in mind the degree to which many of yesterday's 'conspiracy theories' have had a tendency to turn into today's fact. Numerous documents declassified in recent decades can be seen to support Icke's theory of 'problem-reaction-solution', whereby problems are created to enable the subsequent enactment of a desired agenda. We now know that there was prior warning about the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the attack on Pearl Harbour for example, the official reasons for the US to enter the First and Second World Wars respectively. The Gulf of Tonkin attacks, which catalysed the US into the Vietnam War, have also been officially recognised as a 'false flag' incident.

We may never know the real truth behind the 9-11 attacks, but there is a wealth of anomalous evidence to dispute the official version of events. One revealing source was a White Paper published by the Project for the New American Century (PNAC). Founded in 1997 by Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, as well as others who came to prominence under the George W Bush presidency, such as Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz, PNAC's directors included men like Bruce Jackson, a Pentagon official during the Reagan era and then in a senior position at the weapons manufacturer Lockheed Martin.

PNAC's ideology can be found in a White Paper produced in September 2000, entitled *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy,*

*Forces and Resources for a New Century*, in which it outlines what is required of America to create the global empire, or Pax Americana, they envisioned for the 21st century. Many of these plans however, were considered too difficult to implement without 'a significant threat to American homeland security' due to 'some catastrophic and catalyzing event, like a new Pearl Harbour'. Key strategies included repositioning permanently based forces in the Middle East; a global missile defence system; the strategic dominance of space and control of cyberspace; an increase in defence spending to a minimum of 3.8 per cent of GDP, up from the then current 3 per cent. In the wake of 9-11, that 'significant threat to American homeland security', Bush increased the defence budget to almost exactly this figure. These shadowy figures in the US administration may not have actually engineered the attacks, or been complicit in them, but it seems perfectly plausible that, like the sinking of the *Lusitania* and Pearl Harbour, they were allowed to go ahead, providing the perfect excuse to roll out a planned military strategy.

Perhaps the most sinister element of the PNAC document however, is a recognition that advanced forms of biological warfare could target specific genotypes, or racial groups, and thereby 'transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool'. Given the severity of the ecological crisis, the technological advances in areas like AI, biotech and nanotech, plus the scary number of powerful figures that seem to support the ideas behind eugenics, it's easy to see why C-19 could be construed as a covert plan for de-population and control by a technocratic global elite. Throw 5G, the SMART grid, Elon Musk's 40,000 satellites and mandatory vaccines

with nanotechnology into the mix, and you have the coalescence of the ultimate global domination conspiracy.

As ever, perhaps the truth is rather more complex and lies somewhere between the two polarities? In the same way that 9-11 may have allowed further exploitation by various political and economic agendas, so will C-19. And since so many of us have lost all trust in the mainstream media and political institutions in our post-Truth world - where telling lies has become as prevalent and as acceptable as telling the truth - one wonders why we should be trusting them now? However, as the days unfold, the weight of evidence for some covert agenda concocted over many decades, appears to grow stronger. For those wishing to dip deeper down the rabbit hole, I would point to the work of campaigners, doctors and scientists such as Robert F Kennedy Jr, Dr Rashid Buttar, Dr Andrew Kaufman, Dr Shiva Ayyudurai and Dr Judy Mikovits.

### ***Where Do We Go From Here?***

We may never know the true origins of the virus and there will always be plausible alternatives to consider. And spending too much time searching for it could be seen as a distraction from the more urgent task of what do we do now, regardless of where it came from. In the same way that we can argue until the end of time about the degree to which climate change is driven by natural variations or by human activities, this enquiry takes us no further in dealing with what confronts us. And before we can envision what might emerge from this pregnant space, perhaps we need to deeply enquire into

what we are being invited to consider? Might the virus be seen as our 'canary in the coalmine', a final warning from nature itself, telling us all to 'stop, go home, reflect, have a good long think about where you choose to go from here'? Are we being invited to lift the lid on the current global emergency? In that sense, is the virus itself the vaccine we need as species, to shift our systems and patterns of behaviour to a new 'steady state'?

As the pandemic panic first took hold, the immediate knee-jerk reaction for many was an instant flip into survivalist mode. Many of us spent the first few days feeling like we had stepped onto the set of some dystopian apocalyptic movie. The world had changed forever, almost overnight. Then, as we all adjusted to lockdown measures, one could almost feel human consciousness embarking on a shared journey of collective sense-making, accentuated by the mounting barrage of alternative theories about where it had originated and how best to protect ourselves.

Was this really a sign of the Apocalypse, the 'great unveiling' that the word really signifies? Will C-19 be the crucial event that deconstructs our collective delusion about 'how the world really works'? Can it be the catalyst for change that we so urgently need if we are to re-write Bucky Fuller's *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth*, while we are in mid-flight? Can we redirect our idling economic engine to 'extend the glide and soften the crash' of the encroaching climate catastrophe, as suggested in Dr Jem Bendell's paper *Deep Adaptation*? Or will it prove to be the defining factor on the road to The Singularity, where we are literally left with no other option but to be absorbed by a digital

dictatorship, driven by algorithms and Artificial Intelligence? As one friend recently said to me, *The Matrix* increasingly seems like a documentary of our times, not a fictional feature film. Maybe the Simulation Hypothesis popularised by Elon Musk and elucidated by Oxford professor Nick Bostrom, a world-leading analyst of the exponential risks posed by AI, will prove to be correct and we all wake up one day in 2030 to find that we have been living in a computerised simulation all the time? Who knows?

As the days unfolded and we started to stabilise within our new routines, there was a growing sense of how we might use this time most constructively. I was reminded of a famous quote from the early seventeenth century French philosopher and physicist Blaise Pascal, who once remarked that 'All men's miseries derive from not being able to sit in a quiet room alone.' As the global economy ground to a standstill, almost all air traffic was suspended and we retreated to our homes, that precious commodity we always bemoan the lack of - spare time - was no longer in such short supply.

Suddenly, there was no real excuse for not tackling those things we dismiss as 'not having time for': cooking; gardening; yoga and meditation; reading Proust or Dostoevsky; learning to play an instrument; baking bread; sorting family photos. And that bifurcation of human activity, between analogue and digital pursuits, became even more pronounced, forcing us to re-evaluate our priorities. As many of us confronted our own mortality more deeply than ever before, we were presented with some big questions. What is really important in my life? What do I need to hold on to and what can I

relinquish? And perhaps, as a culture and a society, can we use that collective process to reimagine the world and our future?

As the days and weeks have progressed, the paradoxical nature of this new reality has crystallised ever more sharply. As thousands were confronted with sickness and grief, others have embarked on deep personal journeys of healing. As we were physically fragmented and separated to our houses, a sense of deeper connection and solidarity also evolved within communities, both on and off-line. As the systemic fragilities of human civilisation became ever more exposed, the global ecology showed almost immediate signs of regeneration, from air pollution clearing in China and now globally, to giant jellyfish drifting down the Venice canals. As always, there are no-ended sticks and, as the Taoist *yin-yang* symbol suggests, the complementarity of opposites seems to be a universal truth at all levels of reality.

As we journey deeper into this strange new space of stagnant stasis and pregnant possibility, one recurring metaphor used within activist circles over the last two decades, seems more pertinent than ever: the metamorphosis of the caterpillar to a butterfly. As one Buddhist adage puts it, 'What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly'. As a species, we could be seen as analogous to the caterpillar, busy devouring all green living systems to satisfy our greed. Now we have entered the cocoon, the 'mushy' pupa stage, where everything breaks down and dissolves. Within that mush of the cocoon, the 'imaginal cells' evolve, which will later emerge as the butterfly. Thomas Berry called this The Great Work that lies ahead of

us now: how to coalesce and consolidate those imaginal cells - from the regenerative hubs and social justice campaigners, to the climate movements and intentional communities that constitute the largest social movement in human history - into one global civil society network that can co-create the butterfly, or what Charles Eisenstein calls 'The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible.'

### ***Addiction and Dysfunctional Culture***

The other potent metaphor introduced by Eisenstein is that of the 'intervention' to deal with addiction. In the same way that a conventional intervention scenario is designed to disrupt normal patterns of behaviour in the addict, thereby creating the space for healing to emerge, so the pandemic has disrupted our collective patterns, allowing us a shared moment to examine our addiction to a dysfunctional culture.

Addiction is often seen as a difficult word or condition to define. At what point does an activity, or a substance, transition from being a passion, an enjoyable and convivial release, or even a beneficial medicine, to becoming a destructive habit? One of my favourite definitions of addiction is 'doing something more than one wants to be doing it', which also alludes to the etymology, from the Latin *addictus*, implying enslavement.

Although usually associated primarily with substance abuse, the term addiction is now ever more widely applied to a variety of human activities, from sex, food and shopping, to our careers and use of

digital devices. At what point are any of these activities controlling our lives more than we would like? And at what point are they an obfuscation, or diversion, from Pascal's observation about our inability to sit quietly alone with our thoughts? This of course is the essential remit of meditation and mindfulness. Or as one Zen saying demands, 'Don't just do something, sit there'.

If we are block booking our diary with zoom calls, does this indicate that we might be using our work to divert ourselves from our inner work, or attention to our families and close relationships? And to what extent are we addicted to the digital domain and complicit with helping to construct the essential architecture for an emerging digital dictatorship? Are we addicted to an ideology in itself, one that prevents us from standing back and gaining perspective?

Most of humanity has now been brainwashed into an ideology of consumerism, convinced that the happiness we seek can be found in the accumulation of objects, or status and power. Even a cursory analysis exposes the flaws of this ideology and perhaps this is a time we can all use to make that enquiry, finding that happiness might derive more from areas like the strength of our relationships and connection to nature, than with faster broadband, a new Tesla or a promotion at work.

I would suggest that this might be the ultimate takeaway from these weeks and months of lockdown. That unless we use this time to turn within, to take stock of where we are at and what lies ahead, we will only emerge the other side and repeat the same behaviours and

patterns that have brought us here. Unless we learn to cultivate a new way of thinking, which requires an integration of systems thinking at all levels of society, from individuals to institutions, we are destined to repeat the same mistakes. As British comedian Peter Cook put it, 'I have learnt from my mistakes and I'm sure I can repeat them exactly.'

### ***The Phase-Shift***

Having spent most of my adult life researching, writing and campaigning for deep systemic change, one question was always impossible to answer: how do we get there from here? We may have a fully fleshed out vision for what we wish to see in the world, but the actual mechanisms by which that might come to fruition have always alluded us. What conditions could create the most fertile ground for a 'phase shift' or transition to this more beautiful world?

One of the main problems has always been that incremental optimisation of the current systems simply will not produce the necessary changes, since they are all still predicated on principles that are out of step with ecological parameters - an obvious example being that these changes still remain embedded within an economic model fixated with infinite growth on a finite planet. As British Prime Minister David Lloyd George once said, 'Man's greatest mistake is to think he can cross a chasm in two leaps.' For systemic change to work, all components of the system have to go through that step change together. Without fundamental changes in our political and

economic models for example, all aspirations for true systemic change are doomed.

For twenty years now, I have wrestled with this, perversely coming to see the collapse of our current civilisation as almost a prerequisite for any viable future. As various 'collapsologists' have observed, with the combination of the ecological crisis, an extractive linear growth economy, divisive rogue ideologies and the confluence of exponential technologies like AI, nanotech and biotech, we are on a guaranteed trajectory towards the 'end game' of human extinction, probably taking most of multi-cellular life on earth down with us. Many climatologists now think we might push through the upper limit of an average two-degree rise in global temperatures by 2030 and that we only have a five per cent chance of stabilising the global climate at levels which support life. We do still have a tiny window therefore, within which we can shift direction. But time is rapidly running out. And as we divert our attention towards the human pandemic, we should not forget the wider crisis that threatens the future of all life.

The sustainability agenda, or incremental adjustments to our current systems, simply won't cut it. We might push the horizon a bit further away, but the overall trajectory remains the same. Besides, why would we wish to sustain something that we know is fundamentally flawed, based upon an obsolete and redundant way of looking at the world and can only lead inexorably towards self-termination? The only chance for stabilising the global climate at a level that still supports life as we know it, requires nothing less than a global, mass mobilised movement towards regenerating the biosphere which,

rather than just trying to stabilise emissions, is directed towards active sequestration of carbon from the atmosphere, through a combination of ecological approaches, from regenerative farming techniques to 're-wilding' ecosystem restoration and large scale seaweed farming.

Although pandemics have always been a predicted aspect of the coming collapse, my personal vision has always been more of a protracted process played out over some years, or even decades, as the ecological crisis threatens food security, causing famines and mass migrations as large parts of the globe become uninhabitable. Few of us ever envisaged a world that comes to a grinding halt in the way things have over recent weeks. And that is why this crisis could be the perfect opportunity, perhaps our last opportunity, to make the necessary changes to our economic and political models, before we re-boot the system. Can we use this time to redraft the rules, initiating what Schmachtenberger and others call Game B, an 'infinite game' constructed on co-operative, collaborative and non-rivalrous dynamics, while the finite limitations of Game A fall away?

This may sound naïve and there is little indication of this happening from a top down institutional level, but things that have always been dismissed as unrealistic and impossible, such as shutting down the global economy, reducing aviation and global trade, or even introducing a Universal Basic Income (UBI), have either already happened, or are being considered. Suddenly, the impossible became possible, almost overnight.

At the other end of the spectrum, from a grass roots bottom up perspective, civil society has never been presented with such an opportunity to enact the systemic changes necessary for genuinely regenerative cultures to emerge. This is a monumentally daunting task, but in the same way that the global elites will maximise this opportunity for their advantage, with prominent political leaders and technocrats already calling for one global governance system, one digitized global currency and mandatory mass vaccination programmes, global civil society also needs to coalesce and consolidate if we are to create new models in parallel.

### ***Revolution or Renaissance?***

Before we look more deeply at what that might entail, let me present a 'theory of change' that underpins the whole principle of systems change. As the visionary thinker Buckminster Fuller asserted: 'You never create change by fighting the existing reality. You build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.' While dissent and social movements like Extinction Rebellion (XR) seem like an essential aspect of this process, we all need to find our niche within the current systems and decide where our energy can most effectively be directed. Those that feel apprehensive about taking to the streets for example, can find alternative ways to co-create the new models we need. While I applaud the successes of grass-roots movements around the globe, often sacrificing their lives to stem the advances of extractive corporate greed, for many of us in the relative comforts of the developed world, our options can appear limited.

While many may sympathise with XR, the notion of radical protest, even if implicitly non-violent, can be compromising to the security of their livelihoods. But most of us can take those first steps towards 'radical localisation', finding others within our immediate networks who are in alignment over these issues and can work with us to put these ideas into practice – be that a local compositing initiative, an allotment scheme, a wind power co-operative, an alternative currency, or a permaculture community. As history has shown us, revolution rarely replaces an existing oppressive regime with the required upgrade and violent confrontation can be seen as part of the same dynamic that lies at the heart of the problem. As agro-ecological writer and campaigner Colin Tudge elegantly puts it, 'Revolution is not required. Renaissance is what is needed.'

This can be a tremendously empowering insight. Perhaps the majority of us do not need to engage in conflict with the existing status quo, but rather we lay the foundations and sow the seeds for a new civilisation, wherever and however we can? Given their track record to date, prevailing political and economic structures seem inexorably destined to continue on their current trajectory towards self-termination, regardless of what we do. They may appear to have all the power and pull all the strings, but we can make our own decisions about how much we wish to be complicit in their plans, and to what extent we divest them of this power by removing our support. Admittedly, rather like fossil fuels themselves, most of us are dependent on many of the services that tech giants like Google and Facebook provide. But more and more of us are seeing opportunities to defect to alternative digital platforms and disengage

from centralised surveillance systems. Our digital discipline and discernment are now critical, not only for enabling our regenerative analogue activities to become actualised, but also for our collective sense making amidst crisis and collapse.

Although the digital landscape will be a crucial component within a Regenerative Renaissance, perhaps the most effective work we can all consider now, starts with traditional analogue activities within our communities? Can we leverage a new sense of solidarity to boost resilience and build self-reliance into our communities? If we see C-19 as a stress test of our current systems and a dress rehearsal for what is to come, we can identify the weak spots in our systems, such as basic food security, then implement measures to deal with that, such as Community Supported Agriculture schemes, urban allotments, rooftop gardens and vertically integrated indoor farming.

One crucial realisation lies at the heart of this process. The gradual abdication of power and control over our essential human needs - food, water, shelter, energy - to ever more centralised corporate and state controlled entities, has been such an insidious and covert process, that most of us are oblivious to it even happening. Now we are quite happily allowing ourselves to become little more than a strip of code within a global digital dictatorship, where the world of big data appears to be providing a free and essential service, but is also using us and our personal information as the commodity.

As this confluence of crises gathers momentum, the communities with the greatest self-reliance over their essential human needs, will

by definition become the most resilient. The systemic cracks we see becoming exposed in the US, should serve as a poignant illustration of this. The fact that the country regarded as the most powerful and wealthiest in the world is currently looking like the worst affected, speaks volumes.

How is it possible that, with all the risk assessment exercises and simulations conducted by the US military and intelligence services, their response to the crisis has been so woefully unprepared? How can Hollywood have produced such a prescient projection of a global pandemic in a film like Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion*, but the country be so unprepared? How can senior health advisors in the White House be so misinformed to think that COVID-19 refers to the nineteenth mutation of the virus, rather than the date when it was first identified? How much of this can be attributed to breath-taking incompetence, and how much as an exposure of the inherent failings within a globalised economy dependent on fragile supply chains? Food security issues are already emerging and the sequence of cascading effects from this crisis have only just begun.

### ***Six Spheres of Re-Generation***

In the summer of 2019, working with a small group of educators and activists, we launched a new educational media platform called *The Re-Generation*, initiating dialogues around systems change and regenerative cultures with leading commentators like Russell Brand, explorer Bruce Parry, XR Co-Founder Gail Bradbrook, leading

localisation activist Helena Norberg-Hodge and Ecocide campaigner Jojo Mehta. Our aim has been not only to provide a forum for these important conversations, but also use that content to develop educational 'learning journeys' for budding 'regenerators' wishing to engage with this process. Now that our physical events for 2020 have gone on hold, we are shifting the focus on-line, with a programme of podcasts and webinars. [Please join The Re-Generation movement to keep updated with these plans by subscribing here.](#)

In an attempt to encourage a systemic view of the interrelation between different systems, we have chosen six areas that are embedded within each other: **Food, Health, Economics, Community, Culture and Consciousness.**

It all starts with the soil, the health of which can be directly correlated with the nutrition in our food and the health of a society. With recent insights into soil carbon and the intelligent integration of livestock where appropriate, we can design regenerative agriculture systems suitable to specific bioregions and implement perhaps the most potent systemic solution available to us. Some estimates suggest that we only need to raise the average organic content of half the world's arable land by a mere two per cent, to bring carbon levels back to pre-industrial levels, within one generation. In the process, we can rebuild biodiversity and whole ecosystems, reconnect communities with the land, create resilient local economies and communities, plus provide the global population with healthy nutritious food.

We are often led to believe that the burgeoning human population is dependent upon vast industrial monocultures for our food supply. In reality, these systems produce only about 30% of the global food supply, primarily composed of a handful of staple crops that produce denatured food very inefficiently and at an exorbitant cost to society and the environment, in terms of healthcare costs and ecological impacts. Meanwhile, some 65-70% of the food consumed globally, still comes from rural peasant farmers, often supplying local markets. The notion that we need industrial agri-business to feed the world, let alone GMOs, is a complete fallacy. Agro-ecological farming techniques have consistently been shown to produce healthier food, more diverse diets, lower input costs and multiple systemic benefits to local communities, than their industrial counterparts. This has even been officially recognised by the UN.

Industrial farming, which treats nature and living systems like topsoil as machines, has decimated the global ecology in a few decades, impoverished communities and enslaved farmers across the developing world to corporate control. It may sound like an impossible ask, but along with phasing out fossil fuel use as rapidly as possible, we somehow need to devolve corporate-controlled industrial monocultures into smaller bio-diverse farms equally fast, using regenerative techniques to sequester carbon back into the soil.

At a grass-roots community level, we need to take every measure we can to reduce our reliance on this system, seeking local, seasonal and organic produce wherever we can, avoiding as much processed, denatured food with almost zero nutrition, as much as possible. As

*The Re-Generation* programme unfolds, we will be looking at the potential for bringing as much of our food supply back under our control as possible, through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes, urban agriculture, vertically integrated indoor farming, hydroponics and greenhouse growing, all of which will become ever more crucial as the climate crisis threatens our dependence on seasonal rain-fed agriculture. It may sound absurd, but one of the most useful things we can all be doing right now is helping to make soil. Check out [makesoil.org](http://makesoil.org) to become part of an amazing global initiative that is helping individuals and communities do just that.

Healthy soil equals healthy food equals healthy people and a healthy biosphere. As US campaigner and physician Zach Bush has shown, we are only just beginning to recognise the full impacts of a compound like Monsanto's glyphosate-based Roundup, now known to destroy the intestinal wall and trigger the 'leaky gut' conditions that underlie autoimmune diseases. This could well be another factor in the impact of C-19 on the US population, most of whom are riddled with Roundup residues, unable even to access fresh organic produce and are therefore reliant on denatured processed food products for their diets, destroying the diversity of bacteria in the micro-biome, lowering their immunity and predisposing them to disease. Early Chinese studies already indicate compromised gut health in some 80% of C-19 patients.

As the originator of the 'germ theory' of disease, Louis Pasteur himself admitted on his deathbed that it was not about the germ but the environment in which the germ is allowed to take hold.

Regardless of what the mainstream media may be telling us, with even the BBC dismissing notions of building robust immune systems through diet and supplements, most of us know when we are compromised by lack of sleep, little exercise and poor diet. As we all know, Big Pharma has long tendrils and will be manipulating the science to their benefit. Even the Journal of the American Medicine Association (JAMA) has published reports to show how the powerful anti-viral properties of intravenous vitamin C stops RNA application and, when combined with other treatments like zinc and ozone therapy, has been curing C-19 patients.

*The Re-Generation* will continue to explore these issues with leading naturopaths and alternative health experts, looking at ways we can shift the emphasis upstream to preventative healthcare and the basic steps we can all take to develop robust immune systems in ourselves and our loved ones. We will also look at the potential application for psychedelic medicines, not only now showing extraordinary efficacy for dealing with our mental health crisis and epidemics of depression and addiction, but for also prompting unitive, mystical experiences and promoting what biologist EO Wilson called *biofilia*, that innate sense of being connected to the natural world, which so many seem to have lost but which we so urgently need to regain. Interestingly, psychedelics can catalyse a momentary crisis, disrupting our notions about consensus reality and thereby allowing the space for profound healing to occur, with many advocates reporting more progress in one session than in ten years of conventional therapy.

This journey through our Food and Health systems will also highlight the need for the 'radical localisation', as popularised by veteran campaigner Helena Norberg-Hodge. While most of us cannot divest ourselves entirely from the globalised corporate economy, all of us can do whatever we can to re-direct as much as we can towards the local economy. This might include the adoption of alternative local currencies, or barter and exchange schemes, but most importantly by supporting small, local businesses wherever possible. We may now find ourselves increasingly dependent on Amazon and on-line shopping as the high street disappears forever, but forming these tight local trade connections within the community are an essential component of building resilience.

Similarly, as we re-engage with the workplace, whether in a small entrepreneurial local business, or the offices of a transnational corporation, what role can we play there to promote the principles of the so-called 'circular economy'? Where can we eliminate waste in the system to 'close loops', turning linear systems into circular ones? How can we source more local, ecological materials and supply more local markets?

As we have seen, our linear and extractive economy is predicated purely on quantity and not quality, driven by a fixation with growth as opposed to development. Measuring the success of an economy through GDP is of course woefully inaccurate, as it only reflects economic activity, including numerous aspects we could hardly regard as positive - accidents, hospitalisations, divorces and environmental disasters. Economist Herman Daly first made this

distinction many decades ago - a growing economy is only getting bigger, while a developing economy is getting better. As US novelist Edward Abbey said, 'Growth for the sake of growth is the philosophy of a cancer cell.'

Totally redesigning the basic principles upon which the global economy is built is perhaps the biggest challenge we face and might seem like another impossible task. It might even prove logically impossible for us to make a seamless transition from an extractive linear growth economy to the circular model set out by Kate Raworth in her brilliant book *Doughnut Economics*, but it is incumbent on us to try. If we do see a total implosion of the global economy, it might present the only viable model we have.

Numerous mechanisms have been developed in this area, enabling us to re-programme our economic model. In the same way that we have designed our current model to reward competition and quantity, we can redesign the system to reward collaboration and quality. We can stop taxing the things that are supposed to be good for us, like jobs and income, and tax the things that are bad - like pollution and soil erosion from industrial farming. We can eliminate waste streams and close loops within industrial processes, by using ecological materials that can be safely sequestered using natural processes. We can use mycelium networks and mushrooms to detoxify old industrial sites. We can subsidise regenerative activities and reward them for the amount of carbon they sequester, like regenerative farming. We can make companies responsible for the full life-cycle impacts of all the materials they need, overcoming built-in obsolescence and using

'molecular markers' to trace all those that are toxic and non-renewable, keeping materials circulating in the market, rather than continually extracting more from the earth while simultaneously filling up landfill sites with disposable downstream products.

We can introduce negative interest on capital to encourage more flow of money rather than hoarding. We can introduce a four-day week and Universal Basic Income (UBI), to lower the stress on social and ecological systems and create more freedom for more people to explore their creativity, rather than remain preoccupied with a gerbil wheel of debt. If automation is going to create so much mass unemployment, we urgently need to evolve new avenues for human creativity, providing humanising activities to counter the continuing march into digital dictatorship. Above all, we need to remember that many economies have been built from ecologies, but no ecologies have ever been built from economies. As Alan Watts used to say, this is 'the first great fallacy of civilisation' - the confusion of conceptual wealth, which we have created, with the real wealth of the living systems upon which we all depend.

However, the notion that we can make the shift to renewables and still enjoy the levels of consumption provided by the fossil fuel economy seems highly unlikely. The days of air travel allowing so many to go gallivanting around the globe is probably over, at least for the majority. If we are to transition to some new steady state, a circular economy and a truly regenerative civilisation, certain things will be off the table. Most of us will need to eat 90-95% less meat, travel less, consume less, but in the process, lead less stressful,

simpler, healthier, happier lives, evaluated on quality and not quantity.

Although the word community is now often aligned as much with on-line digital communities as those in the real world, and we need to focus on resilience within both, let's not forget how quickly the digital landscape could disappear if something like a solar flare knocked out the energy grid. First and foremost, we need to build resilience into our real world local communities, with many of the mechanisms already outlined helping to enable that, such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes, community orchards, composting schemes and alternative local currencies. All of this helps to balance the de-humanising trends of the digital world with human-scale technologies and activities.

Connecting these analogue activities with the digital domain, for dissemination and replication, is at the heart of what *The Re-Generation* hopes to promote. Tightly knit communities, with deeply bonded connections and as much self-reliance as possible over essential human needs, will inevitably fare much better during adverse conditions than those that are fragmented, atomised and dependent on external centralised inputs for their food, water and energy. We may all continue to use the centralised energy industry, supermarkets and municipal water while we can, but those that can establish localised alternatives will of course be in a better position when the juggernaut runs out of road. As with ecosystems, the more diversity and complexity we can develop within our communities, the more resilience, self-regulation and self-organisation will emerge.

Most of us have experienced this, seeing how bringing even small groups of people together can create new levels of collective intelligence for solving challenges and problems.

And much like our shared belief in the necessity of things like industrial farming and a centralised energy industry, or the inculcated beliefs in humans being purely self-motivated, we should question the notion that we will all descend into Mad Max style dystopian chaos if centralised infrastructure collapses. As brilliant American author and activist Rebecca Solnit so eloquently describes in her book *Paradise Built in Hell*, having spent time in the aftermath of natural disasters such as the Indian Ocean tsunami or Hurricane Katrina, this does not correlate with what she observed. Sure, there were always isolated incidents of aggressive and violent behaviour, but these were exceptions to the norm. The much greater trend was towards solidarity and co-operation. Interestingly, many of the conflicts that arose in such conditions were due to a mistaken distrust between different factions, misinterpreting what were in fact peaceful approaches as being aggressively motivated. Having personally lived through the 2004 tsunami in south Sri Lanka, I have seen this process first hand, as Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, ex-pats, aid workers and tourist volunteers, were all united in one common goal.

By exploring our journey through these first four topics - Food, Health, Economics and Community - we hope to identify the core characteristics of what constitutes a regenerative culture, from self-reliant regenerative food systems to biological medicine, localisation,

circular economics and ecological design. In addition, we will then take a look at the role of art and artists within this co-creative culture, as well as the human need for coming together through ritual, celebration, music, dancing and wise use of intoxicants.

We will also examine the role of science and technology and how we can redirect research from purely commercial gain to actual societal benefits. Some technologies may appear very 'clever', but are they really 'wise' and 'intelligent', given the implications? Are they even necessary and do we actually want them? To what degree might our current trajectory be determined by the evolution of technology itself? Is the 'technium', the super-organism of technology, now a driving evolutionary force in itself and, if so, can we do anything about it? Are we developing and deploying certain technologies just because we can, rather than because we need to? How many of us have signed up and voted for the 5G SMART-grid and the digital dictatorship it will inevitably bring?

Is it not obvious to most of us by now that technologies designed to work with nature and emulate natural processes, will inevitably work better for us than those that seek to control it, tamper with it and even try to improve it through human arrogance and hubris? The emerging science of Biomimcry, that informs cutting-edge ecological design, recognises that nature has had 3.8 billion years of R and D to draw from and we are a young species. As activist and writer Daniel Pinchbeck suggests, our 'planetary initiation' could be seen as a call for humanity to make a move from youthful ignorance into a more mature adulthood. Maybe a part of this process involves upgrading

our relationship to technology, replacing those that undermine ecological processes with those that actively regenerate them? As Russell Brand says, we are waking up to the 'systemic betrayal behind the narrative of progress'. All this technology that was supposed to make us happier and less stressed, so far seems to have done the reverse. Is it even working for the 1% of the 1%? Are they any happier than the rest of us? I somehow doubt it.

Finally, we will also take a look at Consciousness itself, a word that can often induce a level of eye-rolling and instant association with New Age drivel. However, without us examining the more metaphysical or spiritual dimensions to human existence, I very much doubt we will have any chance of fully embracing, or even understanding, the systemic changes required, since they demand a re-evaluation of our sense of human identity.

One framework that can be especially useful in this context is a huge body of research into the left and right brain hemispheres, presented by psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist in his book *The Master and His Emissary*. The first thing to recognise is that neither hemisphere is solely responsible for any single activity - both hemispheres are intimately involved with every operation performed by the brain. The difference however, is in how the two hemispheres *process* that information.

Generally, the left hemisphere is associated with the more masculine traits of rationality, analysis and a focus on specific, separate aspects of what is being observed. The right hemisphere is associated with

the more feminine quality of intuition and concerned more with overall context and relational aspects within the whole. As McGilchrist so eloquently shows, the entire western reductionist and materialist view of reality that has dominated humanity for the last few hundred years, has elevated the left hemisphere and subjugated the right.

So, if we are to find a new balance between the controlling and dominant narrative of the left hemisphere, which supports our 'Story of Separation', with the more holistic, systemic and integrated right hemisphere that supports a 'Story of Inter-Being', perhaps we all need to enquire a bit more deeply within ourselves and see if we can recognise these processes at work? Similarly, the new research into psychedelic compounds has shown how they suppress areas of the brain known as the Default Mode Network (DMN), which is a fancy scientific term for the human ego, or the identification that limits our sense of identity to the human body and often just the brain itself.

When the DMN is suppressed in a psychedelic experience, we have greater feelings of connection to nature and the universe itself and the experience often correlates closely with profound, unitive mystical experiences. In McGilchrist's model, these compounds reverse the 'normal' daily constellation of the two hemispheres, the left being pushed into the background and the right coming into the foreground.

Ultimately, it does not matter if that shift is precipitated by meditation, chanting, dancing, psychedelic compounds, or even just

walking in the woods. The important thing is that it happens at all, as this simple re-correction within our brain function can be all that is required for us to start experiencing the world in a new and different way, one which is more balanced and attuned to an ecological and systemic world-view. And, as a result, this enables us to become active contributors to the co-creation of a truly regenerative civilisation.

### ***Our Planetary Initiation***

We are a pivotal point in human history. Although there is unspeakable suffering for millions, I feel it is incumbent on those of us that are privileged and fortunate enough to even explore these thoughts, to now dig deep, step up and do whatever we can to steer humanity towards the only future scenario in which we have a chance for survival - one that is systemically informed and primarily directed towards the restoration of ecosystems and regeneration of the global ecology.

It may all sound ludicrously ambitious, or be easily dismissed as utopian idealism. But as we have seen, what has previously deemed to be impossible has become reality in a matter of weeks. As veteran US eco-campaigner and author Bill McKibben points out in his latest book *Falter*, within a few months of the US entering World War II and Roosevelt directing major industrialists towards the war effort, one factory in Michigan was knocking out one B-24 Bomber, comprised of over 1.2 million different components, *every hour* - a rather more

complex piece of kit than a solar panel or a wind turbine, and that was using 1940s construction methods.

As wartime scenarios have frequently shown, we *can* mass mobilise around common goals as a species. If we are to leave any semblance of a habitable planet for future generations, then this Great Work is our only option and now, more than ever, is our opportunity to make that commitment. The direction in which our collective sense-making and decision-making goes over the coming years, and the number of us that commit to this Great Work, will determine the future of not just humanity, but all of life on earth. Paradoxically, C-19 is giving us the time and the space to take this journey. In a sense, this is our 'calling', to be part of a planetary initiation process, a collective *metanoia*, from which we can emerge with the resolve and the resilience we need to give birth to a new culture and a new civilisation, one which has moved beyond the polarities of Us and Them to recognise the oneness of just Us. As the activist aphorism asserts: 'The time is Now; and if not Now, then When? And if not Us, then Who?'

Please visit [www.theregeneration.me](http://www.theregeneration.me) and subscribe so that we can keep you posted about forthcoming events and recent news.

Rory Spowers is writer, campaigner and event curator, specialising in systems change and consciousness issues. His books include *A Year in Green Tea and Tuk Tuks*, covering the creation of [Samakanda](#), an ecological learning centre in south Sri Lanka, and *Rising Tides*, a history of ecological thought, critically acclaimed by the UK *Sunday*

*Times*, *The Observer* and a variety of magazines. Most recently, Rory was a Writer on Bruce Parry's 2017 feature documentary [Tawai](#), and since 2015 has been Creative Director of the [Tyringham Initiative](#), a world-class think-tank for new paradigm projects and consciousness studies. Rory co-founded [The Re-Generation](#) in 2019, a new educational media and events platform, highlighting people and projects working for systemic change and regenerative cultures.

