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## Harbingers of the Possible

Forum contribution: [After the Pandemic: Which Future?](#)

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Paul Raskin's prescient [\*Journey to Earthland\*](#) told us our future could go in one of three ways: basic continuity (Conventional Worlds); a Fortress society (Barbarization); or a new ecological civilization of community, justice, and thriving (Great Transitions). We can safely say that with the advent of COVID-19, the first of those options is now effectively out of the running. Which of the [two others](#), poised at opposite ends of the spectrum where centrism is no longer possible, do we choose?

Our action or inaction will decide. If we want the third scenario, it is up to us to act. The second is the default trajectory, to which our inaction will lead. Do we descend into barbarism and defeat or take courage in hand and make an evolutionary leap to redemption and renewal? There is no going back to normal.

Many people see the coronavirus crisis as a one-off event. But we have to see the bigger systemic picture—the background of the global capitalist system that fueled the crisis, and will cause many more to come, cascading into further crises and ultimate collapse, if we do not wake up now, take the reins in our hands, and radically change course.

How have we arrived at this point, and what can we do about it? The pandemic, like climate change and other socio-ecological crises we are facing, is a direct consequence of the global capitalist system, which has both destroyed the balance of nature that sustains us and dispensed with social safety nets, rights, and justice, all for the sake of the profits of the wealthy and powerful. The coronavirus is at once an offshoot of these interlinked crises and a herald of what might come—a blaring red alarm signaling the political, ecological, and now epidemiological disaster zones to which our unsustainable global market system is driving us.

The global capitalist system has not only caused the crisis, but it is also now capitalizing on the panic to push through draconian measures of social control, bail out the big banks and fossil fuel interests, gut climate change policy and actions, and isolate people at just the time when public protest against ecological collapse was gathering momentum. In this way, the neoliberal order morphs into martial law when its own injustices and depredations are laid bare and its hegemony threatened.

This potential for growing totalitarianism is also now greatly enhanced by the new technological powers of digital surveillance. In a pandemic, disaster and surveillance capitalism can fuse together to form an inescapable mesh, a kind of medical/martial digitally enhanced fascism.

Lest there be any doubt at this point, capitalism and technology cannot solve our crises. They are what led us here in the first place. Those at the helm of our systems, the very people who caused the crises, will now try to profit off them, at the expense not only of our rights and freedoms, but also increasingly of our very lives.

So much for the bad news. What about the good, and how can we enhance it?

The positive potential of the crisis lies not only in the growing expressions of love and caring that are sprouting now all around the world, but also in the recognition of the fragility of our systems and the dawning realization that we need vitally to change them. We vitally need to rise above the blinders of our self-interest and express our love and connectedness at all levels—personal, local, and global.

The love and interconnectedness we are seeing—selfless acts of kindness, neighbors helping each other, local self-reliance, community mutual aid groups—are the seeds of another possible future. Yet it is critical that they be scaled up to encompass the systemic dimension as well as personal and local expressions. The spirit of interconnection must be translated into large-scale, deep-rooted changes: a whole-scale transformation to an equitable, just, and regenerative system, the spirit of love expressed in our consciousness, actions, and world.

There are three other positives coming out of this crisis, all heralds of what is possible. First, the Earth has been given a rest from our relentless assaults on her, with immediate positive effects. Carbon emissions have plummeted, birds are singing, waters are clearing, the sky is turning blue.

This proves that nature can regenerate quickly if we just change our ways. It is only business-as-usual that has guaranteed our demise through climate change and ecological collapse.

The second is that we got to see what is essential—essential goods and services, as well as our essential human goodness. We saw the benefits of scaling down our consumption and frenetic lifestyle. It is time to take stock of what we really need and want, and to create systems that reflect it.

The third positive sign is that now we know our governments can make radical, massive changes virtually overnight. There is no more excuse that rapid systems change is not possible: we have seen how quickly governments can act when they want to. They have not done so for climate change and our other impending ecological disasters only because they did not perceive it as in their interests. But it is in all of our interests to save our dying planet, to reverse the destruction of nature's balance that is now threatening all of us.

Thus, the crisis pulls us in two directions: either toward a greater consolidation of elite power, leading to further breakdown and a normalization of martial law, or toward a breakthrough moving forward to a world of cooperation, community, social justice, and love. Which will become the new normal? It is up to us. If we can connect the dots of the positive potentials emerging—the awakening of love and interconnectedness, the discovery of what is essential, the regenerative power of nature, the potential of governments to act fast for radical change—we have a potent, fertile basis to bring in a beautiful future—but only if we come together and act before it is too late.

The future can go either way: a Fortress society of martial law controlling our bodies and movements from birth to death, crushing human rights and life itself, or a just, loving, caring world, a reverence for the sacred on this Earth and beyond. This choice is a very simple one, but also a fatefully urgent one: our life and death literally hang upon it.

Things will not go back to normal. The question is, which path do we want to take going forward? We—the people, for our own sake and that of our sacred planet—must actively choose, and then come together and act. For the sake of all life, now and for all time to come. There is no other alternative.

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## About the Author



Kavita Byrd works to bring together holistic consciousness, healing, and whole-systems change, with an emphasis on evolutionary spirituality and sacred activism. This has included research on ecology, climate change and new economics, integrating universal spiritual wisdom and radical social action for evolutionary global transformation. She is the author of the poetry collection *Love Songs of the Undivided* and the book *Quantum Co-Creative Revolution: We Are All in This Together*. She holds a BA in English Literature and Creative Writing from Princeton University.

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## About the Publication

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