Your Questions Answered - Bret and Heather 96th DarkHorse Po...

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**SPEAKERS**

Bret, Heather

**Bret** 00:19

Hey, are you folks with questions? Welcome back to The Dark Horse podcast live stream q&a number 96.

**Heather** 00:27

Not all these people have questions.

**Bret** 00:29

They are here because they're the sort of people who are interested in questions and what might be

**Heather** 00:34

interested in addressing. Yes, you actually I actually I take that back. I think that you all have questions. I'm quite sure. Not all of you have asked those questions. Maybe not all of you have questions of us. Hi, our kitty cat is here. Okay,

**Bret** 00:49

we're gonna get a cat who if he shows up more fully on camera, you will see that he had a run in with medical destiny and has been shaved in various places by doctors who needed to give him medication it

**Heather** 01:01

looks really unfortunate Yeah, he's patchwork caddies are shaved him in like five different spots. I really don't know why. hard to grasp. Okay. But he's fine. He seems to be doing really well. Okay. From the discord this week. I should have asked you this in advance. I don't know. Do carbon based life forms imply the existence of carbon cringe life forms?

**Bret** 01:32

I take your point. discord people. Yes. No, that's

**Heather** 01:37

there was acknowledgement that this was sort of a light hearted question. light hearted

**Heather** 01:40

question. Yeah. Yes, cool.

**Heather** 01:42

implies Nice job. But what carbon crunch let

**Bret** 01:46

it imply let's put it this way. Yeah. The fact that maybe silicon

**Heather** 01:50

based life form is in fact a carbon crunch life form.

**Bret** 01:54

Well, no, that's no, as a bridge too far. Yes, I would say the fact of carbon based life forms implies the possibility of carbon cringe life forms, but having encountered many carbon cringe life forms, I don't think we need to depend on that shaky rung of the logical ladder. Oh, you see my point. We've all met them.

**Heather** 02:17

Yeah, just because they appear to exist. It's outside. Neighbors doing landscaping.

02:25

Or terraforming their turf as

**Heather** 02:27

their hits their to technological frontier on their own landscape.

**Bret** 02:31

Where they think they are the mushrooms have kicked in, and they are terraforming their own property. I don't think that requires

**Heather** 02:37

mushrooms. I've seen people not on mushrooms terraforming their own property. Hello. No, no

**Bret** 02:42

at the point. Oh my god. Oh boy. What's the point you think? Oh, goodness. Yeah, yeah. All right. kitty cat. At the point you think your property needs terraforming rather than just landscaping? That maybe the mushrooms that

**Heather** 02:56

may be the mushrooms? Indeed. Okay. He may have deleted questions. I really hope. This is not going super smoothly yet. Okay. Next question. Are we done with carbon based versus carbon cringe?

**Bret** 03:09

Yeah, but thank you. I like the question.

**Heather** 03:13

Good day doctors and thank you for everything I have a new obesity hypothesis you might agree with the third cause of obesity after low activity and poor nutrition is climate control. Being 70 degrees Fahrenheit in all four seasons, cripples our metabolism by eliminating our need for involuntary body temperature regulatory systems. Yes, totally agree with us. I awesome that you came up with that it's not new to you. But as we used to say to our students, reinventing the wheel is awesome, because the wheel was an incredible invention. And just because it doesn't happen to be new to the universe doesn't mean that it's not new, you're demonstrating that you are generating something interesting. And I think absolutely,

**Bret** 03:50

yeah, and in fact, I've been playing with this hypothesis for many years, there's an obvious side to it, and what I consider to be a much less obvious side to it. Cool. So if you are cold, then burning food calories for heat is a place that food calories go and if that need is reduced by the fact that you're building burns fossil fuels, in order to keep you warm, then obviously in the oversimplified equation of calories in versus calories spent, you will have a residual but also on the obvious one, that's the obvious one. But if you are too hot, right, you would think that that might actually preserve calories, but in fact the radiation of heat from your system involves the pumping of blood into capillary beds near the surface, etc.

**Heather** 04:44

Now that the act of thermal regulation in either direction requires something

**Bret** 04:50

right now there are other auxiliary features of this

**Heather** 04:55

at least is another

**Bret** 04:57

one that I have played with is when your activity pattern not only spends calories, but it also dictates the cost of food calories that are stored on you that you are walking about with. Right. So in other words, if you are fat, then every step costs more. And so there is undoubtedly an underlying system deciding what the sweet spot is with respect to how much to store, and what it must be monitoring are things like, what how regular your access to food is, how much you move around, and therefore how much you're spending to carry those resources around with you. And basically, the novelty of our situation has sent really bad data in there, including probably things like hormonal effects, you know, absolutely fat and animals with hormones. And those hormones trigger your system as well, things like that. So it's not going to be a simple matter of any one thing. But I would say strong likelihood that climate control in your environment is playing an important role. And just as you know, if you have a very simple minded model of how to get strong by lifting stuff, like lifting weights, you may think well, the more times you do it, the better. And it may in fact be that because building muscle is an informational question, do you need more muscle lifting weight that you're fully capable of lifting many times may not be

**Heather** 06:32

that useful? Well, that was tiring, okay, right,

**Bret** 06:35

I suppose to not send information to the system that says your muscle is inadequate. But if you just barely lift something, or even better, maybe fail to lift something, then the message is, well, actually, you need more muscle than you've got exactly.

**Heather** 06:47

So spending less time at work that is more difficult, can be much more effective, at least in strength training. And probably there are many such systems like this. Yeah.

**Bret** 06:58

And so the bottom line is you're dealing with a complex system that is monitoring information, and we are feeding it garbagey information, very noisy information. But if you can figure out what it's monitoring, then hacking your own system is able to be much simpler, because it may not be, you know, the amount of effort you put into lifting weights, for example, it may not be proportional to how effective it is, it may be the information that they convey. You know, if you think about what your body understands, when you fail to lift something, it doesn't know that you're not struggling to find food, right? And that lifting things as part of that process and you're not able to do it. And therefore that's getting in the road of how well fed you're going to be or something like that. So yes, an informational system to be sure.

**Heather** 07:43

Indeed. Oh, just ask. We can't we can't. Can you predict a few horribly misleading headlines that we're likely to see as a result of your latest appearance on the Joe Rogan experience?

**Bret** 08:00

I don't want to do their work for them. I don't want to do their work for them. Um, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yes. Funny question. It's a funny question. Oh,

**Heather** 08:11

my God. Well, yeah, we'll see him or you know, maybe we won't I don't know. Sorry. It's a it's a funny question. amusing, but no, we're not doing anyway, like that skin. Our screens the opium of the masses, a psychological possum game while achieving a negative sum game. Oh, okay. It's it's spelled like possum, a psychological positive sum game while achieving a negative sum game in the polluting world such that you are happy with less?

**Bret** 08:43

Well, I don't think the screens render you very happy.

08:49

They, they,

**Heather** 08:51

it's only very short term. It's only those sort of technological, you know, dopamine

**Bret** 08:56

is the dopamine traps. Yeah, that are there that make you pursue some kind of happiness or a fix a social fix?

**Heather** 09:05

Yeah, whereas, you know, the borrowing here from Marx, religion being the opiate of the masses, I think that was Mark's opiate being Yes, but to borrow from this phrase here agree or disagree with that sentiment? And I would disagree. But religion is, is is going after a long term things. I mean, maybe you think this this might be sort of a corrective to Marx's misunderstanding of what religion was perhaps because, in fact, religion does inform your entire life and, and does go after those longer term. Basically, meeting making centers Yeah, we're did Yeah. Can Yeah, could.

**Bret** 09:53

We could also correct marks just, I mean, it's a more modern take, but opioids are the opiate of the masses I think. Who could argue? Yeah, you gave me that. Look, we're the thought of divorce briefly crossed your mind. That's got rid of it. That's not the look. Okay. Good. Yeah, that's a relief.

**Heather** 10:21

Have you read sir Roger Scruton is dying in time essay. Any thoughts? Can't wait for my copy of your book to arrive. Thank you both. I have not but I saw this and went and looked at it real quickly, actually. Not that this is necessarily useful, but I can show my screen briefly. It does appear to be Zack you still there? Okay, okay. I thought our producer had had left the building.

**Bret** 10:49

I thought he was doing drugs. But he didn't know.

**Heather** 10:54

Anyway, this, I began I read two paragraphs of it was all I had time for. And it looks extraordinary and timely and definitely worth reading. So I found it for free. simple Google search for this happens to be at Notting Hill editions calm, dying in time. And I say by Roger Roger Scruton. I

11:10

am intrigued. Yeah, yeah.

**Heather** 11:13

So thank you for that recommendation. Okay. How about how about starting an online non woke University via zoom? There have been several quality professors who have had to leave imagine what a great school that would be in high demand worldwide.

**Bret** 11:30

So I'd deliver the answer. Sure. Okay. Here's the problem for us. A online is never quite going to cut it, which doesn't mean it's not worth doing. But it means that from the point of view, we had a very unusual job at evergreen, that was for those who used it to its fullest was absolutely fantastic. Where we had complete freedom to teach what we want, as we wanted to teach it, we could reinvent teaching, if we wanted, our students knew as well, they took a class full time, we taught a class full time, that class could go on for a full year. So everybody was so well known to each other, that the teaching could be extremely personal. And it could be multi dimensional. And I got away with things like never filing a syllabus, so that if a point went really quickly, it didn't have to take a certain amount of time. And if a point that you thought was going to take an hour took a week, that was okay, too, there was there was a lot of flexibility and in the teaching, and so I'm sure I speak for you here to going from that level of freedom, even to a regular teaching job at a college where your

**Heather** 12:33

level of relationship, freedom and relationship I don't mean

**Bret** 12:37

it's not the freedom. I mean, lots of people took that freedom and did nothing right that there was a lot of that at evergreen, but for us, if you felt like figuring out what you could do in a teaching environment, and there was nobody, as long as students showed up, there was nobody was going to tell you couldn't reinvent it. Right? That kind of freedom. If you were, if you were the kind of person who used it and tried to figure out what was possible in a classroom, it was an amazing environment. And so if you eliminate that freedom, and you suddenly put us in front of, you know, class of 100 people teaching for credits at a time, it just doesn't sound at all interesting. And even worse, if it becomes a one step more remote relationship where it's large numbers of people over zoom. So is there room for such a thing that could be valuable to people? Yes, it could be better than not, but from the point of view of taking people who've had this incredible experience where we were empowered to do things in the classroom that are almost impossible to do under any normal circumstances. And you say, Well, how about teaching over zoom? It just seems like, hard to hard to motivate to make that happen. Yeah. And to the extent that it is possible to do something like that, we're kind of doing it, right, this is not exactly that.

**Heather** 13:51

Yeah, you know, it's not it's this is not there are elements that are similar, you know, I would be architecting things such that certain things would come at certain moments and be surprising to some people and not to others and such, if I thought of this as as curricular, right. But it is it still requires such a feedback and active feedback process. And, and the value in it, like the value for us is so much or for me anyway was so much in the interactions with people and you know, frankly, learning from the people as well not you know, not just things that they knew that I didn't do, or ways of approaching things that hadn't occurred to me or more were effective when I wouldn't have thought that would have been but actually, you know, their feedback in terms of like, Oh, this thing that I thought was really cool is falling flat is because no one's had their coffee yet or because I was wrong. And this thing that I thought I was doing that was really cool just isn't working for this crowd. Now, is that not gonna work for this crowd universally, or is it just this to this day, or is it this whole generation or is it or is it just Me, you know, isn't my thing. And you can't do that right nearly as effectively, you

**Bret** 15:04

can't do it and the extent to which, you know, this is becoming ever more remote to us, because it's been a long time since we were in the classroom, but the extent to which, as you were lecturing, or whatever equivalent of that you were doing, you looked around the room, and you saw, let's say, you're teaching alone 25 or so people that you knew really, really well, not just their names, not just the basics of where they came from, but knew a lot about their background, their their style of comprehension, their blind spots, and you're talking and you can see, comprehension dawning, right, it dawns in the eyes. And when it fails to dawn, you know, your point didn't land, right. And so that dynamic is so important to a really good teaching environment, and it is so broken by even zoom. Yeah, right. Even zoom Brexit.

**Heather** 15:57

Now there is they may well not happen. But we've just heard glimmers of possibility that we might end up finding our way in a classroom just for a brief time next summer, again, because you're more or another educational environment. And it's intriguing precisely because it's becoming so remote, that that the value of educating undergraduates or you know, anyone with with capacity, I'm I just think that educating very small children is is a different kind of thing. Yeah. But you know, call it sort of high schoolers through adults is, is so much in the interaction. And as you said, it's, it's fading, you know, for me, it's been almost five years, you know, up as I was on sabbatical, the last two thirds of the year that that evergreen blew up on us. And that's just a lot of time that's elapsed at this point, to not update our model to not update to not have any new people and their experiences and their ways of interacting in our heads. And, yeah, that's it.

**Bret** 17:07

Yeah, there's something else, which I think at some point we need to talk about, I'll just put a little stub here that we can return to. There was also a way in which inevitably, if you were the sort of professor who really cared about students, and you know, as you've pointed out, many times, there were lots of professors who didn't even learn the names of their students and in this environment, that was, that was educational malpractice to be certain. But if you were the kind of person who understood that knowing them was key to teaching them, well, then it was inevitable that you would care about the position in life, their trials and tribulations mattered. And I think the point is, you just as you care about your friends, and it's not, you know, it's not just about those things on which you may be teamed up in business or whatever, right? You end up caring about people and the extent to which, you know, you, you become it Yes, it's an asymmetrical kind of friendship, but you become friends with these

**Heather** 18:13

students, some of them become an asymmetrical after they graduated things, yes, your relationship is over. But Yep, it's completely amazing. And also really, almost entirely all encompassing. And you know, there's a lot there's a lot to say here, but I loved doing the work, I was surprised to love learning how to be an educator, as much as I as I did. And of course, we did develop a lot of ideas while doing it. And so you know, this book is is a piece of that, that framework that we were developing but but choosing to basically throw all in to the education part of of higher ed and to do so in which relationships with the students and knowing something about them was absolutely imperative like I could not the idea of standing up in front of people who were strangers to me, week after week was completely intolerable. I would not have done the work I would have refused it. But that did mean that basically that you know, that, that and the ideas that were being generated the classroom and then your family was very much the full the full thing. And so, you know, the sabbatical that I had the last two quarters of evergreen was effectively me, saying, Okay, I know that I've wanted to write this strange science fiction for a very long time. And I think I can do it if I'm not also teaching, but I don't know because I've been because evergreen had a terrible you know, they didn't pay very well. They didn't have very good sabbatical program. So after 14 years, I finally got two quarters of sabbatical. And sure enough, I did it. I did it really quickly. I was like, okay, yes, that is also Yes. It's one If it's an N of one but it was I predicted in advance, the thing that is that is preventing you know, sort of productivity in the in the outside world outside of the classrooms and the field settings is in part that really heavy investment with the the community that is being built that we are building in these classrooms. And you know, they were 25 if it was one of us teaching 50 if it was two of us slightly lower if we're studying abroad, but you really just came to know people so so so well, and you know, the, the metaphor at evergreen mostly was about faculty, but I certainly felt felt a sense of this, with the whole community was like, you know, you're courting and then you decide to come together and that sort of a marriage. And then at the end, when the thing dissolves, it's it's it's a divorce. And it doesn't have to be an ugly divorce, but it'll never come back together again, no,

**Bret** 20:52

no, you're right, that there's something familial about it, I never once felt that the end of a program was divorced, like, and I think part of it was an ending. Yeah, it was an ending, but I think the problem is

**Heather** 21:04

divorces are just ends that.

**Bret** 21:08

Yeah. But for us, we had a community of people who bounced around between our programs, they took them when we taught together. And so I don't, I think the thing is, it's obviously a formal ending to the moment when you're showing up in the class at that right time of day and delivering some content when

**Heather** 21:27

with those people, you know, it. There was a repeated sense and you everyone who's taught knows this a little bit, but there was just there was a much deeper sense of community that was created with every single program

**Bret** 21:40

100%, but with a fork, right? But you know, I used to say that you knew a program was working, when it spilled over outside of class, you know, when students would hold parties, and they would be talking about what they were learning in class, and their, you know, friends who weren't in those classes were like, wait, what is this? Right? Yeah, at the point that it was self catalyzing. And the fact that the class ended for the day didn't mean anything to anyone, because they were really deeply involved in that, that same thing happens at the ends of the, at the ends of the term or the ends of the course. And so anyway, you know, and the community largely still exists there. Many students you know, who are important to us who were present in our classes at different times who are sort of connected through us to each other, you know, oh, yeah, I've heard tell of you, you know, that kind of thing. Right? So anyway, yeah. Everything you said except I don't I didn't feel like there was anything you know, yes. It was an analogue to some sort of,

**Heather** 22:37

yeah, I mean, that wasn't my language I never employed it in in the classroom but that was the metaphor that was that was spread around Yep. Is the Unity movement dead? Second part of the same question. Do you know Dave Smith libertarian and missus Institute guy am I lcsw got to get creative and grab the awakening masses before they're tricked into republicanism?

**Bret** 23:01

Yeah, I don't think the Unity movement answered the

**Heather** 23:03

second question. First. You know who Dave Smith is libertarian missus Institute? Not stop your head off. I mean, I

23:09

don't think the Unity movement is not dead. It is.

**Bret** 23:17

It is about more than I think people realize because it was initially about the Unity 2020 proposal, which was quite narrow. But the world keeps telling us that it is necessary. Right? That's the point. Nothing is functioning. It hasn't gotten better. We elected the blue team guy, and we can see where we are. So the answer is, we are still in the same predicament that caused us to do that. Certain people who insisted that the adults we're back have now recognized publicly that oops, that didn't turn out to be true. So if the orange guy wasn't the answer, and the blue team guy wasn't the answer, then what you've got

**Heather** 24:01

in new color.

**Bret** 24:04

We need to stop playing this as if it's a you know, sport in which you can recognize your friends by their jersey and start remembering what it is that we're trying to accomplish by being a society and we do need to find the adults and stop killing them off in the primaries.

24:24

So radical idea yeah, very radical.

**Heather** 24:30

This seems like a comment rather than a question. The right is explored territory risks are known but resources limited. The left is unexplored territory, which can have unknown treasures but also unknown dangers and progresses fine until a progressive says off a cliff.

24:45

Yeah, that's pretty good. Yeah.

**Heather** 24:49

And another comment on another comment is last one from a regular contributor here. Time is relative to the proximity of gravitational forces and psychological It's passing is relative to the gravity of the situation. I like these kinds of metaphors. I like this very much both of these. Both of these.

**Bret** 25:13

And that is an excellent gravitational lens.

**Heather** 25:20

What is the evolutionary advantage of marking time? Ie birthdays, anniversaries of good and bad events like 911? Why does this and does it help us? Why do this? And does it help us get our genes into the future? So the fascinating question, yeah. You want to take it on first?

**Bret** 25:37

Sure. Yeah, I have a, I think there are certain things that we mark time, and it very clearly has something to do with processes that require us to do this. I'm thinking, you know, the most salient example, for me would be the Jewish tradition of waiting a year to put a headstone on a grave, right, burying a person quickly and returning in a year to put the headstone. And it seems to me that this fits actually very well, with the natural progress of grief, that there is a one year process, there's something about being through a whole cycle without someone that, you know, completes a part of that process. And that

**Heather** 26:24

reminds me of the ritual in Madagascar, the turning of the bones ceremonies, in which it's different for I think all the 17 ish tribes in Madagascar do it although certainly it's more than one and when exactly the retromer happens relative to the harvest is different in different places. But in among the buttes, Masako, which is the one to which I was invited, it's around harvest time, memory serves. And so it is an annual event, when there is a day when the bones of the ancestors are disinterred, are brought back up, and those who are more freshly dead. If they have decayed entirely, such as just bones are there, the body boxes that they are in effectively, coffins, their bones are clean, they're given new shrouds, and they're put into bone boxes. And if they were, if they were already in bone boxes, then they are simply brought up. And then while they are Up above ground, on, there's a ceremony in which the elder of the village, the currently living elder of the village, speaks to both the living and the dead about what has transpired in the last in the last year. And in that case, you're you're speaking to not just those who have died in the last year, and it's not an anniversary of their death. But it's the same moment every year, you as the living will be reminded of those who have come before and the wisdom of the ancestors.

**Bret** 27:54

Yes, it's not, I think it's not just the wisdom of the ancestors. And in this case, there is something that is not well described, I think anywhere where one is related through someone else, right? So

**Heather** 28:13

like in laws,

**Bret** 28:15

yes, but I think the point is, I don't want to explore it too fully. But you and I are related to each other through our children, right? It's a blood relationship, even though it's not a blood relationship dyadic. And there is also something then so the addition of our children to our lineage, to what was to what is now is now our structure, right? It is a is a hybrid,

**Heather** 28:45

there was our lineage, Zack was born,

**Bret** 28:48

that same process is mirrored by the absence of somebody through whom you were connected, right? And so in, I guess my point would be, there is a tendency if you are treating your cousin, well, because you don't want to displease your aunt, or your aunt. I don't think ants care very much about this sort of thing. But your aunt?

**Heather** 29:13

They love their sisters.

**Bret** 29:15

Yes, they do. Let's say you're treating your cousin well, because you love your aunt and it displeases her when you fight or something like that. And then she dies. Right? Suddenly, you're

**Heather** 29:28

the payroll restrictions. Remove our

**Bret** 29:31

remove, unless you're gonna have to explain it to her every year. Yeah, right.

**Heather** 29:35

Yeah. And this would happen this year. Yeah. Right. We're at each other again.

**Bret** 29:38

Exactly. And so the thing is, you don't want to especially you know, the way it's set up, it's one of these beautiful things, you know, like, you know, Catholics and confession, it's set up in order to disincentivize the bad behavior. In this case, not only are you going to have to face your aunt again and tell her that you've started fucking up now that she's gone. But you're gonna have to do it, it will be recounted in front of others, right. And so the point is what this tends to do is stabilize our view of each other. So that the loss of an individual, which is unpredictable and negative isn't so such a violent disruption of the, you know, the inter workings of the tribe.

**Heather** 30:20

Yeah. Yeah. So I guess there's also, this is a little different, but we talk in the book a fair bit about rites of passage. Yeah. And so marking time that is meaningful developmentally, even if it's not all that meaningful, sort of astronomically, right. So you know, different traditions, you might come of age 13, in the Jewish tradition, or 15, in the Mexican tradition, or, you know, at different ages. And, and in some cases, it's not determined by age, but sort of like, oh, there's a cohort ready. And that cohort of men who are ready to become, you know, boys are ready to become men or girls who already become women might have an age range of 13 to 16, or something. That those, those are effectively marking, marking achievement via time rather than marking time explicitly.

**Bret** 31:14

Yeah, yeah, they're different. It's and actually, this is a perfect analogue to the little disagreement we had at the beginning of the main podcast, because both kind of remember, we were talking about laboratory time, versus what I was not labeling, but basically organic time. And I'm not arguing that laboratory time didn't pre exist, the, you know, creatures, if it exists, there's something that we can go back and look at. But from the point of view of an evolved creature, you ought to measure time and keep track of it in whichever way is most useful. And so if you're, you know, in the far north latitude and your days are expanding and contracting with the year, you want to look at time very differently.

**Heather** 31:54

Yeah, for instance, you expect you might expect if you're normally diurnal creature to sleep a lot more, when the sun is down a lot more and to be awake a lot more in the summer,

**Bret** 32:04

right? And so in any case, the point is, there are two very real kinds of time. And as soon as we started sticking clocks on the wall, basically one of them eclipses the other because it's like, well, no, what time is it? Really? Yeah, you know, it's 37.

**Heather** 32:17

I mean, I was talking about this a week or two ago with regard to speed. Or, you know, maybe it was just in my natural selections piece, I think I was talking about it here too. But you know, that, you know, how it is that we understand speed. You know, when you're in a bicycle, or in a car with the windows down or convertible, you know, you feel the wind and you feel the cat of the road, and you see how other people are interacting with you how their cars people are interacting with you. And all of that is how you understand how fast you're going, the noise of the road of the tires on the road, depending on what the surface is. Or you can look, the speedometer. And the speedometer is the thing that the COP is going to be asking you for when he pulls you over, he's not going to be asking you for how your hair felt and what you were hearing in terms of the crunch of the tires. But you actually have a much more embodied sense of speed with that first way of knowing. And so you're This is just the temporal equivalent of that spatial thing. And like, okay, there are multiple ways, at least two, yeah, Ways of Knowing sort of at a visceral, fully embodied level space, you know, how your physical presence in space and also in time, and there's the ways that we have come to measure these things. And we have largely replaced our understanding of those earlier, more complete understandings of space and time with the newer technological, simpler, less nuanced, more reductionist measures. Yeah,

**Bret** 33:37

it's like, it's adjusted for relevance. Right? Tell me an example. If you are driving down the road and your car at 25 miles an hour, right, maybe you're going 25 miles an hour, because the guy in front of you is going 25 miles an hour, and it's a 30 mile an hour zone, and you're feeling impatient about the way you are crawling down the road, right? We've all been there. On the other hand, if you're on your bike at 25 miles an hour, right, it's pretty exciting. And so at some level, it should be exciting because it's actually perilous that right 25 miles an hour is enough for you to make an error that matters. You got to be fully aware of what you're doing. The wind is rushing by your ears, right? It's it's a very different phenomenon to compare. The two is 25 miles an hour fast. Yeah, yes. on a bike no in a car. And the point is you can have a speedometer on both. Right, but they're not comparable speeds. Right? That's right. So yeah, I think this is this is right.

**Heather** 34:35

Yeah. Cool. As a federal employee, I'm concerned with Biden's latest vaccine mandate. Curious on your thoughts of threatening people with joblessness myself included to push a vaccine.

**Bret** 34:50

We have arrived somewhere incredibly dangerous, because at the very least, the right to coerce people and Heather and I may differ a little bit on this, but I believe Leave there is a right to coerce people in the interest of public health. But I do not believe we have come anywhere near the burden of responsibility necessary before you even contemplate coercing people in this way. Right. We, for example, have not made people safe from the corrupting influence of corporations that have a financial stake in whether we are or are not compelled. Yeah. And so the point is, until you're made safe from the forces that might cause this to be used in an illegitimate way, you don't get the right to coerce. And so anyway, yes, in a different world, there might be a legitimate use of this. But Wow, is the standard high before you reach the place where you have a right to contemplate such things, and we just haven't had it.

**Heather** 35:50

Exactly. I was going to try to find because we were going to talk about this. I didn't queue it up, and I can't find it. But the guardian of all places had a article this morning. That was referring to research that is still not peer reviewed. And of course, the research itself does some hedging because that is what we are obliged to do now. But the Guardian reports on some new research in a preprint Oh, here's the here's the actual preprint this isn't the Guardian article. SARS Coby to mRNA vaccination, associate, Meier carditis, and children ages 12 to 17 is stratified national database analysis. The conclusion of this research, which the Guardian actually reports on, is they find that for boys between the ages of 12 to 17, the risks of the vaccine outweigh the risks of COVID. There's lots we don't know, there's ways they could be wrong, but this is what this research finds. Yeah. And and the Guardian actually reports that now the Guardian is about as far left. Yeah, I was like, pseudo left something, whatever. This is now. Blue team. Yeah, we've been through in the UK. So labor teams, something

37:13

like that, right? Yeah. Yeah.

**Heather** 37:16

As as is out there. And given these sorts of results, that even some of the most Blue Team woke journalistic outputs are reporting the idea of of mandates, when we clearly do not, do not understand the risks. And there is research showing that at least for some populations, the risks outweigh the benefits is isn't insane.

**Bret** 37:46

Yeah. Now, obviously, there's no level of caution. That is enough for emerging research like that. But we have talked extensively about the question, you know, why is it that we have not publicly engaged the age stratified risk profile, so that we can ask the question, are we vaccinating young people to protect old people and does a rational society do that? Right, right.

**Heather** 38:15

Yes,

**Bret** 38:17

I mean, obviously, we do. Obviously, we would be vaccinating young people to protect old people. But if it is not justified with respect to the young people that we are vaccinating, if they are facing substantial risks, and the benefit is recovered in the protection of the old and infirm. I would argue that that is not a decent thing to do that one thing that all societies that are long lived are going to agree on is that the protection of the young is their obligation. Yes, right we do not we do not rob the young of health in order to award it to the old

**Heather** 38:48

That's right. My body my choice slogan for no job now versus pro choice in the past thoughts. So that's sort of a telegraphic Lee posed question, but I was never a fan of my body my choice Yeah, as a slogan. And I've said this places it never it. It's it's a libertarian conclusion. And I think an actual functioning society that is honoring its commitments to its citizens has has the right to expect some things in return. And I'm not saying that I know where those boundaries are. And I am actively and you know, very much pro choice but not because my body my choice, yeah, it's not not not for that reason. And so I don't for me, my body my choice, and especially as being grabbed by some people who are using it cynically, who never would have used it. On the right for for no job. I mean, there's there is something there there's something in it that I think is true. But, but but there's something about the framing that doesn't quite work.

**Bret** 40:10

Yeah, I've always disliked it. And the reason is this, we know it can't be a very good formulation, because you can make exactly the same argument for your house, my house my choice, that mean you can beat your kids? It sure doesn't. Right. And so the point is, if the fact that it's your thing doesn't mean that logically you have a right to do whatever you want there,

**Heather** 40:32

no, but I mean, there's there's the individual is a real thing, right? Only sort of the boundaries are fuzzier than we like to admit, Well, certainly, you know, at the ends, and right at the endpoints temporarily, the boundaries are fuzzier and maybe even spatially, if you know, using sort of Dawkins extended phenotype idea,

**Bret** 40:54

or you know, other things. The fact is, we now know that we are temporary construct custodians of our genomes, and that they are modified and that our bad behavior actually has consequences for people we will never meet downstream of us, for example, genetically, how dare you write epigenetically? epigenetically? How dare you now that's a shirt. But yeah, so there are those things. And also, we've been incredibly clear about this throughout the pandemic, there's also the fact that being reckless about contagious disease does result in harms that come to people who had no choice in the matter. So the point is, the formulation doesn't add up. But what has to be done is we have to understand what would be required to trigger the conclusion of that formulation in this case, or to fail to trigger and so that, you know,

**Heather** 41:50

the obligations from society from from government have not

**Bret** 41:53

been met. Right? They have not they have not been met. And so the point, I think, I think, to the extent that there's something valid in this idea, the idea is luck. Until you have done everything necessary that you overcome all of the real and substantial objections, right? Then we have to default to this other thing, which is you don't get to force me, right? You get to force me when you have met the obligations that you must in order that this actually is not only in our collective interest, but it's in my interest, I may be taking a risk, but that risk is worth taking. Right. And so having not met that this is sort of the fallback position, right, absent absence meeting the threshold, that society would have to meet its side of the contract, there is no contract, and therefore, it would be my choice. Yes, good. If you're not going to protect me from economic corruption that would affect the decision making and the data analysis on this point, then it would have to be my choice to say, well, then I'm not going to participate.

**Heather** 42:59

Yeah. What evolutionary pressure? What are dramatic change in behavior, like masks and distancing, etc, have on existing pathogens like flu? And others? Very interesting question.

**Bret** 43:12

Yeah. I always wondered. Yeah, in fact, years ago, when we were teaching at evergreen, I always wanted to run a class in which we masked over the course of the winner to see you did talk about that. I sure. Did you sure that I wanted to know whether it was going to affect the rate at which people contracted respiratory pathogens. And we were going to compare it to another class in

**Heather** 43:35

there or even just do it. Well, that would have been really tough to to pull up. But I'm sorry, but I feel like just even like the week, the first week of class, after everyone has returned from where everyone has returned from Yeah. could could reduce I mean, everyone with kids has had this experience when you go back to school, if your kids go to daycare, and if you are a professor in the classroom. And so for us, you know, every fall like, okay, our kids are back in school, and we're back in school and like we're gonna get sick. Yeah. So yeah, haven't you know, if you go to the degree that the masks are effective against respiratory viruses, having a masking period that is short, right after, right, as populations are coming up, populations coming back together from a lot of disparate places, might actually reduce a lot of illness?

**Bret** 44:21

I'm not sure if I said this on an early live stream. We certainly discussed it. I don't I just don't know if it came up when we were on. But I wanted to see an initiative where we started actively tracking the pathogens that circulate every year, and learning to control them. That is to say, figuring out the things that we figured out about COVID early on about how it transmits right, whether it's fomite transmission, whether it's all right. So if you did that for all of the things that don't matter that much the little cold viruses that we encounter, You just got good at figuring out, okay, here's how this pathogen that spread around the world or spread around this community, but missed that community, right? How did I miss that community? Right? Yeah, here's and then think of all the knowledge that you would gain. And if you if we just got good at you know, it's difficult to stamp out a cold virus but it might not be difficult to control it if you understood how it was passing around. Yeah. And the fact is, the costs that come to us from all these little things that circulate are not tiny, not only do they, you know, wreck a week of your life at a time or more, but they have health consequences, right? I'm convinced that the destruction that comes from these things, you feel like, Oh, I recovered, therefore, all I lost was that week, but now, they impacted tissues in your body, you're spending some of your lifetime health, fending off each one of these things. So to the extent that we can recover a bunch of time and a lot of health by simply getting better at fending these things off, we would train ourselves. So the next time some really bad thing emerged, we would know a lot, rather than starting from square one.

**Heather** 46:02

I mean, it would, it would require good data, right? It would require a lot of good data, remember, maybe a year ago, so well into the COVID pandemic, pre vaccines. I was in some health building, and some medical building, and I got into an elevator, or a couple women got into an elevator after me. And this is before all the signs are up on all the elevators, some somehow even though it's hard to imagine that right? Like, we're supposed to only be in these little boxes with our own people or something. But it's two women Guardian after me. And I did what I'm actually in long habit of doing, especially in a place where there are sick people, and I press the button with my elbow. And if I can't, I will press it with my you know, just I'm not I will not your knuckle or something. And one of them, you're all wearing masks, and one of them just starts beaming at me. And she says I'm a nurse, I've been doing that forever. And people just laugh at me. I said, Well, it's not gonna stop COVID Yeah, right. And she's I know, like, it turns out that's not for COVID. But you know, think of all the things that is good for and that's just started me thinking like is, there are things that transfer by there are pathogens that transfer via fomites. And we are much more likely to do this than this, right? Like, you're much more likely to put your your finger on your mouth or your face or eat and touch your food. Right, but not your knuckles, and certainly not your elbow. But there's also times I'm like, okay, it's actually much easier for me to do this to, you know, to touch something with my hand, how, how out of the way, should I be going to do this, I'd really actually like to have the data, right? Well, and we just don't have it like, certainly, it's in our collective interest to know Well, this

**Bret** 47:43

is what this is what I was advocating, but it would require something like an institute and you would have to immunize that Institute from the corruption that would otherwise destroy the project and turn it into a pet project of something that can make a profit from it. I would also point out that probably even though the touching of the buttons is not likely to control COVID directly. There's also a lot to be said about what effect does it have that you've come down with something else for your vulnerability or

**Heather** 48:12

compromised yet, right?

**Bret** 48:13

So anyway, yes, there's a whole, you know, obviously, this is what epidemiology is about. But I can't say that I'm very impressed with what we the public know about how to avoid diseases that circulate all the time.

**Heather** 48:25

Yeah. Oh, absolutely. And so I mean, the original question, like does, just like the hygiene hygiene hypothesis, which is well known, and we also talk about it in the health or medicine chapter of the book suggests that actually eradicating all pathogens from your environment is likely going to make you sick or long term for a number of reasons. There is reason to think that providing your immune system No, no exposure to things for a fairly long time, will render it hyper responsive at the point that it does come into contact.

**Bret** 48:57

This may be true, I'm not totally convinced that this makes sense. But it may well be true, and I'm just behind the times on this one. No, I'm

**Heather** 49:05

not I think I think we don't know it. It sounds plausible to me, and I'm not that's the

**Bret** 49:09

problem. Yeah, it sounds plausible, but I'm not sure that it's proper, and I don't think you're not behind the times. I

**Heather** 49:13

think we don't know. Yeah. Okay.

**Bret** 49:15

I did want to point this out, though. I noticed when we were in Texas, right? Texas has a very different sense about it with respect to compliance

**Heather** 49:24

to the culture than Portland, Oregon. You don't say right. But

**Bret** 49:26

here's what I noticed. First of all, let's just say the evidence on the effectiveness of cloth masks is pretty poor. Yeah, right. It's too bad, but it's hard to demonstrate the effectiveness of these things. But that said, here's the missed opportunity that I saw, right? We did not have a vehicle we didn't rent the vehicle. So we were taking Uber to go from place to place. Uber requires you to click I have a mask and I will wear it before it will confirm you Okay, so far, so good. But the driver arrives. In general, this wasn't true every time. But in general, the driver is not wearing a mask until you get into the vehicle. So if they do work, they have already filled the vehicle with these particles. And

**Heather** 50:16

that's that's two different days, right? If the masks work, it only started working after the point that the person, if they were sick, had already filled the vehicle with whatever viral particles they might

**Bret** 50:25

have. And here's the opportunity, right? It is September here in the Pacific Northwest, also in September everywhere, right? Yes. So here's my point. Yeah, the right thing to do, if you're really trying to control this pathogen, the right thing to do for an Uber driver as they pull up, right, for the half a block before they get to you is to open every window to air out the vehicle, right? And then if they then put on their mask, and you have your mask getting in and masks have some value, but even if you didn't point is they will ever reduce the concentration of whatever they're exhaling. Absolutely. And so in some sense, this feels, you know, security theater that with the TSA, where, you know, you're doing all kinds of absurd things that probably don't have any

**Heather** 51:13

shoes off liquids out. Okay. Right. Yeah.

**Bret** 51:16

We also now we have epidemiology theater, right? And the point is, and how people are behaving as if the controlling the virus is a matter of putting in the effort, right, rather than actually doing something that's coherent, right? coherent very

**Heather** 51:31

much so right? And we have rules, and we know that rules can make you safe, right? Therefore, if while the people who want you to follow the rules are watching, if you follow the rules, then then YouTube will be safe. Right.

**Bret** 51:42

But I you know, I didn't see a single driver error out there. Right vehicle, I didn't see anybody I mean, it was hot.

**Heather** 51:51

But we took a took a couple of hours at night, and it wasn't that hot, right?

**Bret** 51:54

And rolling down the windows in that case, I mean, you know, getting an Uber is, I think it's the most dangerous thing we do epidemiologically in this pandemic,

**Heather** 52:02

well, that or elevator and accredited building. Yeah. Small, or small public bathroom like these, these are the

**Bret** 52:10

well here's the thing about the Uber, is the last person in the Uber or the driver has an awful lot of time to saturate that very tiny volume. Yeah, right, the elevator, if somebody gets in and gets out, you know, five floors away, even if they're sick and exhaling this stuff, they may not saturate it. Same thing if they go into a bathroom briefly. So there's the

**Heather** 52:29

Uber has that the car has the capacity to totally refresh the air, or almost,

**Bret** 52:34

actually, yeah, that's the difference between it's the worst environment if you do nothing, and it's a decent environment, if you do a lot.

**Heather** 52:42

Yeah. So and that lot really takes very little like, you'll lose a little efficiency. If it is hot out and you got the AC running, you're gonna lose some efficiency and get lower gas mileage but slight, potentially, potentially a pretty big uptick in in health, I would think

**Bret** 52:57

I absolutely think I absolutely think so. And my guess is that this, if we had a good model of all of these viruses, right, even the common cold, the point is this

**Heather** 53:07

layers applies to all of them. Right, right. And density, the density dependence thing applies to probably all of them. I don't know. But like, a lot of them yummy, right? Yeah.

**Bret** 53:17

So the question is, why do we humans not walk around with a better model of cars are unnaturally concentrating of pathogens by virtue of their air tightness, their small volume in the long period of time, you may be in thinking Dang, right? Yeah. And here's your control mechanism, at least when it's not really cool. I mean, even when it's really cold, you can open the windows for you know, a minute Yeah, right. How much air Do you trade out in a minute? A lot. So anyway, we're really missing the mark. Here's a more just like vitamin D, this is more really low hanging fruit and how many people will die because we never had a discussion about how to make cars safer. Yeah,

53:53

yep.

**Heather** 53:57

Wow. just bought your book via Amazon, Australia up sanity and grace coming.

**Bret** 54:02

I didn't know that it was translated into Australia.

54:06

Now you do now I do.

**Heather** 54:11

I'm not sure about this question. I'm going to ask it and see if you see what you do with it. Would simulated realities be a form of fourth frontier given that they aren't subject to resource limits beyond what's needed for processing power?

**Bret** 54:25

I think you're onto something but I would like to change it slightly. So to the extent that what one needs to do is provide a coherent a resource coherent way of being, that is to say something that doesn't violate any rules of you know, physical rules, equilibrium limits, but that provides the sensory impression of growth. The point is, the sensory impression could come from just about anywhere and That means there is some possibility that some fraction of the sensory issue can be addressed this way now what my concern would be, especially if you start thinking that this is liable to be an important tool in the toolkit, is that creating the impression that you're doing better than you are that the people who govern you are better than they are fair than they are more decent or whatever, is the problem, right? And so, you would have to have a system that was honorable in deploying something of this nature, because otherwise, it is so ripe for abuse, that that that is effectively inevitable.

**Heather** 55:36

Yeah. Does life survive best with periods of expansion and contraction, ie robust growth? Does life survive best with periods of expansion and contraction? Maybe put aside the IE robust growth. And I would say that looking for a bass simple rubric for that condition under which life serves best is the wrong approach. I there will be some, you know, that life that is evolved with contracting and expanding resource base will be adapted to such a thing, and and vice versa. You.

56:15

Yeah,

**Bret** 56:16

I think I think we're missing some parameters here, there's certainly it is certainly true that a contraction will cause an increase in antifragility. Right, in other words, if you keep editing back, the population, what is left over will have the characteristics that don't get edited out. And so this is how selection works.

**Heather** 56:39

But those characteristics in if life then evens out, and you don't have expansion contraction, will be a cost, not borne by those who don't have it, who will therefore be able to use their resources for something else. So I mean, I think, looking for a single stable solution is is the error here? Yeah, I mean, I feel like we're talking passwords. Yeah. I'm

**Bret** 57:05

not convinced I understand. The question, really, you know, what, what is being maximized? The durability of the life in question, the use of resources, what is it?

**Heather** 57:17

Well, but I guess I'm, I feel like this is a question that is ripe for an analysis of a discussion of trade offs, right that does, you know, why do asexual organisms persist, even though sexual reproduction evolved one to 2 billion years ago, and maybe once in a lineage where sexual reproduction evolved, you have had persistent asexuality recur. There. You can't say therefore, that, you know, sexual reproduction is just the best thing. There are conditions in which a sec reproduction is effective, and there are conditions in which sexual reproduction is effective. And so it's the conditions that render the thing better or worse. And so, you know, the question seems to me to presume, a sort of a best state apps and context and this is a pretty, pretty standard misunderstanding of evolutionary thinking, but a really a kind of a dire one. It's exactly the sort of error that leads to things like social Darwinism and eugenics and such, right, the the idea that, you know, whatever, whatever is on top right now, therefore needed to be on top for good reason, and therefore should be on top forever after it's like, no, all these things are context dependent. And also, what do you mean by on top anyway?

**Bret** 58:37

Yeah, so maybe the problem and the question is the word life, that it's the most general case. Hmm. Okay.

**Heather** 58:48

Now, in this case, I'm not sure I understand the question. So let's see, if you do.

**Bret** 58:52

I sense that I will.

**Heather** 58:55

I hope you deal with encouraging non reproductive behavior in those outside your gene pool fit with your thoughts with your thoughts on an evolutionary basis for opportunity hoarding and redistribution through genocide.

**Bret** 59:08

Oh, are people favored to induce others into evolutionarily self? defeating strategies? Yes, including non reproduction? Yes, undoubtedly. And in fact, we see, you know, one of our worst fears, of course, is that populations will sterilize other population. I mean, we've seen this with the Chinese and the wiegers. Yeah, right. And so the idea that sterilization brings to mind a physiological intervention, but it doesn't have to be that it could be the disrupting of the coherent behavior of a population that would result in such things. Yes,

**Heather** 59:48

yeah. Although, I mean, I think sort of famously, neither you nor I are the first to raise this question. But there is there is the apparent paradox in many men appearing to be very homophobic when, at least at least it used to be the case. Which would you know, if you're in a, say you're in a college situation, yeah. Wouldn't having more gay men around me that there's more straight woman left for you?

**Bret** 1:00:15

Yeah. It is a paradox, except that one imagines that the primary impact of that kind of culture is to punish this behavior within one's own lineage.

**Heather** 1:00:33

It's, I've never seen it attempted to be teased apart at an empirical.

1:00:37

Yeah, yeah.

**Heather** 1:00:41

Okay, when did we start?

**Bret** 1:00:44

You three and a half billion years ago, what did you say? Okay. I was given the lineage level answer

**Heather** 1:00:54

a word now that's just like you. Okay, so, let's see, let's do one or two more. Will you ever speak to Jonathan pezzo? Again, perhaps symbolism of COVID and 666?

**Bret** 1:01:08

I don't know what those last two things are. Like, Jonathan.

1:01:14

I talked to him again. Yeah.

**Heather** 1:01:19

Okay, there's a couple here. I just don't know the answers, but I'll ask. Okay. I see the one that we'll end on. But I'll ask one more here. That you may or may not know the answer to. I do not. In the save the world podcast. Dr. Malone said that Pfizer had submitted a new buyer distribution data package any updates? What happened? Thanks. I don't know. Yeah, I don't know. Okay, final question. Any advice on how to maintain your mental health in such concerning times?

1:01:49

Go outside, eat good.

**Heather** 1:01:52

Yeah, I

**Bret** 1:01:52

mean, once you have

**Heather** 1:01:54

that adds, it's a big part of it. It's not, it might be sufficient. Oh, that would be great. But you'll follow all of those things to sort of their natural conclusions, and also generalize from them.

**Bret** 1:02:05

Yeah, I'll go I'll go one step further.

1:02:10

You absolutely positively

**Bret** 1:02:11

100% need at least one person that you can be completely open with about your fears, your hopes, your expectations, your understanding, you need that person. It's not optional. And the problem is, we have lived through a long period of time in which it was more or less optional, you were better off with it. But things weren't of a nature that it was required to even keep your sanity one week to the next, but it has become necessary. And so what I would say is,

1:02:47

we have sold puddle create, though if you don't

**Bret** 1:02:50

have it, right. But the point is, where it fits in your priority scheme of what matters is top level. And I would just say we have been sold a bill of goods on multiple fronts that leads us to believe that life is about pleasure. And therefore, you should do that which increases your pleasure rather than understanding that pleasure is a means to an end, it is supposed to direct you towards things that are good, it has now been hijacked to direct you towards things that are bad. That doesn't mean that every bit of pleasure is that way. But it means an awful lot of what you can source in the market that provides you pleasure is actually a transfer of well being from you to whoever is selling the goddamn thing. So the point is your relationship, right? Your primary relationship and your other relationships are a key to your functionality to your ability to even think straight in the stupid era. So the point is, do they frustrate you sure, right? But do they make you stronger and healthier and clear of mind and better able to steer out of the way of danger? Absolutely. And if they please you, that's great. And if they don't please you figure out how to make them please you in some way. But the point is, it's a functional, it's a functional interaction with the universe. It's not your pleasure, suppose to be the indicator that it's working, not the reason for the interaction. And I just think the difference between people who have somebody else that they can, can talk to openly and those who are isolated is all the difference in the world in this kind of crisis. And that's that's the universe's way of telling us how important this stuff is.

**Heather** 1:04:37

That's wonderful. And I do think that the maybe the penultimate point you made is is crucial. So I'll just repeat it so that it doesn't get buried the idea that the pleasure you get from such an interaction is not the goal. It is the indicator that the thing that is presumably the goal is functioning And we make this mistake we conflate those two things in all domains.

**Bret** 1:05:03

We do. And in fact, very frequently you'll find a pair of things that have some relationship. Some people will think they are synonyms, but they are not. So for example, happiness is a fool's errand

1:05:15

Hey, Zack, thank you.

**Bret** 1:05:19

Happiness is a fool's errand, right, if you pursue happiness, you will very often pay a very high price to get it that is not justified by what you get. If you pursue satisfaction, right? You end up happy some fraction of the time but the nature of happiness is so thin, that, you know, it should not take over your your priority scheme and recognizing these distinctions will do a lot to get you to sort out your life. And it will not make you happier, but it will make you more satisfied. Almost certainly. All right.

**Heather** 1:05:57

We'll be back next week, at which point our book will have been published. And

**Bret** 1:06:03

we'll see how that Caterpillar does then.

**Heather** 1:06:05

Yeah, we'll see about that caterpillar. Alright, Share, share this if you'd like it, and share the first hour, hour and a half whatever it was, and maybe I won't I don't have it in me right now. I'm not going to go through all the other stuff. Yeah. So get outside. Treat the ones you love with with love and care and respect. eat good food and get outside.

**Bret** 1:06:37

Be well everyone