



Occupy Wall Street takeover of Times Square, autumn 2011. Photo by Eric Francis.

The Awakening for Leo **Of Love and the Robot**

By Eric Francis

OVER THE PAST DECADE there has been a little trend of movies that address the theme of love and the robot. Two that come to mind are *Ex Machina* directed by Alexander Garland (UK, 2014) and *Her* directed by Spike Jonze (US, 2013).

In *Ex Machina*, a high-tech mogul has created a lifelike replica of a woman, and a young man who works for him wins the chance to conduct what is called the Turing test to determine whether the device is real enough to convince him that it's human. The Turing test was devised by the inventor of the computer, Alan Turing, since he knew even in the 1930s that more advanced models would be able to provide companionship.

In *Her*, a lonely single man installs an operating system on his phone in the guise of a personal assistant app, but which is really an emotionally intelligent program designed to provide companionship and meet his every need (except that for which requires her to have a body).

For simplicity, I will refer to both of these devices as robots —which is what they are — whether or not they take physical form. In hindsight, these were both visionary films that took up one of the most important questions of life in the digital age, which is what robots are doing to relationships. But instead of the robots being all consuming, ubiquitous and inescapable, they are presented as charming, highly intelligent female human replicas that both male characters relating to them find highly engaging.

And they would be, in a time when actual, real-life relationships seem extremely perilous — and at a time when loneliness and isolation are at pandemic levels and nobody wants to talk about it. They would be, in a time when the intentional stoking of hostility between the sexes has been turned into a drug or a blood sport. People will look for empathy anywhere they can find it, including in a robot.

Everyone's Relationship to Everyone and Everything

I would note that the films depict individual relationships to robotic devices and do not broach the wider topic, which is everyone's relationship to everyone and everything.

This state of isolation described in both films is the direct product of living within robotic consciousness everywhere, all the time. Because the problem involves what the technological environment does to consciousness (rather than the content of the devices), it's so pervasive that it affects people who have never once touched a computer or a phone.

We are "all connected," and yet those who do not have socialization built into their lives (such as big families, involvement with churches and other institutions) are more isolated than ever.

We are fond of asking, "Why are things so crazy?" and not so willing to even conceive of a problem that is unlike anything humanity has ever faced. No technology before has subsumed the entirety of every society, every government, all of commerce, all of navigation and every relationship.

When Cortés' ships appeared on the Yucatán horizon in 1519, nobody among the Aztecs except maybe a very advanced shaman had a clue that it would soon be all over. We are long past that moment, but we still don't understand what, exactly, is all over, because it's disappearing down the memory hole so fast.

Recently I hosted an interview on Planet Waves FM with a woman describing a dream of going back in time and warning her high school classmates about the imminent arrival of "the squares," which she warned them would alter or take away everything about the world that they loved.

Pluto in Aquarius: Your Relationships to Partners, and to Existence

I raise the topic of the robot and our relationships apropos of Pluto arriving in Aquarius to stay until 2034-44. This transition has been underway since March 2023 and completed in November 2024, so you already know a little about it.

Aquarius is your 7th place, whether you have Leo Sun or rising. The 7th is about your relationships to people (romantic partners, spouses, business partners, potential partners and open enemies).

The 7th also describes one's relationship to the everyday society we walk around in. I've never read this in an astrology book; I have deduced it from observation. When you look around the world, the filter you are looking through is your 7th house. This includes the sign involved, natal planets and transiting planets.

With Aquarius on the 7th, your baseline reality is that you prefer a structured social world and you want to live in a society that is dependable. You are not a loner, a nomad, a drifter or a recluse. While Leo is one of the most individualistic signs, you want to be at or near the center of a community that functions in a predictable and dependable way.

In terms of partners, you are more the type to have an actual friend in your spouse or significant other, and to be one. There are a lot of other options.

Aquarius is the sign of groups (which includes all social patterns). Leo is ruled by the Sun, which is the central body that holds together the "group" known as the solar system. This is a metaphor for your role of holding it all together — or feeling like you do. When this goes out of control, it can

manifest as egotism, but most Leos are busy in their coordinating roles and a great many of you are happy working behind the scenes. You want to be respected and wear your hair any way you like, but you don't have to be standing in a spotlight.

Of course when you are, you shine, and you know how to put on an excellent performance. One of my favorite Leos of all time, Lucille Ball, did both brilliantly. She was the star of the show until she went behind the scenes and took over the management of Desilu Productions, one of the greatest television production studios in the history of the medium.

Aquarius is also the most significant sign of technology, of electricity, of inventions, and in our time, the internet — particularly the digitization of all things social. What we can loosely call the "social media age" has come in a series of stages of outer planets moving through your personal 7th house (since 2004: Uranus, Neptune and Chiron).

So when you relate to the world, you directly experience the effects of the chilling down and robotizing of humanity. You've likely felt this happening in stages over the past 20 years, and recently it's unmissable.

And now Pluto has arrived. For everyone and for you, this is going to rearrange both your relationships and the social order of your life.

Special Theme: Power Issues in Relationships

There is a theory that every relationship has a top and a bottom — that is, one partner who is submissive and one who is dominant. That's worth thinking through.

However, if you find yourself in relationship situations where someone is trying to dominate you, and you're not interested, you would be well served to move along quickly. Expression of power is one thing if you like it, and it's appropriate to the relationship. It's another thing if you find yourself subject to conditions you do not want.

Also I don't mean power play as in erotic play; that's its own creature, based on a mutual understanding. I mean actual attempts to dominate you. That is another matter entirely. As you will read below, power is an important theme of Pluto in the 7th place and for you, in Aquarius specifically.

There is another potential power theme which works the line between the community and the individual: those who care a lot "about what people

might think” about your personal relationship. With Pluto in Aquarius in your 7th place, there will be a diversity of overlays between individual and community; I would red-flag anyone who is worried about “public opinion” as it might affect your personal relationship. This includes those who feel others might judge them negatively, and those who want to turn a relationship into a spectacle (by which I mean posting a lot of photos).

I realize that “what people might think” is a theme of at least half of the novels ever written, though it’s not a wholesome ingredient in your life. What matters in your relationship are what you and your partner or potential partner think. The presence of this issue is describing some kind of unprocessed guilt or shame.

This includes what someone thinks that anyone’s family might think. A good credo for you to seek in a partner is the value that *our shared life is our shared life*. It ain’t about all of them — it’s about you. Sadly, despite all the progressivism in our times, it remains as challenging as ever to step out judgement and the expectation of judgment. However, these are the values you want to work through in yourself, and avoid in others whenever possible. Simply put, if someone is hesitant to be seen with you, forget it.

Pluto: Main Modes of Action in Aquarius

But before that, let’s consider Pluto in the 7th regardless of the sign. This will always come with an intensification of events and confronting the potential for major changes. The influence of Pluto moving from the 6th to the 7th rises above the event horizon and makes itself known.

Relationships can come on like a storm under this astrology. They can also transform and they can be wedged out of your life. No matter what sign Pluto is being filtered through, in the 7th house there is a distinct and unavoidable series of transformations. But it’s not just about intimate partnerships. It’s important to scan the horizon for factors other than individual people that can strongly influence your existence. The thing about these influences is that they can wear the cloak of invisibility until you perceive them, so you must handle all encounters a little differently — more perceptively — with Pluto looming around your event horizon.

When someone reveals themselves as a potentially harmful force, it’s crucial that you take action. The problem is that you may not recognize the problem until it’s more serious. So you simply must set a very high level of sensitivity. Neptune is usually the planet that is said to

Yet this has been developing for the past 18 months or so — and one question I have for you is: what has changed? What has shifted, particularly in the way that individual and group relationships interplay? This is an important theme for anyone with Aquarius on the 7th house.

And what was your experience of the lockdowns, which occurred during Saturn in Aquarius? Did you stand up to the pressure, did you yield to the pressure, or were you one of the ones pressuring others to do something? Sort this out carefully.

As for the three scenarios of Pluto in Aquarius, they all involve the power of groups, and your need to meet that power consciously. Saturn's influence is one thing — and I do suggest a careful review of your ethics under that transit. Pluto is quite another. The intensity is manifold, as is the penetrating power of the events. The 7th is more likely to present developments that come at you or manifest in your environment rather than experiences where you take the initiative.

It's essential therefore that you consciously respond to any such developments. That is the whole chemistry of Pluto: sensing what is happening, and responding appropriately. If someone feels like a stalker, you can assume they are one; don't wait to find out.

There Are No Group Relationships

In Aquarius, though, the stalking is more likely to come from groups that want to somehow compromise you or swallow your individual will. For some, Pluto in Aquarius will have a Borg-like quality: resistance is futile and all of that. Under Saturn in Aquarius (early 2020-early 2023), resistance was inconvenient, and difficult, but certainly not futile.

Under Pluto in Aquarius, you might say that resistance will be evolutionary, compelling you to grow and mature in ways that you never have.

Seen one way, all of Aquarius could take on the dominating power of Pluto. That could mean situations where a lot of people want you to be a certain way and put you under pressure. How you meet that, well, it's up to you, though you must make a decision if you want to retain influence over your life. And it's unlikely that a "blow for blow" situation will work; you need to know when to go your own way.

If you are dealing with people in any important business in an online environment, do everything you can to meet them in person before going in

too deep — and if you cannot actually get together, spend as much time in one-on-one experiences as you can, such as by phone, Zoom and private correspondence.

In truth there are no group relationships. There are only lots and lots of one-to-one relationships.

As for your ability to influence groups: this element is de-emphasized when Aquarius is a 7th house factor. You may be tempted. You may want to change the world, but it will be better to focus your change inwardly.

Finally, there is the potential to take part in group evolution. There are many substitutes for this — join us and everything will change. Beware of any group with a charismatic leader. That charisma is anesthesia. (And if you meet an extremely charismatic individual in a one-on-one situation, make sure you get under that compelling quality and understand who the real person is.)

The bottom line with group evolution is, believe it when you see it. Groups don't usually change. Several people who are perfectly wonderful individuals can make one serious douche bag of a collective. And remember to assess the influence of the robot amidst all of this.

Your personal relationships need real intimacy — in person, outdoors, offline, with food you prepare and that does not come from a robotic "app" delivered to you lukewarm, all shaken up and wrapped six times in a little plastic tub.

You might say that the bottom line of Pluto in Aquarius for you is: keep it human. Do the Turing Test on individuals. Are they people, or are they digitized? Know who and what you're dealing with. Stick to the types who love cats and dogs and who get excited when they see an unusual bird. Stick to people who want to be in your orbit and not crash into you.

Speaking of Keeping it Human: Uranus in Gemini

Charts tend to send similar messages from different houses. And while we are on the topic of the slow-moving outer planets, let's consider what is happening in Gemini, which is your most social house. (It's the 11th solar house for you, which resonates somewhat with the 11th sign Aquarius.) But where this 11th house exists, you have the sign Gemini: social, though emphasizing individual relating rather than collective. So this is a crucial theme: know people as individuals.

Gemini is an excellent sign to have placed on your 11th. It's a big facet of what makes you so socially conversant and affable. You can read a room, and then you know that working the room is talking to people one at a time.

Uranus coming to Gemini in July is going to be exciting, for you anyway. By that, I mean more exciting than disruptive or challenging. The warmup act has been Jupiter in Gemini (May 2024-June 2025.) This has provided an expansion of your possibilities in a very chilly time for most people's social lives.

Uranus will bring unexpected, fast-moving developments and many new friends. You could go to a party one night this summer and find yourself with a whole new circle of friends. You will have access to newly formed groups of people that will serve to open your mind and present you with wholly original social opportunities. And the beauty of Uranus is that it can bring unusual, interesting or quirky people. Please don't be off-put by appearances; give people a chance to reveal who they are and what they have to offer.

But the 11th has a purpose that goes beyond social. Described in older times as the house of hopes and dreams, it represents your sense of your own potential. And more than that, it represents your professional income.

As you know, there is a strong connection between your social skills and your ability to make a living. With Uranus, you are sometimes taking a ride on a lightning bolt, and your fortunes can turn quickly.

If you're going to gamble, then take a chance on something you really truly want.

Summing up Uranus and Pluto in the Air Signs

Having Uranus and Pluto in the air signs is a whole new pattern for our lifetimes; it has never happened (except for briefly when both were in Libra in the early 1970s — and they were not forming an aspect).

In the pattern that is forming, Uranus trine Pluto, you are opening the flow to a whole new reality of relationships and social existence.

Both of these placements — and the aspect they form — boldly urge you to keep your relationships human and in person. Uranus also has an electrical and robotic quality, and that means stay where you can see people's bodies,

hear their actual voices, and feel something of their existence without having to synthesize it.

The Aries Point: Your Quest

As of this paragraph, I'm 2,800 words into your reading and I've realized that I'm making it sound like you're a passive entity in the midst of your rapidly changing environment. The truth is that most of the changes in your chart involve your circumstances, particularly to your human ecosystem. My intent has been to describe what is invisible or difficult to perceive.

Yet despite all the movement and changes and new circumstances of your life, what is driving the events of your life is something emerging from deep in your core: the place where your soul strives to shine through your existence as the choices that you make.

So far I have set the stage for what is happening to you on the deepest level — that of your personal quest in the world, perhaps across many lifetimes. The most powerful emphasis from 2024-2026+ will be in Aries. Your fellow fire sign is the 9th place from yours; the 9th is where you embark upon the quest of your existence in a whole new way.

I am not talking about some kind of New Age workshop. I am talking about doing your part in the urgent need to preserve the human part of humanity — which must begin with you. That's all you can really influence; or rather, you cannot influence anyone or anything else unless you are solid in your existence, spiritually grounded, and fully engaged in actual life, not theoretical life.

Traditionally related to spiritual matters and long-distance travel, in modern terms the 9th is the house of human potential. And you have Aries here, which is the sign of self-actualization: a perfect match. The abundant astrology developing in Aries is that of "the awakening." It's one of the boldest places where you incarnate into your own chart, and where your process of coming into full awareness takes place.

There was plenty of activity in this house in 2024; think back to what you were doing and how you were feeling in April, at the time of the total solar eclipse.

Researching your reading, I came up with an old horoscope from nearly 20 years ago that I think calls the theme.

Leo - Monthly for March 2006

Whenever something big happens in somebody's 9th house, I start to ponder the whole idea of belief and the power of belief. One of my very favorite quotations from A Course in Miracles addresses the theme of the 9th house: "Every decision you make stems from what you think you are." Part of the beauty of being a Leo is that you don't have an inferiority complex when it comes to God. It comes as no shock to you that you exist, God exists, and we can all coexist together. The message of this month's total solar eclipse -- which takes place in the house of your highest visions, faith, wisdom and all the great possibilities -- is that you are who you believe you are, and that somebody is going through a change that can have a tremendously positive impact on both yourself and those around you. Give us a nice big roar, little kitty.

Where does the time go? Anyway, the eclipse referenced above was in Aries, and there was just an eclipse in Aries one full nodal cycle later in April of 2024, the big one that everyone saw because it cut a streak from Texas to Nova Scotia. The nodal cycle is significant: it's a long swath of time, and the eclipses have made one full revolution of the zodiac.

The 9th place represents your relationship to the universe: spiritual themes such as your concept of god or God, your values toward scholarship and education, and your particular motivations for long-distance travel. The common thread is "expanding your horizons," which is to say your sense of being. This is the growth process known as "soul."

And you have Aries here — the essential ingredient in self-actualization. There is nothing passive about Aries, especially now. It's been under the influence of Chiron, which for you has the feeling of a quest. Yet with so personal a sign here as Aries, your own healing process is the true nature of that quest. Though in the spirit of the 9th, it's set within the big world, the world of all potential — not in a monastery or a library.

The True Nature of Aries on the 9th

I often ponder what religion is the most accurate representation of the subtle planes; so far the best I can tell you is that Hinduism seems to reveal quite a bit of actual truth, not merely anti-sexual and anti-woman propaganda.

If we put this question to the chart, Aries on the 9th I think comes in first place. The actual quest of life on the physical plane is to grow. Yes, that can

involve service, and study, and travel, but ultimately we show up here and we go from somewhere to somewhere else and that journey at its best is one of learning. Note the resistance to that concept in lived experience.

In some ways, life is a healing journey. Yet healing emphasizes injury; the quest emphasizes the desire for experience, and is based on a quest for discovery and understanding. Eventually, healing will be implicit in that.

You've had Chiron traversing this zone of your chart since 2018. Eris has been in the neighborhood since 1920, when you were much younger. You may be familiar with my approach to assessing the destabilizing of self and society as a consequence of digital overexposure. This has been a serious crime scene, in my view, and it's getting worse as the world moves rapidly in the direction of transhumanism — the merging of people and artificial intelligence technology. This is another way of saying that the robot is talking over one swath of society after the next, and one person after the next is submitting their deepest humanity to something that is only going to swallow them.

"The awakening" is waking up to this problem. It's not about any kind of content or memes or X or whatever. Rather, what is happening is that humanity is being redefined entirely in the context of the transhuman revolution. Every day there is some new development about merging humanity with technology, and that is only what is apparent.

The next seven years of Uranus in Gemini are going to reveal and usher in a technological world beyond anyone's wildest dreams or worst nightmares. And the target of that technology is the individual person with their own life to live.

You are in the VERY best position to stand up to this, thanks to Aries being located on your 9th place. Your concept of spiritual growth inherently means "the journey of emerging into the world fully as yourself."

And you're going to need this orientation to survive or thrive — and so are the people around you. Remember that as the sign ruled by the Sun, you are at the center of your community and your role is to hold all the planets in their orbits.

The Twin Conjunctions

Chiron in Aries has been providing a counterpoint to the chaos of Eris. Chiron is an ordering principle that is addressing the disembodied, tortured

condition that Eris has ushered in. Chiron is an awareness-propagating factor, as contrasted with Eris, which tends to operate covertly.

What emerges in 2025 is that these two planets form their first conjunction since 1971. (That was in Aries; the prior two, c. 1916 and c. 1863, were in Pisces.) These events always come at a time of cultural upheaval, and they always reveal something about human potential. However, this was not really visible until the 1971-72 event in Aries, which came at a time when many people were seeking self-understanding and participating in approaches to growth, therapy and self-development.

That was happening under very different conditions, however, with many people still rooted in the individuated world of literacy. And the prevailing medium of the day, television, provoked people to action. I realize that TV was accused of creating couch potatoes, though much of the surge in participation was provoked by a response to complete the sketchy TV image. And TV also supported the view that you can create your own life.

(My father, a media studies Ph.D., used to say that TV created “a generation of watchers.” He was not correct. It created multiple generations of directors who had the notion they could construct their own lives like no generation before them.)

Today, we are confronted with the ongoing total absorption and encompassing quality of the digital realm. It is so involving as to be not just anesthetic, but also vacuuming people out of physical existence and giving the appearance of taking part in something larger — which often winds up with just throwing one’s soul into an ocean of code.

The digital realm is much more a facilitator of growth to those who go from consumer to creator. Generally, the involvement is on the level of dumping attention into that code ocean and not much in the way of creativity. I speak of all forms of social media, which allow participation without any creative risk. (What gives the illusion of risk is the feeling one might be judged for one’s viewpoints, which to my perception is bullshit. As in, who cares what anyone thinks about what they think you think.) But this is deeply hypnotic.

One essential point of spiritual expression for you is **creative risk**. The conjunction of Chiron and Eris in your 9th place is what you might call **self-creative risk**. And the Chiron-Eris conjunction is going to push this to a new limit. It’s true that many will respond with anxiety (their disembodied state calling for getting their hand into the glove of their own existence) and others will take to the streets. The internet will very likely explode into a

never-before seen degree of involvement, much of which will not be creative.

For you, the sense of being summoned to a quest will be undeniable. You may be called to begin, you may be called to complete, you may be called to explore — though you will not be sitting still, and you know that the implications here are physical, emotional and spiritual, rather than merely digital. If this will feel good for anyone, it will be for you. (Artists with a strong Sagittarius signature will also feel good.)

Not everyone wants to experience radical awakening. It's just too painful. But you are going to experience that as the drive to explore yourself and the world around you. So that's pretty good.

Saturn Meets Neptune in Aries

There is another facet to what's happening in your 9th place, and that is the meeting of Saturn and Neptune. Both of these factors have been in your 8th place for years, especially Neptune, which has been in Pisces since 2011. This has made both interpersonal agreements and all kinds of financial arrangements very difficult.

Saturn in Pisces for most of the past two years has helped you set some boundaries after a challenging phase of time. But now something better is happening. Both planets are moving into Aries. This begins in the spring of '25 and completes in the spring of '26.

Saturn conjunct Neptune is the synthesis of the impossible. And nowhere does this work better than on a quest for personal development, which is always like transforming air into oak. Synthesis implies a new substance, unlike either of its constituent substances.

There is a crucial element to this process, which is transitioning out of defining yourself by your involvements (or entanglements) with others, and holding yourself at the center of your existence. From there, a new kind of relating both to yourself and others will emerge. It will be necessary, as you awaken from the many distractions that your illusions about other people have created. When you have a clear view of yourself, others will manifest to you in much more meaningful and tangible ways, as they really are. However, like most other factors in your astrology for the next two years, this emerges from the inside out. Your need for growth is driving your whole existence forward.

What better source could we ask for than Monte Python to help understand such a deep topic? Graham Chapman said in the corporate board meeting scene in *The Meaning of Life*:

“Matter is energy. In the universe, there are many energy fields which we cannot normally perceive. Some energies have a spiritual source which act upon a person's soul. However, this soul does not exist *ab initio*, as orthodox Christianity teaches. It has to be brought into existence by a process of guided self-observation. However, this is rarely achieved, owing to man's unique ability to be distracted from spiritual matters by everyday trivia.”

Ab initio is a Latin term that means “from the beginning” or “from inception.” Soul is something we create and synthesize as a matter of will. And that is what you are being called to do. You contain the seed of this and have been working on it for many years. Now, your learning and growth will be fully engaged. The dramas in the world around you will serve as a stage, a background and as inspiration, and will teach you much.

The Work: Family Matters in Capricorn

We who remain on the planet today have survived 14 years of Pluto in Capricorn. This has taken place in your 6th house of work, wellbeing and service. It has not been easy for anyone, though this has compelled you to refine your sense of purpose and your correct mode of involvement in day-to-day life.

Though Pluto is moving on, a group of planets will remain that I have been describing as the **Family Hunger Game** cluster. The 6th place is the seat of healing in any chart, but also associated with day-to-day activity: the “ritual de lo habitual.”

You have learned that the work you do every day is a crucial point of centering and grounding for you. That will never change.

Yet now the hunger game cluster is calling for your attention and your devotion to personal healing. In my long experience as an astrologer and de facto therapist, I have seen the extent to which people drag along the baggage of their family of origin with next to no awareness of how they may resolve it.

Many people feel firmly stuck, unable to even acknowledge the issues. As described in my hunger game work, much of the problem is that the old

karma is rendered nearly intractable by the use and abuse of alcohol, which makes it seem to go away long enough to do the same thing again.

Even if alcohol is not an issue, or has been addressed to a real extent, a strange kind of loyalty holds people in the bonds of the wounding and pain of previous generations — many of whom tried to drown their problems and did very little in the way of conscious growth. Plenty of problems are buried in workaholism, though if what you do every day is creative and drives your journey along the unknown, it qualifies as creative. Workaholism is inherently uncreative, self-depleting and a delay factor.

Therefore what you do every day matters. And given many other factors, part of what would serve you to attend to every day would be deepening your understanding of your family background. This is not currently a topic of open discussion. People are obsessed with trauma, though I'm talking about something more sublime. Yes, there may be trauma, though most of the current approach is to genuflect rather than to seek understanding. And the concept is so overused as to be meaningless. Therefore, stick to the conditions of your early life as the basic framework for what you will be exploring.

Within your family structure, it's likely there was someone who took the view that there is no such thing as morality. Now, morality is its own problem. But we count on people to have an ethical framework so they may evaluate matters of right and wrong. It will help if you identify who this person is. It might not be a blood relative, and given the 6th house placement, it may have been some kind of medical practitioner.

Though I have written about this in **greater detail elsewhere**, it will help if you work in two frames of reference: the three generations ahead of you, and what your family believes about its origins back to the beginning. For some this will be about immigration and for others it will be about claiming their aboriginal roots wherever you live now. These matters would best be considered separately at first, then contrasted. If you find that there are deceptions being perpetuated, the question is what might motivate someone to do that?

Families all have secrets, and those secrets manifest for subsequent generations as baggage and karmic clutter. And these things can be debilitating.

Pluto has departed Capricorn. You have experienced and endured whatever this was about. I would wager that some of this family material came up, and had several peaks (such as around 2011 and then around 2020).

The work of the Hunger Games cluster must be done meticulously, and with the benefit of future generations in mind. The first order of the day is honesty. Alcohol and other intoxicants serve to raise a cloud of deception, concealment and plausible deniability. So when those things are removed, that's the point of beginning to be able to finally see what exactly was going on under the hood.

Think of this as work in preservation of your humanity and that of your progeny. The deepest confrontation here will be encountering what I see as the ancestor who had no moral or ethical structure, for whom right and wrong were nonexistent. They have had a much stronger influence on you than you may think — if you think they had any at all.

Investing your Empathy: What You Teach

I read two novels by Philip K. Dick over the summer. Even back in the 1960s and 1970s, he was concerned with the effects of robotic technology on humans. The book that Bladerunner is based on offers much more attention to the core problem than does the movie, which is your basic BS thriller.

What Dick is concerned with the most is people developing empathy for and even falling in love with robots. And that is where we stand today.

We've been conditioned into doing this for a long time, such as with the charming R2D2 and C3PO in *Star Wars*; Lt. Commander Data in *Star Trek*; and others. *2001* directly addressed the issue of not feeling sorry for turning off a machine that is trying to kill you, in the person of HAL 9000.

One might think, what's the harm of jabbering with robots all day? The more you feel empathy for computers, the less you will be able to feel it for people. And it's the people under the thrall of computers who will insist that you give them their due; that you charge up their batteries all the time.

You are on a quest for your humanity. That quest is largely about reclaiming what has been taken from you, which is going to mean being honest about what that was — and is ongoing. The effects are always sly at first: resenting your children, resenting being emotionally present for the people in your life (sometimes called "compassion fatigue") and reverting to automatic modes of relating to others. That means judging them based on

algorithms rather than a fair, honest assessment. It means having the decency to end a relationship rather than watching someone twist as you ghost them.

Stop yourself cold at any idea such as “men are unnecessary” or that they are somehow less than human. Stop yourself cold at the idea that women are inherently some magical combination of eternal victim and goddess worthy of veneration.

Beware of people who think of their animal companions, their children and their partners merely as property — as evidenced by how they treat these beings. Beware of those who believe they can be reprogrammed or have their systems upgraded. Beware of those who would inject you with chemicals that you don't understand, or thinking this might help you.

You are going to be surrounded by robotic influences on all sides, and they are here to convert you to their cold and sterile ways. This “surrounding” will come in a time of unbelievable, mind-boggling surges forward in artificial intelligence and simulated emotion. And the message of that technology is: be like us.

It's up to you to recognize that, as in ages past — perhaps for the whole past of humanity and whatever may be its way forward — the only spirit path is the quest to be human. You are human at your core, and in everything you say and do. This will be your example for everyone around you, all of the time. And as you set that example, you will learn from who and what you cultivate in the world seemingly around you, but really what you cultivate within you.



