Bret and Heather 12th DarkHorse Podcast Livestream\_ Is this ...

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**SPEAKERS**

Bret, Heather

**Bret** 00:08

Hey folks, welcome to the 12th Dark Horse podcast live stream. I am here with Dr. Heather hying. We are going to engage in a discussion today of whether or not we have crossed an event horizon. Let us first take care of a few matters arising, we are going to be talking for about an hour. And then we are going to do a separate q&a as has worked much better. For us in the past, we will answer your super chat questions as filed during this live stream. We will get through as many of them as we can. And then we will collect some of the Super Chat questions that are generated during the q&a. Other announcements that we should make?

**Heather** 00:50

Oh, you want to talk say something about your Patreon?

**Bret** 00:52

Ah, yes, there has been some question amongst fans of the podcast about whether or not the lectures that I have advertised on Patreon lectures is probably the wrong word. But the monthly discussions of what's called the coalition of the reasonable that's a politically focused discussion, and the evolutionary discussion that follows first Saturday and Sunday of each month. And the question is, are they still running? And yes, they are running, they are quite popular and exciting. And we've been having a great time. There's some people who've been participating in those discussions for years now. And anyway, they're very rewarding, I have been a little reluctant to push them because I am reluctant about Patreon itself after it has demonstrated a desire to censor people. So I have not loved using their mechanism that said, no good substitute has shown up and so for the moment, that's what we're using. If you want to join those discussions, I think you would find them very interesting. Okay, so let's see, where are we? I guess here's where we are. I am wrestling with the fact that never in my wildest imagination did I think that the thing that was going to bring humanity together was going to be the need for a haircut. Just didn't see that

**Heather** 02:16

coming? No, that didn't show up in my accounting, either.

**Bret** 02:19

Yeah. So that raises the question about whether or not we are across an event horizon. totally unpredictable cause for global Unity has shown up that suggests that nobody's crystal ball is all that clear at this moment. So in

**Heather** 02:33

this case, being across the event horizon means we have gotten to a place where we are completely unable to predict what will happen next.

**Bret** 02:39

Yes, we have crossed into a zone that could not have been predicted from from before. So anyway, that I mean, sure that's tongue in cheek, but at some level, it does seem to characterize an awful lot of the discussions we are having these days. I have lots of people telling me, they're sure this won't happen. They're sure that won't happen. And I can't say that I'm sure very much about what's going to happen. Because this was just simply not scheduled to happen this way.

**Heather** 03:07

So you're specifically talking about what will happen next? Or ultimately, as opposed to what do we think is true about the virus and the response to it? What's been effective, what's not? What, what might we be doing to get a better result in the future? Those that second set of things is now what you're including in the we pass the event horizon? question, is that right?

**Bret** 03:34

Yeah, I would say there are certain issues that I consider head to hesitate to say it almost mundane. You know, the fact of the coronavirus pandemic. Sure, there are details of it that are nothing but surprising. But the fact that some zoonotic disease was going to emerge from somewhere that we would, the awareness of its power and danger would be too slow for us to react properly, we would treat it as a normal phenomenon rather than the thing that we had been told to fear. So all of that I consider relatively predictable. What wasn't predictable, from my perspective, is what the dynamics that unfold in the aftermath would look like. I mean, for example, the way it is interacting with a presidential year here in the United States and the party politics that usually govern that is very surprising. So we now have a president, who is, I would say, pretty clearly incapable of doing two things that are needed from him at the moment. One of them is grappling with the scientific complexities here at a level that would be necessary to marshal a really proper response. And the other is he doesn't seem to be able to put politics aside,

**Heather** 05:01

but it sounds like you just said that you wouldn't have predicted that, I really wouldn't have predicted that, from this or many other presidents. Two years ago,

**Bret** 05:11

I would have predicted that potentially for this president, although the thing that surprises me most maybe, and maybe I really just have no right to be surprised by it. But I keep thinking that it should dawn on Trump, that he has the opportunity to be a hero that the thing he seems to crave about, about adulation and all he could have in spades, if he could simply adopt a new mode that we haven't seen yet. And I think it's just really not in him. But what does surprise me is that in light of these dynamics, that the Democratic Party is not marshalling a credible alternative. And therefore, that we are stuck in a predicament where we have an incredibly feeble Democratic nominee, who obviously is going to be nominated, but I say, obviously, is going to be nominated. And I must say, most of me doesn't believe he's going to be nominated. Even though that's the way it's supposed to work. How he will not be nominated, is unclear. Who might step in, in lieu of Joe Biden, I think is also unclear, because obviously, Bernie Sanders would be the obvious choice as the runner up, but the whole reason that we're stuck with Biden is that the Democratic Party really doesn't want. And I don't mean the democratic party like us Democrats. I mean, the democratic party establishment really doesn't want Bernie Sanders because he whatever else he may do, he threatens actual change about things that they're trying to prevent change. Oh, so

**Heather** 06:48

I guess I'm a little surprised that you're surprised that you're disappointed in the Democratic National Committee at this point. Having been, you know, we lived together through the 2016 election, in which you were often apoplectic at what the Democratic Party was doing, as was I but I think before this became the global pandemic, and global governmental response that it is, both you and I had looked with astonishment at the winnowing of a once incredibly large, like stupidly large field of potential candidates in the democratic field. And thought about many of them. No, no way. No thank you. And thought about a few of them. A very few of them. Oh, hey, that might work. And watched as it winnowed and winnowed and winnowed and the heir apparent, became the same old same all this all happened before. You know, at the point that probably we should have already been having responses at the federal level within this country, but we didn't. So the fact that there doesn't seem to be any change now, within the Democratic National Committee, the DNC, in terms of its response, doesn't surprise me. Maybe I'm, maybe I'm done being surprised.

**Bret** 08:13

Well, you know, you're right. What what right, do I have to be surprised as the guy who's usually pointing out that a, we have options, we don't register? And that be the system is unsalvageable as it is that we have to take drastic action? So at some level, I guess part of me Can't be surprised. But I think what stuns me is that I see nothing creative. In the democrats response here, I see nothing new. I see. I see a test in the midst of COVID-19. I see a test of the hypothesis that the problem with Hillary Clinton was the pantsuit. I see a male Hillary Clinton, who's mentally would you

**Heather** 08:59

say that? Again? That's very hard to parse. Well,

**Bret** 09:01

I think it's preposterous. If you thought that Hillary Clinton just

**Heather** 09:05

I'm not even sure that the words made sense in that order. I think they did. But would you say it again,

**Bret** 09:09

if you thought that Hillary Clinton was the right candidate, but for X and X was up, America wasn't ready for a pantsuit? Right, then you might

**Heather** 09:20

try to run you're just saying that this code for a female president is all I'm

**Bret** 09:24

saying, if you had some dumb idea that it was some triviality about the scenario. And what you wanted to do was run the identical scenario with against an incumbent this time, and with the one little arbitrary thing change that you had imagined and caused the problem in the first place, rather than recognizing that whatever else may be true, Hillary Clinton may have won the popular vote, but she didn't slam dunk it. A lot of people really didn't want to vote for Hillary Clinton. And so the point is, the problem was never the pantsuit or anything arbitrary. The problem was that this was the same DNC not sense that people were fed up with. And so they're they're going to try that again in 2020.

**Heather** 10:04

I believe we are, you're basically in the same place. But I'm going to push back against the idea that the pantsuit is the difference between Biden and Clinton. I didn't buy then, and I don't buy now, you know, I didn't buy them that it was widespread massage and either kept Clinton from the presidency. And I don't buy now that widespread massage is what kept Elizabeth Warren, who until she went woke, I thought was a pretty awesome candidate. But the fact is that there are there is one large difference, at least between Clinton and Biden. And, you know, it's not just the fancy,

**Bret** 10:41

not the dementia.

**Heather** 10:43

Well, so yeah, obviously, she's, she's more competent still, yes, she, and maybe she wasn't then. But at this point, she's more competent, because she doesn't have, as far as we know, have any dementia. And I, you know, certainly there are a few people. And I honestly don't know if it's a fraction of 1% or 10% of the population in this country who wouldn't vote for a woman for President. But I'd be shocked if it was more than 10% at this point. You know,

**Bret** 11:08

I'm not saying that this is a credible idea. I'm saying what I'm watching is a Democratic Party engaged in a live fire exercise where they test a wrong hypothesis about why Hillary Clinton was not elected. And they test it by running a version of the same politics dressed up differently. I don't care that she's a woman. I don't think most people care that Hillary Clinton is a woman. I think what we care about if she represents the same thing that has been parasitizing us for decades,

**Heather** 11:38

isn't that in fact, exactly what then is being revealed? The Democratic National Committee cares about as well like that, that the status quo, the establishment politician, is what they want to push on us, no matter what that's what's been revealed,

**Bret** 11:54

well, what they want is no meaningful change. The Democratic party that is, at the point that it abandoned the working class and embraced a certain cadre of rent seeking elites basically became hostile to the idea of change. And in order to explain why we should elect them, if they're not interested in change, they've given us a lot of symbolism, hence the the woke nightmare that we have seen sweep over much of the left. But still, I would have imagined no matter how dumb and delusional the DNC may be, I would have thought they would have learned more from 2016 than they apparently learned. And to find Joe Biden, who is I think it would be impossible to be enthusiastic about this candidacy, to find him as the offering that we are being delivered in the midst. Yeah, okay, this whole thing didn't, you know, most of the presidential primary did not unfold with our awareness of COVID-19. But nonetheless, it is a stunning moment to see our political structure declare itself in capable of finding a good president. Right, it has declared that on both sides, and in my opinion, and what I would say if we can get back to the event horizon issue, is that okay, if both sides have delivered you an answer, that is unacceptable. And then the world has delivered you a crisis that reveals how dangerous it is to have somebody in that office who is not up to the challenge, then, it seems to me this is the moment at which we get to ask the question, well, what possibilities that have seemed impossible are now back on the table.

**Heather** 13:53

What are you proposing?

**Bret** 13:55

Well, I'll go back to proposing mutiny, which is to say that I don't know what opportunities we actually have. But I will say, the democratic party may not be salvageable by virtue of the stranglehold on power that the DNC appears to hold over it. And so there's a question about, well, if you needed to storm the cockpit, what other mechanisms exist? Right? Is there something that can be done? And I don't think this was the place to necessarily explore that question, but I think the question needs to be on the table, because I think an awful lot of people who are experiencing lockdown at home will recognize that the system has failed them and that every four years we get a chance to alter how it functions at a significant level. Well, it

**Heather** 14:55

could instead though, I mean, I'm prepared to do all sorts of different things than this. And I'm not prepared to answer your question that you just launched, you know, what is it that we do if we're going to storm the cockpit, because it's not clear to me that that's where we are and what we should be doing. So it feels a little bit like a setup. But one way to approach this where it doesn't feel like a setup is to say, Okay, if this is all very standard, sort of game theoretic outcomes from a two party system that has been more and more cemented in place over the course of decades, and by some measures, centuries, and you might call that as you have, and has others have game a, maybe we should be talking about what it would mean, to move into a game be universe, maybe maybe that is the setup that you are actually bringing to us here.

**Bret** 15:50

Well, I think so. But I think you know, for those of you who are not aware of what game B means game, that's

**Heather** 15:57

what that's that's what I'm trying to set you up to describe because i don't i don't think that a totally abstract store in the cockpit. Is, is going to result in much further discussion right here. In fact, you said I'm not sure I want to continue that. But what what then, what might we do? Well, how might we understand this as? Okay, maybe beyond our event horizon? It's really hard to predict Now, what's going to happen next, even on questions where it seems like, Don't we have enough information? Now we actually we seem to not because things are changing so fast. So how is it that this very modern predicament of change that is so fast, that the future will not look like the past? How can we take that situation? And understand it in the context of if game a is how things have always been done? How might we do things in a different way?

**Bret** 16:54

Well, one thing to say is that we are handed a system that has a structure written into the Constitution, and then we are handed a system that functions within it, which is the parties which hold on to power, and they allocate it in various ways, and they make sure not to lose it in other ways. And the question really is, in light of the constitutional structure that we have, do we have opportunities if we recognize that the parties are not the route to good governance. So game B, for what it's worth, is the idea that within the system, there are mechanisms that could create desirable change could increase the stability, the anti fragility of the system, the fairness of the system, that do not require something like the taking a part of the constitutional structure. So I would say,

**Heather** 17:56

in fact, really, there's no advocacy for that, right? That the, you know, the extent the outline of the constitutional structure in our country, remains what it has always been, which was farsighted. And you're simultaneously honoring of what has worked in the past and open to novelty moving forward in terms of solution making?

**Bret** 18:24

Well, yeah, I certainly, I would say, you know, the Constitution thematically is right. I would say, like any document that was written when it was it's incapable of handling many of the 21st century reality. So you know, I don't think we should treat it as sacred. Though I do think that in terms of aid, the founders would have had a hard time doing better given what they understood, and be in light of the values that they enshrined in it. I don't think we should be eager to open it up. But I do think beyond that, I would be afraid to see it opened up because I think it would be a political disaster, and we would end up making the constitution far worse. So anyway, if you take that or some position like it as correct, then the question is, well, what can we do within the structure that would usher in the proper style of changes without an alteration to the the underlying foundation and the first place? I mean, I guess what I would say is, look, it's 2020. We have an opportunity upcoming. that opportunity isn't as big as it might be, because the primary season has already run its course. But there may be an opportunity if Biden is not viable by virtue of the accusations that have been brought against him, then what happens next? I'm not sure I nobody, and I know anybody who knows the answer to that question. So again, it's an event horizon of some kind.

**Heather** 19:57

Yes. The the A remarkable convergence of global pandemic, increasing dementia. And are they credible? Nobody seems to agree. allegations of sexual possible Lee even crimes in the past of this candidate coming together. Leads no one as far as I can tell, with an ability to accurately guess as to what happens, what happens next? I haven't I haven't seen it anyway.

**Bret** 20:27

Yeah, haven't seen it exactly. So that's really all I'm saying is let us at least recognize that we're in that moment. Right. And therefore all sorts of things that get said under normal circumstances about what can't happen and what you mustn't do with respect to how you cast your vote, all sorts of things must now be on the table, because all of the things that are supposed to give us some normal choice that we're supposed to vote for, without thinking too hard about it didn't work. They led us to a remarkable situation of amazing vulnerability, a choice between two unacceptable outcomes. So maybe that's where we should leave it. Okay. All right. You had some things that you wanted to raise from the recent week? Well,

**Heather** 21:17

um, you know, I don't know, I was sort of going to integrate it with our conversation, but I'm not sure. I'm not sure that anything's integratable with that. Maybe Maybe this to start, I guess, that we do see more of the same, more of the same gobbledygook, sort of pre modern thinking, coming out of the so called right and postmodern thinking coming out of the so called left and I know there are many good people on the right, who reject the pre modernism that that is sometimes conflated with the entire right and certainly, there are many people on the left who reject the postmodern garbage that comes out of what is often compared with the entire left so maybe it's just, you know, shooting fish in a barrel. At some level. It's a little bit too easy, but the examples are always fun, because they're so ridiculous. So should we go should we should we talk about an example of a republican ohio state lawmaker first or Politico publishing about how hard this is all on women?

**Bret** 22:25

Let's go with the Politico

**Heather** 22:26

let's go with Politico first. Okay, so over in what the hell is left doing now? narrative we have a Politico actually I can pull this up. Hold on sec. Yeah, here it is. Now you can show it on screen. Politico nightly Coronavirus, Special Edition COVID war on women. During this plague year, there was almost never good news only degrees of bad news. Even so the pandemic has been different and worse for girls and women. It's true, the article continues. It's true that more men are dying than women from COVID-19 around the world. But that's not exactly cause for celebration.

**Bret** 23:05

I think I'm insulted.

**Heather** 23:07

He could take it down Zack. Wow. So I would just draw everyone's attention in case it wasn't clear to the word. But in that last sentence, it's true that more men are dying than women from COVID-19 around the world. But that's not exactly cause for celebration. How could you possibly write that, and at least one of the authors is a man himself. really, truly remarkable. And I don't know what else there is to say, except with these people, please stop calling themselves progressives, and on the left for the sake of all of us, who would like to do good and not be stuck in traditions that are out of date? Nothing.

**Bret** 23:50

It's remarkable. I mean, I don't know just the I don't know how such a thing. It diagnosis the system. The very fact of that piece having gotten through with that wording, suggesting that there might be something positive about men dying at a higher rate certainly does. But it doesn't go far enough to be worth celebrate. I don't know. I don't know what the claim is here. But just the idea that this ostensibly journalistic outfit contains enough people to read that over to get it on line without anybody saying, Wait, what did we just say? Maybe it's impossible to raise that complaint? Maybe somebody did see it and realized it was objectionable, but you can't say so within the confines of political

**Heather** 24:35

will and that's mean that that's going to be yet right. And that that points to some of the problems that we've talked about here before and that certainly Your brother has talked about with regard to in this case, it is what happens not at the you know, the the you know, how do you get how do you get into academia, how do you get into the media, but within media outlets, there becomes no matter what It is an orthodoxy that you shall not speak against. And certainly we can all name outlets on both the left and the right, that appear to have an orthodoxy outside of which nothing shall be spoken. And probably there were a couple of those, I hope on both sides that are actually working from the inside to try to expand what kinds of opinions are are speakable. But this idea that no matter what the story is, we will and we must put a spin on it that turns it into a way to point out that the world is sexist, and the world is racist. And let's just continue on with it's you know, we've already talked before about how, God what, I don't remember which outlet was wired that claimed that it's not obesity, that is a risk, but it's, it's fat shaming, right? So is that is that sizes, I don't even know what the word is, right? But so there's, you know, there's, there's that ideology ingrained, so much in some of these outlets on and I won't always want to scare quotes on the so called left, that it's, it actually seems impossible to escape there, Paulo.

**Bret** 26:15

Well, I don't know whether to interject this here or to wait for your next example. Maybe I'll just interjected here, and then we can go to the next example. But the, there is a second epidemic, the second epidemic has to do with the inability to step out of one's political identity and viewpoint and into neutral space. And the problem with something like a global pandemic, of a zoonotic disease or something like it is that it is not a political phenomenon, inherently. It is a fact. And it requires a dispassionate, a political, frankly, patriotic response, if we're talking at the national level, and then whatever the equivalent of patriotism is, to the globe, if we're talking at a higher level,

**Heather** 27:10

but we patriotic, being distinct from nationalistic,

**Bret** 27:14

yes, I draw a distinction and patriotic involves sacrifice for some larger entity, like your nation. But in this case, we have a a question that we have to ask ourselves. So we're watching, for example, these protesters who are demanding that we remove the lockdown, and some of them explicitly, and some of them implicitly, are effectively making an argument about the comparison between the cost of the lockdown and the cost of the deaths that will occur if we lift. Now some of them are in denial about whether there is a hazard to begin with. But if we put those ideas aside, there is a calculation to be made. Obviously, we do these calculations all the time, you want to eliminate all highway deaths. That's easy. You just end up driving. Right? We don't do that, because we all figure that the cost of the ability to drive is worth the fact that there will be some deaths.

**Heather** 28:23

But one thing that is true is that most members of the public, always blanch when the actuarial analysis is brought into stark relief, right? The fact how much you're paying for life insurance, or to some degree health insurance is in fact, based on exactly these kinds of actuarial actuarial analyses about how long you're expected to live based on how healthy you are and what kinds of decisions you make. And the last time I remember actually, probably forgetting things in the interim, but the last time I remember sort of public outcry over the idea of a value being placed on human life was in the wake of 911. When it became clear that cash was it was it the government who was paying families of those killed in the Twin Towers, and in the few other places where people died directly. In one of those are from one of those four plans. People who had made more during their lives are being paid more. And there was an outcry without a recognition that actually this is the kind of analysis that's happening all the time everywhere, and just completely putting aside whether or not that is as it should be. It certainly is, and it certainly works within an economic system that is not frankly inherently predatory at that level.

**Bret** 29:45

Yes. And you know, the problem is that we politeness keeps us from having the discussions that we need to have about what what really is fair why certain lives count more than others mean for example, Should we work harder to prevent the death of a young person than an old person? Almost certainly, yes. Right? Very easily defended what I think is unfolding here. That's very unfortunate. And it may be an example of exactly what we've been talking about, for several previous live streams is the unfolding of dangerous game theory. Yeah. And the problem is, you've got what should be what's called in philosophy of rawlsian veil of ignorance, which is you don't want to make a rule that you wouldn't want to live on the wrong side of. So it's sort of the adult version of I divide you choose, if you want to make only rules that you would be willing to be subjected to, rather than rules that favor you and disfavor somebody else.

**Heather** 30:45

I've never heard it described that way before. That's, that's very good. All right.

**Bret** 30:50

But in any case, the problem is here, we know an awful lot about who is vulnerable to this disease, and therefore the danger that people who for whatever reason, don't feel vulnerable, don't have vulnerable people in their close circle in their family or something like that have an incentive to demand a lifting of the lock down. I don't know how many people will have seen Caitlin Flanagan's piece in The Atlantic I think came out today. Did you see it? No. It's a terrific and she is terrific. And it's a very heart wrenching piece. She describes her own battle with cancer and the fact that it makes her very, very vulnerable to this. This pathogen. And anyway, she talks about some things that were hidden close to home for us about the cancellation of her son's graduation, which he had been, you know, she's counting the years that he's made it from diagnosis, and he was going to make a graduation if he never thought he'd see. And then suddenly, it's canceled. It's it's a, it's a tragic piece. But in any case, there's a question, we have to look at ourselves, let's just limit this to the American context for the moment, we have to look at ourselves. And we have to say, Are we the sort of people who are going to recognize that there's a category of folks who are very vulnerable? and say, well, we're going to lose those, but that's okay. Or are we not? Are we going to say that in this case, actually, those people ended up unlucky, they ended up in a in a vulnerable category with respect to this, but those of us who feel less vulnerable to this thing, frankly, it's a prosperous enough society that we can actually afford to not throw them overboard. And, you know, this is I think, where I come out, which is that this is not a calculation of how many deaths is acceptable not to wreck the economy. The problem is, we know an awful lot about where those deaths are going to land. And that runs the risk of the tyranny of the majority of the majority of people who are not so vulnerable, inflicting this on a bunch of people who did nothing more to deserve it than we did. And, you know, I think a prosperous society doesn't have to make that choice.

**Heather** 33:24

a prosperous society is de facto making that choice, though, given that the social safety net seems to be broken and riddled with holes. And it doesn't have to have but you know, for all of the new how many trillions of dollars, did the cares, package cares act, have and promised 1200 people to every adult making $75,000 or less in 2018 and 500, more for the kids. And additional I think 600 a week federally for unemployment, and on top of whatever the state is giving, that all sounds like that should be could be for people making that amount of income or less, unless they were living way outside of their means in the first place. Like way, way over indebted like that, that could could and should be enough. If I like if everything else is in place, and we're hearing so many stories of people not receiving their checks being told actually, you're not going to receive it until you until you do your taxes next year, not even this year, but next year. And the number of stories about small businesses who are in a damned if you do damned if you don't situation because they can get some money, but then they have to spend it all very quickly, or else they risk having to pay it back. And man, just the people are having to make impossible choices because the bureaucracy in place is not acting like safety net. It's acting like bureaucracy.

**Bret** 34:56

So I agree with you exactly. And I would just point out that this is in some sense, I think, why the political apparatus is fumbling this so badly, right? When this could be a non political issue that could be handled well and would turn anyone who did handle it well into a hero. The problem is that this once you start getting into this question about, you know, why are people who are weak from illness going to be thrown under the bus so that those who aren't so weak can go back to living a normal life? You do start getting into questions about well, why are Why is the unfairness distributed the way it is under normal circumstances. And some of it is for legitimate reasons. But a lot of it isn't right, there is a lot of our system that simply reinforces patterns of well being that already exist, which means we've got echoes of all kinds of arbitrary and not so arbitrary patterns from the past that do continue forward. And we could for the same reasons that I would argue we should not throw vulnerable people under the bus to COVID-19 that we actually, this is a time to, for us collectively to spend to protect them. That same question exists on a normal day when there's no pandemic, by virtue of the fact that why are we going to let this community suffer? Right, when in fact, the reasons that it is, you know what, the reason that it is vulnerable have to do with decisions that it didn't have any part in either. So I do think it would be marvelous if this moment, got us to sideline our politics enough that we could have a courageous discussion about those questions. And you know, as I've argued elsewhere, luck is really the enemy. Right? both good and bad luck or noise when it comes to the things to create well being

**Heather** 36:58

fair system minimizes the role of luck and outcomes. This is this is what you've said in the past and I think I don't know if you said it exactly that way. But that's that's how I've internalized it a fair system minimizes the role of luck in the outcomes of people such that they are maximally free to produce to create to live to the best of their abilities and desires

**Bret** 37:20

Yep. And then that actually be by virtue of the fact that eliminates noise it creates signal that guides you tells you what's actually worth doing because you get rewarded for things that actually create good in the world. So

**Heather** 37:32

we want a system that has positive feedback, motivational structure is built in Yeah, rather than the series of negative feedback motivational structures that start at kindergarten right and pretty much continue at least through retirement if not beyond given at least in the US that people continue to have to deal with things like Medicare and and retirement plans yeah beyond that.

**Bret** 37:57

Absolutely.

**Heather** 37:57

Yeah. So having mocked the pseudo left Shall we mock the I don't know if I want to call it the pseudo right this is at least their reflection of one person who is on the right but I know it does not reflective of what everyone on the right thinks.

**Bret** 38:14

Yes, yes, yes, we shall let's monster ridiculous, right? However ridiculous,

**Heather** 38:17

right? Okay, Zack put this up. This is a Newsweek headline republican ohio state lawmaker refuses to wear a face mask because God created humans without one. Okay, so I'm going to read a quote from this article on his Facebook page fatale said he would defy the requests of his states governments on religious grounds. This is not the entire world. Vitaly wrote, this is the greatest nation on Earth founded on Judeo Christian principles. One of those principles is that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. That image is seen the most by our face, I will not wear a mask. When we think about the image and likeness of God were created in the image and likeness of God. When we think of image we think of a chest or a legs or arms, we think of a face. That's the image of God right there. And I want to see it in my brothers and sisters.

**Bret** 39:02

You know, I think he may actually have a kind of a point. But I would suggest that taken to its logical conclusion, you will also recognize that God created people without pants. Yep, under or otherwise,

**Heather** 39:14

he seems to be arguing for everyone to walk around in what used to be called their birthday suits. Yes.

**Bret** 39:19

Yeah. Right. Exactly. So anyway, yeah, that is, I mean, let's put it this way. If we take God out of the equation, there is something to be said for the fact that your face is a specially built communication apparatus in humans, and that denying people the ability to communicate with their face is you know, I think it's actually one of the strongest arguments against things like a burqa is that you're you're denying people the ability to communicate. On the other hand, there's a very good reason in this case, that we would be doing an epidemiological reason that Is protective of the people wearing the masks as much as anyone else?

**Heather** 40:05

I mean, I do think, I don't know, how many people have sort of sorted through what parts of wearing a mask make them uncomfortable. I don't know that anyone likes it, right? And you'll put aside those people who already masked for religious reasons, like religious Muslim women. But now that many of us are walking around, masked when we go outside, well, when we go into stores, and when we are inside with strangers, most of us, many of us, I hope most of us are wearing masks now. And yet, I don't I haven't heard from anyone that they kind of like in that, you know, it's an it's an ability to explore fashion or like, I don't know that anyone likes it. But how many people are actually exploring what is it that they don't like, there's social pressure, that until so in one of our local markets now mandates masks if you're going to come in, and that takes a social pressure out, because when you're walking around, everyone else in the store is masked. And there is no inherent judgement. Whereas just, you know, a mile down the road, there's another store where it's not mandatory, and there the social distinction is still happening. And there's people judging and making political assessments based on whether you're masked and whether you're not. But But this this other issue, and I'm sure there's more than two, but the two that come well, three, maybe social pressure, discomfort, physical discomfort, and for some people, it's actually real people with actual respiratory problems, asthma and such may actually have a harder time breathing through a mask, right? Yeah. So there's, there's that and you know, and if the weather is very hot, it's actually going to be potentially stifling

**Bret** 41:42

logs or glasses, Oh, my,

**Heather** 41:45

I'm starting, I wear my contacts when I go out now. So I don't plug my glasses. But the third thing, which is what, which is what you raise here, and which if we take if we take this Republican, ohio state lawmaker, if we take the religion out of it, and sort of the pre modern, whoo, out of it, and say, Well, actually, what is the value then, in walking around with bear faces? It's huge. This is exactly how we communicate. And it's, you know, this is this is one of the reasons I hate phones so much, right, that having voice only is not sufficient, it is not sufficient to actually do the full job of human communication.

**Bret** 42:24

Yeah, I agree with that. I had an incident at one of our markets. I was in there checking out and I was being

**Heather** 42:36

Hold on a second, this is the one with the mandatory masks are one of the ones I think there's only one don't think it was a shame that this is a new market

**Bret** 42:42

is very well traveled. But anyway, I was checking out. And I was being my usual, ironic self. And because my face was covered, the guy was talking to who it turned out later in the conversation was very much up for having a kind of, you know, dialogue that would involve wit and things like that. Couldn't tell that I was kidding. And anyway, it kind of made the conversation very awkward at first, and then, you know, as I guess, maybe I'm just learning how to engage in that behavior with the with the mask. But

**Heather** 43:23

well, this is actually, I think, perfectly analogous to one of the problems with with social media, that we reduced, it seems like we're doing writing, but it's more like we're in this sort of, and this has been argued by scholars of language, that we're sort of returning to something that's more like an oral culture. And we mostly are playing, don't know how to play the rule play by the rules. And so I actually think that you've run afoul of this a few times with regard to you have a code, right? You just stop me or correct me if I get this wrong. But as I understand it, now, you have a code. And it's that if you use an emoji, it means you're being sarcastic or ironic, or otherwise, saying something that you really, really don't mean. And so it should be read that way, right? It's effectively it's it's the you know, you can do it with your facial expressions, although you also do a good job of keeping a straight face so that you could lead people down a primrose path or in person. But you know, in a tweet, for instance, I now know that when I see an emoji associated with something that you've written that you don't mean it. I mean, I also know what your positions are, for the most part, but I think that today, for instance, you I don't remember even what you said, but you but you put a radio or something but a radio emoji next to it. I thought, No one is going to get this.

**Bret** 44:43

Yes, I said, free speech doesn't mean you can just say whatever you want. Right, which I think the words in and of themselves connote irony, either you're an idiot, or they connote irony, but what I find on Twitter is again and again, when I say something like that, which I feel is so over the top that everybody will have to wonder. I mean, maybe it won't be their first thought. But their second thought will be maybe he's kidding. I get

**Heather** 45:08

in the middle. It's so in the middle of what some of what many people think.

**Bret** 45:13

I know, that's the beauty.

**Heather** 45:15

Right? But so you're saying it's over the top. And you and but you also recognize that the beauty of it, as you say is that it's smack dab in the middle of the ideology that says, it's not exactly cause for celebration that more men are dying than women. Right? So that ideology, people who buy into that ideology would absolutely say the thing that you said. And it's it requires, it requires eyebrows, it requires facial structure requires that you be interacting in real time, probably without a mask, in order to make sure that your audience knows first time that that was actually not what you really believe in your heart of hearts. Well, I

**Bret** 45:56

don't know. See, I mean, I guess the whole problem is, you know, for me, this is sort of where humor is. It's, you know, it's the ultimate teaching tool, which doesn't mean that you know, it's a somber thing. It's obviously tremendous fun. But what I want is for people who resonate with the idea that, you know, free speech, doesn't mean you can say whatever you want, I want them to say, yeah, and then say, Wait, what? What did I just say, that doesn't make any sense, you know? So anyway, we've lost this in part text isn't great at this, especially, you know, as you've pointed out, in our classes, where we knew our students really, really well, you could use irony to, you know, to upgrade the software and you know, you've pointed this

**Heather** 46:43

thing can works better when you know who you're talking to? Do you know who you're talking to? Exactly. So

**Bret** 46:48

you you mentioned this thing that I used to do all the time with students, where if students if we were on a field trip, let's say, and students were goofing off and they were sitting, you know, I saw a group of students at a table, you know, laughing it up, I would walk over and in a completely serious tone of voice with no expression on my face, I'd say, guys, if you're laughing, you're not learning. And that table would go deadly. And then, you know, the first person at the table to get the joke would be like, wait a minute, what are you saying? And then you know, and then it sort of dawns I mean I actually believe almost exactly the opposite. If you're laughing You probably are learning also if you're crying it works either way but the point is these

**Heather** 47:34

you did not however ever aim to nor I think really ever actually make students cry.

**Bret** 47:40

I had probably have twice but but anyway, yeah, so anyway, these things if you do know the person really well, then it works out on Twitter, we all only kind of know each other and so it doesn't work out at all. So yes, I've resorted to if there's an emoji, then this is not to be taken at face value.

**Heather** 47:57

In this case, I'm just going to continue asking you about this. What's what the radio emoji? Well, I was that possibly. So I'm always just like, I mean, just kind of looks like you hit a random button before hitting send.

**Bret** 48:11

No, first of all, I do not commit myself that the emoji will be content rich, though I always look for one that

**Heather** 48:18

is instead of pronouns and your buyer. You need this if emoji then sarcasm,

**Bret** 48:22

sarcasm, right. But the the radio actually was chosen because the thing I was responding to was Jay Shapiro asking the question in earnest, I think about if Alex Jones has been evicted from all of these platforms, does he have free speech? And so anyway, radio seemed relevant, but you know,

**Heather** 48:45

kind of,

**Bret** 48:47

alright, you got to work with me a little bit on the emoji thing.

**Heather** 48:52

Okay. Okay, I think we're done picking ridiculous examples from the right and the left with regard to how they're responding to this crisis. You want to talk a little bit about the varying responses to that well, I guess the good segue here is people are becoming politicized over lockdown versus no lockdown, which is once again a false choice. It's a false dichotomy. There's it shouldn't be a binary because many governments clearly as we talked about a little bit last time, the numbers are showing that lockdowns are effective in reducing deaths. But there was also a good argument a big conversation important conversation to be had with regard to what are the other effects and therefore what number of deaths are we willing to put up with etc. But I think frankly, for me, the more interesting question is not lock downs versus not lock downs. But what kind of lock downs what what kinds of injunctions are coming down from government. Be they city state province national, that, at some point, those who are most firmly behind the idea of lockdown to really understand why masks matter why social distancing matters, all of this are going to start are going to start breaking rules, because many of the roles that are being handed down to us are ridiculous and bad and are not based on a solid understanding of what's going on. So just a few examples. And we've already talked about this, but it looked for a little while last week before what was supposed to be our last live stream. And sorry, guys, technical troubles stop that. But it looked like governor Newsom in California was going to shut down all parks and beaches across the state, which is rich dickless. Right. It's totally ridiculous response. Turns out, I don't know if he really was he wasn't, but he got so much pushback before whatever happened. That actually was just just the Orange County beaches, which is your Orange County, for those not familiar with California is a giant county in Southern California, basically, between LA and San Diego, I think, right? It's the it's the only coastal county between LA County in San Diego County. And, you know, frankly, it also feels a little bit like a political move, because LA is pretty blue in San Diego is pretty blue, aside from maybe the military bases. And Orange County is pretty red. Right? It's it's one of the coastal California counties in you know, that's south of Golden Gate Bridge that runs Republican. So it may be felt a little personal, little political. And what would it mean, what do you think?

**Bret** 51:43

Well, first of all, I want to this dovetails a lot with what I've been thinking about over the last week. And I want to put a little amplifier on the point. It's not ridiculous. It's which isn't ridiculous, the shutting down of the public parks? Yeah, it's actually dangerous. And it is making the exact problem that it is supposed to be solving worse. And here's, I want to be careful about this, because I think we now have enough information to say that with some certainty, but the point is, if it's true, it was true before we had the information to say that with some certainty. Yeah. And so the things I'm thinking of in particular, which you and I have discussed extensively on and off air are a, this thing seems to be very difficult to transmit. Outdoors.

**Heather** 52:35

Yeah, we talked about a couple of live streams ago, a result out of China that tracked 7000 plus cases, community transmission cases, rather than travel cases, only one, maybe two of which were understood to have been transmitted outdoors.

**Bret** 52:49

Yeah, so there's so what I would say is, if you're trying to think about what behavior to engage in, I would say being outdoors makes things better and not worse. Obviously, if you're in a house with nobody who's got the infection, then your house is probably pretty safe. So going outdoors is not a step in the right direction, but it's probably not too dangerous. But if you couple it with social distancing, masks and common sense, then it may be that there is in fact, a an opportunity cost to not going outdoors, that the cost of being in the building drives up your likelihood of contracting the thing, when actually,

**Heather** 53:26

I mean, indoor air pollution is a real thing. So even put aside, if you live alone, and you haven't had anyone else in your house, and so you really know that the virus isn't in your house. That doesn't mean that the air in your house is healthy to be breathing. So opening up windows getting outside, you're having cross ventilation that's not mechanical, but is actually fresh and natural, is understood to have health benefits, regardless of what particular pathogens or just particulate matter that might be causing you have lung issues might be around right,

**Bret** 53:57

which could make you more vulnerable. If a pathogen does get through the door, you encounter it somewhere. Also lots of people, even people who do live alone or with family members who don't have COVID-19, they still live in a building that might transmitted between compartments or something. But anyway, what we're learning now is that vitamin D, looks like it may have a protective effect. It may prevent you from getting it. And it really seems very likely to reduce the severity if you do get it. So here's what we I think are beginning to understand. Going outside reduces the likelihood of transmission. It also increases your ability to fend off the disease if you do get it on the basis that vitamin D is produced when UV light hits the skin. Therefore, to the extent that regulations have said don't go out, stay in your home. What they actually do is they create vitamin D deficiencies because even if it's in your food It's hard to get enough of it that way, the way we create vitamin D involves effectively photosynthesis of it. That people whose instinct was to go outside were safer. And laws that scolded people for going outside. You mentioned one case in which people were told not to sit in their front gardeners are UK, right? that these things are all counterproductive on the list of things for how to protect yourself from this disease should be sunlight, exposure to sunlight, right? Do it while social distancing wear your mask, but go outside. So the me just

**Heather** 55:38

put this up for I know you have someplace else you're going here. But our friend Marsha Birkby sent us this that in British Columbia, the instruction is in fact, please go outside the ice. What is she, the BC provincial Minister of Health, I believe, says COVID-19 is much less likely to spread outdoors. And please, please, please go outside your social distance wear masks be around other people, all of these things. But this is the only place that I've seen actually an explicit directive from a government official saying Actually, we want you to do the opposite of what everyone else is saying.

**Bret** 56:15

Right? And then there's the final point, which I think we have no way to calibrate the importance of at this point. But there is a question, especially in light of a very frightening scenario that is unfolding, that a to the degree that anything normal can be safe enough to engage in his mental health wise bound to be a positive thing. So how many suicides will we prevent if people are encouraged to go out to frankly, know that there are other people in the world like physically be in their presence without being in danger, these things have a very positive benefit. And what's frightening to me is, if we, to some extent, cancel some part of spring summer, if we reduce people's ability to enjoy the outdoors the way they do, then what happens to us as winter descends, I really think that this is a frightening prospect in light of the fact that we don't really see an end game here, if there's a vaccine coming, it's probably year and a half, two years or more off. So to the extent that we are in this for the long haul, doing things that reduce the mental hazard of it, which seemed to be epidemiologically safe, and you know, it's nice out there. So anyway, people whose instinct was to go outside were right. Government, to the extent that it was telling him to stay inside was wrong, that was true all along. Now, the data is beginning to tell us that. So that is a model for how the counter intuitive here was a very important thing.

**Heather** 57:59

And I guess I would add one more thing, which is just like the subway study that we discussed, I don't know, maybe three livestreams ago, in which it became clear that New York City's response to COVID-19, which was to try to enforce stay at home for people was to ask them not to take the subway, and the what it's not the MTA, but whatever the transit authority in New York City is responded by cutting back the number of trains such that those people who were on trans who were forced to take trains because they were essential workers for whatever reason, were then tightly packed, and we're much more likely to be effectively spreading the disease. So having a public response, B, we're going to create scarcity, in order to try to get you not to use this resource forces, higher density of people and therefore higher risk to those people who are using it. So shutting down a bunch of nature areas is and leaving a few open as ends up being the case in I think California is going to crunch people into a few of the areas whereas letting them spread out across an entire landscape and make decisions for themselves. In this case, in a place where in a in a situation in which we understood that we understand this to be healthy transmission doesn't seem to happen outdoors much. And it's not just healthy physically, but also mentally to go through the examples you were just talking about. This is this is what we should be doing and outdoors actually becomes more dangerous, the more tightly packed you are. Right That's that that is the condition under which being outdoors is potentially more dangerous. Everywhere becomes more dangerous. Everywhere becomes more dangerous, the more tightly packed you are and so if you're going to recognize that nature and outdoors is actually safer than indoors, leaving all of that open For people to explore, and to be in, and to be hopefully making the same kinds of careful decisions that they're making, when they go into the market or the hardware store, whatever, is clearly a better move than saying, well, we're going to shut down some and not others and thus force those of you who are feeling the need to go outside into a smaller amount of space.

**Bret** 1:00:22

And it also reflects something that we've been getting at, which is the, the governmental structure that wants to dictate exactly what to do is feeble compared to a structure that tells us what the objective is, and gives us room to navigate. So I've argued every functional complex system that involves people also involves discretion. So what we really want is not a politicized populace, in which, you know, the folks on the right are dismissive of the need to take action. And the folks on the left are insisting on the action and all of that what we need is a recognition that we all are better off if this thing doesn't spread further, if the cost of it is low, because people are well prepared. And people have discretion to figure out how to, to enact the the countermeasures. So to the extent that you're outside, you know, you're not going to have x's on the ground that tell you where to stand. You know, those X's aren't particularly great anyway, in the in the various markets. But if you understand the principles, if somebody's shown you an animation of how the particles dispersed from somebody who's coughing or talking or something like that, then you can steer clear of them in a way that minimizes the chances of contacting something. So being informed and having discretion to do what reaches the objective rather than being nannied into abiding by some rule. That's Yes, stupidly simple. So you know exactly what it is, but leaves a lot of possible value. unexplored. Yeah.

**Heather** 1:02:15

Good. I think we are about at the hour mark. But I'd like to maybe just flag what's happening in the house. And maybe we come back to it another time. I believe it was our fourth live stream that we talked about why kill the large city in coastal Ecuador, that is experiencing really tragic response to the Coronavirus. And what's happening in my house, which is a city of 2 million people in the middle of the Brazilian Amazon is very similar. And it looks like it's going to become the next guy killer in Latin America, Zach, if you would just quickly put on screen this image, which is an aerial view of coffins being buried in an area where new graves have been dug. This is they're experiencing it was so we, you talked last time about this measure of the effect of SARS cov. Two, as one of the good measures excess deaths. You know how you can take a town outside how many more people died in a particular area during a particular period of time, then did at the same period of time in previous years for the same area controls for so many things. That it really seems to to be a very useful metric. And it's it's obviously, it potentially has error in both directions. But overall, the idea of excess deaths of tracking how many more deaths occurred than we were expecting is, is a really apt one. And in manasse, the XX, the excess deaths are two closing on three times for the period of the last six weeks or so. And they they report that it just showed up there in early March. Of course, none of these reports of when it actually showed up in particular places are necessarily accurate. Maybe that's one of the things we'll talk about next time. But one of the problems in MMA now so manasse is literally at the confluence of the Amazon and early on aggro, which are two of these massive rivers and the Amazon just got the name afterwards so you Everyone knows the name of the Amazon and not the name of your own aggro. There it's place I've actually been and fell in love with and really wanted us to go back to and then we went and had kids instead. So we haven't been back. But it's truly an extraordinary place. It is you know, it's this sort of center of the Brazilian Amazon. And for a long time you can only get there by boat or by plane. There is now a road unfortunately, fortunately. But you know a massive bustling metropolis that is not in the The industrial center of Brazil in the south, you know, Rio and Sao Paulo, in particular being the massive centers of, of economy for Brazil, and bolsonaro, for the president of Brazil has long set long before this particular pandemic struck, made it clear that he sees the Amazon as a untapped way to make money that he sees the forest as mostly an impediment to development and the indigenous peoples as same. And while manasse is not, you know, it's, it's surrounded by forest, and there are indigenous tribes somewhat near it, it is not itself, you know, filled with indigenous people or or forested place. It probably got ignored a bit, in part because this was already a city, an already a region in Brazil that was not being treated well, by the by the governance.

**Bret** 1:06:00

Government. Yeah. It's also the case that early on, there was the expectation, and based on a pattern that people had thought they had seen where this wasn't being spread in tropical climates. And I know that now in manasse, the question is, will they be the next guac? Kill that that's actually on their minds. And the fact that there is a mouse crisis and a Guayaquil crisis says that whatever it is, that might be somewhat protective about these climates, it's not completely protective, and probably means very little.

**Heather** 1:06:34

Yeah. Awesome, awesome guy cooler, sweltering, hot, humid places.

**Bret** 1:06:39

Right. So I think as we are, and I really hope people will sideline the political dimensions, the question about what we should do mustn't be a political question. The question about where this came from, also must not be a political question. And it is becoming an unavoidable one. So in any case, maybe we'll return there another time. But for the moment, we have different outcomes based on different kinds of responses. A political actor will cherry pick that data in order to support whatever policy position they think is right. The rest of us could be looking at these things and thinking, Well, we know that New York can happen. We know the mouse and Guayaquil can happen, we know that Italy can happen. What we don't want to do is alter the protocols so that, you know, la becomes the next New York if that's possible. We want to learn from what has happened and frankly, share the burden of it. The the political solution to this is no solution at all. And what it effectively does is it puts the pathogen in charge. So really, I can't stress enough how important it is that we don't allow politics to drive which then says something about well, how are we going to rein on our politics because that's exactly what they're setting us up for. That's right. Okay, so we are going to return in 15 minutes to another link, which we will put in the description of this video, where we will answer your super chat questions. Anything else we can say here?

**Heather** 1:08:26

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**Bret** 1:08:29

Yes, that's right. Like subscribe, hit the notify bell. I don't know. Knock yourself out, comment below the stream here. Alright, we'll see you in very few minutes.