

Powered by Love --- an Emerging Worldview by James O'Dea

I was invited to write a reflection that I've titled: Powered by Love---an Emerging Worldview It is on my website, being circulated in other forums by Club of Budapest, Science and Medical Network in the UK, and others.

There is a worldview that has come to dominate every aspect of global reality affecting human civilization, the natural world and planetary climate conditions. It can be summarized as the quantitative worldview. The quantitative worldview is in a crisis so deep it is leading, in an interconnected and interdependent world, to deep systemic disruptions, chaotic conditions and signs of complete failure. If this worldview were a patient receiving care it would be in intensive care on life support.

There is another emerging worldview that is, from a whole world-whole systems perspective, in the natal unit being born into the world exactly as the quantitative worldview is on life support: this worldview, constituting a universal paradigm shift, can be summarized as the qualitative worldview.

To be clear it is not a case of quantity versus quality or quality versus quantity. What it is now evident is that when number dominates outcomes in every aspect of life people become deeply conditioned by it-- being led to believe that it is through quantity that quality is delivered. In the qualitative worldview number must be governed by values and qualities which express and embody health, wellbeing, social harmony and ecological sustainability. By placing quality under the governance of number we are discovering we are now trapped in conditions in which 'more is always better' and so the goal is always to have more, get more and do more.

It turns out one must stay on top of the numbers game or get pushed to the bottom whether you are an individual, a community or a nation state. From this perspective to attain a quality life you have to compete for resources in order to get ahead and not fall behind. When scaled up this quantitative approach leads to massive disparities between the haves and have nots; massive overconsumption; massive ecological devastation.

Adding to the intensity of this unsustainable quantified reality is that it brings with it acceleration and time compression to meet numeric goals and we begin to experience the consequences of living at hyper-speed. In a matter of seconds stock market transactions can affect millions of lives. Even doctors, teachers and others find themselves increasingly time-squeezed by the quantifiable when their goal is qualitative change. We don't have time to deal with causes and in all kinds of settings we try to grab a hold of whatever will have the speediest effects—even when those effects become patchwork remedies with their own pernicious side- effects.

Then along comes something like the Covid19 virus in the form of a pandemic giving us

master lessons on several fronts. It demonstrates how, in an interconnected world, the quantitative approach becomes a global house of cards: a virus that started in China not only kills tens of thousands of people in dozens of countries, it kicks tens of millions across the world out of work tanking whole economies. But it also reveals important facets of the qualitative worldview in an interdependent world: we learn in graphic ways how the choices we make can mean life or death for others; we learn how science and compassion can synergize to not only save lives but deepen our social bonds.

Because the qualitative approach develops emotional intelligence it enhances our perception of what really matters. When the British Prime Minister (not hitherto known for his emotional quotient) was leaving hospital after having been in intensive care with the virus he said he saw and experienced firsthand how the National Health Service was really “powered by love.”

For some time now the qualitative worldview has been quietly gestating around what is referred to as an integral approach, that is, an approach that honors subjective experience as well as objective facts; that cultivates inner development as well as outer function and purpose in the world; that nurtures inner peace as well as peace in the world; that promotes holism in theory and practice and seeks to make choices that are informed by whole systems perspectives and a cosmology of depth consciousness. The qualitative worldview is more interested in dialogue than in ideological dominance because dialogue offers pathways to understanding and appreciation of both uniqueness and diversity. This qualitative approach is more psychological than moralistic: it moves from who is right v. who is wrong to who is hurt and how can they heal or how can they be less divisive and more relationally skillful.

The qualitative worldview brings a new alignment between science and a non-dogmatic spirituality and a critical alignment between economy and ecology.

Any major shift in worldview has been seen initially as peripheral and has been met with resistance by the vested interests of the dominant paradigm. While the emerging new center of reality is fecund with stunning levels of creativity and insight it is often ridiculed and even persecuted. Courage is needed to live and act from inside the emerging paradigm and to embody its memes and values rather than exhausting energy by fighting the dying worldview---which, in any case, really needs to be respectfully hospiced.

We who believe that love, compassion, empathy and altruism are the real infinitely renewable resources available to each and every being must become incarnational source points of that reality. We must come out of hiding. Yes we will have to make sacrifices of time, money, stuff, even reputation. We will have to stop organizing our lives and our civilization around number, for it is really ego which conceals itself in how big and how small, in never enough and in the compulsions of unbridled growth.

Many of us sense in the time of this current pandemic a great opportunity: it is as if we have collectively been sent indoors to do our essential human homework, to hit the pause button on our hyper-accelerating lives and reflect on what is really of value. It is to get into our hearts; to discover that being human is a magnificent thing; that each human being is a uniquely formed stream of creativity so perfectly designed to flow into communal rivers of renewal and into a great tidal shift that moves us in the years ahead to declare, “Powered by love? Indeed the whole thing is powered by love: every forest, every lake, every creature, every human, every galaxy is powered by love---by a love as potent and creative as we allow it to be.”