

The Great Simplification

Nate Hagens (00:00:02):

You're listening to The Great Simplification with Nate Hagens. That's me. On this show, we try to explore and simplify what's happening with energy, the economy, the environment, and our society. Together with scientists, experts, and leaders, this show is about understanding the bird's eye view of how everything fits together, where we go from here, and what we can do about it as a society and as individuals.

Nate Hagens (00:00:33):

Greetings. Welcome to another episode of The Great Simplification. Today is part three with my friend and colleague Daniel Schmachtenberger, the founding director of The Consilience Project. This one went in a completely different direction than I expected. I was fully energized to have a back and forth discussion on my systems overview of the world... energy, ecology, money, systems... and see where Daniel agreed, differed, what we could converge on. Of course, it went in a completely different direction where we talked about meta-narratives themselves. Why they're threatening to various sections of society, how and why Daniel became a vegetarian, how to take in the entire systemic meta-crisis that humanity faces in a way that gives you agency and not despair. Whenever I finish one of these podcasts, I have a pretty good sense of whether I liked it, it was good. This one was fantastic. Though, you will see that my energy at the beginning kind of faded into speechlessness after some of the 15 paragraph thoughts that Daniel dropped on me. So, I hope you enjoy and learn and are inspired from this conversation with my friend, Daniel, which is turning into a longer series than I originally intended. And see you next week. Thanks.

Nate Hagens (00:02:31):

Hello, Daniel.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:02:33):

Howdy, Nate. Good to see you.

Nate Hagens (00:02:36):

Good to see you again on our third podcast together. It was great to see you a couple weeks ago in person at the conference. I don't know if you have seen, but some people have uploaded photos of our little presentation together. I have to say that me sitting next to you on a chair... I kind of look like someone on human growth hormone next to you.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:03:01):

You're a big dude.

Nate Hagens (00:03:03):

That's why I like the podcast thing.

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Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:03:07):

That was a good conversation we got to have there. I was happy it happened.

Nate Hagens (00:03:12):

Yeah. We have to do more of those. And that's kind of the purpose of this series is to expand on the meta-narrative. Not only what is it, but how it can influence more human minds individually and collectively towards important outcomes. So, here's what I have in mind. This is our third podcast in this series. What I would like to propose is I will do kind of an elevator pitch of my view of the human predicament, which we discussed in the first two episodes. Then, I'm going to hand the mic to you and you can give your grand arc of the meta-narrative of the meta-crisis, as you're kind of known for, and interject how that rhymes or overlaps with mine. Where you might state things a little bit differently but saying similar things, and then also where we might differ. And we'll expand on that. I don't know what's going to come out of that. I'm genuinely curious. Hopefully, like the last two episodes, we will... and not only our episodes, but all of our conversations and dozens of Voxers... we'll learn from each other in real time, which is something I greatly value.

Nate Hagens (00:04:40):

And then, building on that, Daniel, I would like to talk about how not only yours and my stories, but others in our network, when we meet each other and we're working on different things, we are constraining each other's expertise and stories. I would like your opinion on that. Then, we could maybe discuss the importance of these grand narratives. Not only why they're important, but why they're socially constrained and threatening to some people. We experienced that at that conference and at other conferences as well. And then, finally, I would like to queue up the fourth episode in this series on what is the criteria for civilization and how can we think about this in a way that is productive to our future? So, that's what I have in mind. Do you have anything to add or suggest?

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:05:45):

It sounds like you're going to do a brief recap of what we did in the first two and where we're going to go in the next one, so there's some continuity in the arc. I'm really happy about what we're getting to explore across these four episodes together.

Nate Hagens (00:06:02):

Cool. Okay. So, the first episode, you interviewed me about energy and our economy and the big system. The second episode, we were trying to get to what we're going to discuss today, which is your meta-narrative, paper clip maximizer, things like that. I'll briefly recap my component of the first two, which is that humans are a social species that has arrived here in 2022 as a self-organized economic system. That, as individuals, as small businesses, as corporations, as nation states, we are optimizing financial surplus that's tethered to energy, which is highly tethered to fossil energy, which we're drawing down 10 million times faster than it was sequestered. And there's waste that is not included in our economic prices. And so when you talk about climate change or overpopulation or some of these issues, those are all downstream. Those are symptoms of the core problem. The core issue is a biological-social

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species finding a bolus of fossil sunlight that has boosted our goods and services and economic output for a brief time in history. And embedded in there... I expect we'll get into this... is everything in our economic system requires energy, materials, and technology. And so how those three things combine to create productivity and wealth has been the driver of our system.

Nate Hagens (00:07:59):

My view is we have two possible pathways forward. Actually, only one, but they will converge at some point. The first pathway is that we continue to innovate and either develop new technology or new access to energy and resources. We continue to grow the size of the human economy globally and we grow it enough that we're able to service and maintain the prior financial claims and we thus kick the can. That would be good for the human economy. Probably would be bad for the natural world. The second path is the one that I think is becoming more imminent, which is that our technology, our central banks, our innovation, are not enough to overcome the depletion of the high quality, low entropy energy and materials. And, therefore, we have a date that our financial claims on reality end up re-tethering to our actual physical reality. That is what my work is focused on is how to have humans, individuals and groups and governments, meet that future halfway. And so that's kind of my ecological, energy material, human behavior, anthropological view of the human predicament. Handing the mic to you. How does this match? How would you say things differently? Where do you disagree? Lay it on me.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:09:58):

I hope that people are watching this after having watched the previous ones in the series and that you'll put the links to those in the show notes here. And if not, maybe pause this one and go back. Those other ones will be a better starting use of time because I want to reference concepts that we constructed in there. Because the story the way you just retold it actually only makes deep sense if somebody has what we discussed in the first episode, really understanding Jevons paradox and why the traditional idea of how we innovate our way out with efficiencies doesn't solve the issue. I'll assume those concepts are familiar.

Nate Hagens (00:10:45):

I'll just pause you right there. That's part of the challenge of our work, isn't it? Because there is never a one hour thing that we could just say, "Here it is." These things are all nuanced. And the human brain doesn't like nuance. The human brain generally likes certainty. This story that we're telling is not only nuanced but complex and it takes a long time to unpack. That's why we're doing four of these.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:11:14):

I think evolutionary psych is a very riddled field. It's very interesting, but very riddled because we study humans who've been ubiquitously conditioned, mostly in the kind of weird model, and then we take that to be human nature. And then we try to describe why we are biologically oriented to be that way. It's easy with reductionism to say, "See, here's this gene that correlates or something," but this is why I like looking at different cultures, where there's a difference in the median of an important quality, difference

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in the distribution, across the whole culture. Because it shows it's not just an outlier person. It's actually a different development.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:11:55):

I think we might have even talked about this before. You have cultures that were radically more violent and radically more peaceful over fairly long periods of time in large populations and also ones that had much higher value on the quality of education ubiquitously. The Jewish culture is a very interesting example because even in it, the embedding environments, the education level and the pogroms, low economic status, low access to public education, whatever, was still very high relative to the embedding environment, in which case things like the capacity for... The value system on attention and nuance and whatever can be developed.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:12:35):

Fortunately, I don't hold that human nature is inexorable part of our problems, but a lot of human conditioning to develop the capacities that nature makes possible, but not a given is an important part of it. And I will say that it is true culturally... I just watched one of those dreadful things last night where the interviewer goes around and asks average American citizens, or what's supposed to represent average American citizens, which state Utah is in and they have no idea... and they think Africa's a country... to kind of indicate how dumb the population is. Obviously, they're taking outlier dumb cases and presenting them... or uneducated cases and presenting them as more median than they are. But I think it's important to understand that the things that we're going to suggest, especially in the next episode, are deeply informed by thoughts on human nature and the capacity for it to be able to meet requisites with different conditioning environments.

Nate Hagens (00:13:38):

Agreed. My point... Perhaps nuance was the wrong word. My point is that, in today's internet age, things that are short and concise and things that are certain, an absolute... Climate change is going to kill us all or climate change is a hoax. Those things get more views, more attention seconds to use your language, than something that's, well, it could be this and it depends on this and those nuanced assertions.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:14:12):

So, this is interesting. I think this is... Obviously, that's something about the way the brain, the neurophysiology and psyche together, are being conditioned by tech and culture and the economy together. And obviously, we're looking very specifically at things like the way that Facebook and platforms like that, trying to optimize time on site and engagement, identify that the stickiest things keep people from bouncing and those happen to be the limbically hijacking things, so use literally personalized AI-level technology to double down on the worst traits in humans at a multi-billion person, kind of trillion dollar scale. That's not our inexorable nature. That's our nature being conditioned for a specific purpose. But it is something we have to overcome and that we have to work with here. I think this goes to the topic you were asking of... Thinking about grand narratives just in general, being able

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to think about the whole well enough that we can think about solutions even to parts that don't mess up other things, the minimum required complexity of just reality as such that we do have to recondition ourself to be able to seek instantaneous certainty and in instantaneous solutions less and be able to take the time to go deep enough in the thing that you really get the insights of what the many different causes are and not a singular cause. And what solutions-

Nate Hagens (00:15:39):

Is that a skill like meditation? How does someone develop that?

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:15:51):

When we're talking about the social media thing, and obviously this is not only social media, there are different kinds of reward circuits. This is also why it's interesting to think about it in terms of brain and evolutionary biology versus conditioning. There are one-marshmallow reward circuits and there are two-marshmallow reward circuits. I'll assume people know the two-marshmallow experiment. The one-marshmallow reward circuits, when you have an economy that makes a lot of those available... which evolution didn't make a lot of one-marshmallow reward circuits available.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:16:28):

Typically, you had to actually perform evolutionarily relevant work to get rewards of various kinds. One of the things that we've been able to do and that, specifically, economics has incentivized is being able to take the thing that there's an evolutionary reward attached to and strip it from the work that you would have to do to get it to make something that sells better. That's what the supply side is. The supply side is incentivized to drive demand, right? We've talked about this before. What fast food is to food. I didn't have to hunt or gather or whatever and I just get a concentration of salt, fat, and sugar with maximum palatability stripped of fiber and micronutrients. It hits all of the dopaminergic reward centers, but neither has transcendent nor did it actually require any evolutionary activity of my body. That's pretty much the same thing that porn is to actual sex, which involves intimacy and relationship and lots of things like that. And it's the same thing-

Nate Hagens (00:17:28):

So, we're getting the payoffs without the work in our culture.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:17:35):

Without the work and without the actual, even deeper, nutrients. Without the deeper fulfillers. If I'm hungry and I crave McDonald's, there's this fascinating thing where people who die of diseases of obesity are actually also dying of certain types of micronutrient starvation. Because every time they eat more stuff and they get filled with calories and micronutrients, they're actually not getting trace minerals. They're not getting phytonutrients. And so then the hunger is even deeper. It's not a real satisfier. It's a pseudosatisfier. Not only are they not doing the work, they're also not getting the deeper thing that... The salt/fat/sugar was evolutionarily bound to the other micronutrients that were needed. And the same thing in terms of people don't get a sense of deep intimacy and connection and the

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meaningfulness of life from porn that they would from an actual intimate relationship. They don't get it from social media that they would from real friendships. The real friendships mean I can't just be an asshole and then bail. I actually have to work through all the human conflict, which means I have to look at how I contributed to it, which means I have to become a better person, but it's hard.

Nate Hagens (00:18:42):

Bringing it back to the original question... In ancestral times, we would've been sitting around a campfire, hashing out the complex problem that we faced and so our brain power wasn't a limiter there, but what's happening now is two things. Number one, the situation is unbelievably complex, and it can only be understood in an individual mind. You can't get a climate expert, an energy expert, an AI expert, and a psychologist in a room and each of them opine on their part of the meta-crisis and then assume that everyone understands everything. It has to be assembled in an individual mind and then, hopefully, you'll grow the number of those minds. But first of all, it's complex. And second of all, we're being bombarded by Facebook and other things competing for things that are not relevant to our future. That are not giving us a full, healthy experience, both calorically and mentally and otherwise.

Nate Hagens (00:19:52):

So, that's kind of what I meant, buzz. I've been doing this longer than you have, for 20 years, and finally, the real world... I mean, for better or worse, the real world is catching up to this story. More people are trying to understand it because they recognize something is quite wrong with our current cultural stories. It took these things happening in real time for that awareness. But I'm just observing that. I know that these things are difficult to be simplified and said clearly in a short bit of time. Here, I've already spent our first 18 minutes on a sidetrack. But keep going, my friend.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:20:36):

There's actually something that you said about the must be processed in a single human mind that's important and I want to come back to. But just to make sense of the detour and why I was mentioning the thing in food and online relationships and all those areas... There's a hyper-normal stimulus that is separated from the rest of what made it evolutionarily relevant. That's the one-marshmallow reward circuit rather than the two-marshmallow reward circuit that involves some self-application for some kind of delayed and healthier gratification. That obviously is also the case with the kind of reward circuits associated with sense-making and understanding. The one-marshmallow reward circuits are to get certainty very quickly without the work of actually trying to study and understand the situation and just-

Nate Hagens (00:21:25):

Ah. So, that certainty is a one-marshmallow. That makes sense.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:21:31):

And so I know what in-group I'm a part of because we're all outraged at the terrible Trumpers or the dumb libtards, whatever it is, on the other side. I know what in-group I'm a part of and I feel safe

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because there's lots of us and we're really certain and we're really sanctimonious. And I get that feeling of... There's a false sense of identity and esteem and kind of the Maslow's need sense, which is sanctimony. I get to feel esteem because I feel so obviously smarter than the dumb ones who think the other wrong thing. I also get to feel the security that is associated with feeling certain even though it's a false certainty. And so I would say those are... The need for belonging and the need for security and the need for esteem are all getting hijacked. Getting turned into political warfare in a way that is useful for political parties and people who want to sell their wares and whatever else it is. But those are all the one-marshmallow reward circuits of like, wait, did I actually read all of the literature on climate change in-depth or on vaccines or on whatever it is and really come to sense about this on my own or did I get a sense of certainty really prematurely and really kind of handed to me?

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:22:49):

Similarly, when you're saying what are the skills underneath it, I think the skill of... The quality of earnestness in our desire to understand the reality we live in and the earnestness associated with a pure desire for clear understanding as well as a desire to be effective. And the recognition that, if my map is wrong, I'm not going to navigate well, especially if I am falsely certain. And then the willingness to sit in uncertainty for a lot longer. The willingness to not be part of an in-group that is certain. The willingness to let go of the moral righteous superiority and to sit in the uncertainty of that so that I can, without bias, actually come to make progressively better sense of the world. And then to still never get certain because there's always more stuff that I don't even know that I don't know that's going to continue to-

Nate Hagens (00:23:39):

But isn't that a really high bar? To reject certainty and sit with uncertainty and sit outside of your in-group? Isn't that a rare human that can do that?

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:23:51):

Statistically rare in the current environment? Yes. Requiring genetics everybody doesn't have? No. Now, we could say that's not possible for everybody, in which case we should say democracy is no longer relevant. We should get rid of democracy because having a bunch of people that are falsely certain, and angrily righteous about it, trying to do some system of open governance is obviously not going to work well, in which case we should find a small number of people and make them the new nobility. That's the Chinese answer, right? In the current environment. There are other groups that are working on that. If you want an open society where everyone gets to participate in choice-making, then everybody has to do a good job of sense-making. To do a good job of sense-making and meaning-making. What is really meaningful here and what is really going on here? If you want anything like a democratic or open society, the minimum required investment is authentic, deep informed-ness about the nature of the issues, which also requires adequate educated-ness to be capable of that.

Nate Hagens (00:24:58):

I personally fully agree with that as you know, but I think that is a minority view probably.

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Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:25:07):

Well, I think it's a minority of people that think about what the prerequisites of a democracy to really function well in a complex world. It's a minority of people that even think about theory of governance. I don't know that many people would really disagree with it if the logic was presented.

Nate Hagens (00:25:25):

Okay. I've kind of already changed the outline of this conversation, which was, of course, with you and I probably inevitable. You wanted to put a pin in the whole meta-narrative can be understood in an individual mind. You had something to say there.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:25:45):

That's actually really important because one of the things that I would say... One of the fundamental aspects of the meta-crisis, if you want to call it that, is that for us to be able to coordinate lots of human activity in a big corporation or a military or whatever, we need to be able to decompose complex tasks into a bunch of small tasks, everybody do those, and recompose the small tasks. So, we divide up understanding the world into the natural sciences and the social sciences and then the natural sciences and the biology and chemistry and then biology into ecology and microbiology and whatever. The idea that we can then somehow recompose that. But in doing so... and this is kind of key to reductionism is we convert the complex to the complicated. We convert the self-organizing nature of nature to some taxonomy that you can separate thinking. You can understand the parts and that the parts are not fundamentally also defined by their relationship to each other.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:26:57):

And so, whenever that happens, we can optimize for a part without realizing that it's at the expense of another part that is outside of our domain of study. This is why we end up getting iatrogenic medicines where we look at the cause of the disease in this very narrow way because we had to split up the complexity of the body into gastroenterology and oncology and neurology and et cetera. Then, we say, "Well, you have high cholesterol, so we're going to give you a statin or you have this, so we're going to give you that." That thing produces side effects in other parts of the body. They didn't look into the deeper cause across the systems. That's why a complex chronic disease doesn't actually have cures. Because we don't understand them because you have things that start in the gut and then affect the immune system and then affect the nervous system. You have to understand those complex causations.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:27:49):

The same is true with... Can you fix the environment without understanding industry and infrastructure and economics and human political theory? It's all deeply connected. When you decompose it and you try to solve the problems in isolation, you end up just moving the problem somewhere else. And so the need for... Of course, no one person can understand everything, but they can seek to understand in a way that has more cognizance of the depth of interconnectedness. That's the only way to be able to do something like any degree of specialization that is not itself part of the problem.

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Nate Hagens (00:28:27):

Let's go into my second question that I had planned for you now and get back to your changes and edits to my systems overview. Why is it that, when we go to a conference or there's a presentation or something, the larger fly up high enough and look down at the topography of the human predicament... Why there is so much pushback from people who are single issue, focused on social justice or inequality or climate change or Bitcoin or politics, and yet, like you just said, you need to look at how all this stuff fits together in order to see the right map of our future. Why is it so difficult? What is happening socially here and how might it be overcome or at least steered so we can get more people looking at... squinting and seeing roughly what a more accurate systems map would look like?

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:29:45):

The answer is begged in the question itself. Let's say that someone starts to understand climate change and understand the significance of that issue portends to all life. And then they look at how long people have understood this and how long they've worked on it and that it's not making progress. It by itself seems like an overwhelmingly large and bordering on impossible task. And so critical. Existential. Why would anyone move any attention to anything other than just move this thing forward, right?

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:30:22):

Similarly, let's say that you witnessed firsthand what happens inside of a factory farm or the clear cutting of rainforests in an area. The idea that anyone else wants to go up to some higher, highfalutin, abstraction place that seems kind of academic when these orangutans are burning to death as the Indonesian forests are getting cut down to make fucking paper bags... The realness of the issues, the imminence of the issues... If you live in a ghetto and you're focused on social justice because you have a direct relationship with what the police are like and institutional racism is like and what redlining is like and those things and then you hear something like these talks, you're like, we fucking live in existential risk every day. Just walking around with our skin color with the police around is an existential risk every day and you want to talk about fundamental problems of world views? Come live in our world.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:31:27):

It's easy to understand why anyone who is touching something... The existential risk for people in the Ukraine is not a hypothetical issue in the future, right? Or for people in Syria. And so what you and I are doing is a position of privilege in a way that we aren't in Ukraine or we aren't in the ghetto or we aren't in a rainforest that's being clearcut, where our way of life is being imminently destroyed. We're able to look at all those things and have our heartbreak from every single one of them and be like, fuck, all of those are existential for some people and some life, some animals, and all of them also portend patterns that could be existential or catastrophic for everything. And none of them seem to be getting much better.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:32:13):

Maybe more on-the-ground activism of that type isn't actually going to cut it. Maybe something else is actually required and maybe we're wrong. Maybe we're wrong. That's an important point. But that's kind

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of how I came to it. I'm guessing that you might have had a similar story of I can't actually turn away from any of these issues. Once I've been exposed enough, I can't turn away from them. And I also don't think any of them are getting better, so I think the fundamental approach is missing something. Maybe there's something about the deeper structures that all those problems are symptoms of that, unless we understand it, we actually can't solve any of them. And if we do understand it, maybe we can do something more fundamentally effective everywhere.

Nate Hagens (00:32:55):

That's exactly my view. My observation to you... and we shared a couple Voxers on it last week or two weeks ago... was that, since I feel that so deeply and viscerally and almost spiritually, I expect that other people, when they see the connections and the underlying structure, will feel the same way I do and I'm often disappointed with that.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:33:25):

But it's like... I can't feel what it's like to be in an indigenous tribe living in the Amazon and then actually have mining companies or logging companies come in and devastate my whole world and have the petrol dumped in where everybody gets cancer from the water. I can't feel that if I don't have some grounding in it. I got to go there and be with them. And, still, I'll only get a little bit of it. I can't really feel what it's like to be a mother in Ukraine right now. I can kind of get a sense, but we have to ground in it to get it.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:33:59):

The same thing is true. If you and I are sharing stories where we've spent years and years in data and abstract thought about it, of course, nobody else is going to be able to get all of that without some grounding in it. Then, it's just our job to say, all right, what is the best one? Is it even relevant for everybody? It'll be relevant for some people and not others. Other people doing a better job with the issues that they're already connected to is the right thing. We want to just move our attention to say is there anything from our domain of focus that could help them with that thing that they're focused on because what they're doing is critical. Sometimes, if being able to work on more fundamental systemic kinds of change is important, then it's like, all right, how do we actually help the concept but also the experiential grounding of it to land? And it's a process. This is the two-marshmallow thing. In the same way we would like other people to not jump to certainty too quickly, we need to also... and they would go through a process of sense-making... we also need to go through a process of people's sense-making with them. And it takes some time.

Nate Hagens (00:35:02):

Okay. I'm with you on that. Going back to the original choreography-

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:35:13):

The one thing I wanted to share here about worldviews and meta-narratives real quick and then we can go back... If you would have somebody on your team put in the show notes the conversations between

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David Bohm and Krishnamurti, the link to that... Some of the most beautiful things ever recorded on video that I watched and influenced me growing up. They were in this very deep inquiry about what is the fundamental nature of the problems in the world and what is the fundamental nature of human conflict and poor human choices. They both shared really insightful frames on it. Krishnamurti's was... He said the highest stage of intelligence is to observe without evaluation, meaning we actually don't see the world. We see the world through the very limited lens through which we meaning-make it. If you can see the world, if you can sense more deeply, then you can do better sense making. But I can't sense-make stuff I didn't even take in and I'm not going to take it in if I'm pushing it through filters too quickly.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:36:16):

So, that's very relevant, but I'm actually going to emphasize the one Bohm shared here. Bohm said the fundamental cause of all the problems in the world, environmental war all the way down to family conflict, is what he called a fragmented consciousness. He talked about wholeness and the implicate order. Because remember. He studied with Einstein. Einstein said it's an optical delusion of consciousness to believe there are separate things. There is, in reality, one thing we call universe. It's such a deep thing to think about what Einstein was saying because it's like, I think of myself as a separate human a lot of times, but what am I without the Sun? I don't exist at all. What am I without the electromagnetic field? I don't exist. What am I without the higgs boson? I don't exist. What am I without plants or algae or the biosphere or the ozone layer. Me as a separate thing is actually a misnomer. It doesn't even exist. It's what Einstein called a delusion of consciousness to believe that there are parts that... Just because there's distinction, we think they're separable. And they're not separable.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:37:20):

Then, of course, in that delusion, we can try to optimize for a part at the expense of something else, either on purpose or without knowing it, and we cause a lot of problems. If you do it without knowing it, we call it mistake theory and externalities. If you do it intentionally, we call it conflict theory. War, oppression, whatever. So, David Bohm said the underlying cause of all the problems is not perceiving from wholeness first. And it's so true that the generator function of the generator function, the deepest thing, starts there. Which is, if you think about it in terms of I can try to benefit myself in the moment at the expense of my future self, that's the one-marshmallow activities. But that's the connection to my temporally momentary self and not to the wholeness of myself across time. And so the addictive hit in the moment that messes up my future life is a theory of trade offs based on not actually seeing the wholeness of myself across time.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:38:23):

I can try to benefit one part of myself at the expense of another part, which is all of our internal conflicts, or myself relative to someone else, advantaging myself relative to them is traditional conflict, or I try to advantage somebody else at my own expense, martyring and co-dependence, which ends up creating resentment and passive aggressiveness and problems, or my in-group relative to an in-group or my species relative to the biosphere. When you recognize the interconnectedness, you see that all of

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those are short-term pump and dumps. And that, if you see the interconnectivity of the whole thing, none of those parts can authentically and enduringly be optimized independent of all the other ones. We can get into how we do this systems framing, and we should, but I hold, in terms of the deepest way to look at it, is that particular pattern of perception and identity.

Nate Hagens (00:39:16):

Two comments. One, that was trippy. Two, you made me think that maybe instead of refining and simplifying the meta-narrative so that more people can understand it, which is my vocation right now, it may be more productive to boost the number of humans that are in a place where they perceive their role as a whole... as part of the whole, like you were saying. I mean, we need orders of magnitude more humans from that cognitive development space that are able to see that that's more important than, hey, there's climate change, there's energy depletion, there's nuclear, the AI, all that stuff.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:40:06):

It might seem like I'm forcing things as a fit here, but I believe that the ancient wisdom traditions had wise people that saw similar things and encoded them differently. It's said by many Vedic philosophers that the Bhagavad Gita, the great kind of scripture, one of them, of Hinduism, chapter two, verse 48 is fundamental. Established in yoga. Perform action. Yoga means union with all that is, "yogastha kuru karmani" is the quote. And it says, "Established in yoga, or union with all that is, from the place where you recognize that your existence doesn't exist without everything else and from the place where you cognitively but also experientially get that, where there's an intimacy with all life, and act from there. Spontaneous right action emerges from that place." When, in the Bible, it says, "Seek ye first the kingdom and all these things shall be added on to you," the place at which everything is sons and daughters of the same reality, the place at which there is a sense of the sacredness of all life in the union with it, then right action starts to be informed from there. I do think it is a different orientation from which sense-making and meaning-making happen differently and inform choice-making differently.

Nate Hagens (00:41:28):

Well, I'm beginning to get a suspicion that we may have an episode four and five, but let me just ask you a follow-up to that. You know me pretty well by now. I have very limited experience with psychedelics. I had a magic mushroom omelet on Koh Samui, Thailand. I remember an 18-inch tall Jesus Christ running up my leg and I have not really done it since. But I do have spiritual epiphanies being in nature and feeling that oneness that I'm told happens on ayahuasca or some of these other psychedelics. Mushrooms. Some of my most mystical experiences in life are seeing the vibrant green in the trees and the birds and the insects. I felt the connection then and I felt my heartbreak all along because I think some of the costs of our economic system are back loaded. As we bend and hopefully not break, some of these things are going to get worse before they get better. I live with that... you could call it trauma or grief or something... every day, but that also motivates my work and the things that we're discussing.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:42:53):

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You can't just get the cognitive model across to people because that's not even where it came from. Why did you do the work to get the cognitive model? It came from that experience of sacredness and interconnectedness and the heartbreak. That's what actually motivates the desire to figure out how to serve the thing and protect the thing better. It's not just the understanding that resulted from what drove that work that has to come across to people. It's the facilitation of those experiences.

Nate Hagens (00:43:23):

How do you merge that all together in a productive way?

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:43:30):

Well, first, the fact that you said you're inquiring into psychedelics but that you just had experiences in nature... Psychedelics are one way to access non-ordinary states of consciousness. You can do it with deep time in nature, with fasting, with meditation, with breath work, with lots of things. I think psychedelics can be profound tools, but I also think they can be one-marshmallows to spirituality, where you get the high state hit without any of the work of really communing with nature or learning to calm the mind. Getting a false sense of knowingness independent of some of the other important parts. So, the depth of time in nature I generally prefer.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:44:17):

This is actually something I want to say because people ask me this and I'm sure they ask you this sometimes. In CBT, cognitive behavioral therapy, there is a very popular term called catastrophizing. That people end up having more psychological pain and drama in their life because they anticipate the worst possible things that don't end up happening. There's that Mark Twain quote, "I've suffered of great many terrible things in my life and a few of them actually happened," meaning most of the great, terrible things are shit we just made up that never happened and we suffered from them anyways. CBT tries to help people get over catastrophizing. I've noticed that many people who focus on catastrophic risk have a catastrophizing disposition and it happens in other areas of their life. The gift of it is it makes them think through possible catastrophes for the world better than most people, so they can be protectors. Awesome. But it also has some pretty big downsides in that they oftentimes catastrophize their own personal life and relationships in ways that makes it hard for them to be collaborated with because they have a hard time trusting people because they catastrophize that other people will always fuck them over or whatever else it is.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:45:24):

And so for what it's worth, I don't have a catastrophizing disposition. I actually have a very optimistic disposition. I got interested in catastrophic risk as a byproduct of that same thing. Of a very local, small scale love of these animals and then the heartbreak at what happened. Love of these environments, a sense of sacredness of life, and then that it was being harmed. I just wanted to solve that local issue. And then I started to understand that local issue wasn't just local. And then I got to start to understand, fuck, it's not just factory farms on cows, it's factory farms on lots of animals, which also goes along with clear cutting and then overfishing of the oceans. And then it just kept expanding. So, then... All right.

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Man. What other great horrors are there that need tended to, but that are only horrific because life is beautiful? If life wasn't beautiful, if those cows lives weren't sacred, I wouldn't give a shit. I'd just be like, fine, let it happen. Let it burn down. If the Amazon didn't... If there wasn't something sacred about all the life there, I'd be like, I don't care.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:46:31):

And so the anger at the people who are hurting it or the heartbreak or the fear is the epiphenomena of the fact that it's intrinsically meaningful and beautiful for everybody. And so it's important for them to remember that and realize, hey, the only reason I'm scared or pissed off is because there's something I really love. And then how do I come back into a direct relationship with what is sacred to me and how do I be of best service? Is the anger the right way or do I actually want to come back into the sense of love and beauty and sacredness and be more for than against? So, it's not like one has to have some perverse obsession with doom porn to want to focus on AI risk and climate risk and economic risk and nuclear risk. When one is wanting to serve life and then they think about all the things that are going on, it can make natural sense to study those things but from a fundamentally different place inside.

Nate Hagens (00:47:32):

Wow. So, here's another question I didn't intend on asking you. I gave you my two-minute elevator pitch of my story. I think we are headed for... As you know, I call it a great simplification. When our economic output is no longer able to continue to grow at the scale that our cultural and financial expectations have given it. And we're going to have to respond to that. Now, since I've had this-

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:48:08):

You know I agree with you on that frame. What we do about it we can get into...

Nate Hagens (00:48:16):

That's a point on our original plan. What's been surprising to me... and maybe you'll have some thoughts on this given what you just said... is, six months into this podcast and after my movie and some of my other videos, I fully expected to be grilled and have stones cast at me from finance MBAs and economists and technologists. And there have not been that many of those. Probably because they're just not paying attention. That could be Occam's razor. But I have gotten a lot of stones, surprisingly, from people that think I'm too optimistic. You don't understand. We're headed for collapse. There's nothing we can do. Humans are going to go extinct by 2050. You don't understand climate. We're already on runaway towards Venus and there's nothing we can do. As soon as global dimming kicks in, it's game over. All these things. Anyone that's paying attention to the story that thinks collapse is not at least a reasonable possibility isn't paying attention. But I think it's a possibility. It's not a likelihood. And I want to do everything I can to make the future better than the default. But it's very fascinating to me that most of the pushback that I've gotten personally in my inbox... I mean, there's a lot of congratulatory supportive stuff, but most people are poking holes saying I'm too optimistic, which is kind of ironic.

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Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:49:56):

Okay, this is really interesting. I want to share a personal story about it, but first... Most people have had the experience at some point in their life when they are really suffering about something. Somebody else tells them to just cheer up or be optimistic or it's not that bad and they feel much worse. This is like the gaslighting phenomena, where especially someone is... Say somebody is dealing with someone in their life who they know is lying to them and whatever. And someone else says, "No, it's not really happening or it's not that bad or why don't you take responsibility for it?" Of course, people should take responsibility for what they can, but a superficial assessment.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:50:44):

There's a place that, when someone's really in pain, they just actually want someone else to feel it with them. They don't want to be made wrong and they don't want it to be lessened. Because the thing that makes the pain even worse is the loneliness of no one else can hold this with me. Sometimes the optimism prematurely seems like a spiritual bypass to prevent the grief. They actually just need to be in the grief and they need to know anyone else sees the thing that they see and can feel it with them. Now, of course, there's the separation of the cognitive thinking through it versus the emotional experience. People conflate these and they're not all that clear on it. They're like, "No, it just is this way and I'm not trying to get empathy. I'm just trying to tell you the way it is." I would say, in that place, they're under-discerning about the way internal process works. So, there is a place where there's a space that is needed to not jump to the optimism too quickly and to actually be able to just feel collective trauma and grieve. That then gets to bring us to a state that is capable of saying, without denying any of that or bypassing it, now, what is the space of agency? What is possible to do? Again, this is tricky because we can't do this on a podcast with people. This is deep, embodied, personal work.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:52:13):

So, that was one thing I wanted to say about it. And the other one is... This is totally not where you and I thought we were going to go with this, but this podcast was where we're going. I'll share a spiritual experience I had that was a big part of my process. Like many people, there was a series of life-defining experiences. This was a young one, so it sounds naive and it is. Please give the benefit of the doubt that I think about it in more refined ways than I did when I was 15, but this is 15 year old insight. Because I was homeschooled, I didn't have a curriculum. I got to study whatever I wanted. When I got deeply into... I got into the animal activism stuff when I was nine, but from 12 to 15, I was working with Greenpeace and PETA and whatever, lots of orgs, and just kind of full time studying all of the metrics that I could of species extinction and soil erosion and biodiversity loss and planetary boundaries and all those things. I had enough of a sense of science and math to be able to do some forecasting.

Nate Hagens (00:53:26):

When you were 12 to 15.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:53:33):

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Yeah. But I wasn't doing that in addition to school. That was my school. I was spending all of my time doing that. I came to the conclusion, as unequipped as I was and naive as it was, that self-induced human extinction was inevitable in the relatively near term. Because I was trying to look at the things that were getting better that were adequate to solve the problems and what those curves looked like relative to the points of no return and they just weren't convergent. The things get to points of no return before we get to the adequate solution spaces. And so that brought me to where I think many of those people who wrote to you was. Like, you don't get the math. The math is bad. We're fucked. And, of course, then being unwilling to accept that and wanting to feel some sense of agency.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:54:28):

Again, as an emotionally disturbed but caring and emotionally immature 15 year old, I started thinking about depopulation strategies. Because I'm like, we just can't do it with this many people. The collective ignorance mass is too high. The collective utilization of resources is too high. If there was a lot less people, we could make it. And if we don't, then we'll end up doing things that end up leading to no people and a lot of harm to the rest of the species. So, I started thinking about technological population reduction solutions. This is one of the reasons that I'm concerned about decentralized exponential technologies like tabletop CRISPR and stuff is because I know there are other people thinking about those things and the technology to be able to act on it is getting much easier than it was back all those years ago when I was 15. Even then, I was able to think about some things.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:55:23):

One of the experiences that took me off of that path was... I can't say exactly why it happened, but Bucky Fuller... I heard him say this so many times when I was a kid, but it hit me all of a sudden in a different way. He talked about this example of... That, when a bird is developing inside of the egg, the yolk is what becomes the bird. The egg white is the kind of unrenewable amino acid resource it is using to develop itself. That it is using up an unrenewable resource and it is producing metabolic waste that isn't being processed in its finite little space in a way that is totally self-terminating. The little bird doesn't know it's inside of an eggshell because it doesn't have a reference frame. If we were to anthropomorphize... which, of course, the little bird is not doing this... but if we were to anthropomorphize being the little bird embryo and they're developing and it recognized at a certain point, man, I'm running out of egg whites here and I'm creating shit in my space, what am I going to do? I don't know. Just keep on eating. I guess we'll figure it out later. Because what else can I do?

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:56:38):

You get to a certain point. Runs out of egg white. It just happens to be that evolution made it such that the amount of egg white was exactly what it needed to be able to then be at a place where it had a beak that could break free from the shell that could then also eat seeds on the outside that its little developing GI tract and underdeveloped beak couldn't have done. Now, it's eating seeds that its poop fertilizes and it's part of this process. But the developmental phase of it was unsustainable because it was a developmental phase. Just a fetus inside of a womb, if it continued there forever, it would obviously kill the mom and kill itself. But it goes through this 40-week, for human development, and

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then it goes through a discrete phase shift. The breaking out of the eggshell is different than the development in the eggshell and different than the development afterwards. And the birth process is different than the 40 weeks of development in utero and then different than the post-umbilical development afterwards. The same with the caterpillar to the chrysalis to the butterfly.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:57:37):

I just saw all of these cases of developmental periods, where if you were to just take their trajectory and forecast it forward, you would just see self-termination. But there was a forecast and then there was a discrete phase shift. And it took a minute, right? The birth might take 50 hours or 20 hours or whatever it takes and the chrysalis takes a little while. But I was getting this experience that all the forecasting I was doing was a developmental period for humanity. There was a discrete phase shift that I couldn't see possible. Of course, sometimes the baby dies in birth or the mom dies in birth. It's not a guaranteed thing. And so how to not just look at changing the shape of the curves, but how to look at what types of discrete phase shifts could occur and what a world on the other side of certain phase shifts might look like and how to facilitate that became a different way for me to think about the future than just a continuation of these curves and trying to change the shape of it.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:58:39):

But one of the things it did was... I had not studied discrete phase shifts. I hadn't studied how, in lots of systems, you have a movement towards a certain kind of far from equilibrium point and then a discrete phase shift to something totally different. I didn't even know that was a structure I wasn't factoring when I thought I was forecasting well. So, I had a false sense of certainty based on not understanding some phenomena, but understanding other ones well, but I didn't know the ones I didn't know. That false sense of certainty had me thinking from a moral place about depopulation strategies. One of the things that I find is so scary about utilitarian calculus is how much... If my goal is harm reduction and I'm willing to commit some harm in a trolley problem to keep a worse harm from happening, but if I get false certainty that X worse harm is for sure going to happen, it justifies me doing super fucked up stuff so long as it's less.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (00:59:39):

I feel like, and I know from my own experience, it is really easy to come to catastrophic certainties that just aren't true. I remember everybody's concern about Y2K. I remember the concern about the Cuban missile crisis and 2012 and a zillion things like it. It's interesting how bad both our catastrophic and our hopeful predictions are historically. It doesn't go the good or the bad way we think it's going to go. And so I would love if the people who are really concerned about the world issues would recognize that they end up having the same premature certainty biases that the optimists have on the other side. That the Trump supporters and anti-Trumpers have. And that it's a lack of a certain kind of cognitive, emotional, spiritual maturity needed to just keep sitting with the uncertainty of maybe it's all catastrophic, but maybe it isn't. And if maybe it isn't, maybe there's shit you really should do and maybe you don't know what the right thing to do is. That's actually harder than just saying, wow, it's all fucked. I'm just going

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to be one of the mature people who accepts it. It's harder to be like, I actually don't know. And so I'm obligated to work on it as best I can in the presence of still not knowing.

Nate Hagens (01:00:56):

You did make me cry on our last podcast with your story about the plow and animism. This was really profound, what you just said. And I kind of agree with it because you're describing kind of my place. I've veered towards certainty at times, but the more I know and the more I talk with people like you, there are lots of variables. The whole freaking thing is moving every day and events change and our understandings change and I don't know what to do. I'm reasonably confident what's not going to happen. I don't know what's going to happen. My role is I want to pass the baton to more prosocial humans that can take a decent chunk of this on board and play a role. The other thought I had is, when I was 15, I was freaking watching Gilligan's Island and Scooby-Doo, so I already respected you before this, but now I even have a higher level of respect for you that you were doing this when you were 12 to 15. I just can't imagine that. I mean, I first started really caring about this when I was like 31.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:02:06):

I was obviously homeschooled, exposed to certain things, which I think is pretty common for... I mean, anybody would respond to the things they're exposed to. The earlier part of that journey was something so random. My family was in a gas station in Iowa and a... Actually, in Texas. We were on a trip. A tractor trailer pulled in and it was a cattle truck. It was a taking cows from a factory farm to slaughterhouse. The ones with the holes in the side for air. The ventilation holes. I went up and I looked in the holes and the cow right near me was missing an eye. There was blood and abcess coming from it. It was a terrible stench. All the cows were obviously terrified. There was feces all over them. It was just like an Auschwitz scene, you know?

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:03:05):

I grew up eating meat, including from factory farms. McDonald's, whatever. Just no cognizance. I just didn't put it together. But I also grew up loving animals. That cognitive dissonance that so many people have where they don't get, wait, dog, cow, not that different. I asked my parents why those animals were in that condition. They said, "That's where the hamburgers come from," and my world just broke. I never ate animals again after that day. I read Diet for A New America the next day. Starting the next day. And then I couldn't think about anything else. Because I'm like, wait, we're just focused on our own little life going well and there are billions of other sentient beings that are just being completely fucking tortured and then murdered in a tortuous way. How can my... What's wrong with my species? How can I just be focused on my own personal life and be stoked when that's happening? I can't. You'd have to be so disconnected that you're a sociopath in a way to be just be focused on your own life and stoked.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:04:15):

That was the beginning of feeling very suicidal about these things for me. Because I'm like, this planet is... The way that we're operating is so fucked. I just can't be complicit with it. I want out. It doesn't make sense. And then I'm like, well, that doesn't help any of the animals and so I can't do that. And then I'm

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like, but I also can't just feel like my life is a success with that being the case. I can't kill myself, but for my life to succeed, theirs has to be better. So, how do we fix factory farms? Of course, that was the first one. Then, it went from factory farms to also whaling and then overfishing and then clear cutting of the forest. And then it started to look at extreme poverty of people. It just grew. But it's that insight of like, there is no way to actually be sane in the world and see it clearly and then just hold our life separate from everything else. The only way through for me is actually, how do we make a more sane, kind, just world? I think different people get exposed to things at different points, but if they have some time and space to feel, it's a very natural human process.

Nate Hagens (01:05:29):

Thank you for that. I feel much the same way. I think I'm older than you, but I matured at a later age than you. And I think maybe that's why we've formed a deep friendship. Because, first of all, we care about the future and we want to influence things to the best of our skills and our networks and our knowledge. But I think it feels good to meet another human who is aware of all these existential risks and the trajectory and the probability distribution of various futures and just admits, yeah, I don't know. It's all awful and I don't know what to do, but let's roll up our sleeves and find some paths forward. Just the existence of that, another human being feeling that, is so buoying to my psychology and my feeling.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:06:31):

Yeah. I think when the people say, hey, you're being falsely optimistic, they're actually needing to feel or longing to feel met in the tragic place they're in. I think you and I have talked about this before. Mark Gaffney is a friend who, the first time talked, after it was clear we resonated for a while, he asked me if I was post-tragic. I asked him what the model was. He was saying there's a kind of pre-tragic optimism that people will have, where they have ideals that have not yet been shattered on the reality of the world. We call it naivete. And then there's the encountering the tragedy of the world and having the ideals shatter and there's a cynicism that can emerge there.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:07:17):

And then there is a post-tragic place that is committed to being in service to the sacredness of life whether you can succeed or not. It's still the right way to... It's still the right hill to die on. That doesn't even need the certainty of success to have it be the right sacred thing to be living that way. And then that also realizes that there is a false certainty of the tragic place. Just like there was a false certainty of the naive place. And that the universe is much bigger than both of those false certainties. And so then it says, cognizant of all the tragedy and cognizant of all the reason to be cynical and holding that, we're still going to look for solutions and still also operate with the sacredness of life at the center. I think that's the task.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:08:11):

It's so interesting because you and I both know we could solve all of these things, make an economic system that doesn't have an embedded growth obligation and closed-loop materials economy powered by regenerative energy and overcome war and bind AI and biotech, and then a solar flare just takes us

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all out in a way that we can't control for shit. And so there is something about just sitting also with the fragility and the impermanence of the whole thing that we just have to hold. When people think about how thin the crust of the Earth is, it's like a ball of lava with a little bitty boat of a thin crust and a tiny, thin atmosphere in a bunch of vacuum outer space right next to a sun that can do solar flares. You're like, we're here at all. We're here at all. That's amazing. Who knows for how long it will be? How do we both serve the continuation of life and be with the profundity and beauty of it in its fragility at the same time?

Nate Hagens (01:09:14):

I don't really feel like going back to the egregore and attention seconds and paper clip maximizer now. If we're going to do that, we're going to-

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:09:26):

I think we can do that next time.

Nate Hagens (01:09:27):

Okay. Given everything that you've just shared, looking ahead to next time, what would you like to say to the listeners to get them on board this way of thinking and to pay attention to our next conversation that we're going to ultimately try to get to the criteria for civilization? In my opinion, that's always two conversations or two things you need to check. One is what is conceptually, technologically, materially possible? And the other is how do we get there from where we are now? Those are separate questions. Yeah, Daniel. You've thrown me for a loop here. I wanted to talk about cognitive-

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:10:25):

I have some thoughts.

Nate Hagens (01:10:27):

... material economy and mesh with your worldview and now I'm at a deeper place. Help me out. Give me your thoughts.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:10:37):

Some of the primary frames that people are related to in from the larger systems that have developed is they're seen as consumers or customers in the market and they are seen as voters, if they're in the US or another democratic country, for the state. They're going to buy a product or not buy a product. They're going to vote yes or no on a proposition or vote for this candidate or that. It's an extremely constrained set of choices that doesn't require them being creative or them understanding well. It's a supply side forcing, it's an institutional forcing, of the choice to be very constrained. So, of course, people have been conditioned that way for so long that they don't even realize that they're just being conditioned that way and that it's not really deep or authentic choice. And so, of course, if we're trying to get people to vote for us rather than the other guy or buy our product because our company is going to solve the industry's problem or whatever it is, we don't have to get them to make sense well. In fact,

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we actually just want to give them quick certainty and outrage to both join our side and get other people to join our side. We'll do the sense-making for you.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:12:00):

Neither you or I are trying to do that. We're not saying go vote for a specific party or a specific proposition or go purchase a thing. We're saying there is a deeper way of being able to make sense of how what seems like a lot of different issues in the world are interconnected, where understanding that gives us a different possibility space with which to think about how to forward. So, it's not oriented to immediate political action in the same way. That doesn't mean that it's not oriented to action, but in a different way. In a deeper way. But it is also much more two-marshmallow. It requires a lot more of the people.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:12:37):

And so a couple things I want to say in terms of where we go next time when we're sharing cognitive models about what about the relationship between our infrastructure and our social structures and our cultures and worldview or superstructure and the biosphere and the nature of the exponential curves and technology... What about those things causes which kinds of problems and what would necessary and sufficient design criteria of a better economic system or a better supply chain or a better culture, educational system, or legal system look like? We have to figure that stuff out.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:13:11):

Everything that we've talked about today that we didn't intend to talk about is from where we approach figuring those things out. Where it's not against the bad guys. It is for the thriving of life. It's not premature certainty of either the naive possibility or the cynical impossibility, but something that has been through both of those and holds a deeper humility about how much is in the unknown unknowns set, including possible solutions. It's a place that doesn't think that we get real security on a little planet with a thin biosphere floating next to a sun that does coronal mass ejections. We just don't get that thing. There is a different emotional way of relating, where the driver of all of it is the *prima facie*, the inherent sacredness of life that happens when you chill the fuck out over all the other agendas and disconnects and are just present with it. Those are the places where, if you come from there, the sense-making and the activity is differently motivated and differently informed.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:14:21):

Now, understanding the models is still really important. This is heart, will, mind all working together. It's pretty easy to see that any two of those three don't work. You get mind and heart and no will and you get really smart, caring academics who feel broken and hopeless at the impossibility of the world. You get heart and will without deep mental frames and you get activists who are willing to go put their life at risk to chain themselves to a boat or whatever, but they don't know how to think through strategy at the scope of what has to change. You put will and mind together but without heart where there's narrow value systems and you get the kind of sociopathic rule that currently runs the world. That knows how to be highly strategic, knows how to be highly agentic, but to serve some narrow interest at the expense of

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somebody else. It takes all three of those together. And so what we're going to be talking about next time is some of the strategic frames or the theoretical frames that inform better strategy. And not a specific strategy, but a kind of meta-strategy. Meaning in whatever domain one happens to be working in as the situation changes. That's where the theoretical frameworks come in.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:15:35):

I think it was Bertrand Russell... I don't remember... Who said something to the effect of, if the only value of knowledge was its immediate, clear utility, then mechanics would be the only thing really worth studying. The reason one studies philosophy is not so much what you immediately do with it but what it can do to you. What it can do to you in the way that you relate to all information and all situations from a deeper place. So, some of the philosophic inquiry that we go into is not that someone now knows, okay, now I know how to fix climate change or the American democracy or Facebook. It's, now, I'm perceiving the world with more nuance and more complexity and from a different place, whereby maybe the local PTA issue that I'm about to deal with, I'll have new insights on. All the things still needed tending. All the local things need tending.

Daniel Schmachtenberger (01:16:36):

There will be some people who are listening who are institutional... who work at major institutions, who are oriented to how do we change the financial system and legal system and regulate tech. Most of the people won't be working in those domains, but that doesn't mean that it's irrelevant to understand the world we live in better. There's a relevance to have a better understanding of the world even if you don't know what to do with it exactly because it can help you perceive differently the situations that you're in and where you can do something with it. So, when we get into these frameworks next time, it's not to give certainty about catastrophe. It's to understand the principles that are driving it well enough that you can see applications of them in all kinds of domains, think about those domains better, and start to get a sense of what adequate solutions at scale might entail.

Nate Hagens (01:17:26):

Excellent. I really look forward to that. I had COVID, we were traveling, so this was a big gap, but maybe we can do that next conversation at the end of August ish. I know you're also traveling. This conversation was completely unexpected and was like an everlasting marshmallow, so I thank you for your wisdom and grace. Yeah. I really value you as a fellow traveler, as a friend, and let's keep going, my friend.

Nate Hagens (01:18:03):

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