Living in a Violent, Broken World

The Urgent Need for 'Compassion Studies'

A Proposal
For Those Interested in Starting a Course on 'Compassion Studies'

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This is work-in-progress towards a primer on *compassion studies and a critique of society.*
Shared here for those who may be interested in starting a comprehensive course in 'compassion studies'. This article offers a set of ideas to initiate a course development process. The course is articulated as 3 interconnected learning ecologies – *social ecology of orientation, social ecology of suffering and social ecology of compassion.*

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Concerns

Covid19 is teaching many critical and tough lessons about us and the societies we have built. It has shown us how fragile and broken the world is. It has also shown how unprepared we are to the inherent dangers in the world we have mindlessly created and continue to stubbornly sustain. We have paid very little attention to the warnings of the wiser amongst us. Also, to the facts and figures about our disastrous development highway.

The façade of civilized modernity is breaking down. However silent we maybe, barbarity is upon us in many forms. We have created and live in 'a violent, broken world'. Immense problems at the local, national, regional and global levels threaten us. They unfold in both spectacular as well as everyday social sites of human transactions. They are both social and ecological, pushing us towards civilisational collapse. But we walk around with a sophisticated blinker, developing even more sophisticated rationalisations. We keep doing the same thing, hoping that somehow the world will change for the better. We recycle the unsustainable futures of the so-called developed nations. We copy standards that may position us well in the market but not in the long-term survival of life on the planet as we know it.

Consider. We have thousands of universities and academic institutions that continue to manage many 'educational products' to serve industries and governments. They run hundreds of thousands of academic programmes (structured knowledge packages that are globally copied, revised or recycled). We take part in hundreds of research initiatives and produce a continuous flow of reports. We organise a massive number of global, regional and national academic events involving enormous air and land travels. We passionately set up many local and global technical committees. And publishers all over the world aggressively publish and promote. Yet the world is and continues to be, in a colossal, deepening mess. We focus on leadership thoughtlessly – programmes, events, publications, eulogies etc. Yet many of our leaders, elected and otherwise, are pushing us towards the brink of ecological disasters or violent national and international conflicts.

We need a soul-searching reflective pause. Very urgently. We need to accept the fact that we are not doing the right thing, or our disciplinary expert knowledge, the practices and technologies they promote, are just not good enough to take us to a peaceful, nurturing, humane future. The whole mainstream occupational edifice that industries, governments and universities promote and sustain in the name of 'livelihood' or careers in the present labour market seems to drastically challenge our effort to become more sustainable. Insane activities are generated for recording a positive GDP. We are all stuck in a path of pain, suffering, disaster and death for many. In an extremely unequal world, one powerful group amongst us drags the other.

We also seem to think there is only one path to take us to our common future. We carelessly teach our students and children that 'there-is-no-alternative' (TINA) ideology. Despite many attempts to address global problems, there has been no significant relief. Politics, policies, economy and the media have created substantial havoc in the life of the people and planet. The issues we face have led to an ever-growing number of sites of pain and suffering, disaster and death across the globe. Increasingly, we encounter both material and moral crises as well as two critical 'deficits' – dialogue and compassion. Given these realities, how do we make sense of the situation we are in and reach out to the people and communities who need help, at both the everyday and structural levels? How do we genuinely and urgently usher in a future that is being threatened today by eco-civilisational collapse?

Making Some Sense of Compassion

1 (a) A critical question before us: how do we frame compassion and compassion studies to address it as a legitimate 'academic' field of study, research and practice. And, for such an area of learning to eventually *become a critical guide to individual action, community participation, public policy and political practice.*

(b) There is a need today, to start with, to find plausible reasons to engage with compassion actively. It may be necessary to look at the world and accept the reality that we are increasingly 'living 'in a violent, broken world which is the direct result of our mindless decisions, lifestyles, occupations, and blind faith on the 'cancerous' growth-based development highway. We are living in a world where, for individual or structural reasons, there is the growing 'distribution of sites' of pain and suffering, disaster and death (also an ever-increasing 'deficit 'of empathy, dialogue and compassion).

(c) The growing fascist tendencies globally is throwing at us yet another serious challenge. As many concerned persons, motivated by compassion actively reach out to help others, they have been assaulted, mauled or worse, assassinated. This reaching out to help others or address unsustainable structural situations, are actions that come to question the status quo and challenge powerful vested interests that sustain it. In a sense, continuing to maintain individual or masses of 'bodies in pain' in unsustainable realities is the way the system unfolds. It is part of its character and presents it as normal. Questioning it is a political risk, which brings along with it the danger of censure, threats, imprisonment, torture or death. It is essential to acknowledge that in many

contexts today, compassion is a mode of political engagement both in the everyday or spectacular theatres of power. Narratives and acts of compassion are indeed radical acts in today's grim political status quo.

(d) The reality of keeping 'bodies in pain' (a feature of neo-liberal late capitalism) is inherently intolerable. They evoke our need to respond in many direct or indirect, private or public, usual or creative ways. They urge us to reach out to those already suffering or in situations that could harm them. (This is applicable to both humans and non-humans.)

(e) The multi-faceted texture and multidimensionality of compassion unfold in many diverse ways, from the personal to policies to the political, but primarily opening us to suffering (of Others) and a readiness to address it. It is a motivational force that spurs many of us into private or public action.

(f) Compassion is the critical basis for our sense of solidarity and interconnectedness with all "non-I", or the "not-Self", that we are all an integral part of. Compassion presupposes mutual security, safety, respect, well-being and happiness. We reach out because existentially, the growing social instances of pain, suffering and death may also visit us. We have no defense against meeting our periods of distress or suffering. The real social suffering of the Other becomes Self's potential suffering in the world. Very often, this is not about individuals but also communities. It is also not just about humans but involves non-human beings too.

(g) Compassion transcends proximity or the familiarity of the suffering (unlike empathy). The attention to the suffering of the distant, the unfamiliar, the stranger is the unique quality of compassion. In a

sense, it draws on our ability for "embodied imagination" of the bodily suffering (body and mind) of the not-Self, near or distant, familiar or unfamiliar and known or stranger. The growth of the global "public sphere" and global "media space" offers the opportunity to witness suffering in distant places. And, opportunities to respond.

(h) The publicness of compassion presupposes an understanding that we are all equals, with rights and dignity. We are guided by social and ecological justice. It is essential to realise that rights from a compassionate perspective go beyond the immediate, the familiar and even the human world, recognising rights of Nature. It is also important to understand that inherent in a compassionate orientation, is dialogue where the 'I' and 'not I' merge into 'trans-reality' experience.

Compassion: Engaging in a Violent, Broken World

2) (a) How do we make sense of the world we live in today? Is this world violent and broken? Has it put the whole of humanity, other sentient and non-sentient beings in harm's way? Isn't the biosphere, which we and other living beings are so dependent on under immense stress and constant destruction? Isn't our growth-based development liquidating Earth, filling our social environment with products and more products (along with a massive accumulation of harmful industrial toxins), encouraging us to endless consumption? We must have demand, and more demand, even if Earth is on fire!

(b) What are the ecological, social and psychological impacts of the broken, violent world we live in on all of us? Who are benefitting from it? Who are the victims? Are we advancing surveillance, social control and 'disciplining 'of individuals and populations through a social 'panopticon'? Is creating a sustained state of conflicts, wars, inequality, wants, destructive desires, insecurity the ways of the system we live in?

(c) Do we need to rethink the way we produce knowledge about the world we live in and the ways we respond to it? Do we need to rethink the unsustainable global occupational edifice that industries, universities and governments create and support?

(d) Are all these not a reflection of not only material but also moral crisis?

3) (a) There are numerous signs of the ecological (mainly related to the biosphere) and civilisational collapse that we have created on the path of our growth-based development: (i) the global eco-footprint in relations to the 'Earth Overshoot Day '(using more resources then we are supposed to, measured on an annual basis), (ii) the categorical transgression of the nine planetary limits (out of 9, 4 have been broken), (iii) the increasing urgency of the "12-year" timeline for ecological and civilisational collapse (warnings from the 2018 IPCC meeting in Seoul and the 2019 COP25 meeting in Madrid), (iv) the increasing danger of mass victimisation in a world moving to an era feeding male-volent fascism and increasing instances of large scale displacement of peoples and genocides.

(b) Fascist tendencies are on the rise. We are all in mortal danger since the character of fascism is to create 'enemy communities', slowly moving from the now designated less-than-human Other to continuously differentiating the Self into "us" and them". The contamination of pure Self by "them" who are the less-than-human enemy and the source of all problems. There is no safety or security

for anyone as fascism will eventually reach the destruction of Self in its endless quest for the 'pure' Self and the less-than-human Other. It will be an era of endless, needless suffering. The initial apathy shown towards the now designated less-than-human Other by those who think they are part of the Self, and therefore are safe, is a delusion and a recipe for a future of systematic, inescapable suffering and death.

4) (a) Living in a very 'violent, broken world 'really means increased geographical and socio-cultural sites of pain and suffering, destruction and death across the globe. We can see this 'brokenness '(i) in biodiversity loss, (ii) increased extinction rate, (iii) forest cover loss, (iv) loss of the living habitats of indigenous peoples, (v) intensification of climatic events, (vi) increased environmental toxins, (vii) increased non-biodegradable wastes (along with e-waste), (viii) rising inequality, (ix) increased assassinations, (x) growing modern labour and sexual slavery, (xi) more refugees, (xii) increasing genocides and ecocides, (xiii) more conflicts and wars, (xiv) growing ill-being, mental health and stress, suicides and unhappiness and (xv) the growing fascist socio-political form. And, today, with the pandemic, we can see how broken our food and public health delivery systems are. In fact, COVID19 has clearly exposed how fragile and broken our world is!

(b) It has become a habit to look at and address poverty as our "brokenness". We look for ways to alleviate it. But we need to realise that *poverty and affluence* are both part of the brokenness and have their trails of ill-health, social suffering and death. Affluence is as much a social and ecological problem as poverty. We are told repeatedly the 'rags to riches' story without once telling us its environmental and social costs! All these

need very drastic interventions at every level – personal, professional, policy and political. We need a different story.

(c) On what basis would reaching out to those suffering at the individual or structural levels, in the mundane or spectacular theatres of power, be a self-affirming reality that also defines our survival and flourishing as a species? How do we respond to the deep moral crisis that we are facing today?

5) Indeed, we have made life convenient here and there. But many of these conveniences have come with a massive cost to society and ecology. This is cost that has an inter-generational career. Consciously, or carelessly, we have continued to sustain the unviable neo-liberal economic order. It has brought a menacing eco-socio-mess to our doorstep. Collapsing biosphere, climate emergency, extreme inequality, virulent global fascism, weaponisation and militarisation of everyday life, genocides and ecocides are not just threats for a locality but the whole world, not only for this generation but across generations, not only for human but all life. We are living in an era of growing critical 'deficits' -- a world experiencing loss of empathy, mutuality, dialogical relationships, peaceful and inclusive coexistence and, very importantly, a compassionate ethos. The most important question before us today is: *how do we systematically understand this loss and recover dialogue, empathy and compassion (or empathetic compassion) to make them an integral part of our private and public lives, of the spectacular and the mundane?*

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Obstacles to Growing Compassion: Problematising' Growth' and 'Disciplinarity'

6) Universally, we are faced with destructive desires in the form of two seductions:

(a) the seduction of 'growth' (and more blind growth) and
(b) the seduction of 'disciplinarity' (an increasingly limiting historical mode of production of knowledge to understand the eco-social complexity we live in).

7) (a) The desire for the first, growth, has led to global 'socio-economic cancer' that we carelessly continue to feed. It is cancerous because it is growth for growth sake. In the main, it has contributed to a violent and broken world. In the mainstream imagination of growth, the increasing brokenness of the world is just a part of the normal, which can further be made to serve the heartless economy. The proposed solutions to our brokenness seem to come with more growth, with more demand and supply. Even the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are based on growth and more growth. Carelessly and quite naively, it proposes to do away with poverty, inequality, conflicts and wars and all that which contribute to human misery and suffering from more and more Earth liquidating growth! It is scary death wish.
(b) The desire for the second, disciplinarity, which has also contributed to the broken world we live in today, is presented to us as a way of producing privileged scientific knowledge that helps us to make sense of and to design our society. It is the desire to be able to name, define and control the world through privileged, expert knowledge, produced directly or indirectly, within the mainstream university framework (which follows many global standardizing procedures).

(c) We have thousands of universities and academic institutions and continue to manage many educational products and run hundreds of thousands of academic programmes. We take part in hundreds of research initiatives and produce a continuous flow of reports. We organise a massive number of global, regional and national academic events involving enormous air and land travel. We passionately set up many local and global technical committees. And global and local publishers aggressively publish and promote. Yet the world is and continues to be, in a colossal, deepening mess endlessly threatening human civilisation. Perhaps we need to accept the fact that we are not doing the right thing, or our disciplinary expert knowledge and the practices they promote, are just not good enough to take us to a better, more humane society. We are stuck in a self-destructive path which is ironically perceived, taught and promoted as needed development.
(d) With the poverty of imagination, we seem to think that there only one path we can take to our collective, shared future. Unfortunately, even many faith-based educational initiatives are recycling the ways of the corporate sector or the developed nations. They are not setting the standard but instead are following the punishing standards set by for-profit and profit-focused institutions. Profit is the standard!
(e) Unfortunately, disciplinarity is reified and taken to be the ahistorical reality. However, it is just another historical stage in our effort to produce knowledge about ourselves, society and Nature. It has assumed significant arrogance in the name of objectivity, hegemonic standards on knowledge production and who has the right to do it. In a sense, it is exclusive and imperialistic. Evaluating it carefully, it seems to present only a caricature of the 'eco-social complexity' we engage with in our everyday life.

(f) Disciplinarity and its institutional medium, the university, need to grow out beyond what they are. There is no sociology or economics or political science, etc. out there in the real world. And, it is not a mechanical world with clear black and white causes and effects. These are modern myths. We do not live in a uni-dimensional, mechanical reality. The complexity we are an integral part of is deeply inter-connected and inter-dependent, multi-layered, multi-functional, multi-media, multi-vocal, multi-directional, multi-temporal, multi-species, material, spiritual, and continuously 'emergent'. Disciplinarity is just inadequate to understand this complexity and its emergent character.

(g) We need to interrogate both disciplinarity and the university. We need to accept that they are certainly part of the global eco-social problems we face today. We must take into consideration the glocal ecological footprint of universities. The footprint of mainstream universities is not just the material, i.e. the material resources consumed by the universities and their metabolism. It is also tied to the social reproduction and ideological processes (in the name of selling recycled knowledge packages, categorised into degrees and diplomas) that create generations of students who contribute to the acute problems that the world is facing today. This 'university footprint' (which is ideological in Nature) in terms of its programmes, courses, and certificates has been disastrous to our eco-socio well-being. In the name of offering a career, place and future to students in the present global mainstream occupational structure and the hedonistic cultures supporting it (including a wildly consumeristic one), we inject a disastrous viral practice that infects the well-being of the biosphere to support life. It is essential that we critically examine the impact of the courses/programmes that universities run, the thousands of graduating students, the knowledge they produce, the mainstream careers they promote and the lifestyles they nurture on our ecology and society. Both disciplinarity and the university are certainly part of the global eco-social problems we acutely face today. We need to recognise this urgently and work towards its long-term trans-formation.

h) Disconnected, fragmented, alienated, and bureaucratised "disciplinary silo-dom" submerges realities and make them unavailable to our understanding and learning. It cannot offer a grounded, wholesome knowledge of such complex realities as trans-being, emotions, virtues, inter-being, spirituality, trans-realities, trans-faith, trans-gender, sustainability, art, empathy, dialogue or compassion, etc. To address these realities, it must transgress its boundaries. It does in becoming multi- or interdisciplinary to go beyond its limited approach to producing knowledge. To develop such areas as compassion, we need to go beyond disciplinarity. This 'primitive' approach cannot make sense of a complex inter-connected, trans-media, trans-faith, inter-dependent, trans-layered, and multi-temporal reality.

(i) University too has assumed a reified status. Though it has the profound potential to transform, the university, which is in the main institutional form of disciplinarity, is part of the global problem we face today. It is time to rethink the university, its footprint and the seduction of disciplinarity. *Wholesome transgression of disciplinarity is the need of the times.*

8) Today, we are also certainly faced with a crisis of imagination. We need to seriously and consistently problematise both growth and disciplinarity. Without this first step, we cannot rethink our future(s) or find lasting solutions to the problems that are gaining the power to destroy human civilisations in the way we know them. One cannot find a

solution with the same knowledge, technologies and tools that produced the civilisation-threatening problems in the first place.

9) We will not really understand the social and ecological complexity we live in today by using the present mode of knowledge production and all the technologies around it, which we have developed. We continue to make critical decisions based on the limited knowledge produced by disciplinarity. It is not enough or helpful. And unfortunately, we are not ready to acknowledge this serious problem before us. University or university associated knowledge producers have become hegemonic, setting the standards and criteria for what knowledge is, what it is not and who can and cannot produce it. All kinds of regulatory and promotional bodies are at work to ensure this is maintained and reproduced. By these mindless strictures, we have only marginalised deep cultures of practice, vast collections of knowledge, large terrains of realities and numerous sustainable pathways to the future. We are certainly missing options for our survival and flourishing. The seduction of growth, disciplinarity and technology are all putting us in harm's way.

10) The disciplinary mode of engaging with the world and production of knowledge has schooled successive generations. Learning, within this social ecology, has transformed into education and education into an industry. Universities have become 'knowledge factories' with 'productivisation' of disciplinarity-based knowledge packages on sale as courses in the effort to sell learning. A pervasive network of national and international institutions and bureaucracies, including ranking agencies, make universities, and their marketable knowledge packages, offered as the 'career currencies' of degrees and certificates, manufacture numerous assembly lines of consumers ('students'). Corporatised education is constantly producing profitable futures for its survival by selling all kinds of knowledges packages as education.

11) Alternative pathways are unfolding to the above historical stage in human learning. For instance, another approach to learning and social evolution is the growth of alternative multiversities. Critical notions such as deschooling, decolonisation and conscientisation influence this development. It is primarily a movement in the developing world, questioning the hegemony of western knowledge, its production practices and its universities. It challenges the culture and tyranny of the expert and their hegemonic approaches. It attempts to recapture indigenous traditions of engaging with Nature, Society and knowledge production practices. Its approach goes beyond disciplinarity. It is closer to inter-disciplinarity or transdisciplinarity. i. All these have led to thinking about new institutional forms, namely 'multiversity' and 'transversity'. Learning social ecologies need drastic changes and new institutional forms for us to survive and flourish.

12) In combination, this entire new architecture of learning offers a much needed 'disruption' of the way we engage with the world. It is not disruption for more technology, more growth and a new round of aggressive capital accumulation and profit-making. It is not a disruption to grow indefinitely and mindlessly. It is one to reclaim our interdependentness, inclusivity, inter-being, wholeness, humanity, and compassion. It is a pathway out of our material and moral crises and way to the 'new humanities'.

Back to the Basics: Can we Re-Orient?

13) The struggle against growth and disciplinarity is a difficult one. We need to raise fundamental questions to re-imagine. Will we 'wake up'? Can we stop and turn back? Can we re-look, re-examine our assumptions? Can we take a 'u-turn'? Can we go 'underground' and look for 'subterranean' pathways? Can we get off 'the highway'? Can we re-imagine, rethink? Can we rewrite the stories to live by? Can we let go? Can we identify and associate with other 'categories' of knowledge producers? Can we create genuine and counter-hegemonic narratives, new stories of authentic development to live by? Can we mindfully re-examine the basics? Can we be cosmological in our imagination, thinking and being?

14) (a) Specifically, can: We look at causes, not just symptoms? We look at being, not just having? We look at the maximum wage, not just the minimum wage? We look at affluence, not just poverty? We look at labour, not just capital? We look at people, not just the profit? We look at value-creating culture, not just the economy? We look at Nature, not just humanity? We look at temporalities not, just 'spatialities'? We look at the ecology of interconnectedness, not just individuating separate existence? We look at critical followership, not just leadership? We look at health and well-being, not just the medico-pharmaceutical industry? We look at wholesome nourishment, not just the food industry? We look at agroecology, not just the agrochemical industry? We look at mobility, not just the transportation industry? We look at making peace and not instigating wars and profiting from them? We look at learning, not just schooling and the education industry? We look at appropriate technologies, not just smart technologies? We look at sustainable livelihood not just 'rags to riches' careers? We look at minimalism not just

material possessiveness and product line expansionism? We look at the 'culture of sustainability' not, just the 'culture of economic growth'? We look at indigenous elders, not just the professional experts? We look at spirituality not, just religion? We look at Other-centeredness, not just Self-centeredness? We look at our other-directed compassionate foundation, not our self-directed competitive, 'what's in it for me' mindset? We look out for all, not just our kin or kind (or species).
(b) Efforts in addressing and answering these questions should help us rethink our education and the 'decosmologised' worldview(s) we are imprisoned in. Among other things, it is a pathway to help us position compassion studies.

Compassion Studies: Proposal for a Systematic Learning Ecology

15) (a) There is a need to respond to our present challenges, problems, dangers and promise. We need to move away from disciplinarity to inter-disciplinarity to transdisciplinarity. And we need to transform our universities and its faculties over time to multiversities to transversities. We have to find ways back and closer to Nature. Only through these pathways can we nurture the growth of new integrative trans-knowledge and wholesome, authentic learning practices/ecologies. It is a proposal of a new cosmological way of being.
(b) One of the critical aims should be to engage with not just university knowledge producers but also all other non-academic knowledge co-producers. *In particular, we have a lot to learn from the elders of many endangered indigenous communities. We also need to establish a serious and profound dialogue between mainstream science and arts to transcend the limitations of disciplinarity.* In creating new pathways and nurturing counter or anti-colonial narratives to live by, authentic artistic

imagination goes beyond its present high-society entertainment, or edutainment, functions. Equally, we should not shy away from inclusive and engaged spirituality. The sacred and secular are artificial creations that need to be bridged and overcome. And seriously, we need to address the global business and bureaucracy (the "bu-bu") assault on humanities (and social sciences) and rebuild it as 'New Humanities'.

(c) If we want to survive on Mother/Sister Earth and build a vibrant self-conscious, trans-disciplinary, trans-faith inclusive society, we need to be open to the enriching ways New Humanities will offer the future to us. We need to revisit and engage with the 'ecological and social' complexity, grow new transdisciplinary areas of learning and set up an all-together a dynamic social infrastructure for generating new livelihoods. Truth and reconciliation, dialogue, peace, socially engaged spirituality, trans-faith, indigeneity, animality, nature rights, femininity, post-development, post-humanity, empathy and compassion among others would have to become a regular part of a new language serving a new learning ecology. In the long run, we must not forget to take the liberating potential of transdisciplinarity as historical and not reify it too to make it ahistorical. We need to go beyond that frame of mind.

(d) We need to do one important thing: actively and systematically deschool and decolonise society from the 'seduction' of growth and disciplinarity. The forces of growth and disciplinarity will resist, criticise and demonise such efforts just as how the climate deniers have funded, denied and demonised those who educated us to transborder climate problems emerging from anthropogenic causes. Our effort to introduce new humanities and a transdisciplinary approach to knowledge creation practices is inherently a critical political stand.

16) (a) The *Deschooling is a structured effort that needs to be nurtured by decolonisation and conscientisation, transformative learning processes and critical civic engagement.* deschooling project is more than a material project. It is also a political, moral and spiritual movement as well as a dematerialisation project. By interrogating and challenging unexamined assumptions of our learning and being, transformative learning practices will prepare us to examine the impact of the dominant, often exploitative or alienating, structures on our choices, lifestyles and conscience. It would also interrogate the unexamined assumptions of the taken-for-granted world our learning is based on and taking place.

(b) The foundational edifice of the unsustainable world we have so carelessly and mindlessly built with all its institutional scaffolding, including the university, needs to go through a 'metamorphosis' into a completely different one. The 'social caterpillar' is ready to become a butterfly. Will we allow it?

(c) We need to reclaim our cosmological orientation, genuine animality and compassionate humanity. Only then will we be able to generate deschooled, decolonised, disruptive new stories, new narratives, and new futures. Maybe then we will have a fighting chance at deeply repairing the world we have broken. And set a new course, a new regenerative Japanese art of *kintsugi*.

Proposed Content for a Course on Compassion

17) (a) There are growing pathways in addressing the civilisational challenges we are faced with. It is within this nourishing desire to seek a lasting solution; a proposal for compassion studies is being made. It is being proposed as a critique of growth, disciplinarity and the university form. It

is a proposal to address a world where there is a critical 'deficit' of cosmological thinking, empathy, dialogue and compassion. It is also proposed to heal the fragmentary knowledge silos created by disciplinarity.

(b) In the proposed version, the course content will have 3 cluster areas or focus on helping us understand and nurture compassion: *Social Ecology of Orientation (Theory, Methodology and Practice), Social Ecology of Suffering and Social Ecology of Compassion.* The first cluster/focus is basically the grounding of compassion studies in transdisciplinarity, transformative learning and critical civic engagement through the process covering deschooling, decolonisation and conscientisation. The second cluster/focus is to deeply understand the social structures that give rise to the many social sites of pain, suffering, disasters and death. And lastly, the third cluster/focus is to recover/reclaim our compassionate nature and genuinely engage with it at all levels, inclusive of the private and public levels.

(c) The course on compassion is to help young people to grow and nurture a new sense of being-in-the-world. The present 'version' of the specific content of the 3 focus areas below can be further rationalised, developed and structured in many ways as per needs and structuring formats.

Cluster/Focus 1: Social Ecology of Orientation (Theory, Method and Practice)

- Why Do We Need to Rethink Humanities?
- Moving Away from Corporatised Education and the "Bu-Bu Approach"
- Human, Humanism, Post-Humanism
- Methodology, Praxiology and Dialogism
- Deschooling, Decolonialisation and Conscientisation
- Political Economy

- The Dialogical Method
- Reflection/Contemplation/Meditation
- Transdisciplinarity and the Eco-Social Complexity
- Transdisciplinarity and Ecology of the Future
- The 'Framing' Approach to Analysis: Mindfulness and Reading the Signs of the Times
- Challenging Assumptions and Transformative Learning
- Critical Civic Engagement and Citizenship,
- Critical Followership and Leadership
- Global Public Virtues, Values and Meanings
- Socially-Engaged Spirituality
- Cosmos, Nature and Our Animality
- Social Evil and Dystopia
- Localism, Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism
- Arts, Sciences, Cosmology and Different Modes of Thinking
- Counter-Hegemonic, Anti-Colonial Narratives/Counter-Narratives
- Indigeneity and Femininity Frameworks
- New Glossaries, New Worlds, New Ways of Being
- Rethinking University, Imagining Multiversity and Transversity
- Alternative Pathways: Charters, Planetary Futures and Social Utopias
- Reimaging Eco-Social Complexity/ Exploring New Ecologies of Learning,
- 'Compassion Studies'

Cluster/Focus 2: Social Ecology of Suffering

- Examining Global and National Statistics on Social and Ecological Trends
- Interrogating Neo-Liberalism, Capitalist Development, Sustainable Development and Economic Growth/Political Economy
- The Body in Pain and Dystopias
- The Human World: Inequality, Poverty, Affluence, Retail and Structural Violence, Health, Genocides

- The Non-Human World: Biosphere Destruction/Ecological Disasters/Wars/Ecocides
- Geopolitics and Violence
- Panopticon, Surveillance and Control
- Nationalism, Nazism and Fascism
- Climate and Eco-Fascism
- Migrants, Refugees, Human Trafficking, and Modern Slavery
- 'Nature-Deficiency' and Ecopsychology
- Occupation, Meaninglessness and Stress
- Food, Market and Industrial Agriculture
- Market, Consumerism, Health and Modern Diseases
- Interrogating Conflicts, Wars, Arms Industry, Weaponisation and the Military
- Torture, Assassinations, Genocides and Ecocides
- Interrogating Socialism and Violence
- Ethics and the Future of Pain, Suffering, Disaster and Death

Cluster/Focus 3: Social Ecology of Compassion

- Understanding Compassion, its Varieties and Cultures
- Key Thinkers / Practitioners
- Key Concepts/ Theories
- Exploring Humane Virtues, Values and Meaning Structures
- Contemplation and Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Beyond TINA/Rethinking Development: Alternative Narratives/Post-Development/Post Materialism
- Exploring Worldviews/Indigenous Cosmologies of Development/Utopia
- Alternative Economic Theories and Practice/Degrowth/Public and Common Good
- Civil Society Movements, Civil Disobedience, and Humanitarian Intervention
- Urbanisation and the Architecture of Compassion
- Peace, Reconciliation, Trust, Mutuality and Inclusive Coexistence
- Sustainable Cultures and Socially Engaged Spirituality

- Femininity, Indigeneity and Ethics of Care/'Animal Stdies'
- Discipleship, Critical Followership and Leadership
- Compassion, Citizenship, Governance and the Policy Environment
- Media, Public Sphere, and Distant Suffering
- Creative Arts, Meaningful Art and Compassion
- Exploring Social Teachings of World Religions
- Compassion in World Religious/Spiritual Traditions
- Compassion in Contemplative Humanist Traditions
- Models of Compassionate Practice

Are We Ready To Go a Step Beyond?

18) (a) The attempt above is basically to 'frame and position 'a learning ecology for compassion studies. A new academic architecture 'is proposed to promote a learning ecology that basically questions disciplinarity and the mainstream university institutional form. It also examines the mindless economic growth model our societies are based on, which intimately influences the modern university and its knowledge-producing activities. Such activities follow invasive dissection of reality, the privileging of certain realities, neglect or submerging of others and complete blindness to yet others. The integrity of a rich and complex whole is carelessly lost. We have also violently separated ourselves from each other and Nature. We have encouraged a lifestyle that depends on a disastrous global occupational infrastructure that persistently contributes to and sustains global problems. The ecological footprint of the totality of universities is deeply troubling, problematic and unsustainable.

(b) The new social architecture based on compassion will be governed by efforts at deschooling and decolonisation to go beyond growth and disciplinarity, guided

by transformative learning and the transdisciplinary approach. It aims to look not at a minutely dissected reality, one not 'out there 'but one in which we are all intimately interconnected and integrated. 'New Humanities', which an integral part of the new academic architecture, opens up a whole new world including compassion for exploration and human flourishing.

[i] There is a growing body of knowledge on this. *"Trans"* means to "zigzag back and forth, to cross over, to go beyond, to transcend borders and boundaries. While interdisciplinarity is focused on blurring or dismantling the boundaries between disciplines (within the university system), transdisciplinarity (TD) strives to remove the boundaries between higher education and the rest of the world, to solve the problems of the world". See footnote 24. See Charter of Transdisciplinarity here: http://inters.org/Freitas-Morin-Nicolescu-Transdisciplinarity. Oct. 2019.

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