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Ancient Wisdom We Have Forsaken

The Covid Crisis

Jack McMillan and Ria Montana

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So tired of it all, the endless ‘debate’ and angst about this current crisis — Covid. The pandemonium is dizzying.

This crisis is real, we suppose. As real as every other self-inflicted malaise of our spinning out-of-control ‘civil’-ization. And it will play itself out as it will, in spite of how bogged down we get in perplexities, competing theories, and varied, disparate solutions surrounding this real yet unreal crisis. We’re enmeshed in the tertiary branches of this unfolding saga of chaos and confusion, blind to the forest by the trees of our fear-based hype. ‘Covid’ may be real, but the greater real of it is the calling to consider the deeper existential, experiential crisis of civilization and to get to the root of our obvious dysfunctionalities as a society and as a species. The real crisis, beneath the surface of this one, points to how we have been indoctrinated to relinquish our autonomy to think and feel for ourselves, tapping into our archetypal intuitions and wisdoms about life from which emerges awareness with instinctive callings. We have disconnected ourselves from

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primal wildness and the organic flow of life. We are living in humans' self-constructed artificial closed system of civilization, remote from unfettered Earth, stuck in the prison of our amplified brains and screaming egos, detached from our languishing hearts.

And within that disconnect, we have become, as a collective, lost in technology and its technocracy, swirling in a citadel of babble, now in its current iteration of Covid clamor. But it's been going on for at least 10,000 years, this babble and disconnect, ever since we stopped being unimposing mammals on this Earth, free from our conceits of pseudo-supremacy. It was then we left our belonging, embedded in wildness. We began objectifying, subduing, commodifying, and dominating wild and once-wild animals and plants, whom we recast as 'its' in a slight of mind and denial of heart to numb us from the pain of our alienation from nature, and our true natures. Rationalization supplanted our innate compassion and became our *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. Thus began the descent into the death march of civilization.

This rationalization provided an illusion of 'working' for thousands of years while we exploited new frontiers, whether of other lands, other peoples, or other life forms, while we expanded and intensified our supremacist war on all to consume the spoils. We are now so estranged from visceral sensations and situational awareness that we neither notice nor care about the ravages in our wake we ourselves are ushering in, such as the monstrous destruction of Earth's biodiversity in this current 6th mass extinction event, and slaughtering over 70 billion fellow animals per year, over 150 million every hour, and trillions of marine beings, for mere titillation of our taste buds. We are essentially obliterating Earth's biota and abiota to prop up and propel our social hegemony, our artificial, speciesist behemoth lifeway, once mutualistic now parasitic and as audacious as our mountaintop removals with our mechanisms of mass destruction. Yet we tell ourselves,

away at that concrete, but all it is doing is creating a rubble we will stumble over and then rebuild with brick and mortar into the next monolith of myopic mindlessness and ruthless heartlessness. Through indoctrination into civilization's separation and supremacy, we repeatedly and increasingly reap what we sow, ad infinitum. Earth needs us to stop railing against the reaper while ignoring the sower. Earth needs us to sidestep, drop out of, and smash the ways of our barbarian civilization, to end the reaper civilization's hardened heart is sowing.

Despite how daunting this sounds, it's really not so complicated. Want to end our assault on the Earth and all life? Want to cease resource wars, stop climate change, end world hunger, avoid these zoonotic viruses, heal Earth, liberate ourselves and other animals from our dominating ways? In other words, want to thrive embedded in the community of life unchained by civilization's persecutions and prisons? The only way is to ditch the attitude of human supremacy and hierarchical thinking by putting our hearts and Earth's life first, thereby resisting and refusing the authorities and tangible and intangible structures of civilization, which is by definition the speciesist domestication of plants and animals. All else will follow, informing and guiding our way out of our 'damned spot' madness. Nothing short of that will ever heal and restore ourselves and the wild world. Or end the unending litany of the shallow babbles of our discontent.

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in utmost human-centric arrogance, that we are kind and caring, as we willfully and maliciously assault life, and remain steeped in prevarications when our victims — and now a covid posing as a metaphor of deeper calling — implore "What are you doing!?" and cry "Stop!!"

But now at last, we have run out of new worlds and new victims to subjugate. Out-of-mind and out-of-sight finally fails. Our exploits now come full circle and close in on us, the pompous assailants. The chickens are coming home to roost. We are an organism that has walled itself off from our intrinsic relationship with the greater sustaining whole and began feeding on itself with a cancer of dis-ease, in a pilot's death-spiral mired in delusion and illusion of an altitude of superiority, all the while steering ourselves and Earth in an increasingly rapid descent toward inevitable annihilation of both self and the mountain. Along the path toward crash we have all manner of self-made crises in addition to the species extinctions and biodiversity loss— climate chaos, ecosystems collapse, world hunger, resource wars, ocean death...and on and on and on, while we quibble over hyped fear porn of a pseudo-pandemic distracting us from the far more deadly virus of our domination over all.

What's the underlying cause of it all? Connect the pieces to the puzzle and we can easily see our misbegotten sense of superiority, and our hierarchical thinking, resulting in our meddling other-ization of those we perceive to be 'lower than' us, whether flora or fauna. Stripped of their personhood and natural-born autonomy, we close them off from our hearts and any consideration for their sovereign and sacred interests and lives.

This domination starts with animal beings we brutalize, and moves on to Earth 'it'self, in a wanton assault to serve our misperceived exaggerated needs. The ethos turns inward, extending into our human realm with ruthlessness heaped upon those we perceive as our underlings. Civilization's devices

leave us fettered and brutalized, with the survivors among us entrenched in incipient misery seeping into our very souls. Everything done to enslave the free living returns upon and into us, internalized in our own collective and individual essence, becoming us and tragically now so very becoming of us. The suffering we sow and the dooming affect of our disconnect billows, while we twiddle and quibble, tumbling and stumbling ever downward, lost in a rabbit hole of obfuscations of the truths we left behind.

At the core of the looming crises we fret and obsess over, and protest and rail against in a sinking futility, is this fatal flaw: our massive failure of compassion toward the other, and a refusal to fully feel and embrace how the other *is* us. We are one and the same. We talk about humanity being “one big family” but we don’t really believe that or feel that. We talk about having respect for the Earth and fellow animals, and we doubly do not really believe or feel that. We wage war on both, and then war on each other in a reap of the supremacist predatoriness we sow.

Some say we must solve human issues first, but such supremacist perspective is a shallow, upside-down, and ill-fated origin of the issues we seek to solve. “*As long as there are slaughterhouses there will be battlefields*” (Tolstoy). We must start from the problem at its core, in its entirety. The mind-set and heart-set of amity, of mutualism, of compassion, expanded to all gives rise to thriving communities of diversity of life, humans and non-humans alike. For eons, all our talk and efforts for ‘peace’ and ‘justice’ have only amounted to shape-shifting the problems, leading only to ever-spreading failure and lament of same. Our supremacist, human-centric approach to life IS the problem. An approach prioritizing human issues while excluding Earth’s others only further propagates the very issues we are trying to resolve. Further still, the fallacy of human supremacy easily shifts its victors and victims. In the end, no one is spared from the

arbitrary hierarchy of civilization doling out who is worthy and unworthy of compassion. Contracted and fragmented compassion limited to human concerns negates and violates the very concept of compassion, making it oxymoronic and counterproductive. Humans’ open and whole compassion for all is the only way all are released from civilization’s prison into liberation.

The slogan “Earth First!” means something, and something deep. As in a family, altruism is what gives and sustains the life of the family. “*For it is a giving without hope of getting*” (Leslie Cross). Expanded to communities, bioregions and all Earth, compassion for others is a selflessness inspiring broader thriving infusing mutualism into both individuals and the overall whole. Shifting toward this giving and sharing, rooted in authentic caring for all beings, can succeed where human-centered selfishness has failed in ways now closing in on us and the world. Or we can continue being caught in the advancing viruses of our selfishness, bringing all down with us.

This coronavirus is an ironic perversion of another word of exactly the same letters — CARNIVOROUS — now scrambled into a prevarication of the truth that is right in front of us, that has been calling to us for so long now. We human herbivore apes are by our social nature compassionate and mutualistic, in unity with others in community. When our compassion remains unbroken, we are altogether primally repulsed by causing the suffering of other animals and their homes; conversely we get pleasure from soothing the pains of others. How we are with fellow animals and Earth is how we invariably are with ourselves. Sow misery and murder and by ‘jungle justice’, it returns to us exponentially. That we reap what we sow is the wisdom we have forsaken.

The current coronavirus is seen as real. Yet it is just a concretization of something far deeper, and a manifestation of something far more vile than virus. We can keep hammering