

Love or Die: Introduction

By Dr. Marc Gafni

Eros is life. The failure of Eros destroys life. Our lack of Eros is poised to destroy the world. We call this existential risk, or the second shock of existence.

The first shock of existence is the realization — at the dawn of human existence — that the skull grins at the banquet. Life, before it continues, is first confronted by death. The first shock of existence is the death of the individual human being.

The second shock of existence is the death of humanity, or in a second form, the death of *our* humanity.

All civilizations have fallen because the stories that they lived in were, in some sense, stories based on rivalrous conflict governed by win/lose metrics. Every civilization was weakened by interior polarization caused by the lack of a shared story of value.

We now have a global civilization, but we haven't created a shared story of value. We haven't solved the generator functions that caused all civilizations to fall. Our global civilization has exponential technologies and extraction models depleting the earth of resources that it took billions of years to create, which is going to lead to a civilizational collapse.

Existential risk: risk to our very existence.

The choice is clear: love or die.

It is that simple. Eros is no longer a luxury. It is an absolute necessity for the survival of the individual and the planet.

In the last half a century modern psychology has documented an age old truth: a fully nourished baby who is not held in loving arms will die. So too our world, personal and global — even with all the resources of intelligence and technology at our disposal — will die without being held in love. In the embrace of Eros.

We must embrace a personal path of love and a global politics of love.

Not ordinary love. Not love which is mere human sentiment — but Eros, or what

we sometimes call Outrageous Love, which is the heart of existence itself.

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

These are core ideas I begin to unpack in this introduction.

What Is Eros?

We define Eros through what we refer to as *the Eros equation* (one of a series of what we call *interior science equations*):

Eros = Radical Aliveness x Desiring (Growing + Seeking) x Deeper Contact x Greater Wholeness x Self Actualization/ Self Transcendence (Creation [Destruction])

There are good reasons for the formal language of interior science equations in these writings, and the reader is invited to explore them on their own, in particular, in our work entitled *"The First Principles and First Values of CosmoErotic Humanism: 48 Propositions of New Metaphysics: Post Tragic Memories of the Future"*. But for now, let's describe Eros simply, outside of the formal equation:

Eros is the experience of radical aliveness, moving towards, seeking, desiring ever deeper contact and ever greater wholeness.

Eros is the core fabric of reality's *being* and the motivational architecture of reality's *becoming*.

Eros is what animates the evolutionary impulse itself, from the very inception of Cosmos all the way to our very selves, who awaken to the realization that the evolutionary impulse throbs uniquely in every single one of us.

The realization of human awakening and transformation that lies at the core of the interior sciences is the invitation — or even the urgent and desperate *demand* — of a madly loving Cosmos, animated by infinites of power and infinites of intimacy. The demand, the desperate invitation, the plea, the tender and fierce command of Cosmos that lives inside every human being, is to awaken

— to awaken to our true nature, as unique incarnations of Eros and Ethos that are needed and desperately desired by all that is.

Or, said slightly differently:

- ◆ Reality is Eros.

Or:

- ◆ God is Eros.

The failure of Eros destroys life.

The collapse of Eros is always the hidden (or not so hidden) root cause for the collapse of ethics. This is true both personally and collectively.

We live in a moment of a worldwide and personal collapse of Eros. Our lack of Eros is poised to destroy the world. We call this existential risk. This is what we have referred to as the Second Shock of Existence.

Existential Risk: The Second Shock of Existence

The first shock of existence is the death of the human being — the realization that the human being will die, which dawns in human consciousness at the beginning of history. We are not talking about the biological fact of death but the existential realization of death.

Although the interior sciences disclose that death is a portal between two days

(there is vast empirical¹, philosophical² and anthro-ontological evidence³ for the continuity of consciousness⁴), yet death is also, in our own direct surface experience, a stark end — and that is obviously not a bug but a feature in the system. Our first-person experience is that death ends this life. It is not the *totality* of our experience if we go deeper inside, but it is obviously intended to be the central, potent, and painful dimension of every human life. Indeed as Ernest Becker potently reminded us, the denial of death is at our peril. All the stories and all the plotlines and all the threads of living end at that moment. Whatever happens beyond, we have an actual experience of ending.

Paradoxically, that ending, the experience of the finality of mortality, is what presses us into life. From implicit demand of the first shock of existence, human beings were activated and pressed into creative emergence, and what emerged was all of human culture, interior and exterior.

The second shock of existence is the realization of the potential death of humanity.

After all the stages of human history — matter, life, and mind in all of their stages of evolutionary unfolding — we have come to this place in the evolution of humanity, in which the gap between our exponentially expanding exterior

¹ Evidence gathered by the most serious of researchers beginning with Henry and Edit Sidgwick at Cambridge University and William James at Harvard University and continuing in highly rigorous form for the last 150 years as recapitulated by Whiteheadian scholar David Ray Griffin in multiple volumes. See also, for example, Dean Radin, *Real Magic: Unlocking Your Natural Psychic Abilities to Create Everyday Miracles*, Potter/TenSpeed/Harmony, 2018, *The Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena*, HarperCollins e-books, 2010, and other books by him. Or see the earlier classic by Frederic William Henry Myers, *Human Personality And Its Survival Of Bodily Death; Human Personality And Its Survival Of Bodily Death*, Longmans, Green, 1907.

² This requires a cogent analysis of materialism and dualism and the introduction of far more cogent third possibility which we have called pan interiority.

³ We discuss Anthro-Ontology in some depth in David J. Temple, *First Principles and First Values of Evolving Perennialism: Forty-Two Propositions on CosmoErotic Humanism—Post-Tragic Memories of the Future* (2023) and see also the fuller conversation in David J. Temple, *First Principles and First Values: Towards an Evolving Perennialism: Introducing the Anthro-Ontological Method*—both books published by World Philosophy and Religion Press, in Conjunction with Waterside Press and Integral Publishers. For now we will simply define it as an innate and clear interior gnosis which directly available to the human being.

⁴ See Dr. Marc Gafni's and Dr. Zachary Stein's essay in preparation, "Beyond Death: Anthro-Ontology, Philosophy, and Empiricism." This essay is slated to appear in the book *Towards a World Religion: Homo Amor Essays*. The essay is also the ground for a larger book by the same authors, *Twelve Portals to Life Beyond Death: Responding to the Second Shock of Existence*. In this volume, we discuss three forms of material: the empirical, the philosophical, and the anthro-ontological and show how each form discredits the notion of death as the end.

technologies and our stalled (or even regressing) interior technologies of value has created dire catastrophic and existential risks.

This gap generates extraction models and exponential growth curves, rivalrous conflicts based on win/lose metrics, tragedies of the commons and multipolar traps, in which everyone has to keep producing to the n th degree, including weaponized exponential threats to our very existence because we are afraid that the other parties are going to do it and not be transparent — hide it from us and then dominate us.

Let's outline clearly the major generator functions for existential risk.

1. Rivalrous conflicts governed by zero-sum win/lose metric.
2. Rivalrous conflicts generate extraction models at the core of the economic system and exponential growth curves.
3. Both of these drive (and are driven by) a contrived system of artificially manufactured desires and needs, delivered into culture by ever more precise forms of micro-targeting individuals and groups through ever more immersive environment of the world wide web.
4. Rivalrous conflicts and exponential growth curves animated by win/lose metrics generate complicated, *fragile* world systems, highly vulnerable to myriad forms of collapse.
5. Fragile local systems are made exponentially more fragile on a global level by our inability to meet global challenges while social, legal, political, economic and ethical infrastructures which remain largely local.

All these is a direct result of the failure to develop more adequate interior technologies which would be sufficiently compelling to displace rivalrous conflict governed by win/lose metrics as the motivational architecture for the human life world. This has led to the conditions that will cause the implosion of systems that are already — and quite literally — on the brink of collapsing themselves. That's what we mean by "the second shock of existence"

To recapitulate: the second shock of existence is not the death of the human being, but the potential death of humanity. It is the *Death Star* moment of our species.

When Value Is Deconstructed, the Center Doesn't Hold

We stand in this moment poised between utopia and dystopia. We are at a time between worlds and a time between stories. We need a New Story of Value, eternal yet evolving, rooted in First Principles and First Values, which would become a universal grammar of value, a context for our diversity.

This is exactly what the Renaissance was — it was a time between worlds and a time between stories. In the Renaissance, we were swept with and challenged by the Black Death, a pandemic that swept Europe. The Black Death destroyed between a third to half of Europe and a huge part of Asia. It killed everyone. People died horrifically, brutally, in the streets. They had no idea how to meet this challenge, and so, in response to the Black Death, da Vinci and Ficino and their cohorts understood that they have to tell a New Story of Value — and that story was the story of modernity.

Did they get the story right? They got part of it right, and this birthed, to use Jürgen Habermas' phrase, *the dignities of modernity*, the new way of information-gathering and universal human rights — but they deconstructed the source of value.

They *lost the basis* for the good, the true, and the beautiful.

The basis used to be divine revelation: *God told us*. But it was owned by every religion, and every religion had overreached and over-claimed. The revelation was often mediated through cultural categories and wasn't fully accurate — so modernity threw out revelation, but was unable able to establish a new basis for value. Value was just *assumed* to be real; as it says in the founding document of American revolution, *we hold these truths to be self-evident* — that is, we don't really have a basis for value, but we just take that *as a given*. In other words, modernity took out a loan of social capital from the traditional world.

The source of value has never been worked out, and then, gradually, value began to collapse. The Universe story began to collapse. The belief that the good, the true, and the beautiful are real began to collapse. The belief that love is real began to collapse. As Bertrand Russell is reported to have said,

"I cannot see how to refute the arguments for the subjectivity of ethical values, but I find myself incapable of believing that all that is wrong with wanton cruelty is that I do not like it."

What do you do if you grew up in a world in which value is not real? A world without a source of value, without a Universe story, without a story of human identity, without a story of desire, without a narrative of power? In the words of W.B. Yeats, *the center does not hold*. We become the hollow men and the stuffed men, gesture without form. You have a collapse at the very center of society, because you no longer have Eros. You no longer have a reality in which value is real — and so you have this lingering sense of emptiness. You have a complete collapse at the very center — and that's the source of existential risk.

The Global Intimacy Disorder

Above, I have outlined the major generator functions of the existential risk. But there is a deeper cause for the existential risk that lurks underneath the rivalrous conflict governed by win lose-metric and the fragile systems they engender — and we cannot take the Death Star down without discerning and addressing this deeper root cause. We have already alluded to this root cause above, but at this point we need to make it more explicit — so that, from this context, we can the adequate root response will become clear.

The deeper root cause of the meta-crisis is a global intimacy disorder. This ostensibly surprising statement can be understood in a few simple steps:

1. All of the catastrophic and existential risk challenges we face are global — from climate change to artificial intelligence, pandemics, systems collapse, and exponential arms races.
2. Every global challenge self-evidently requires a global solution.
3. Global solutions can only be implemented with global co-ordination.
4. Global co-ordination is impossible without global coherence.
5. Global coherence is only possible if there is a global resonance between

the parts.

6. Global resonance is only possible if we have global intimacy.
7. Global intimacy — just like intimacy in a couple — is only possible when there is a shared story — not just a shared history, but a shared story of value. It is only a shared global story that can generate a new emergent quality of intimacy, global intimacy.
8. A shared story of value must be rooted in shared ordinating values, or what we have called evolving First Values and First Principles. Intimacy requires a shared grammar of values as a matrix for a shared story of value.

The global intimacy disorder is the root cause for existential risk, underlying its core generator functions. The global intimacy disorder is rooted in the failure to experience ourselves in a field of shared intrinsic value, which derives from the deconstruction of value.

Indeed, it is wholly accurate to say that the root cause of the two generator functions of existential risk is the failed story of intrinsic value, or what we might also call **the breakdown of Eros**.

- The first generator function is **the success story**. Our modern success story is rivalrous conflict governed by win/lose metrics, which violates all the terms of the Intimacy equation: there is no shared identity and no mutuality of recognition, feeling, value or purpose, and instead of *relative* otherness, there is *alienated* otherness. Such a story generates complicated fragile systems with no allurements or intimacy between the parts, systems which optimize for efficiency (as an expression of win/lose metric) and not for resiliency and life.
- The second generator function is **the deconstruction of intrinsic value** itself. The deconstruction of value means that human value does not participate in any sense in the intrinsic value of the real, for the real is dogmatically declared to have no intrinsic value. Thus, there is no shared identity between the interior of the human being and reality. There is no common participation in a field of shared intrinsic value. Instead of intimacy with value we are alienated from value — and only intrinsic value can arouse will — political, moral, and social will.

To sum up, without a shared grammar of value there is no global intimacy, and therefore no global coherence, and no global coordination in response to catastrophic and existential risk, which means — put simply — there will be, quite literally, no future.

Evolution of Intimacy

But we are not hopeless. On the contrary, we are filled with great hope.

Hope is a memory of the future. **That memory of the future is the direct hit that takes down the Death Star, the culture of death.**

The direct hit must be — as it has always been in history — the emergence of a new stage of evolution.

Crisis is an evolutionary driver, and every crisis is, at its core, a crisis of intimacy — from the oxygen crisis of the single cells dying which generated multicellular life at the dawn of existence to the existential risk in this very moment. (We demonstrate this principle in some depth in *Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe*, *The Intimate Universe* and in other writings of *CosmoErotic Humanism*.) **The direct hit is therefore structurally self-evident — to evolve intimacy itself.**

What is Intimacy, as a structure of Cosmos all the way down and all the way up the evolutionary chain? We engage this inquiry in depth in the aforementioned two volumes and in other writings, but for now we will simply adduce what we have called the Intimacy equation:

Intimacy = shared identity in the context of [relative] otherness x mutuality of recognition, mutuality of pathos x mutuality of value x mutuality of purpose.

We will unpack this equation in the main body of this book. Here, it is sufficient to say that intimacy is about the capacity of parts to generate a *shared identity* while retain their otherness or distinct identity — at the same time. This requires multiple mutualities, including recognition, feeling or pathos, value and purpose. The parts must recognize each other, feel each other, even as they share value

and purpose, but all of this must lead to intimate union and not pathological fusion where the distinct identity of the parts is disappeared — like subatomic particles that successfully become an atom or two persons who successfully become a couple.

We have identified the global intimacy disorder as the root cause of the existential risk, but **the underlying ultimate failure of intimacy is the deconstruction of value itself.**

The deconstruction of value means that human value does not participate in any sense of intrinsic value of the real. It is not about *values* but about *the field of value* that underlies all individual values. When the human being, moved — often sincerely or even nobly — by myriad cultural, historical, and psychological confusions, claims to have stepped out of the field of value then intimacy itself is deconstructed. The deconstruction of value is the deconstruction of intimacy.

In the absence of a shared story of value, a story which is an expression of Reality's Eros, a story rooted in *pseudo-Eros* take center stage and become the generator functions for existential risk. Our modern pseudo-Eros story is rivalrous conflict governed by win/lose metrics. Such a story catalyzes in its wake the second generator function of existential risk: complicated fragile systems with no allurements or intimacy between the parts. It is in that sense that we have argued that the first generator function for existential risk is the success story.

The failure of intimacy is precisely the impotent experience that there is no shared identity between the interior of the human being and reality. There is no shared identity in the sense of any kind of common participation in a field of shared intrinsic value — but only a shared story of value can arouse global will required to engage catastrophic and existential risk. For it is only global political, moral, and social will — we can say, *erotic* will — that can generate the most good true and beautiful world that we have always known is possible.

CosmoErotic Humanism

Coupled with the intimacy equation is the scientifically grounded realization, in both the exterior and interior sciences, that reality is progressive deepening of

intimacies, or, said only slightly differently:

◆ **Reality is Evolution. Evolution is the evolution of intimacy.**

The evolution of intimacy requires — personally and collectively — a deeper, more accurate discernment of the nature of our universe, ourselves, and our beloveds. This new discernment generates a new global story of value. The new global story of value generates an emergent, heretofore unseen **global intimacy** and heals the Global Intimacy Disorder.

The New Story of Value is the direct hit that takes down the Death Star and replace it with the hope that invokes memory of our best future. Global intimacy facilitates global coherence, which facilitates global coordination, which activates the possibility of our creative and effectively coordinated global responses to the global meta-crisis in its entirety and its specific expressions.

To solve Russell's challenge, the apparent argument for the subjectivity of ethical values, we have to reground value theory in eternal yet evolving First Principles and First Values, and articulate a New Story of Value as a context of our diversity, which we call *CosmoErotic Humanism*.

As we said in the beginning, our choice is simple: love or die.

To love means to participate in the evolution of love, which is the evolution of the human story of value.

To love means to evolve, to activate a new cultural enlightenment, rooted in a new narrative of identity, a new narrative of value, a new narrative of Intimate communion, a new narrative of desire, a new narrative of power, all of which will birth new narratives of economics and politics.

The evolution of love is the telling of a new story. The new story that must be told is a love story, for in fact that is the deepest truth of reality, rooted in the best exterior and interior sciences that we have at this moment in time:

- Reality is not merely a fact. Reality is a story.
- Reality is not an ordinary story. Reality is a love story.
- Reality is not an ordinary love story. Reality is an Outrageous Love story.

A New Story doesn't mean *a made-up story*. It means doing the hard work of

integrating the validated insights of the traditional world, the modern world, and the postmodern world. This is the intention at the heart of CosmoErotic Humanism. CosmoErotic Humanism, together with other emergent strands, needs to become the ground of a world religion as a context for our diversity. We need religion even as we need science to articulate a shared global grammar of value.

At the core of this New Story of Value is what we term the *interior sciences*, which engage Value as Eros, or what we term *ErosValue*, as the primary structure of Reality and form the ground for CosmoErotic Humanism, the New Story of Value, and the shared grammar of evolving value as a context for our diversity.