

**The Narrative Thread of Cosmos:**  
**The Evolution of Intimacy Through**  
**the Four Big Bangs**

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It is the new information of the sciences that opens us to the most profound realization that the essential nature of Cosmos itself is Story. This narrative view of Cosmos informs what we briefly termed above as *cosmological, biological, and cultural evolution*. It is only now that the leading edges of modern science are beginning to realize that there is a direct throughline, a narrative thread, if you will, beginning with this current Universe at the Big Bang and moving all the way from matter (chemistry, physics, and cosmological evolution) to life (biology and biological evolution), to mind (spirituality, psychology, and cultural evolution).

Before we turn to the Four Big Bangs, which we will unfold as the narrative arc of Cosmos, the core of the Universe Story, and particularly of Evolution: The Love Story of the Universe, some crucial contextual notes are in order.

## **Evolution as Crisis and Invitation: The Context for the Four Big Bangs**

In other writings on CosmoErotic Humanism, we will unfold six plotlines of the Intimate Universe. To simply state them here, evolution evolves to more and more Eros. The plotlines of Cosmic Eros include

more and more complexity,  
more and more uniqueness,  
more and more consciousness,  
more and more creativity,  
more and more care and concern,  
more and more intimacy, and  
more and more story.

For the sake of this writing, however, let's just focus on the evolution of intimacy as the overarching vector of evolution's progression. Eros and intimacy evolve within a narrative arc. The narrative arc of the evolutionary plotline—the evolution of Eros and intimacy—is what we have termed *the Four Big Bangs*. They form the crux of the narrative thread of Cosmos. Central

to the emergence of Conscious Evolution is our very recent ability to discern precisely this narrative thread.

To grasp the narrative arc of Cosmos more fully, we need to place our discussion of the Four Big Bangs in a larger context. One common feature of all evolutionary theories is the idea that evolution is hard, painful, crisis-prone, and existential—a matter of life and death. It is clear that, at key moments, evolutionary crises occur—cataclysmic events that bring into the Universe something that is totally new and truly unprecedented.

As we have already discussed in Volume One of this series, there is little doubt in the minds of those thinking seriously about evolution that we are in the midst of an evolutionary meta-crisis. This is the first totalizing crisis of the Anthropocene, as humanity and the planet itself are forced into what we have termed a *reconfiguration of intimacies toward higher-order evolutionary emergence*.<sup>1</sup> This is a moment of crisis, and yet, such a crisis is perfectly in sync with the narrative structure of Reality. Everything we know about evolution suggests that, precisely at such a moment of breakdown, we are poised for breakthrough.

But our choices matter. That is exactly what *Conscious Evolution* means. It is the movement to the pivotal role of conscious human choice—evolution in person as us—in both ensuring that there will be a future and in designing the quality of that future. Our choices are the leading edge of evolution itself. We are the verbs in the arc of evolution. This narrative arc will become clearer, as we outline the Four Big Bangs below.

This meta-crisis must shift not only our physical systems and exteriors (infrastructure and social structure), but also our interiors—our consciousness—or Eros itself (superstructure). And this evolutionary leap will be catalyzed by the meta-crisis that we are in the midst of, right now. This crisis has *not* only to do with the geo-history of technology and the limits of the biosphere. It is *not* just about the complexity of the planetary stack. It is, more fundamentally, a crisis of self-understanding. Or, as we frame it in our writings, *virtually every crisis, at its core, is a crisis of*

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<sup>1</sup> *Anthropocene* comes from the Greek roots *anthropo*, meaning *human*, and *-cene* from *kainos*, meaning *new* or *recent*. This term is now being used as a formal unit of geological epoch division, basically suggesting that humanity has so impacted the Earth that, from a strictly scientific position, our age constitutes a new geological epoch, a new stage in the history of the planet's basic physical being, especially its atmospheric and chemical composition. The term has deep roots but was brought to prominence by Paul Crutzen, a Nobel-Prize-winning atmospheric chemist. The second shock is a cultural corollary of this, our new planet-changing species being.

*intimacy*. We are not intimate with ourselves, and our world, and as such, we are not in love with ourselves, or our world.

But the two are related. We *need* to be in love with our world, our planet, and with our Cosmos. It is because we are *not*, that we *are* naturally *not* intimate and in love with each other or ourselves. Or said slightly differently, we need a Universe Story, in which we can locate ourselves. We need a Universe Story that meets the depth of our longing and the depth of our knowing—the truth of the interior and exterior sciences.

One of the core sentences of CosmoErotic Humanism is:

Evolution is Love responding to need.

It is the depth of this need, emergent from the meta-crisis of this moment that can generate such a new Universe Story. Our CosmoErotic Humanism is one model of precisely such a new Universe Story. Only from the depth of such a new Universe Story can we articulate a narrative of identity, in which are literally *in* love, in which we participate *in* the very fabric of Reality's Eros.

We are in the midst of an unprecedented species-wide identity and relationship crisis (and this is happening during the very decades when the self-inflicted extinction of our species has become a potential reality for the first time). Our Universe Story and its derivative narratives of identity, power, desire, and community have collapsed on themselves, no longer able to claim alignment with any genuine features of Reality beyond the surface structures of what postmodernity calls *social construction*. We no longer know what it means to be human.<sup>2</sup> And for

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<sup>2</sup> Don't misread the recent upwelling of fundamentalist religion as a sign to the contrary. This reactive and often violent grasping and entrenchment of tradition is driven precisely by the now inescapable and hegemonic force of the *non-stories* about the meaning of humanity. The biggest sacrilege—and what looks to fundamentalist cultures like godlessness—is really the *storylessness* of postmodern culture, which stems in part from its (pseudo-)scientific basis: a non-foundationalist, open-ended, *choose-your-own-adventure* worldview that glibly dismisses ancient traditions by citing the latest scientific headline, and then, dismisses that headline when a newer study is released.

the first time we are aware of this ignorance, collectively.<sup>3</sup> Dogmatic materialism coupled with postmodernism and superficial evolutionary psychology, the conventional narratives of the age, have *de-story-ed* Reality. Together, they reject the notion that we have any intrinsic purpose on the planet.

And yet, at the very same time, the leading edges of post-dogmatic and post-conventional thinking in the sciences, both interior and exterior, have begun to tell a new Story. At the leading edge of thought, there is a growing understanding that consciousness, and the Eros that animates it, as well as our own core self-understanding, are not epiphenomena. Eros and consciousness are not side effects in our lives. They are the main event. Eros, consciousness, our Universe Story, and narrative of identity are not merely supervening or reacting to a more basic bio-technological base. Rather, human Eros or its lack and its desire for greater intimacies, consciousness, and self-identity (or their lack) are at the core of everything. ***It is because of Eros's fundamental and central nature that failures of Eros are driving the global crisis on all levels. We cannot live without Eros, for it is our fundamental nature and the nature of Cosmos. Reality is Eros.***

As we point toward in other writings of CosmoErotic Humanism,<sup>4</sup> ***when Eros breaks down, pseudo-eros in the form of every kind of substitute gratification seeks to fill the void.*** Pseudo-eros is the direct cause for the collapse of *ethos*. Formalized succinctly, we can say: ***All failures of Eros lead directly to a breakdown of identity, which in turn engenders a collapse of ethics.***

Our generation is in an unprecedented position to take responsibility for participating in profoundly generative and destructive evolutionary crises. The question is: ***Can we understand***

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<sup>3</sup> To avoid any misunderstanding, it should be said that humanity has *never* known its true identity and purpose. This is not something we once knew and have forgotten, or something we lost and must now find. No doubt, certain cultures have previously been *convinced* of a particular identity and purpose for all humans, and there have been visionaries who have offered their stunning guesses at the riddle of our being. The difference now is not ignorance—we have always been ignorant—the difference is that now there is widespread knowledge of our ignorance and an unprecedented groping toward truly new answers, answers that are post-dogmatic, post-disciplinary/academic, post-conventional, and trans-national/ethnic. It is also true that premodern and classical modern culture held at least some important truths about the nature of Reality, which have been lost in the dissociations of both extreme modernity and postmodernity. At the same time, there are, as we have already noted, crucial new insights, including the narrative nature of Cosmos itself, which were not available to either premodernity or modernity.

<sup>4</sup> See Gafni, Marc and Kincaid, Kristina. *A Return to Eros: The Radical Experience of Being Fully Alive*. BenBella Books, Inc, 2017, pp. 113-130, 178-192. And see the original formulation of the distinction between Eros and pseudo-eros in Gafni, *The Mystery of Love*, Atria, 2003, pp. 24-31.

*our crises in a Cosmic Context, as opportunities for the emergence of the unprecedented, and as invitations into a higher form of life?*

The only effective response to the meta-crisis is, in fact, the movement from unconscious to Conscious Evolution. And Conscious Evolution means, as we noted at the outset, not only the structural realization that we are a direct emergent of and expression of evolution. It is not enough to know that *evolution lives in us and that the evolutionary impulse beats in our hearts*. Conscious Evolution means that we have gathered new information from the sciences, integrating its interior and exterior disciplines. In doing so, we have realized that *evolution itself is love in action*. And as Conscious Evolution, we are, quietly and literally, *evolution as love in action in person*. Indeed, this is the impulse that moves the project of CosmoErotic Humanism itself and all likeminded meta-projects.

What moves us to gather all the fragments of information—myriad separate parts—into a new larger whole, weaving strands from all the diverse disciplines into a larger embrace, is none other than the same Love that moves the Sun and other stars: Evolutionary Eros itself. And the primary action of Evolutionary Love is the evolution of love itself.

*That* evolution has now awakened to itself inside of our own identities. *That* is what we refer to as *Conscious Evolution*. We now realize that we are personal incarnations of the Force of Evolutionary Love pulsing fiercely and tenderly in us and as us. So, it is Conscious Evolution from here on out: We are able to know and do too much to pretend otherwise; we must consciously orchestrate the future of the planet and the biosphere. And as we have begun to unpack above, the next step in Conscious Evolution is the realization of the Universe: A Love Story.

The interior sciences remind us that *the inside of consciousness is Love*, or what we are calling *Eros*, which is defined by an incessant drive for ever-deepening intimacy and creativity. And, as we have begun to point towards,<sup>5</sup> and will deepen future writings, intimacy and creativity are the same movement of Cosmos.

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<sup>5</sup> See for example, Gafni, Marc and Kincaid, Kristina. *A Return to Eros: The Radical Experience of Being Fully Alive*. BenBella Books, Inc, 2017. See also, *Homo Amor and CosmoErotic Humanism: First Thoughts*, Marc Gafni and Zachary Stein [2018]. This book was completed in 2018 but will be released in 2024. We, however, keep the date on the book as 2018, as it marks an earlier stage of our thinking, which has, with the grace of Cosmos, advanced significantly since that time.

As we began to unpack earlier, new intimacy is created by fostering ever wider and deeper shared identities in the context of (relative) otherness. Separate parts allured together to foster new wholes is the essential movement of both intimacy and creativity. It is the movement of becoming, which characterizes the Story of the Intimate Universe.

## **The Story of the Four Big Bangs**

We must come to see that the evolution of the Universe and biological life is not just a fact. It is a story. Evolution is a story about us, who we are, and what we are going through now. The Universe itself is best understood as a Story, not as a mere fact. The Universe is a Love Story. Like all true love stories, and unlike Harlequin romances or romantic comedies, it has been a Story of profound crisis, cataclysm, tragedy, hope, emergence, and creativity.

One of the best ways to summarize the narrative arc of this Story was offered by Teilhard de Chardin (1955), who followed C.S. Peirce, as well as cryptic strains in Kant's early metaphysics of nature, and organized his master work according to three epochal emergent properties of the evolving universe: matter, life, and thought. This same tripartite division has been rehearsed recently by Holmes Rolston III in his *Three Big Bangs: Matter-Energy, Life, Mind*.<sup>6</sup> We use this framing to tell the Story of Cosmic Evolution; only we add a Fourth Big Bang.

### **A First Glimpse at the Elements of the Fourth Big Bang**

The Fourth Big Bang itself includes three core dimensions. At the core is the planetary phase-shift resulting from evolution becoming conscious of itself in and through humanity. This is the dawning of the age of Conscious Evolution, which intimately co-emerges with the advent of existential risk to the future of humanity itself.

Co-emergent as part of the Fourth Big Bang are

a new Universe Story (the Universe: A Love Story or the Intimate Universe),

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<sup>6</sup> See *Three Big Bangs: Matter-Energy, Life, Mind*, by H. Rolston III, 2010, Columbia University Press.



a new narrative of identity (Unique Self and Evolutionary Unique Self), and  
a new narrative of We-Space (Unique Self Symphony).

All of these are key strands in the emergence of the New Human and the New  
Humanity—*Homo amor*—animated by the evolutionary philosophy of CosmoErotic Humanism.

We stand today on the edge of this Fourth Big Bang and have only a glimmer of the  
unimaginable horizons it opens. The best image available to capture what is currently potentiated  
in humanity is the image of a universal, non-coercive human superorganism, constituted as a  
Unique Self Symphony. What we have termed *a Planetary Awakening in Evolutionary Love  
through Unique Self Symphonies* is core to the emergence of Conscious Evolution and *Homo  
amor*. This is the plotline of the Intimate Universe, the Universe: A Love Story.

Essential to the Fourth Big Bang is the realization of the narrative nature of Cosmos, in  
which we are personally implicated.

**The realization of *Homo amor* is that *your story*—  
*the love story of your life*—  
*the intimacies of your life in all the realms of your life*—  
are chapter and verse in the Universe: A Love Story, or the Intimate  
Universe.**

Key to this vision is precisely the disclosure of the narrative nature of Cosmos, or said  
differently, the realization that Reality is not merely an eternal fact but an evolving story. We  
must tell this story, because understanding that Cosmic Evolution is a Story, and being able to see  
its narrative arc, is an essential part of expanding the self-understanding of humanity during this  
time of crisis. Importantly, our ability to position the evolution of humanity in the vast deep-time  
context of Cosmic Evolution emerged only recently. For example, Einstein himself was initially  
unaware and barely able to grasp the breathtaking idea that not only life but the Cosmos itself is  
evolving. It is, however, precisely the quality of the Universe: A Love Story, which is disclosed  
when we realize that, in the same historical moment, we are confronted with the perilous reality  
of our impending self-induced extinction, we are also confronted by a breathtaking new vision of  
humanity's precious and miraculous place in Reality.

The future depends on our ability to make sense of the past. This means not only our cultural and social history, but also the narrative arc, the big history of the cosmological and biological story that led directly to our species and to the cultural story in which we now find ourselves. There is a direct line between cosmological, biological, and cultural evolution, the Story of Reality's emergence from matter to life to mind. And by mind, we mean our self-reflective and self-creating humanity.

## The First Big Bang

One of the seminal moments in modern science was the *discovery* of the First Big Bang—although, as has been suggested, a better name might be the *Primordial Flaring Forth*. With remarkable irony, a scientific worldview dedicated to denying the existence of the unmeasurable and questioning the reality of the immaterial led inextricably to the conclusion that everything in the Universe came into being as *a spontaneous explosion of something from nothing*. The *mystery school of modern physics* tells of many mysteries, but none is more mysterious than this.

Moreover, we are told that in less than a millionth of a second after something exploded out of nothing, intelligent structures began to emerge, structures that would make it possible for the Universe to unfold toward a kind of structured novelty, leading to the emergence of new and more intricately organized structures, such as solar systems, suns, and planets.<sup>7</sup> In the language of

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<sup>7</sup> By calling these structures *intelligent* we are taking a stand on the conscious Universe vs. materialism debate, but we are *not* endorsing any kind of *intelligent-design* argument. We are noting, however, the *fact* that the Universe was *born* already intrinsically structured in configurations of coherent intimacy, ordered and erotically allured toward increasing complexity and self-organization along certain very specific lines. This could be simple chance, some big Cosmic *Oops!* But to believe that would be to cling to randomness and chance in the face of obvious Eros and *telos*, or what we are more neutrally terming *self-evident structure and purpose*. Again, we are not arguing for intelligent design, which is the idea that there is some purely extrinsic intelligence that designed and built all we see before us. As Henri Bergson was wont to say, *evolution is much more than a plan*. The problem with the view of evolution as a plan is at least twofold: It is usually professed by those claiming allegiance to an ethnocentric and homophobic God, and is thus a fundamentalist ruse; but also, it denies the reality of an immanently self-organizing and self-evolving Universe, a reality that is now well established both theoretically and empirically. We are arguing that the Universe itself *is* intrinsically intelligent and animated by Eros. We are affirming the self-evident truth that matter itself *is* full of life, meaning, and purpose—these qualities need not come from outside the Universe, they are primordial properties of the CosmoErotic Universe. Moreover, from a nondual perspective, there is no *outside* or *inside* to the Universe. Thus, technically speaking, we endorse a form of *panentheistic evolutionary nondualism*—what we have termed *CosmoErotic Humanism*—with the understanding that none of those concepts can, by themselves, replace an actual waking up in consciousness that grasps the Ultimate Mystery. Otherwise, all of these terms are just more dualistic concepts (even *nondualism*, as a concept, only makes sense contrasted to *dualism*—which is why the great Buddhist sage Nagarjuna denies both terms as being adequate for Ultimate Truth).

the interior sciences that we will unfold in more depth in other writings, the Infinite disclosed its intimate nature. The Infinite desires the finite. The Infinite yearned for intimacy—to love and be loved.<sup>8</sup>

## The Second Big Bang

As billions upon billions of years passed, a Second Big Bang was being prepared, breathtakingly improbable from the perspective of the sciences that have demonstrated its reality—the *emergence of life from (seemingly) lifeless matter*. Seen more deeply from the perspective of CosmoErotic Humanism: The intensification of intimacy between interconnected parts generated life from matter. Matter itself is not actually lifeless or insentient in an absolute sense. It is rather a structure of allurements generating unique configurations of Eros moving to ever deeper and wider levels of wholeness or what we have termed *coherent intimacies*.

The genesis of the biosphere on Earth generates almost as much radical amazement and wonder as the explosion of everything from nothing. And as many science writers have demonstrated, the sheer statistical improbability of such an occurrence is truly mind-blowing.<sup>9</sup> Yet, it is a scientific reality that cannot be denied. Earth would come to be entirely encased in life, an explosion of ever-evolving configurations of intimacy, as the surface of the once barren rock was transformed into a teeming wilderness of biological diversity. The tendencies displayed in the evolution of the material universe, such as the spontaneous confluence of diffuse matter into organized forms and the emergence of higher-order structures, resulted in even more complexity—coherently intimate configurations—during the evolution of the biological world.

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<sup>8</sup> The Infinite acts in the Eternal Now. Yet, we place these sentences in past tense because we are writing and describing—from within time—the primordial movement from nothingness to something as the yearning for intimacy, which discloses itself as the inception of the Universe and time itself.

<sup>9</sup> This is not the place to get into these numbers, which include more zeros than could fit on a million single-spaced pages of 1-point font. For good overviews of these issues see: *The Origins of Order: Self-Organization and Selection in Evolution*, by S. Kauffman, 1993, Oxford University Press; *The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision*, by F. Capra and P. L. Luisi, 2014, Cambridge University Press. For a discussion of the compounding improbabilities involved in the emergence of *higher-order* life forms—i.e., beyond the already stupefying improbability of primordial ooze—see: *Rare Earth: Why Complex Life Is Uncommon in the Universe*, by P. Ward and D. Brownlee, 2003, Springer, and Robert Shapiro, *Origins: A Skeptic's Guide to the Creation of Life on Earth*, Summit Books, 1986. In non-scientific parlance, the term *impossible* comes to mind when considering these kinds of figures; and yet, here we are.

Thus, in the past decades, *emergence* and *self-organization* have become the watchwords of the branches of biology seeking to explain the earliest forms of life on Earth. Simply put, *emergence* appears to be an intrinsic property of the Intimate Universe. Intimacy generates emergence. The Universe: A Love Story is a living process, in which synergies and symbioses—resulting from self-organization—propel matter toward unprecedented new forms. When what were once independent entities reach a certain density of interconnectedness, they spontaneously become potentially intimate elements of a new higher-order coherent whole, and in so doing they can no longer be understood as separate parts. **This is the progressive deepening of intimacies, which is the plotline of the Intimate Universe throughout the arc of all the Big Bangs.**

### **The Third Big Bang**

As the evolution of intimacy, the movement toward ever deeper and wider levels of wholeness, had unfolded on Earth for billions of years, a Third Big Bang was being prepared. It is again a seeming miracle from the perspective of materialistic science: *the emergence of self-conscious awareness and human culture*.

Each of the Big Bangs implies the miraculous in the sense of the Latin word *mirari*, from which *miracle* derives. *Mirari* means to *behold with rapt attention*. Such attention, sensing a quality beyond that of the merely material, is what our colleague Howard Bloom has termed *a material mysticism*.

It is not clear exactly when the transition from animal signaling to human language occurred, or when the natural activities of foraging and hunting became tied into the reflective transmission of culture and technology that characterize even the earliest human societies. Aside from the very first microorganisms that transformed the atmosphere of the Earth into oxygen, and thus created the conditions for the possibility of the biosphere, the emergence of human culture is perhaps the most significant moment in the history of the planet.

There is a narrative logic in the Big Bangs themselves. The physiosphere (matter and energy) fulfills itself in the biosphere. Each stage of emergence leads to the next. This is one of the many expressions of the dialectical paradox of randomness and nonrandomness, holy chaos and holy order, that form the Heart of the Universe: A Love Story. As scientist Harold Morowitz

points out in his excellent study of evolutionary science *The Emergence of Everything: How the World Became Complex*: Each stage of emergence inherently leads to the next stage.

Each stage of matter has independent value, and that value gradually accumulates with matter ultimately fulfilling itself—triumphing—as life. In a similar sense, each stage of life is inherently self-validating and has inherent value and dignity, even as there is a dimension of life that fulfills itself—triumphs—in the depth of the self-reflective human mind. In other words, from one perspective, that of the narrative of arc of Cosmos, **matter fulfills itself in life, and life fulfills itself in the depth of the self-reflective human mind.** Cosmological evolution fulfills itself in biological evolution, and biological evolution fulfills itself in cultural evolution. Or said yet again: The physiosphere fulfills itself in the biosphere, and the biosphere fulfills itself in the noosphere. **From the vantage of hindsight, a clear *telos* emerges.**

And yet, the sorting mechanisms for this powerful thrust of life, driven by the *creative advance into novelty*, is Darwin’s holy idea of natural selection, which includes contingency and randomness. That is the free and open-ended nature of the Universe: A Love Story, which emerges from *Source*—from *no-thing*—as an expression of apparent otherness. The Universe emerges, driven by its own inherent ceaseless creativity, self-actualizing, based on ever-deeper and more complex *in-formation*, which unfolds through spontaneous and free chance interactions, inherently animated by the *Tao* of an unseen *telos*.

We can access this pulsing Heart of the Cosmos *anthro-ontologically*. By *Anthro-Ontology*, as we have already noted above and more deeply in Volume 1 of this series,<sup>10</sup> we mean for now, simply, *the lived truth that the Intimate Universe lives in us, even as we live in it*. Human beings are constituted—literally—of all of the previous layers of Reality’s evolution. We are made up of both, the physical stardust, all of the elementary particles, and all of the previous stages of evolution, as well as the felt allurements and interior *gnosis* that live in the core of our being.

Echoing evolutionary mystics and interior scientists of the last several hundred years, we might offer *the mysteries are within us* as a succinct, five-word summation of Anthro-Ontology.

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<sup>10</sup> See also the section “Anthro-Ontology and the Anthro-Ontological Method” in Volume 5 of this series. See also David J. Temple, *First Principles & First Values: Forty-Two Propositions on CosmoErotic Humanism, the Meta-Crisis, and the World to Come* (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*.

It is for that precise reason that we can access the working of the Intimate Universe within our own clarified interiors. Evolutionary Mystic Kook captures the *Anthro-Ontological Axiom of Reality* in a short passage:

*It is necessary to explain the nobility of studying the secrets of Torah,  
in conjunction with the requirement to honor the inner knowing of the human  
being,*

*who is the foundation of the world.*

*And increasingly,*

*this culture of externality*

*comes from this formula:*

*the more that a culture's valuing of externality increases,*

*the more the human eye fixes on discerning the external,*

*and the more it disregards inner knowing,*

*and as a result of this, the true value of a human being dwindles and declines,*

*and the liberation of the world depends on elevating the value of inner  
knowings,*

*which emerge and shed light,*

*by means of the great intimate entry into the depth of interiority,*

*which itself is the fascinating engagement with the secrets of Torah,*

*with holiness and purity,*

*with humility and special courage.<sup>11</sup>*

In other words: *The mysteries are within us.* We live in an Amorous Cosmos. And the Amorous Cosmos lives in us.

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<sup>11</sup> *Orot HaKodesh [Lights of Holiness]* (Vol. 1), (p. 96), by A Kook, 1937, Jerusalem.

## *The Dialectic of Freedom and Telos: Moving Toward the Fourth Big Bang*

It is the nature of all intimate relationships to be a dialectic of *telos*, patterned order and symmetry, dancing with *surprise and contingency*. Intimate relationship with a person, a body of knowledge, or a community always moves between patterned, symmetrical, intimate order and open-ended curiosity, new possibility, and transformation. All evolutions of love, both personal and collective, take place in this dialectical context of love. There is open-ended freedom and possibility on the one hand, and patterned order and regularity that create trust on the other. Without either side of the dialectic, the intimate Reality becomes undone at every level of Cosmos.

The *telos* of the progressive deepening of love self-actualizes as life, through the laws of physics and chemistry, guided by the inherent structures of information<sup>12</sup> that literally, in David Bohm's evocative phrase, *in-form* each stage of emergence as the Story of Reality. Reality moves through stage-by-stage emergence from the physiosphere toward its triumph in the biosphere.<sup>13</sup> Life is the triumph of matter, fulfilling itself in a quantum jump, a second great flaring forth, the Second Big Bang. The Second Big Bang is the emergence and the evolution of the biosphere. But just like the First Big Bang, the emergence of matter and energy from *no-thing*, it is not the product of an inevitable causation from some past set of events that we have measured. The First Big Bang, at least according to the classic scientific story of cosmogenesis, is the emergence of something from nothing. But however we tell the story of the birth of cosmological evolution, it is clearly an emergent. It is not the product of simple past causation.

In the interior sciences, the story is told of *involution* before *evolution*. There was *no-thing* before there was *something*. Infinite *No-thing* sources everything. Indeed, as the new science of relativity informs us, the spacetime continuum itself is a product of the Big Bang. Speaking in the metaphors of time, we might say that Cosmos is an invitation from the future. But by future, we mean *not* a point in time but the intention of Eternity.

The code for this radical *gnosis* of the interior sciences, in the specific language of the interior sciences of Hebrew wisdom, is the four-letter Name of God—*Yod He Vav He*. We have

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<sup>12</sup> On information as core to the structure of the animating Eros of Cosmos, see above section “The Great Problem of Pain in the Universe: A Love Story—The Dance of Certainty and Uncertainty” and footnotes there. See also “A Short, More Formal Statement of the Four First Principles and First Values We have Discussed” below.

<sup>13</sup> See *The Emergence of Everything: How the World Became Complex*, H. J. Morowitz, 2004, Oxford University.

already briefly discussed above the Name of God as the DNA code of early expressions of CosmoErotic Humanism in the interior sciences.<sup>14</sup>

We add here the dimension of the future. The first letter, *Yod*, is *the point of eternity which calls in the future*. The last three letters, *He, Vav, He*, form the Hebrew word for *present*. The Name of God is thus an equation, which expresses the eternal point that lives in the present, calling it to the future. The entire Name spelled together means: *It will be*. It is Reality called into being from the future, but the eternally becoming future, beneath the spacetime continuum.

### ***The Evolution of Love from Physiosphere to Biosphere to Noosphere***

It is in this sense that the physiosphere appearing out of *no-thing* is not a product of past physical causation but a necessary and free emergent, a great flaring forth.

In the same sense, the biosphere comes out of the physiosphere, in no way violating any of the laws of physics or chemistry, and yet, the biosphere is almost infinitely more than a necessary product of matter and energy. It is a momentous leap into the future, in full integrity with its prior causes but called into being by the future, the infinite point of being that self-organizes evolution into the becoming of tomorrow. The biosphere is thus a new Big Bang, a

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<sup>14</sup> See the section in this Volume called “The Name of God Is Eros—The Universe: A Love Story.”



radically new, emergent flaring forth called into being, self-organized by Reality's inherent eternal future.<sup>15</sup>

The biosphere follows the same dialectical pattern, that of symmetrical order and radical freedom—radical symmetry, law, and order, coupled with radical freedom, spontaneity, and contingency. Life goes through the many distinct stages, which in retrospect present a self-evident sequence of emergence, from single-celled bacteria all the way to hominids walking on the African savannah more than 2.5 million years ago.

At that point, the biosphere fulfills itself in a quantum jump, the Third Big Bang, with the emergence of the noosphere. This is the triumph of the biosphere in the noosphere. Life triumphs itself as it is transcended and included in mind. Here again, like the physiosphere and the biosphere, the emergence of the noosphere, the human world, is not the product of necessary causation from the past. It is, like the previous Big Bangs, radically new, unlike all that came before, and inexplicable in terms of antecedent causation without remainder.

*Noos*, or mind, is the world of the self-reflective, self-representing human being.

This human being

passes down knowledge,

which multiplies exponentially,

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<sup>15</sup> Said differently, the Big Bang is the emergence of something from no-thing. In other words, life does not emerge from the aggregation of *things*. Life is not the densification of matter, which becomes life. Rather, there is something radically new in life, a dimension that literally flares forth from no-thingness. In the scientific reading of CosmoErotic Humanism, integrating the exterior and interior sciences, life emerges from the intensification of intimacies between the parts of matter in such a way that the new intimacy flares forth into life. We know this to be true anthro-ontologically—in the depth of our own interiors. For within ourselves we know that the intensification of intimacy is what generates new Eros, new possibility, and new creativity, which in turn births new levels of wholeness. Mathematician and complexity theorist Stuart Kauffman (*At Home in the Universe: The Search for the Laws of Self-Organization and Complexity*, 1995, Oxford University Press.) alludes to this understanding of the intensification of intimacy being cause for the emergence of life in more formal scientific terms in the following passage on p. 62 of the Kindle Edition: “as the diversity of molecules in our system increases, the ratio of reactions to chemicals, or edges to nodes, becomes ever higher. In other words, the reaction graph has ever more lines connecting the chemical dots. The molecules in the system are themselves candidates to be able to catalyze the reactions by which the molecules themselves are formed. As the ratio of reactions to chemicals increases, the number of reactions that are catalyzed by the molecules in the system increases. When the number of catalyzed reactions is about equal to the number of chemical dots, a giant catalyzed reaction web forms, and a collectively autocatalytic system snaps into existence. A living metabolism crystallizes. Life emerges as a phase transition.” Similarly, the intensification of intimacy within the biosphere generates the awakening of the new depths of self-reflective human consciousness, the emergence of human consciousness and culture. The third level of consciousness does not emerge simply putting together more cells, or life. There is a radically new emergence flaring forth from no-thingness.

speaks language,  
creates art,  
trades,  
creates the superorganisms of culture,  
and continually evolves his/her own interior consciousness,  
even as his/her human organism remains the same.

The noosphere, then, goes through many structural stages of development. These evolutionary stages have been famously charted along different lines of development, or what we might call *vectors of evolution*.

For example, one could trace development of the techno base of society  
from *hunter-gatherer*,  
to *horticultural* (early farming with a hand instrument),  
to *agrarian* (later farming with an animal-drawn plow),  
to *industrial* (the Industrial Revolution),  
to *informational* (the age of the computer, telecommunications, etc.),  
to the emergent age of what we might call *exponential tech* (biotech, infotech, nanotech, AI, machine learning, augmented reality, and all the rest).

Another line of development, however, might be communal—the movement  
from clans  
to tribes,  
kingdoms,  
great religions and empires,  
all the way to nation-states, including both dictatorships and democracies.

These communal stages of development roughly correspond to the techno-base stages.

But perhaps the most important line of development is what we might call *the evolution of consciousness itself*. It is the evolution of *worldviews*. This includes both the Universe Story of a

particular epoch, as well as the consequent narrative of identity that derives from the Universe Story and all the consequent values, including forms of government. This is the *evolution of interiors*. It is, according to Jean Gebser, the emergence

from archaic

to magical

to mythical

to rational

to integral consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

In parallel to these worldviews is the evolution from early clans and later tribes ruled by a chieftain all the way to modern democracies. All of these are further progressions in what we have called the *evolution of love* or the *evolution of intimacy*. All of these stages of evolution are inter-included with each other, and they are all part of the Third Bang—cultural evolution within the noosphere.

Evolution moves

from cosmological (physiosphere, matter and energy, and all of the stages of its evolution from elementary particles to planets)

to biological (the biosphere and all the stages of life from cells to humans)

to cultural evolution (the noosphere and all the stages of human development).

Each of these levels of development can be understood as stages in the evolution of intimacy. The progressive deepening of intimacies is the plotline of evolution throughout the narrative arc of Cosmos—the first three Big Bangs.

Within human evolution, the Third Big Bang moves

from the egocentric consciousness

of survival clans

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<sup>16</sup> See Gebser, Jean. *The Ever-Present Origin*. Noel Barstad (Translator), Algis Mickūnas (Translator), Ohio University Press. *The Ever-Present Origin* is a translation of *Ursprung und Gegenwart*, a book that was published in German in two parts around 1949 and 1953.

and early (magical) tribes,  
to the ethnocentric consciousness  
of later (mythic) tribes,  
empires,  
and early nation-states,  
to the worldcentric consciousness of twentieth-century democracies.

Each of these emergent levels expands the boundaries of intimacy to ever-wider circles of inclusion.

### *The Dark Side of Evolution*

But for now, we want to revisit a point we already noted above, one of the key paradoxes of evolution. Every new structure-stage of development brings in its wake new promise, as well as new potential pathology.

To state it somewhat simplistically, rocks do not get cancers, but animals do. Animals clearly represent an evolution of intimacy beyond rocks. The interior of animals is, self-evidently, exponentially more intimate than the interior of a rock. The intimate relationships between all the interior parts and systems of an animal far exceed that of a rock. Concurrently, the interaction of an animal with others evokes exponentially more intimacy and love in intersubjective relationships than does the interaction of rocks. That is perhaps why people do not keep pet rocks, while pet dogs and cats are wildly popular. But at the same time, animals get cancer and rocks don't. The evolution of intimacy from matter to life, from the physiosphere to the biosphere, also brings with it a higher level of potential pathology.

The same is true with the evolution of love from the biosphere to the noosphere, and with each progressive widening of Love within the noosphere. Let's just give two examples.

Human beings are capable of far deeper love than animals. To be somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that is generally why people date and marry other human beings, and *not* other mammals or animals. While there is clearly pain and suffering in the animal world, there is a broad consensus among scientists that

the level of anguish and emotional pain and trauma caused by human relationships exponentially exceeds and outstrips the experience of pain and suffering that we witness in the animal world. To cite but one statistic that supports this view: The animal world does not suffer a million suicides a year, which is the rate that the human world is now approaching.

The second example, however, brings us to our main point. Within the human world, there is also a progression of love from ethnocentric to worldcentric consciousness. This means, as we will unpack in multiple conversations across the writings of CosmoErotic Humanism, an expanding circle of love and care—from one's own nation or religion (ethnocentric) to every human being on the planet (worldcentric).

That evolution of intimacy is based on, at least, two major factors:

**First** is the evolution of technology, which itself is a form of new intimacy between separate parts. Technology connects a distant world.

Co-emergent with technology is, however, **second**, the evolution of intimacy just described—from egocentric to ethnocentric to worldcentric intimacy.

But worldcentric intimacy—facilitated by the new connections of technology, allowing for new forms of rapid communication and travel in the industrial age, and instant communication in the information age—also generates new pathologies. A world civilization can contract *cancer* in the *body politic*. What, after all, is cancer if not the metastasizing of one cell, or set of cells, which disassociates from the larger whole of the body and its needs? Just like new structures of intimacy create cancer in the body of the lifeworld, in a way that was not possible in a rock, new structures of global communication and intimacy create the possibility of dangerous cancer in the body politic. Cancer means that a cell, and then a set of cells, disassociates from the larger shared story of the body, or body politic, with its protocols, values, and *telos*.

A brief explanation is in order. Paradoxically, in the world of ethnocentric intimacy, which characterized the major political, social, and religious structures<sup>17</sup> of premodernity and

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<sup>17</sup> There were, however, intimations of worldcentric intimacy in multiple streams of thought, in both premodernity and modernity, but they were virtually always peripheral to the social, political, and religious power structures as well as to the center of gravity of popular thought.

modernity until after World War I, there was a shared story within every ethnocentric group, be it a clan, tribe, kingdom, empire, religion, or nation-state.

**The good news** of that shared story, which included a Universe Story and its corollary narratives of identity, community, power, etc., was that it created a potent basis for love, dignity, nobility, honor, obligation, meaning, shared purpose, and shared action within the ethnocentric in-group.

**The bad news** was that many, although not all dimensions of the shared story were based on what later turned out to be false dogmas.<sup>18</sup> These made the *other* less than human, allowing all manners of ethical violation, including murder, whenever the *other* refused to comply with the will of the more powerful incursive party. Coupled with those intense shadows was the treatment of women and children, the relationship to personal uniqueness, to the body, and to what modernity established as the basic rights of human dignity in myriad forms.

The ethnocentric communities of multiple forms, from religions to ethnic groups were themselves unable to distinguish the genuine shared depth of insight and destiny, which they authentically shared, from socially constructed surface structures, which were false and simply perpetuated extreme and oppressive forms of in-group/out-group dynamics. Similar lack of discernments between depth structures and surface structures also perpetuated upper-caste- and lower-caste-type dynamics within the ostensible in-group. The result was oppression by the in-group of all who were considered the out-group, the infidels of all forms, and oppression against the lower castes of the in-group.

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<sup>18</sup> Key dimensions of the shared story were based on valid *gnosis*, derived through the Eye of Consciousness—in its expressions as the Eye of the Heart, the Eye of Contemplation, the Eye of Value, and the Eye of the Spirit. The Eye of Consciousness is one of the three Eyes that reveal Reality to us: the Eye of the Senses, the Eye of the Mind, and the Eye of Consciousness in its four expressions (with their injunctions/practices): the Eye of Contemplation (Meditative Practices), the Eye of the Heart (Practices of Loving), the Eye of Value (Practices of Ethical Discernment), and the Eye of Spirit (Practices of Rituals, Ceremony, & Sacred Text). Some of these dimensions are the shared universals, derived through direct experiment of the interior sciences, which disclosed crucial *gnosis* about the nature of self and Reality. Other dimensions of this knowing involved the unique quality of intimacy between the Field of Consciousness and that particular nation, religion, or tribe. That is what we have called the *Unique Self of that particular tribe, nation, or religion*—the unique quality of intimacy between the Infinite and the finite, which is the story of that tribe, nation, or religion. But inextricably entwined, mixed in, with these valid dimensions of *gnosis*, there were all of the ethnocentric shadows.

Beginning with seeds of universalism,<sup>19</sup> the old in-group and out-group dynamics began to fall away. A new worldcentric consciousness, standing for universal human rights, sourced in the dignity of all human beings, struggled to emerge to some extent within significant swaths of the population. It was concentrated mostly but not entirely in the democratic world.

The massive problem was that this new worldcentric consciousness lacked the soil of a shared Universe Story, rooted in a shared Story of Value, rooted in First Principles and First Values, within which to take root. After World War II, late modernity stripped away many of the false social constructions of early and middle modernity and premodernity. But it did *not* distinguish between the validated insights of the great lineages of the interior sciences in the traditions—as well as the important *gnosis* of modernity—and the social construction of both. This generated false or corrupt dogma.

The postmodern moment deconstructed but never engaged the reconstructive project. In other words, postmodernity did not articulate a new shared global Story of Value rooted in evolving First Principles and First Values in the place of all that had been appropriately deconstructed. We will engage this failure of story in more depth in other writings of CosmoErotic Humanism.<sup>20</sup>

The result, however, was a world of global interconnectivity and the fragrance of potential global intimacy. But there was no interior technology within which to ground the potential vision of global intimacy. The results, as we outline them in Volume One of this series, were disastrous.

The world was *de-storied*. There was a glaring absence of a shared global story, which might generate a global ethic for a global civilization. In what seemed like a flash of time, technology had connected everyone. But the connection created not intimacy but heightened alienation. Everyone was crashing into each other. There was no narrative of shared identity to foster a sense of shared *pathos*, and therefore shared purpose and passion.

Sans a shared story, the void was filled with the success story, measured by win/lose metrics, which in turn fueled a disastrous model of necessarily self-terminating growth based on

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<sup>19</sup> Universalism was sourced in ancient texts but first showed up at the cultural center of gravity of the Renaissance, and only came to more significant political and cultural fruition after World War I.

<sup>20</sup> See also David J. Temple, *First Principles & First Values: Forty-Two Propositions on CosmoErotic Humanism, the Meta-Crisis, and the World to Come*. And see the fuller conversation in David J. Temple, *First Principles and First Values: Towards an Evolving Perennialism: Introducing the Anthro-Ontological Method* (forthcoming).

perpetual extraction, production, and consumption. The win/lose-metrics success story coincided with far-flung, complicated, and therefore fragile systems of global interconnectivity. These two factors were exacerbated by exponential tech, which made exponential power, including destructive power, available to relatively high numbers of rogue actors.

The failure of a shared global Story of Value rooted in First Values and First Principles were coupled with the win/lose metrics and undermined the articulation of shared codes of honor. Those codes of honor, if rooted in a universal grammar of *ethos*, might have limited the proliferation of destructive exponential tech. The vacuum of a missing shared global Story generated a high number of rogue non-state actors as well as rogue state actors with access to world-destroying exponential tech.

In effect, the progression of intimacy through new technology and the potential global intimacy of the world community was existentially threatened by the new pathology it generated. The global intimacy disorder with multiple rogue players and communities of players engaged in rivalrous conflict de-generated into multipolar traps, races to the bottom, and tragedies of the commons. These types of dynamics pose a genuine set of catastrophic and existential risks to the future of humanity.

In effect, the de-storied world generated the genuine, even likely possibility of cancer in the body politic. This cancer involves both individual human beings and communities of human beings experiencing their identity as separate selves. These are ontologically isolated from the whole and their Eros, therefore, derives only from a success story based on rivalrous conflict governed by win/lose metrics. Moreover, the experience of most communities is that they are merely individuals in *random* superorganisms—products of the *random walk of evolution*.

Even those who profess classical or alternative forms of religion or spirituality are infected with the virus of what is presented as a de-ontologized universe. Although they may live in a particular religion or spiritual view, they are invariably infected with the dogmas not of science but of *scientism*. The latter constantly injects its non-scientific, dogmatic materialism into the bloodstream of culture. The result is a new pathology taking hold, side by side with the apparent evolution of love—the promising move from ethnocentric to worldcentric consciousness. A global intimacy disorder sets in, which undermines the promised emergence of a genuine global *ethos*. For a global *ethos* cannot emerge sans the Eros of a shared Universe Story and narrative of identity. This is where we stand today—at the end of the Third Big Bang.



## *Crisis Is an Evolutionary Driver: From Caterpillar to Butterfly*

It is crucial to realize, however, that the *teleroitic* drive of evolution is as strong as at the pivotal moments of the First, Second, and Third Big Bangs. The same evolutionary impulse that has driven all the great breakthroughs of evolution is at play right here and now. The evolution of love is not over. It is self-evidently in mid play. Indeed, in this time between worlds and time between stories, the progressive deepening of Love is poised for another momentous leap. As we are poised between utopia and dystopia, the Fourth Big Bang is beginning to emerge.

The Fourth Big Bang follows the inherent narrative logic of Cosmos that is apparent in the first three Big Bangs. Much like the physiosphere fulfills itself in the biosphere, and the biosphere fulfills itself in the noosphere, the noosphere also desires its next stage of evolution.

How does the noosphere fulfill itself?

This is the movement from *Homo sapiens* to *Homo amor*—the emergence of a New Human and a New Humanity based on a new Universe Story—the Universe: A Love Story and the Intimate Universe. It is not coincidence but the intimate nature of Cosmos that the Fourth Big Bang is just now beginning to explode. For, as we already described in Volume One of this series, the alternative is a level of existential risk that might well result in the last chapter of the human story.

The image of the chrysalis turning into a butterfly aptly captures this moment in time, where the noosphere necessarily seeks its own evolution of consciousness. This is the Fourth Big Bang, the caterpillar dissolving, while dormant imaginal discs begin to transform into imaginal cells that generate a butterfly, and not a moment too soon. As always, crisis is an evolutionary driver, and at its core, the crisis is always a crisis of imagination. The old society, convinced that its story is the only possible way society can function *successfully*, kills the attempted emergence of new imagination, which might birth a new Story.

A caterpillar goes through a powerful process as it evolves into a butterfly. It begins with massive consumption. The caterpillar eats as much as a hundred times its weight every day. At a certain point, it is too bloated to continue. This is the beginning of the crisis. So, the caterpillar hangs itself up. Its skin dries into a chrysalis. Inside the chrysalis, the caterpillar digests itself,

until there is only soup left—with one exception. Certain highly organized groups of cells survive the process. They are what biologists call *imaginal discs*. These have been part of the caterpillar—one disc for each body part of the butterfly—since it hatched from the egg.

The imaginal discs hold the memory of the future—the butterfly. The memory of the future is the Fourth Big Bang. That is, however, not the inevitable result of prior causation but an invitation from the future. But the imaginal discs are the seeds of imagination already present in the old world, before it breaks down. The imaginal discs are not generic. They are holding a unique vision of each dimension of the butterfly that needs to emerge. They are the voices that see the coming breakdown and are already imagining the possibility of a butterfly.

But in the old world, the systems of society move in myriad ways to choke the seeds of imagination from the nourishment they need to bloom. The imaginal discs are not resourced. They are marginalized, dismissed as fringe, or even attacked in more aggressive ways. It is only when the crisis, long predicted by them, collapses the society (caterpillar<sup>21</sup>), when what was *too big to fail* actually fails, that the crisis of imagination of the old world may be potentially resolved in the vision of the imaginal discs. The imaginal discs feed on the soup. They literally ingest the crisis and turn it into the evolutionary driver of new life birthed by new imagination. Their willingness to ingest the new reality is the cause for their transformation into imaginal cells.

The caterpillar's immune system—the old system of society—kills the imaginal cells as they arise. But, with the immune system breaking down, the imaginal cells keep emerging faster and faster. The imaginal cells, driven by the search for new intimacies and new coherences, are allured to their partners and co-creators. The imaginal cells begin to link with each other. New configurations of intimacy cohere and emerge. The crisis of imagination is resolved in the imaginal cells coming together in new intimacies of what we call *Unique Self Symphonies*.

With that new intimacy comes a new freedom. The cells are now free to each turn to their unique function in the life of the butterfly. The imaginal cells turn into the butterfly, which emerges from the chrysalis.

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<sup>21</sup> And with it the juvenile hormone that used to prevent the growth of the imaginal cells.

This is a compelling archetypal story about how crisis precedes transformation. It is not a fairy tale or myth but a story rooted in scientific facts sourced in nature.

The old system breaks down. New visions begin to emerge, but the old guard shoots them down. We have called this stage of the process, in other essays, *the Murder of Eros*.<sup>22</sup> The old guard represents the old level of consciousness. This is the immune system of the caterpillar, which views the new consciousness of the imaginal cells as a threat. The immune system moves instinctively to destroy these harbingers of a next level of consciousness—the butterfly—the next level of humanity.

Eventually, however, enough of the imaginal cells are allured together, and the old guard dissolves. New imaginal cells emerge from the crisis, and a beautiful butterfly emerges from the chrysalis.

The chrysalis embodies the core structure of evolution. Crises serve as evolutionary drivers. A new Universe Story and a new vision of identity begin to emerge in the Fourth Big Bang. At the core of the Fourth Big Bang is the fulfillment of *Homo sapiens* in *Homo amor*.

## **The Fourth Big Bang**

Human self-consciousness led to the development of civilizations, and eventually our modern capitalist world-system.<sup>23</sup> This is, of course, a long and complex story, which goes through many stages. But as culture evolved through various and largely cumulative political and scientific revolutions, a Fourth Big Bang was being prepared. Eventually, culture itself would

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<sup>22</sup> Gafni, Marc and Kincaid, Kristina, *A Return to Eros: The Radical Experience of Being Fully Alive*, BenBella Books, Inc, 2017, Appendix B “The Murder of Eros,” pp. 471-480.

<sup>23</sup> The idea of *world-systems* is essential for any serious thinking about evolutionary futures for the human species. See: *World-Systems Analysis*, by I. Wallerstein, 2004, Duke University. World-Systems Analysis is a growing trans-disciplinary field, encompassing economics, politics, sociology, and history. The modern world-system, which began to emerge during the sixteenth century, is the largest functionally integrated unit the human species has ever created. Its existence and continuation have fundamentally changed the very frontiers of human possibility and fundamentally altered the self-regulatory processes of the biosphere. It is the highest-order unit of selection and is unprecedentedly close to literally encompassing all of humanity, something never achieved before by any actually existing historical world-system. Wallerstein argues that, at this point in geohistory, when there emerges a world-system without peripheries or frontiers, an evolutionary crisis ensues, and a fundamentally new world-system must be painfully and violently born—one no longer predicated upon endless accumulation, growth, profit, and exploitation.

come to be informed by thinking about evolution. Evolution was becoming conscious of itself in a new way through human consciousness.

This has been a halting, error-prone process. Even today, the majority of the world's population does not believe in anything like a scientifically informed theory of evolution. But even more importantly, those who do trust the science of evolution view it as a theory of origins and not as a radical revisioning of what it means to be a human being. Nevertheless, there is good reason to believe that the coming decades will be those during which evolutionary realizations spread like wildfire, and a new species-wide self-understanding emerges, including new ideas about the nature of the self and human personality, and new ideas about the evolutionary function of human collectives and cooperatives.

### *Shadows of Early Evolutionary Narratives*

The emergent truth of evolution is love in action. When we lose sight of this, the result is potentially disastrous. Evolution disassociated from its intrinsic nature as love in action is potentially pathologized in multiple forms. Indeed, the first glimmerings of an evolutionary view of humanity and the Universe coincided with one of the most violent and divisive periods in human history. This includes the specter of eugenics that still haunts all attempts to apply evolutionary theory to the social world.<sup>24</sup> These demons cannot be exorcised without having the courage to call them by name and look them in the eye. What has been said again and again, and was perhaps best said by Gould and Kevles,<sup>25</sup> is that these first attempts at applying the biological sciences to the design and governance of society resulted in a nightmare. Evolutionary theory was co-opted by warring capitalist nation-states and used to buttress racist ideologies that perpetuated nationalism, imperialism, and ultimately a global war.

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<sup>24</sup> I (Barbara Marx Hubbard) was myself initially taken by some of the transhumanist arguments in a number of domains and expressed myself inaccurately, in ways that were prone to tragic but sometimes understandable misinterpretation. My encounter with CosmoErotic Humanism opened me to Unique Self Theory, the centrality of the Evolutionary Eros, and much more, which caused me to recant some of the earlier transhumanist ideas I had expressed, some of which I now deeply regret.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*, by D. J. Kevles, 1985, Harvard University. Also, *The Mismeasure of Man*, by S. J. Gould, 1981, W. W. Norton.

This is all true. But it is important to know exactly why things went so horribly wrong, especially given the optimism expressed by many early pioneering biologists, that evolutionary theory would unite humanity, an optimism shared by many to this day.<sup>26</sup>

Two things stand out that should free us from the fear of inevitably repeating the horrors yielded by our progenitors' attempts at applying evolutionary theory in thinking about human systems.<sup>27</sup>

**One** is that these early attempts were based on extremely simplistic ideas about genetic inheritance, selection, and other key aspects of evolutionary processes. There are a massive number of key advances in the biological sciences that have recently obliterated such outmoded forms of thought. Yet, despite the simplicity and easily demonstrable inadequacy of their ideas, the early eugenicists had huge ambitions, ambitions that, they should have known, actually required extremely complex ideas and tools—ideas and tools they did not have, and which were decades away. They needed a scalpel; all they had was an ax. **So, why did they run ahead into surgery on the body politic anyway?** It appears this was a case of politics trumping science, and of scientists being co-opted by money and power, intoxicated by state-sanctioned violence, and caught up in the kind of utopian dreams hatched during periods of profound social upheaval. Today, we have fundamentally more adequate tools and ideas about the nature of evolution, no question. **But can we shield them from co-optation by political and economic powers that have no interest in scientific truths and their ethical application, especially during a time of great crisis?**

**The second** is that early attempts at applying evolutionary theory to society radically under-theorized human interiority, consciousness, and especially the nature of human personality. There was a kind of dogmatic materialism which ignored interiors. In the new language of this writing, they failed to marshal the evidence in the interior and exterior sciences, which would

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<sup>26</sup> Make no mistake: Racism was a major problem throughout the world-system during this period and remains a major problem today. The arguments offered here are not intended to downplay this aspect of the historical context. Instead, the goal is to identify the illicit epistemological moves that allowed for the perpetuation of racist ideas by creating the *illusion* that they were backed by scientific theories and objective measures. When the early IQ testing movement, for example, is simply dismissed as racist, without further analysis, we have gained no insight into the mechanisms by which science was made an *accomplice in the crime of political inequality*. Moreover, we miss the fact that many of these mechanisms are still in play as aspects of contemporary ideology.

<sup>27</sup> However, we must always continue to be in touch with this fear of repeating history. And we ought to continue to retell and remember the horrors we wish not to repeat, even if only to honor the victims and to educate the younger generations who might otherwise forget.

point to the realization of the Intimate Universe, or the Universe: A Love Story. It is not an ordinary love story but an Evolutionary Love Story whose very plotline is the evolution of love. That Love Story moves from cosmological to biological to cultural or human evolution to yet another future breakthrough.

### ***Awakening from the Shadows: From Unconscious to Conscious Evolution***

It is only recently, however, that *we* have awakened from unconscious to Conscious Evolution. We now understand that humanity is directly implicated in the next chapters of the Universe: A Love Story—or else there may be no chapters for humanity at all. Humanity is the Universe evolving in person. But not only humanity. Every unique human being is personally implicated. Every unique human being is the Intimate Universe in person. Every human love story is chapter and verse in the Universe: A Love Story.

We are finally transcending the desiccating dogmatic claim that the self and its experiences can be understood as artifacts of the racial group or functional purpose under which any given individual is subsumed. This alienation from interiority and consciousness disabled empathy and ultimately gave ideological justification to state-sanctioned violence of unimaginable proportions. By looking *only* at evolution in terms of *exterior* physical systems (genes, biology, technology), the evolution of individual and collective *interiors* was occluded from consideration. A whole generation was blinded by reductive evolutionary thinking and rendered unable to see *the other* as anything but a vehicle for the evolution of bloodlines.

### ***The Fourth Big Bang: Three Elements***

Today, we not only need a theory of evolution that is qualitatively more complex and adequate in its dealing with the material and external aspects of evolutionary processes, but we also need one that can illuminate the evolution of interiors—the evolution of self and culture.

We are called to weave a unified vision of humanity as part of an evolving Universe, one that integrates interiors and exteriors—matter and consciousness—agency and communion. This is the nature of the Fourth Big Bang, in which we are participating as the Universe in person at this very moment. The Fourth Big Bang has three major elements:

**First**, the movement from unconscious to Conscious Evolution.

**Second**, essential to Conscious Evolution is the realization of the interior nature and narrative thread of Reality, namely the Intimate Universe and the Universe: A Love Story.

The **third** core characteristic of the Fourth Big Bang is the movement from unconscious to conscious *uniqueness*. The emergence of Unique Self is key to the emergence of the New Human and the New Humanity. We have termed the Fourth Big Bang *the first glimmering of the emergence of the New Human and the New Humanity—Homo amor*. *Homo amor* is the Intimate Universe, or the Universe: A Love Story, in person.

### ***The Heart of the Fourth Big Bang: Unique Selves and Unique Self Symphonies as the Emergence of Evolutionary Intimacy***

A fundamental set of insights that guides the emergence of *Homo amor* is articulated in Unique Self Theory.<sup>28</sup> Unique Self Theory understands that one of the central dimensions of the evolutionary process is uniqueness. That is, one of the things that evolution does is *to produce the unique*—and, as evolution unfolds, uniqueness increases. This means that the idea of evolution becoming conscious of itself can be reframed in terms of uniqueness becoming conscious of itself. The moral implications could not be more important.

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<sup>28</sup> The notions of *Unique Self* and *Unique Self Symphony* emerged at the interface of religious scholarship, psychological meta-theory, and evolutionary meta-theory—expressed collaboratively in different forms by Gafni, Stein, and Hubbard. This work naturally integrates with Hubbard’s seminal work expressing and exploring *Conscious Evolution: Awakening the Power of Our Social Potential*, by B. M. Hubbard, 2015, New World Library (revised edition). For a detailed look at the genesis of Unique Self Theory itself, see the special scholarly issue of the *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, 6(1), which is dedicated to Unique Self Theory. The volume was edited and largely penned by M. Gafni, with the lead article, “The Evolutionary Emergent of Unique Self: A New Chapter in Integral Theory,” by M. Gafni, 2011, *JITP*, (6)1, 1-36. See also major works by Gafni (2012; 2014) *Your Unique Self: The Radical Path to Personal Enlightenment* and *Self in Integral Evolutionary Mysticism: Two Models and Why They Matter*, on the core articulation of Unique Self Theory. And see the forthcoming work by Z. Stein and M. Gafni, *Toward a Politics of Evolutionary Love*. For the first book-length treatments of First Principles of CosmoErotic Humanism, see *A Return to Eros* by M. Gafni and K. Kincaid, 2017. The Center for World Philosophy and Religion is supporting a series of book projects currently underway involving scholars from over a dozen fields, including business, psychotherapy, attachment theory, evolutionary theory, medicine, and technology. For more details about this emerging school of thought, see the think tank at the Center for World Philosophy and Religion: <https://worldphilosophyandreligion.org/>.

We will return to Unique Self and the evolution of uniqueness in the context of *Homo amor* in Volume Four of this series. For the purpose of this Volume, we will lay out the basic ideas in schematic form as a series of related postulates:

- 1) Evolution is a process that moves from simplicity to complexity—and from less consciousness to more consciousness.<sup>29</sup>
- 2) Greater complexity means greater interconnectivity. Evolution moves to deeper and wider levels of interconnectivity.
- 3) Reality is—definitionally—interiors and exteriors all the way up and all the way down the evolutionary chain.
- 4) The interior of interconnectivity is intimacy.
- 5) Evolution can therefore be thought of as the evolution of intimacy.
- 6) Intimacy always implies the coming together of unique parts.
- 7) This movement toward greater complexity, consciousness, and intimacy is also a movement toward increasingly unique forms of life.
- 8) Thus, the greater the uniqueness, the greater the potential depth of the new intimacy.
- 9) Increases in complexity, consciousness, intimacy, and uniqueness correlate with increases in creativity and Eros as organismic potentials.
- 10) Evolution is thus the move from unconscious uniqueness to conscious uniqueness.
- 11) The self-reflective Evolutionary Unique Self—the organism aware of its own evolutionary uniqueness—becomes a possibility with the emergence of humanity and can be thought of as a key strange attractor in the evolutionary process.
- 12) Thus, your Evolutionary Unique Self is the *personal* face of a universal evolutionary process. In this way, your unique qualities of personhood beyond ego participate in the evolution of the Universe.
- 13) It is necessary to pause here to clarify the meaning of *Unique Self* and to preempt some common objections. Firstly, there is a difference between what is typically

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<sup>29</sup> This is Teilhard De Chardin's notion of *law of complexity and consciousness*. See *The Phenomenon of Man* by T. P De Chardin, 1959, Harper & Brothers (Original work published 1955 in French as *Le Phenomene Humain* by Editions Du Seuil).



referred to as *ego* and *Unique Self*.<sup>30</sup> The term *ego* is typically used with reference to a contracted sense of self, where one emphasizes difference and asserts self over other. *Unique Self*, on the other hand, can be understood as *individuation beyond ego or beyond separate self*.

14) Said slightly differently: Separate self is both real and an illusion—both from the exterior and interior perspective. Albert Einstein was referring primarily to exteriors when he pointed to the self-evident truth of the contemporary ecological evolutionary sciences that the notion of a separate self is an *optical delusion*. The interior sciences of the perennial philosophy, across space and time, have pointed to this same validated truth from the perspective of interiors. This is understood by Unique Self Theory to mean that *there is no consciousness and desire which is separate from the larger Field of Consciousness and Desire*. This knowing is our true identity of True Self—the identity in which every human being must consciously participate, in order to know themselves at the most fundamental level. Unique Self is *not* separate self. That would be a pre-True-Self Realization. Rather, Unique Self is a post-True-Self Realization. In other words, Unique Self is the unique perspective and unique quality of intimacy of the LoveIntelligence, LoveBeauty, LoveDesire—individuated beyond ego—or beyond separate self. To know one’s identity is therefore to awaken to one’s Unique Self.

15) Naturally, this does not mean that Unique Self comes online only after a full realization of True Self. What is required, however, is what we might call *a general sense or fragrance of True Self*. Once one has a fragrance of the larger Field—which one can access just by reading the last couple of points—*the part of you that understands the sentences above is your True Self*—you can then awaken to the realization of your Unique Self. **Your Unique Self is the unique expression of the Field of the True Self.**

16) This notion of identity is the most inclusive framework we have around identity. It is supported by the classical sciences, both exterior and interior. Unique Self makes

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<sup>30</sup> See *Your Unique Self*, by M. Gafni, 2012, for 25 Distinctions between Unique Self and Ego. There is no space to go into all that here. For a free copy of 26 Distinctions between Unique Self and Ego from Gafni, *Self in Integral Evolutionary Mysticism: Two Models and Why They Matter*, see <https://worldphilosophyandreligion.org/dr-marc-gafni-26-distinctions-between-ego-and-unique-self/>.

sense for Albert Einstein, for quantum physics, for molecular biology, even as it is a perspective that makes sense in a-theistic Buddhism, especially in its Vajrayana forms, as well as in the esoteric realizations of Judeo-Christian, Sufi, Hindu, Confucian, and Native wisdoms.

- 17) Note that this is different from most typical spiritual and ethical teachings, which suggest *overcoming* or *forgetting one's personal story*—disappeared and outshined by the Absolute—be it the Eternal Fact or the Evolutionary Impulse. Rather, our story is a part of the larger Story. Each unique personal story drives the larger Story. There is no split between personal evolution and the evolution of Reality. You don't overcome or forget your story; you clarify the uniqueness of your story. There is an evolutionary imperative to promote uniqueness. And uniqueness is a relational category.<sup>31</sup>
- 18) Unique Selves come together to form Unique Self Symphonies, which is how the Universe optimally and ethically self-organizes and evolves at the level of human culture and personhood.
- 19) The realization that *the Universe inherently self-organizes or self-actualizes based on simple rules* is emergent from work done during the last centuries of the twentieth century, emergent from Alan Turing's work in his epic *Morphogenesis*.<sup>32</sup>
- 20) At the level of ant hills and slime molds, pheromones seem to participate in communicating the self-organizing queues of the Cosmos.
- 21) What drives self-organization at the human level?
- 22) In the Third Big Bang, self-organization is driven by different motivational architectures at every structure stage of consciousness. In developmental language, we might refer to the structure stages of the Third Big Bang as *the first tier of human*

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<sup>31</sup> *Uniqueness* is what philosophers call a *relational category*, which contrasts with an *entity category*. This means uniqueness describes something that occurs between and among things, arising out of relationships, as opposed to being an intrinsic abstract property of a thing in isolation. Uniqueness is not just about difference; it is about differences defined through relations. Interesting enough, it was our friend C.S. Peirce who did the first pioneering work on the differences between relational categories and entity categories; See *The Continuity of Peirce's Thought*, by K. A. Parker, 1998, Vanderbilt University.

<sup>32</sup> Alan Turing, "The Chemical Basis of Morphogenesis," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological Sciences*, Vol. 237, No. 641. (Aug. 14, 1952), pp. 37-72—<https://www.jstor.org/stable/92463>.

*consciousness*, as described in overlapping forms by myriad developmental theorists as aptly recapitulated in Integral Theory.<sup>33</sup>

23) At what developmental theory calls *second tier*, a new structure stage of consciousness, recognized in some form by myriad theorists, *uniqueness* is the self-organizing instrument of the Fourth Big Bang.<sup>34</sup>

24) Unique Self Symphony is an emergent form of superorganisms because it requires that we care about everyone's story. It has social justice—the view from everywhere—at its core and leverages the benefits of justice to promote further harmonious evolutionary emergence.<sup>35</sup> Unique Self Symphony is the personal and communal expression of what we call *Evolutionary Intimacy*.

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<sup>33</sup> See the charts in Wilber, Ken, *Integral Psychology*, Shambhala; 1st pbk. ed edition (May 16, 2000). For an important critique and up-level of the way development is often presented in Integral circles and other forums, see Zak Stein's article "On the Use of the Term Integral," especially the section "Growth-to-Goodness from Baldwin to Wilber," in *Journal of Integral Theory and Practice*, 9(2) pp.103-113, [http://www.zakstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Stein\\_ITC2010\\_REVISED-copy.pdf](http://www.zakstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Stein_ITC2010_REVISED-copy.pdf). In this regard, it is worth mentioning that one of the foundational volumes of CosmoErotic Humanism under preparation—this one by Stein and Gafni—is titled *In A Unique Voice*. We intend it to integrate Unique Self Theory and developmental theory, and it will be a key pillar of the new Story of Value—CosmoErotic Humanism.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the essay/dialogue by Marc Gafni and developmental theorist Suzanne Cook Greuter in this regard, *JITP* 6:1. We also note the reaction of Don Beck on reading the original Unique Self Book—*Your Unique Self, The Radical Path to Personal Enlightenment*, with Introduction and Afterword by Ken Wilber, Integral Publishers, 2012. Beck remarked, "Your Unique Self is the bible of *Yellow*, referring to the first structure stage of second-tier consciousness." Most importantly, however, note Zak Stein's chapter on Unique Self Theory in his *Education in a Time Between Worlds: Essays on the Future of Schools, Technology, and Society*. Bright Alliance, 2019.

<sup>35</sup> The image of the Unique Self Symphony elaborated in these pages—as the pinnacle emergent property of Earth's evolution, the culmination of human capacities for autonomy and community, and an embodiment of justice itself—echoes a history of such images of justice as a kind of embodied interpersonal harmony, which are found especially in the Western philosophical tradition. The great eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant was the first to tentatively and cryptically suggest that the laws humanity gives itself are best read as an autonomous extension of the self-regulative and self-organizing processes of the natural world. According to this view, humanity's autonomy—literally its self-legislating capability—represents nature's crowning innovation, wherein are found startling advances toward novelty and complexity. Importantly, a capacity for autonomy entails the acceptance of responsibility. This is the root of the notion that humanity is somehow accountable for the trajectory of evolution. Kant argued that humanity ought to facilitate the transformation of the *kingdom of nature* into the *kingdom of ends* by proceeding such that *the norms of our actions might be fit to serve as universal laws* (akin to *natural laws*). The *kingdom of ends*—a kind of idealized coordination and harmony of all beings in perfect justice—is given esoteric significance by Kant, who views it as the *teleologia rationis humanae*, a vision of reason's future, an immanent catalyst of the *corpus mysticum*. This was some of Kant's motivation, when he articulated one of the earliest and most influential normative global meta-theories in a series of publications about the history of human civilization and the necessary future emergence of a polycentric global governance system.