

The Great Simplification

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[00:00:00] **Iain McGilchrist:** And the very, very last thing that we need now, is more power. What we need is more wisdom. And if we had sufficient wisdom, then more power would be useful. If we have more power, but not the wisdom required to know how to use it, we cannot help. But destroy ourselves in the world.

[00:00:27] **Nate Hagens:** Joining me today is neuroscientist and philosopher, Dr. Ian McGilchrist for his second appearance on the great simplification. Every generation, in my opinion, we have a few philosophers that cut to the core of the cultural conversation of humanity at that time. I believe Ian is one of such philosophers, and have been greatly impacted.

[00:00:51] By his work, Ian is the quantum fellow of all souls college in Oxford has been a research fellow in neuroimaging at John Hopkins hospital, as well as many other academic positions in the field of psychiatry and neuroscience. He is the author of a number of books, but his best known for the master and his emissary, the divided brain and the making of the Western world, as well as his book on neuroscience, epistemology, and ontology called the matter with things, our brain, And I'm still making it through the, 1800 pages of that book.

[00:01:29] In the previous episode with Ian, we covered an overview of his work on the differences between the left and right hemisphere of the human brain, with the left taking on a more analytical, narrow problem solving role and the right hemisphere being responsible for seeing the holistic, contextual, and relational view of the world.

[00:01:49] We also talked about how that theory connects with things like Like wisdom psychedelics and artificial intelligence. If you haven't given that a watch or listen, I highly recommend that you watch that one first, before the second conversation, it will be linked in the description of the episode.

[00:02:08] Today's episode is a more personal follow up conversation on how Ian's research can influence how we live our everyday lives in search of a more balanced

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and wonder filled life ahead of the Great Simplification, as well as having ripple effects of how we connect with our communities, societies, and the natural world.

[00:02:31] This was a winding discussion of around two hours, covering a myriad of topics from how we use our attention to the importance of Zen, but the central themes of this episode are at the core of this platform, the Great Simplification. How can we expect a wiser and more holistic future, materially less throughput, if we're not implementing those practices in our lives as individuals?

[00:02:58] With that, please welcome my friend, Ian McGilchrist. Sir, Ian, welcome back. Great to see you.

[00:03:06] **Iain McGilchrist:** I didn't know I'd been honored in this way, but thank you. Anyway, it's great to be back with you, Nate.

[00:03:12] **Nate Hagens:** Well, as an American, there's all kinds of, British, citizens that we hear the word, sir, and it doesn't really mean much, but in the.

[00:03:22] Time since I talked to you first 18 months ago, and now I've read a lot more of your materials, though I haven't read them all because it's like 2, 500 pages. And I've listened to your, talks and I've really kind of recognized that your thinking is foundational, to what our species faces. And so when I call you, sir, Ian, I mean it as an honorific.

[00:03:48] Very nice.

[00:03:51] **Iain McGilchrist:** So how are you doing? Pretty well. Thanks. Although it's hard to separate oneself from the condition of the world, isn't it? At the moment. But there we go. Yeah.

[00:04:05] **Nate Hagens:** I when people ask me how I'm doing, I usually say good or quite well. Asterisk. There's an asterisk these days. They usually is. So it was 18 months ago.

[00:04:17] You were on the show and you posted a wonderful, introduction. To, your thinking, but, we unpack quite a bit, the right and the left hemisphere and why, the right hemisphere is generally the center for holistic, contextual, intuitive thinking.

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while the left hemisphere is dominated by analysis, categorization, and kind of narrow minded problem solving.

[00:04:44] And of. Course we needed both in the, environment of evolutionary adaptedness, but now the roles have switched. and the, master, which should be the right hemisphere has become the emissary to the master in our current culture, which is the left brain kind of problem solving categorization.

[00:05:06] so today I wanted to just assume that people know that general context and, take a deeper dive into the situation. That humans and our 10 million other species in the biosphere face. So let me just dive right into it, as a renowned psychiatrist and a brain scientist who spent pretty much your whole career, studying the brains and behaviors of Homo sapiens, a species you and I are both card carrying members of UC modern civilization.

[00:05:40] Not so metaphorically, on your couch, what is your diagnosis? Well,

[00:05:45] **Iain McGilchrist**: there's several ways of thinking about that, I suppose. I would think that this patient who'd come to me was Anxious, very anxious, unsatisfied, depressed, in fact, overstimulated, over involved with his or her own inner life and not enough with a more general vision of life.

[00:06:16] I would think that was the sort of problem, not necessarily an innate problem of narcissism, but that was part of the picture. Yeah. And, Yeah. At another level, I would say that they were, as I believe we all are now, and this helps to explain why we're so unhappy. We're taking on board a vision of ourselves and of the world, which is, so far, a miss and so far short of the reality of who we are, that it is not surprising that we feel unfulfilled, frustrated, depressed, rudderless, and, as though there is no point in things.

[00:06:58] So I, I would see this anxious, depressed patient. I would see that person is overdependent on their left hemisphere's thinking, and I would see them as, in a simple sense, somewhat narcissistic.

[00:07:11] **Nate Hagens**: And when you give that diagnosis, is that like, taking eight billion, personality tests and, getting the average or is that diagnosis you just described to a culture as a whole?

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[00:07:26] **Iain McGilchrist:** Oh, very much the second of those. I mean, I think it's very important, again, as in everything, to see a patient, and in this case, a whole society, holistically, rather than simply scoring them, going back once again to trying to measure things, and, I mean, occasionally that can be very helpful, and I'm not against it at all.

[00:07:50] It tends to be what psychologists, rather than psychiatrists do. and, It has place, but I think that when you're dealing with somebody that's sick, you need to have a holistic human understanding of what it is that's going on for them and why they feel the way

[00:08:08] **Nate Hagens:** they feel. So in our first interview, you said that as a psychiatrist and you've been a practicing psychiatrist most of your, adult life, you usually know very early on, the patient needs to do.

[00:08:23] But the important learning is that they eventually, at some point, had to understand what they had to do. So you telling them solution didn't matter until it was paired with their own recognition? How does this individual therapy map on to the civilizational diagnosis you just gave?

[00:08:42] **Iain McGilchrist:** Well, gosh. I think it's a really crucial point, and I think it's important to, to, emphasize what you've said, which is that people don't hear it when you tell them, when you first meet them, or what you need to do is more of this or less of that.

[00:09:02] And They, and that's because they're not in a place to think like that, to see their problem in the form that you are seeing it. So, it's not just that it's somehow wrong, but I'll buy it and go with it. It's like, it's useless. So, the analogy here is that people want me Very often, and it's a very understandable reaction that they, I paint a picture of the modern world in so many respects as a reflection of the triumph of left hemisphere thinking over more, far more subtle, right hemisphere thinking, black and white, cut and dried, either or, categorical, abstracted, theoretical, but not actually in that place where that is lived experience.

[00:09:57] And they want me to give them some answers. And that's very understandable because with left atmosphere thinking, one of the problems is that you see everything as a series of problems that must have solutions. But I think

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that instead of thinking in this problem solution way, which has not worked, you know, I'm not saying I don't think it's the best way to approach things.

[00:10:25] This. individual problem, individual solution way, I'm saying it is not working, it has not worked, it never will work, because it purports, what it's, what it deals with, as the left hand always does deal with, is an immediate, isolated question or problem. It's the one that helps us get stuff in a situation quickly.

[00:10:49] What we are always dealing with human society and A40 Ori, looking at the complexity of the natural world and even more of the whole of the Earth, we are looking at a complex system in which There isn't a simple cause and effect chain going on. There are many causes for every effect and they interact with one another.

[00:11:15] And you won't get anywhere by simply applying a simple solution. And that's what people are longing for. If only I knew I could do this and everything will be all right. But I could waste your time and mine by saying, do this, but it won't make everything all right because we need to think at a bigger, broader, deeper level.

[00:11:36] We need to think in terms of complexity, and I'm using that term in a technical sense that most people nowadays have heard about. Complex systems are not just complicated systems like there's quite a lot. To them, it's that they act in a different way from a complicated mechanism like a jumbo jet aircraft engine.

[00:11:58] so they require a different kind of approach, a systemic approach in which one's looking more wisely for a shift. of perspective. And I think that what people need is exactly what they get when they enter into therapy. They get an aha moment. And my problem as a very naive young psychiatrist was being able to see the solution in outline, but not allowing them to get the aha moment in which they I see.

[00:12:33] They see something different. And it may actually be the same set of circumstances, just seen from a quite different point of view. It's like that illustration of the duck rabbit. You keep looking at it and thinking it's a duck, but hey, it's actually a rabbit, or whatever it might be. It's that kind of change, and in thinking about this, if I may, Nate, and, I'm rather, tentative in bringing such a, thing into

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the discussion here, because it might sound inappropriate or grand or something, but The distinction, it occurred to me, is very much like the one described where, in the Gospel of St.

[00:13:19] Matthew, where the Pharisees come to Jesus, and, you know, the Pharisees were very concerned with rules and procedures and the legalistic detail, and they said to him, which of the laws is the most important law? So it's almost like saying, so which is the one that I really must obey? And Jesus said, and I can't remember the exact words, but I think it was, Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy soul, and all thy mind.

[00:13:55] And the second commandment is like that. It is, love thy neighbor as thyself. On this, he said, on this hangs all the law and the prophets. In other words, our tendency is to get things back to front, to think the rules, the procedures, the things we do are the important things. But it is the disposition that matters.

[00:14:15] And from that comes, on that hangs all the law and the prophets. Now, what I've struggled to get across. And I keep on trying to find a better way of putting this, because people think, oh, well, that's all very well, but I want something concrete to do now. What I'm trying to say is that simply doesn't work.

[00:14:35] And lots of the problems we have now are actually due to previous attempts to solve a different problem. And they've left us worse off than we were. So what we need to do is to change The way in which we think, it's about the how, not about the what. And that, incidentally, is another hemispheric distinction.

[00:14:56] The left is interested in things, objects. The right is interested in the way in which something is done. Because if you do the same, apparently, In the abstract, the same thing will say the same thing, but with a different heart, a different intention. It changes it completely.

[00:15:15] **Nate Hagens:** Boy, I have so many responses to that.

[00:15:19] so what, percentage of this as a neuroscientist or a psychiatrist, you mentioned people's, belief or wanting assurance that everything is going to be okay. What percent of the opening of, awareness or aha is that they recognize that things are not okay and that it opens them up to a different way of thinking said

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differently, the role of this podcast is to integrate the various foundational tenets of modern civilization, energy, money, environment, human behavior, ecology, all of it.

[00:16:00] And it's pretty clear. There's some serious things wrong. Does a recognition and a facing of that reality bring someone closer to that aha moment, or is it the opposite that it's, I need to know that things are going to be okay. I'm not going to listen to this story. what, are your thoughts on that?

[00:16:21] Well, of course, different people

[00:16:23] **Iain McGilchrist:** will respond in different ways, but I think that, in general, realizing that there is definitely something wrong is a very good first step. And again, one comes back to the psychiatric patient. No patient goes to see a psychiatrist because everything's absolutely fine. And, in fact, one of the first things one wants to do with such a patient is say, well, let's look at some of the things you're doing that tend to lead to the wrong kind of outcome.

[00:16:52] So That's why my most recent book, and probably the book in which I have said most of what I can ever say, is entitled the matter with things because everybody understands that there is something that is the matter with things and you know a subtext is the pun that it has something to do with our obsession with a kind of vision of matter material things that I don't recognize and indeed with things rather than relationships and processes which I believe is what the world is made of so When we talk about things to do, we have to be careful that we're not talking about something that is a left hemisphere.

[00:17:39] I can now relax and I don't need to do any more. What we need is instead to try and shift as many people's understanding. By nothing less than a moment of insight, an aha moment, so that what is required then comes naturally to them, as it does to the patient. The patient says, you know, I, don't want to keep going back to this story, but it was, an eye opener for me when I started, you know, that I would say on the first occasion, mistakenly, I think it would be good if you did X and they go, well, I don't know.

[00:18:16] And they'd go away and not do it. And then after, you know, six months, nine months, a year of therapy and possibly some medication, they come back and

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they say, you know, I suddenly realized what I need to do. It's X. And X was exactly what I said to them when we first met. The difference was that they hadn't had that readjustment of their whole mindset.

[00:18:41] And it's that readjustment of the mindset. that has to happen, the things that one does after that won't be the same things one would have done even if they looked like it before that. So it's to do with how we do things, why we do things, in what spirit we do them, and in a spirit of, I think, You know, of cooperation, of compassion, of the sense of one another, because if we don't have that sense, we're not going to survive.

[00:19:13] None of us can survive, alone. we, you know, we can, we need to either hang together or hang separately.

[00:19:24] **Nate Hagens:** I agree with that. So let me read a book, a quote from your book. what then is attention? The best way I can put it, it is the manner in which our consciousness is disposed towards whatever else exists.

[00:19:40] The choice we make of how we dispose our consciousness is the ultimate creative act. It renders the world what it is. It is therefore a moral act. It has consequences. Love said the French philosopher Louis Lavelle is a pure attention to the existence of the other that you wrote in the matter with things.

[00:20:02] So if our attention brings our experience of the world. into being and determines what I see, it also causes me to not see where my attention is not. So given that, given modern technology and social media and all of the attention hijacking technology, does that technology actually affect our values and our ethics in addition to just being technology that guides us through the day?

[00:20:33] Absolutely, it does. So,

[00:20:38] **Iain McGilchrist:** our culture, both the typical nature of a capitalist culture And the now destabilizing impact of the introduction of AI that we don't entirely understand the full range and consequences of. All of this is about acquiring power. Or in the case of capitalism, money. And money is power.

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[00:21:08] Money is power to make choices. Now, it is all about power. And the very, very last thing that we need now is more power. What we need is more wisdom. And if we had sufficient wisdom, then more power would be useful. If we have more power but not The wisdom required to know how to use it. We cannot help but destroy ourselves and the world.

[00:21:42] So, I'm sorry, I may repeat myself here, but this probably takes You know, some repeating, I'm interested in the philosophy of a German phenomenologist called Max Scheler in the early part of the 20th century, and it doesn't matter too much going into his philosophy, except that it's, he was very much admired by Heidegger, and I think if he'd lived, would have taken the sort of philosophy of Heidegger's into the mainstream.

[00:22:12] I don't know. a much more interesting emotionally and morally rich, realm. Anyway, he suggested that there were tiers of values, and you can think of this as a pyramid, and I put it in, both actually, in the, because I think it's so important, in the master and his emissary and in the matter with things, and at the very lowest level is the level of power and again, already in the 18th century, Lessing, the German philosopher Lessing, said the utility question immediately prompts, well, utility for what?

[00:22:54] And that means, you've got to have some other values. but if you're, we never answer that question. So we just think utility in itself is valuable. Just having more power is good. But the question is, what are we going to use that power for? And here we come to my insistence that what we need is wisdom, not power, that the values with which we exercise that power are of primary importance.

[00:23:21] And what are those other values? Well, he suggested that the next level up was what he called Lebenswerte, which are values of life. And what did he mean by that? He meant things like, nobleness, generosity, of spirit, magnanimity, bravery, and, their opposites, you know, cowardice, small mindedness, and so on.

[00:23:49] But above those was a more important level of values, not that they're not important, but they're less important, than beauty, goodness, and truth. And above those, he called the Geistige Werte, which means the spiritual values or the intellectual values. In German, the word Geist happens to mean both. And then at the top, that's Heilige, the holy.

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[00:24:11] Now, I mean, the story we've been told is that, in a very cynical way, that these values work the other way around. That the holy was invented only so that a caste of priests should be able to wield power over people. That goodness, beauty, and truth were trywere invented goals that aimed to help people control the populace and make sure they behave properly, and, the sort of values of self sacrifice, of magnanimity, generosity, are the sort of things that in the game of evolution, the suckers go for, and those who can exploit them for it are the winners, because in the end, the only thing that matters is power, the bottom level of this pyramid.

[00:24:55] But I believe very, strongly. It was every fiber of my being, from everything I have learnt in life, that it does work the way that Shayla saw it. And, you know, I didn't really realize until perhaps, I mean, all my life I thought that the concept of the divine or the sacred or the holy was important, and I don't need to emphasize it for people who react badly to this kind of thing, you know, but all I can tell you is that I think it is of The highest kind of significance and one of the reasons that we're in a mess is because I think we have neglected our spiritual lives and our spiritual lives.

[00:25:34] However, whatever you think of is meant by that, but I believe in something that is bigger. and greater and more valuable than just us being here, but takes us up into it. It's not a diminution. It's not a way of putting down humanity. In fact, it's the reductionists, who, put down humanity. We're just, a competitive ape who's not very good at things compared with the machine, but no, it, the vision I'm suggesting is one in which we are honored to be.

[00:26:10] able to take part, and we can talk about, you know, what a human being is and why there's life later if we want to, because I think they're quite important. Your question was, so, does the way, our society works, does this, stop us from seeing certain things, I think was the key thing that you said, and I think it absolutely does, because obviously if attention changes the nature of what it is you attend to, so you see something different, then very obviously it can also block your vision of something, and you may not even see it at all if you don't attend to it.

[00:26:48] So The, one quick, if I may just give into the, pressure from people to say one thing that they'd like to do. I can tell them one thing to be a very good start,

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which we ask themselves, what is it that the way I habitually think about myself and the world is stopping me from seeing.

[00:27:10] What is it that our culture, now, is stopping us from seeing? And one way to think is, what did other people in other times and places, by no means stupid people, quite probably at least as intelligent as ourselves, what were they seeing, and why do we no longer see it?

[00:27:27] **Nate Hagens:** Oh boy. I have so many questions now.

[00:27:30] The, res Gorla Wagner learning function is, kicking, on, in, in my brain because a lot of this now starts to dovetail with, my work and importantly, my work since we talked, 18 months ago. So first of all, I'll point out that your German, psychologist, it was power. that caused that pyramid to invert.

[00:27:56] I mean, it was, human social power somewhere that, that inverted that pyramid.

[00:28:02] **Iain McGilchrist:** I think I just say Shayla was a philosopher, really not a psychologist, but he was psychologically astute. Yeah.

[00:28:08] **Nate Hagens:** So. In the intervening 18 months, since we've spoken last, I've converged on a story that the stakes of our time are no less than power versus life.

[00:28:20] That's what's at stake. Absolutely. And, power has, was limited. By, we didn't have surplus back, pre agricultural revolution. Everyone ate about the same. There was different status, but we didn't carry stuff around. There wasn't storable lootable stacks of grain or gold or anything like that.

[00:28:44] Then we found agricultural surplus, then fossil carbon, then money. Printable, and now created by digital pen strokes. And now AI is turbocharging the whole thing. And so in a world where power has the ability to, make decisions and move atoms and bits, around the world, there are small groups of humans that are going all in to get more power.

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[00:29:15] the best AI and everything else. and that's pulling the rest of society and the biosphere towards a cliff. So here's some questions on that. In a group of humans, if there is some surplus and there is, a small percentage of people of the humans, you could say 10 out of 100 or even one out of 100 does the preponderance of left hemisphere dominated thinking and behavior.

[00:29:50] is it kind of this inevitable positive feedback loop that happens that pulls the rest of that group of humans along with it? Does that, make sense? Cause it feels like that's what's happening because lots of people aren't dominated by power. They're just, Part of the downward causation of the economic superorganism going through their emotions, following the cultural zeitgeist.

[00:30:16] What do you think about that? The insidiousness in the presence of all this, economic surplus, that left hemisphere thinking becomes a virus almost.

[00:30:29] **Iain McGilchrist:** Yes, I, see why you, you say that. I'm not sure it's exactly what I would say. I think the problem, and I'm thinking back here to other societies, other civilizations before our own that have, if you like, fallen off the same cliff. and The common factors were, yes, material overreach, or territorial overreach, or both, and a sort of decontextualization of each human life from the necessary togetherness of manageably sized social groups.

[00:31:23] See you. As a civilization got bigger and bigger, and people got further and further removed from those over whom they had control, and thought in more theoretical and therefore typically left hemisphere terms about what the solutions to things should be, things started to go wrong. And You can see, you can trace in the art of these civilizations, I'm thinking here primarily of the ones that I know best, which are the Greek and the Roman, you can see everything signaling left hemisphere takeover here.

[00:31:56] And I'm not sure that it's sort of contagion from one person to the next exactly, although I can't rule out that obviously plays a part, but I think it's to do with the overall vision of a society, of its leaders, of what it is that they're doing. And that has this impact on us. And what we desperately need is to be able to secure a number of like minded people who see the world differently and have a vision which speaks to people in such a way that they go, my God, yes, I see what it is I've been missing.

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[00:32:37] So I really think the first question that anyone should ask is, what is it that's missing from my life? What is it that I know other people have had and in other times and places, cultures have had, but I don't seem, we don't seem to have this. That is the clue. So, yeah, I mean, we could take that anywhere.

[00:33:04] **Nate Hagens:** Here's where I'd like to take it. I just had a profound thought, which, which, as a teacher and a psychiatrist, you might smack down, immediately. So, We are a product of evolutionary forces. there's something called multi level selection. EO Wilson, David Sloan Wilson talked about cooperation and competition, both being, hardwired in us, depending on our ancestral conditions, that selfish individuals out competed, cooperative individuals within a group.

[00:33:39] But cooperative groups outcompeted selfish, groups, and therefore we are all descended from both of those. You might also argue that the left brain and the right brain offered similar multi level selection, situations in our evolutionary past. What about if power and life at a cultural level is now the next, signpost and threshold, but we've never lived on a full planet where we're impacting the biosphere.

[00:34:11] And now the evolutionary selection is really between power and life continuing in, in any reasonable form, the way that, that it has evolved since the last mass extinction. And so I wonder if there's a multi level selection, occurring this century applied To our, species and maybe, you know, within, individually within, and, you know, sub question to that, is there any way that those people who are right hemisphere balanced could.

[00:34:47] Become leaders because it seems like the left hemisphere categorization and goal seeking and power accumulation, by definition, get selected as leaders. what are your thoughts on all that?

[00:35:02] **Iain McGilchrist:** Ooh.

[00:35:04] **Nate Hagens:** That's a big bite. Yes,

[00:35:06] **Iain McGilchrist:** yes. Well, the first thing to say is that, and I think this is in what you were saying, is that species that have, thrived and prospered have been those that have learned to cooperate.

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[00:35:23] They have been able to, compete, and I think competition at a certain level, in a certain degree, is healthy. I don't think it's a negative. But on the other hand, it must be combined with cooperation. And the two together make us able to, thrive. And so when, and these are very distinctly related to the left and right hemisphere.

[00:35:52] So the left hemisphere is generally thinking in terms of me, and the right hemisphere is thinking Not that I don't matter, but in a less egoistic way that what I am is, determined by Where I've come from, nature, from society, that I am made what I am by the people I know, that I owe to them, and that we are together in this.

[00:36:21] You know, that's an enormously loving and comforting thought, and it's perfectly realistic. In a high functioning society, there is competition, but there is also enormous creativity, because people are coming together to do things.

[00:36:38] **Nate Hagens:** That makes a lot of sense to me. I, forgive me because throughout this conversation, I periodically forget that the camera is rolling and we're doing a podcast.

[00:36:49] I feel like I'm in office hours, my professor, and I'm like, just, I'm thinking, Oh my God, what about that? So let me ask you this. So in, in my work, I, propose kind of three separate timelines that humanity faces. And one is right now. where we're trying to kick the can with various biophysical macroeconomic can kicking methods like debt and maybe some new technology that rearranges the deck chairs in a slightly different way.

[00:37:21] And then we have what I call the bend versus break moment when the financial house of cards is a wily coyote sort of moment. I think that's in. The next 10 years or so. And then we've got, the resolution or the post peak carbon pulse, more sustainable. when, the financial overshoot is kind of, gone and we're, you know, the great simplification.

[00:37:51] So with respect to your work, while you were just speaking, it. Made me think that your work is not incredibly relevant to right now. because there are no solutions to what's coming. it's kind of inevitable to what's coming, but it's very

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relevant to informing and educating and inspiring society and a greater number of human beings to ask what's missing.

[00:38:21] what's the matter with things so that. during this bends not break moment, we're asking better questions. We've changed our values. And then even more importantly than that is whatever culture comes afterwards. the mitochondria of some new civilization or new human culture is informed by this holistic, reminding us of, our past and.

[00:38:49] Awe and sacredness and kind of a spiritual sense, which even if people are unaware of your work, I think a lot of just the common person knows that something is wrong and something is missing and they don't quite understand it. So what is your opinion on these three timelines and the importance of left brain, right brain integration and balance during those timelines?

[00:39:19] **Iain McGilchrist:** It reminds me of, something that, I have said when people have asked me, so, you know, really we do need to know, we need to have some guidance about what to do. and this also reflects the three timelines that you have, mentioned in a way. But the first thing to say is that I don't agree that what I'm saying is not relevant now.

[00:39:47] I think it's highly and most relevant now, because if we don't start changing the way in which we think, there won't be that future. Your timelines won't be there. Well, they will be there, but we won't. So We have to be preparing the future and the thing is we are so mesmerized in our left hemisphere way by the immediate that we don't think broadly and deeply and over a long enough time span about what we're doing because we are making a future.

[00:40:27] and so we are responsible for the world that more than we, others will come to, to have if we're lucky. So I think it's terribly important, but I think there are three ways, if I may reflect back to timelines, but I think there's something very germane here and, close to what you're saying. I think there are three ways in which people can respond to this, and I'm going to take them in the order of increasing importance, but they will take, they will sound to be in the order of decreasing importance, so, and that's because of the way we think, so they're all important, every single one of them, and let's start with the one that most people will think of, which is, you know, grand grandmothers.

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[00:41:17] Grandmothers. Corporate intergovernmental initiatives and adjoining those and being part of them, because after all, if this is a global problem, it must be tackled globally. And there's truth in that, but there's also, as always, there is. A hidden other side to it. And in fact, I mean, it's no secret that a lot of what has been done by these organizations has done very little to move forward the real inspiring goals that they were designed to achieve, but has instead either intentionally or unintentionally resulted in the extreme enrichment of certain groups involved in these initiatives.

[00:42:07] Power wielding organizations. See, that's the one that everybody thinks is important, and in some ways it might be, but I'm not convinced at the moment it is. The next is your, I liked your image of the mitochondria. I sort of, I, think of it as like seeding little colonies in a, in, a nutrient medium that are going to spread.

[00:42:30] And here I'm thinking of the practice of initiating the practice now. I'm not waiting until it's too late of ways of thinking about education, ways of thinking about social engagement with one another, and fulfilling our needs in terms of agriculture and so on. There are small foci that In the future, when the crunch comes, when the breaking point happens, they will be our chance both to survive and to seed something for the future that will be less monumentally hubristic and destructive than the way we now think.

[00:43:17] So, I mean, here I think of,

[00:43:22] I think he was called Abraham Heschel, wasn't he? the rabbi that, I think I quoted him two or three times in my work. and he said a lot of very wise things, but one of them is, in the past, we Our civilization might have perished for want of power, but now it perishes for want of wonder. And he was really saying that getting a little humility and a sense of how wondrous life is, because without it, life isn't worth living.

[00:43:55] I mean, you might as well stop. without Those things, we are doomed. So these things that sound in a way kind of airy fairy and not grisly, because they're not what sort of bankers and politicians talk about, are actually the real deal. They are the real things that are important. I loved your notion of power against life, because I do believe that we are not livings.

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[00:44:22] life fully. I think we're living now in a simulacrum of life. We're not actually living life. And I found this extraordinary quotation in the 19th century from a novelist, Swiss, I think, novelist called Kuhnberger, who said, life no longer lives. I thought it was extraordinary. It really kind of went like, in my heart, and I've never removed the dagger, and I, think he's so right.

[00:44:51] anyway, to come to the third point, the third sounds, initially, how's that gonna help? But it is actually, in my view, the thing that must happen, the only one of the three that must happen. And luckily, it is something that doesn't require a great deal of power, or a great deal of money, or a great deal of time.

[00:45:14] It just requires a desire for the world, for life, for nature to thrive, and for our lives to be different from the ones that we have now. And that is to begin, if I may put it this way, in the space within the inner temple. That can start Not even tomorrow, that can start today, because what I'm saying is we need to begin a process of examination of what our values truly are, of what we are, leaving behind, what we are doing to help here.

[00:45:59] And people think in this very spatial, typically left atmosphere way about how small they are and how big the world is and how much bigger the cosmos is and the world is just a small thing in it. That doesn't matter at all because what's going on this earth is extremely important. It can't be more important actually.

[00:46:22] I think the enormous things that are at stake here to do with the values of life and spiritual life. And we don't know how big the changes we make can be said to be. I sometimes say if you, truly experience love, and in some ways, of course, love is not just erotic love, but it's also the basis of The moral and spiritual life in almost every tradition.

[00:46:56] If you do experience love, how big is that love? And actually, what you experience is the only thing you will ever experience. The only thing that you will ever experience is what goes on inside you. I mean, I don't mean that the whole world is made up by us, and that's a whole other story, and I definitely argue against that right from the start.

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[00:47:17] But nonetheless, your experience is only your experience. It is of other things, but your experience is your experience, and how you experience it makes the world and your life and everything you find in it. What it is. So there cannot be anything more important for you. Now, you might say, well, yeah, but isn't that being selfish because it's just about me?

[00:47:37] Shouldn't I be bothering myself on behalf of other people? And yes, there are ways, of course, of doing that in a more explicit way. But we don't know what the outcome of thinking and talking in a new way can be. Margaret Mead, I think, the great anthropologist, said that It's not just that some movements begin from a small seed.

[00:48:01] Every movement, however big, begins from a small seed. It has to. That's how movements begin, just as an oak grows from an acorn. We need to be part, don't be discouraged by the idea that you're too small or what you can do is not important. What you can do is extremely important if it is, if you like.

[00:48:22] Centered in, directed towards the purpose of enlarging what is good,

[00:48:27] **Nate Hagens:** beautiful, and true in the world. Let me summarize some of the points you made in our first conversation and apply them to what you just said and to my own work. let me unpack this a little bit. So, I think you've watched some of my Friday musings, they're called Franklies, and I have, A therapist, a cranial sacral therapist, I know nothing about, but after she works with me, I have a much greater balance between my sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems and I just feel more grounded.

[00:49:03] And she said that she watched some of my Franklies, like a smattering of them, and that She loved the content. The concepts were very interesting and relevant. She could tell that I was kind and positive, but on some of them, she could tell that my nervous system, my fight or flight was activated and that I was predominantly in my sympathetic nervous system and that could be transmitted.

[00:49:32] On camera to others. So a lot of the things that she's helping me with are things that you recommended in our first podcast, which is to slow down, to listen, in the quiet and also to not worry about being productive all the time, but to

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have fallow periods. And that sometimes the greatest bursts of productivity came after a period of not doing much at all.

[00:50:01] So you also said in our first conversation that you are a student of and an adherent of Eastern philosophies like Buddhism and Zen. So here's my question. at a time when things are chaotic in the world and about to come become more chaotic, if there are people who slow down, become more fallow in order to be healthier and eventually more productive, to be more quiet, to, moving towards the right hemisphere, is that Enough to combat the left brain power hungry dominance of the economic superorganism, in other words, is ascribing to being Zen in these times, relegating to becoming a witness.

[00:51:00] of what's happening, or can it one human change to 10 to 100 to 1000 to a million, actually change the initial conditions of the future? What are your thoughts on all that? Well, first of all, I think

[00:51:14] **Iain McGilchrist:** that last thing is true, but I'd also say that I don't think that having a Zen cast of mind means that you never do it.

[00:51:22] Help me understand that. I think one of the things is that

[00:51:31] to be always productive is very unproductive to be always busy is a kind of laziness to act too quickly and too much is to lose the prize and it's often won by a simple single stroke, which needs to find its moment. So I think that Zen is not a way of abdicating responsibility for the world. I don't know if you know at all the work of a man called Rod Dreher.

[00:52:04] No, he has a, a, blog, which I, think is very interesting, but he's, he wrote a book called The Benedict Option, and he's just published a book called Living in Wonder. And in fact, I've been asked to interview him at the Oxford Literary Festival in a few months time. the reason I mention it is that In his book, The Benedict Option, he was misunderstood to mean that actually what we need to do is run away and form little groups in the hills.

[00:52:40] And I'm not saying that either when I talk about these small nuclei, these mitochondria, as you put it, that it's a running away. It's a tough option, but it is some, and it's an engaged option, but it is one that is sufficiently removed from

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the pressures of, quite unnecessary, forces that, that, buffets us in everyday modern urban Western life.

[00:53:08] it, it's removed enough for something good to come out of that. And I often think that if there weren't, I mean, if it came to this, if there weren't monastic communities, I, very much respect them, and you may know that in my younger life, I anticipated I might become a member of such a community. I haven't, and I'm sure it was right that I didn't.

[00:53:27] But, but I think that if there weren't such places, I would feel that the world was an immeasurably poorer place, and that we'd be nowhere as it were, where any kind of spiritual stability, stabilizing,

[00:53:42] **Nate Hagens:** was housed. I guess that's at the root of my question. Is these nucleotides or mitochondria or small groups of humans living generally the directional way that you're describing a slower, quieter?

[00:54:00] It is all of

[00:54:00] **Iain McGilchrist:** that. The slower and quieter and all those things. And I didn't want to repeat all the things I said last time, which probably were much more practical than what I'm saying now. But I think that I'm not saying that these. You know, I always come down to this figure 3%. I'm not sure who it was who said it, but if you can change the way of seeing the world of 3 percent of people, you have the basis of a movement that will, you know, really carry the day.

[00:54:28] I think

[00:54:28] **Nate Hagens:** it was Malcolm

[00:54:29] **Iain McGilchrist:** Gladwell, but I'm not sure. Oh, right. maybe. Oh, I, okay. Yes, I think it was before, but it might be wrong. But in any case, it's not that people would be simply keeping themselves to themselves. I'm saying that when we have a point of view that we think is important, we act on it and we, all have different strengths.

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[00:54:55] We, we, speak about it. We do it. We, try and promulgate it in whatever way. We best can. But also, I think it's not just utilitarian in that way, that it actually does change the way people think. So we don't know quite how contagious a way of thinking can be, and we don't know quite how that contagion spreads.

[00:55:20] But again, to talk of somebody that, whether you are an adherent of Christianity or not, that you have to, I think, admire. Jesus Christ, He was a poor man who was effectively treated as a criminal and died the death of a slave. And yet, and he didn't have social media, and he, didn't give, you know, public lectures.

[00:55:51] But somehow Whatever it was that he was saying was so important, that people were prepared to sacrifice their lives to see that it was transmitted. So, there is something that happens when ideas that are very, important have their moment and people see them and feel their mind changed.

[00:56:13] And that is the key thing. It's this I don't want to get away from the idea of an aha moment, because I think without the aha moment, it's too easy to carry on with business as usual, thinking, oh, I've now, in a very left hemisphere way, I've now got all the right hemisphere principles and I'm doing fine.

[00:56:33] I think there actually has to be a bump in the journey, really. And that sometimes, as in faith, I think losing faith for a while is a very important stage post on a deepening of faith. And I think that understanding certain ideas, you go through phases where at times, you know, you, espouse certain things, you then let go of them.

[00:56:56] And then only later you can see what was important in them or what was not important in them. We're changing all the time, and that's good. So, in terms of knowledge, I mean, again, to be a bit zen about this, there is a big distinction between ignorance and not knowing. So, if you ask me what's the answer to this question, I mean, I might be entirely ignorant.

[00:57:22] You might ask me what's the coefficient of expansion of brass. I don't know the answer off the top of my head. but you might ask me, what is the meaning of life? And by not knowing I think is somewhat wiser than by coming up with a simple formulation. See, there's a kind of, ignorance that is this side of knowing, and a kind of unknowing that is that side of knowing.

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[00:57:50] And it's where a lot of very important Teachers and thinkers have ended up, I mean, among them Montaigne, Coussage, you know? And it is also, again, a common

[00:58:07] **Nate Hagens:** saying of those who have followed the spiritual path. So let's go to some of the questions that, caused me to, rip up my outline of questions that I sent you.

[00:58:21] no, You, emailed me. and you said that asking the right questions is more important than any answer you might give. So let's start there. Why is asking those questions, more important?

[00:58:35] **Iain McGilchrist:** I don't have an answer. No, sorry. By the way, all the questions I sent you are questions to which I

[00:58:42] **Nate Hagens:** don't have a ready answer. Well, why is asking those questions more important than finding practical solutions?

[00:58:48] **Iain McGilchrist:** Because again, there are, you see, not all questions are born equal and not all solutions are. So, Some questions are questions about what are we going to have for breakfast?

[00:59:03] And there needs to be a solution to that question, or at least an answer to it. And it's not difficult to find, we don't fret over it. But there are far, more important things, like what should my life be directed towards? What is my life for? What is nature? What is our relationship to it? What is the cosmos and what is our relationship to it?

[00:59:34] In fact, those particular questions are the questions that I most find myself puzzling over and I'm not disappointed that I haven't come up with the answer like, you know, the famous 43 or whatever it was that, in the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy one came up with. I mean, that is a perfect A beautiful, ironic comment on the nature of such questions.

[00:59:59] But they are the important questions. And the reason we need to ask them is, first of all, we don't know if we can answer them, but by going deeper or not, but by going deeper into the examination of them, we may get closer to truth.

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You may notice if you've looked at my book, the Mat, things that. I call the first volume, The Paths to Truth, so how can we know that anything is true at all, or truer.

[01:00:31] And then I say in the second volume, so what then is true? And I never use the word true in the sense that is often used in contemporary Anglophone Western philosophy. as a kind of point that theoretically you can arrive at, where there is a thing out there, and you know the steps of the path to get to it, and the reward will be you will possess truth.

[01:00:59] Instead, I believe that truth can never be possessed. But that doesn't mean that you don't strive towards it. In striving towards it. Truth is asymptotic. Truth is asymptotic would be a very good way of putting it. In other words, you can approach it as near as you like, you'll never arrive at it. And what I like is that the Greek word for truth, aletheia, means an unconcealing.

[01:01:27] So, what we are doing is not putting together a truth, As if Michelangelo made a statue out of an arm, a leg, a torso, and a head and put them together. But one is unconcealing something, as Michelangelo did for several years, simply throwing stone away. And there at the end of it was David. So what we Our doing in the path of truth is getting out of the way the clutter that gets between us and a true path.

[01:01:58] And that is always a path. It's always something that every day requires our attention. There's a rabbinical saying which I like, You are not required to complete the task, but you are not permitted to refrain

[01:02:15] **Nate Hagens:** from the attempt. So does the relationship between science or modern science and truth map on to left brain dominance versus right brain integration?

[01:02:28] Are those related?

[01:02:29] **Iain McGilchrist:** They are related, but, not in, not in the very simple way that some people might immediately assume.

[01:02:35] **Nate Hagens:** That, that would be me.

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[01:02:36] **Iain McGilchrist:** So please, explain how they're related. No, not at all. Truth is very complex, and things that are true cannot always be encompassed in language, however hard we try.

[01:02:51] We can get somewhere, trying, we can suggest something, often through poetry, through metaphor, through indirect means, through myths, through narratives. I mean, one of the mistakes is to think that myths are lies, myths are truths, but the kind of truth that cannot be expressed in the kind of language with which you write a chemistry textbook.

[01:03:15] So, I always find this one a difficult one, because I so much admire science and reason that I have devoted the last 35 years or whatever it is to pursuing. And they're hard, and they're very important, but it falls to someone like me who is worried, actually, that they are under attack now in the world we live in, and who therefore feels And fiercely defensive of.

[01:03:51] Also to point out that they never attempted, they never claimed to be able to answer all our questions and by assuming that they can, one is actually travestying them and diminishing them from their true importance. So, science starts from, as every kind of process of investigation must start from, certain axiomatic positions.

[01:04:16] And, Those axioms are not questioned. That's the point of axioms. You have to have something you don't question. As Wittgenstein says, if you want the door to move, there must be hinges that are not moving in order to enable you to move. So, in science, for example, it is claimed that no values will be taken into account.

[01:04:40] In fact, values are taken into account all the time, but let's leave that aside in the practice of science. In the theory of science, then, Values don't come into it, nor does any kind of purpose get to be acknowledged. Now, as I think Whitehead said, it's amusing watching scientists, busily working away with a purpose and demonstrating that they have no purpose, but you can't get away from values and purpose, in fact.

[01:05:05] And they are of, I think, ultimate importance, but science can't tell you about them. You know, and as Stephen Gould says, science doesn't fail to tell us

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about God, it just doesn't. can't tell us about God one way or the other. It has nothing to say about it. And that's not a criticism of science. That's just the nature of science being a very well suited tool for certain purposes.

[01:05:28] But there are very important things that, that can't be, can't satisfy the criteria for acceptance by science. They must be demonstrable and measurable. And in that sense, anything that is wholly experiential. Such as love, cannot be demonstrated at will in a lab, cannot be measured in a lab, and people make the very basic mistake that measuring levels of oxytocin or dopamine or something in the brain, you're measuring love, but what you're, that's not what you're doing at all, you're, Looking at some markers that mark many things, and sometimes by marking this, and saying, well, I can measure those, but you haven't measured love.

[01:06:17] You can't find love in oxytocin. You can't find love anywhere in dopamine. They are somewhere else, altogether. And in thinking that you are measuring them in the lab, you're doing something else. Now, when I said this on a podcast of Alex O'Connor, who I think has a, an audience, it seems, of unreformed, reductionist, materialist, the sort of comments, oh, he's pleading for the God of the Gaps.

[01:06:46] And I, I'm not pleading for the God of the Gaps. I'm just saying, there are certain things that are definitely real. I can tell you love is real, and many other people will tell you love is real. You say to me, say, what is this real, this thing that's love? If it's real, Show me it. Demonstrate it to me.

[01:07:01] Describe it. I cannot do any of those things, but it's still very real. And I'm not saying, therefore, there must be a God. But I am saying when it comes to the sacred and the divine, the same sort of things apply. I can't explain to you what it is if you haven't experienced it. I can't capture it in language.

[01:07:24] Or even in normal cognition. I mean, you can up to a point, but to the degree that you do that, you're actually traversing what it is you're attempting to approach. So, I hope that I've made enough. I can say a lot more, but I mean, the point I'm making is that truth is of many kinds. And it isn't just the kind that can be demonstrated in science.

[01:07:48] Nor are things that reason cannot reach irrational. You know, music is not. Irrational. It's terribly real, it's very moving and important, and my life would

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be very impoverished without it. It's not irrational. It just isn't encompassed by reason. It is supra rational. Now, lots of things that we value, just about everything that makes life worth living, is supra rational.

[01:08:18] Friendship, love, sex, worship, awe, wonder, beauty, nature, painting, architecture, Ritual, you name it, all these things that are so rich in meaning and so important, but they don't have that, you know, fully encapsulated in language or

[01:08:40] **Nate Hagens:** reason. So given what you just said, and earlier you said that truth is asymptotic, is it true then that everyone has their own truth, irrespective of science?

[01:08:53] **Iain McGilchrist:** No, that is a ridiculous idea. I mean, don't get me wrong. I mean, if somebody says, my truth about this person is that he or she is whatever, I'm, and you say they're somebody different. I don't say that. People can't see a person in different ways or even see an experience in different ways. That's right.

[01:09:19] But the idea that you can just make up truth is appalling. And if there was any, credence given to this, we would be. Incapable of either speaking or acting, because there'd be no point in saying anything, because it would be neither truer nor less true than anything else that could be said. And there'd be no point in acting towards a certain goal, because there'd be no truth in the idea, that, this goal is important.

[01:09:49] So the idea that truth can be made up is one of the most pernicious things that has happened in academe in the last, I suppose it's, since the sixties, since just before I hit Oxford and it's been very damaging.

[01:10:07] **Nate Hagens:** So are things like $E = MC^2$ and a barrel of oil has 5.7 million British thermal units.

[01:10:16] Are those science or truth? Well, they're scientific truths,

[01:10:20] **Iain McGilchrist:** I suppose. I mean, science deals in truths, and those are truths of a scientific kind, and you know, science has its truths. It's no good. I mean,

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now it's under a double assault from sloppy postmodernism, like, sort of, Oh, well, you know, two and two might be four, but you know, I might think it was 17.

[01:10:46] Why can't I be right? Well, because you're stupid. you're wrong. numbers have the qualities that they have and saying that in a different base of arithmetic, the answer would be five is to completely cheat because it's just saying you're going to do arithmetic in a different way and the answer five means something different.

[01:11:05] So no, there are things that are clearly true, but there are also Things that are more complicated, and about which there are different strands of truth, and I don't claim that I've seen all the truth. my easiest way of thinking about this is with, music. That's why I begin the matter with this thing, with things, with a fairly long disquisition on, well, it's 20 pages, but it's not that long, you can read it in an hour, about What I think reality is, what I think truth is, and I don't think it's all made up by me, but on the other hand, I don't think that I play no part in it at all.

[01:11:48] and it is an encounter. It's an encounter between the life that is in me and the life that is in whatever it is out there, between the part of consciousness that is interior to myself and the field of consciousness, which I believe is the ground of Everything that is not included in my temporary consciousness.

[01:12:10] There is a coming together of things. It's not that there just is stuff out there, and we receive it in the way that a photographic plate does, nor is it made up by us in here. But if you take a piece of music, There are different performances of it, and some will be truer to the music and some less.

[01:12:31] And on the whole, when people say this is a profound and true performance of this piece of music, most people who Know what they're talking about. We'll tend to agree. There'll be largely agreement that it is a, you know, a, brilliant, a heroic, a beautiful understanding of it. And you can't just make it up.

[01:12:53] It's like, you know, I give the example, I used to be a literary critic, you know, and okay, people see different things in works of literature, but I, can take a different stance on Hamlet from other people, but. You know, one thing I can't say is that it's a, critique of peasant life in Azerbaijan in the 11th century.

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[01:13:12] It just isn't, mate. You know, and if you say so, you're wrong. So, I mean, the fact that there isn't one crisp, clear truth doesn't mean there isn't truth. Bloody is. And the question is, how close to it can you get?

[01:13:28] **Nate Hagens:** So I know you do a lot of podcasts and, I think you're writing a short book or something like that, but do you have conversations like this outside of doing podcasts?

[01:13:39] Do you have a men's group on the Isle of Skye where you, get together and think about these gnarly and important questions?

[01:13:47] **Iain McGilchrist:** You know, I don't, no, I don't. but some of these things I, you know, I'd share over in conversation with friends from time to time. But no, it's interesting, isn't it? I, I suppose I have a lot of interior dialogue and, I also think that very often the pressure to, answer a question, once again, is, damaging, and it may be that in the long run you do have an answer to the question.

[01:14:26] But the immediate answer will not be the best answer. And I think I've said this before, forgive me if I have, but one of the things I'm now most grateful for in my life is the fallow periods when I thought I'm not doing anything. Because it was during those periods that I was actually creating the things that later I Took on dictation, that's a

[01:14:48] **Nate Hagens:** way.

[01:14:48] So as a neuroscientist, psychiatrist, can you explain why that happened? What's going on in the brain that fallow led to productivity or creativity? Well,

[01:15:00] **Iain McGilchrist:** to be a little bit reductive, What is necessary is to keep possibilities open, and here I need, you know, I say apologies, it's not reductive really when you read the full story at the Hemispheres, but it can sound it in soundbites when I say things like this, but the In brief, the left hemisphere is always trying to close things down to a certainty because it needs to act, and it needs to act quickly, and it wants a definite outcome, and it knows what that is, and it's going for it.

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[01:15:36] That, unfortunately, writ large, has become our modus operandi in everything in the modern West, and it's one of the reasons why we're so comprehensively screwed up. The right hemisphere, which literally sees more, attends better, perceives better, makes better judgments about what it is it's perceived, is more intelligent cognitively, emotionally, and socially, and is more creative in the way it uses what is going on in it.

[01:16:04] In its awareness, the right hemisphere is trying to do the opposite to the left hemisphere. It's trying to say, but it might not be this. This is why Ramachandran calls the right hemisphere the devil's advocate. It might be, but hang on a moment before you close it all down into what you think you so cleverly know, think it could be something different.

[01:16:25] This is rather like my question that I've been banging away at during this interview with you about people asking themselves the question, so what am I missing here?

[01:16:36] **Nate Hagens:** So fallowness gives you iterations of, the left and right interacting with each other over time.

[01:16:43] **Iain McGilchrist:** Narrowness of focus means that you won't see things except under the spotlight, as it were.

[01:16:50] You know, it's like the story of the man who's found looking for his wallet and he's, looking under the light and he can't find it and somebody says, where'd you drop it? And he said, well, over there. And they said, well, Why are you looking here? Because that's where the light is. And you know, that is the, way we are now is that we, the left hemisphere has a spotlight and that's the bit that we're very aware of.

[01:17:10] And we're frantically looking and we can't find it. But the answer is look outside of where the spotlight is. Now to do this, you definitely need to switch off that eager grasping of, yeah, I got it. I've got a name for it. I've got a category for it. I know how that fits in my system. All those things are not very smart, intellectually speaking, and they will lead to the long wrong answers.

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[01:17:37] What you need to do is to be more agnostic and I mean, just literally in terms of the structure of the left and right hemisphere, the left hemisphere has many more tightly, self involved nodes, and the right hemisphere has much better trans hemispheric, across the whole hemisphere connections, white matter connections.

[01:18:04] It tends to think broadly. It tends to make connections that are broad. It tends to see the bigger picture. The left hemisphere has lost all this already because it's so set on having an answer now. Come on, tell me what it is. I don't even care whether it's right or wrong. I'm just gonna go for it. and it's, narrowing down the pitch in, in, in moral terms, in, in, spatial terms, in temporal

[01:18:29] **Nate Hagens:** terms, in terms of meaning.

[01:18:31] So let me ask a follow up to that and then I'll, try to tie it together. So in the email you sent, preparing for this, you chastised, not the right word, but you cautioned me that all the people that interview you say, what is the formula? What is the formulaic, answer, the steps? And you're more interested in questions like, why is there anything?

[01:18:54] Why is there life? Why is there human life? Who are we anyways? What is the point of life? Those sorts of questions. So when you sit and contemplate on the Isle of Skye, in the stillness and you have conversations in your mind about those things, like, how does that go? Are you, having a dialogue, while you're cutting the hedges or doing chores or what is going on inside the mind of Ian McGilchrist as you, ponder these unanswerable, but vitally important questions.

[01:19:32] Well,

[01:19:32] **Iain McGilchrist:** you know, it's a total mystery to me. I, how can I answer this? Sometimes, of course, when I'm cutting bread or doing some simple thing, yes, my mind is on something else. Sometimes it's on the very business of cutting the bread. I can't really generalize about it, but I think that One of the things that happens is one sleeps on problems, so one thinks about something, one reads about it, one thinks, I'm not entirely satisfied with that, what's the answer to that?

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[01:20:07] And then, you know, one of the times when the left hemisphere is not so dominant is when one's asleep, and the right hemisphere is able to make connections and speak in visual metaphors, and even sometimes actually in verbal metaphors, but in any case in metaphors. Not all of that is meaningful. Some of it is absolutely not.

[01:20:31] But sometimes it can lead you to something you were neglecting. And you may not even know that it has led you to that. You don't have to go, Oh, I see. In my dream, I learned that. But the fact is that while you were dreaming, You're thinking about this subtly changed and the fact of you having dreamt about it also means that there's a greater chance that you will have a conscious awareness of whatever it was.

[01:21:01] But lots of what's interesting goes on in an area where one is absolutely not aware of it.

[01:21:07] **Nate Hagens:** So, directionally, what you're suggesting is, A lot of what we're missing is a spiritual experience and a recognition, an aha moment. and that is a gateway towards thinking and ultimately acting differently.

[01:21:29] And if we get 3 percent of society, That follow that progression. Then maybe there's some emergence that changes to the mitochondria of a new, culture is the hypnagogic state or dreams, a sh a gateway to a spiritual recognition or, a recognition, at least that something is missing. And, I hate to be so, Depressing with this thought, but the last six months or so because of the weight of the world, I have intense dreams.

[01:22:04] I take, melatonin and magnesium and theanine, and ashwagandha sometimes before I go to sleep. And I have amazing dreams. And some of my best Frank's are ideas that I had when I was dreaming. But I wake up and I see the emails and I see what's going on in the world and I feel sad. And sometimes my dreams are much better than, the real world.

[01:22:27] I'm telling you that as a psychiatrist, but what are your thoughts on all that? Ian? I'm, I'm, spiraling down a rabbit hole.

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[01:22:39] **Iain McGilchrist:** well, my thoughts about it are the very obviously, important truths do come to people in dreams. In fact, the answer to some scientific. Conundrums have come to people in their dreams, for example, the structure of the table of the elements came in a dream, to Mendeleev and the, quite possibly the structure of the aromatic ring, which is the basis of carbon and, structures and therefore of life, is said to have come to Kekule in, a dream.

[01:23:18] These things happen, and things that were important to me have happened in dreams that I found had meaning. So I know it happens. It's hardly a secret. I don't think it happens in the strictly decodable way that Freud sometimes, suggested that it probably could. but Whether it does or not, I think the spiritual element is slightly different from this creative, imaginative element.

[01:23:53] It's not separate from it, it needs it, but it is the key in a way. You can be creative and imaginative, and be on to some really bad and false things. And I think that, you know, it is dangerous talking about the spiritual these days, but what the hell, I've only got a few years to go anyway. And it's quite clear to me that it's very important.

[01:24:20] And I think of two things that Saul of Tunisia said, and, you know, again, I think of him as a colossal soul and mind. And You know, when he was asked, how is it that these terrible things happened in the 20th century? He said, the only answer that makes sense to me is because men have forgotten God. And he said that twice.

[01:24:48] And I think I know what he means, because it's not because we believed in capitalism or because we believed in this or that or the other. Again, it comes down to those bullet points are not really going to help because the only thing that really matters is the disposition of your soul. And so that, that is the point.

[01:25:11] And the other thing that Tolstoy said that I think is really important is that We shouldn't just demonize other people and think that we can just be good. The line between good and evil, and I believe in the reality of both good and evil, runs through the middle of every human heart.

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[01:25:30] **Nate Hagens:** That I believe. And could you alter Solzhenitsyn's quote and say it's because man has forgotten the sacred, and would it have the same meaning then?

[01:25:41] I don't think it would be quite so powerful,

[01:25:43] **Iain McGilchrist:** actually, since you asked, but I think, I don't want to exclude from conversation about a very, important topic. Highly perceptive, good, intelligent, spiritually rich, surely much more so than I am, people who just don't like the word God. And I'm not Entirely sold on it myself.

[01:26:04] I mean, I spent quite a long time trying to avoid using it in the final major chapter of the Matter of Things, and when I do introduce it, I say, and what a load of baggage, of unhelpful baggage comes with that. I just like people, if they don't react well to that word, for all kinds of reasons, maybe to do personal history and all sorts of other things, just to try and think, well, maybe I don't have to attach the meaning that is unhelpful to me to it.

[01:26:32] I can try and empty my mind of presuppositions about it and allow it to begin to take on meaning through experience, again, not forced by willful action or verbal pyrotechnics, but actually by the business of living and attending. I mean, that's all we can do actually in the end, but we could stop attacking life and stop attacking nature.

[01:26:56] And I think those are two things we're doing now. And again, you know, something I didn't say, but should have said, is that when you need to know what to do, the very first thing, and I'm sure I said this last time, is to find out what you're doing that's not good and stop doing that.

[01:27:11] **Nate Hagens:** So let me put a pin in that because on our first conversation, I mentioned a quote by Viktor Frankl, which you recognize between stimulus and response, there's a space and is in that space is our power to choose our response.

[01:27:27] and in that response lies our growth and freedom. So as a busy person talking about myself to a psychiatrist, you, there's a space. There's a long list of things that I would like to do that I think are important, but in the moment I end

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up choosing the unhealthy choice. So what are things to do in the moment between stimulus and response that would increase the odds of me and our listeners, making, a better choice during that space is the first step recognizing that there is that space.

[01:28:03] **Iain McGilchrist:** I think it is, yes, an interesting people who don't think they have choices, who think we have a philosophy, which I think is, unfortunate, that, they're fully determined, are less moral. in their actions and less happy in themselves, and I don't recommend discarding the belief just to make you happy, I recommend discarding the belief because it's obviously false in my view.

[01:28:36] there is nothing in the universe that is fully predictable in that way. There is always room for choice, and it's a perfectly reasonable point that, lots of things do go wrong. Influence us, our ancestry in various ways, and our personal experience, they help to make us who we are. Nobody could possibly deny that.

[01:28:57] But it's when you say we have no room to make choices that I fully disagree. And I'm on the side here of the rather wise Viktor Frankl. So I think knowing that you have a choice is important. Knowing what choice, and being explicit with yourself what choice you would like to make. Let me say, hands up. I find this difficult.

[01:29:19] I, I'm very bad at lots of things. I don't want to sit here saying things and appearing to be, pleased that I'm, I've got it worked out. I haven't. I'm, a kind of I feel the same way. Yeah, exactly. So, so I don't know what the answer is, but there are helpful things, you know, like I'm perhaps even writing and signing something that says I will, for the next week, I will, when I get this.

[01:29:50] To

[01:29:50] **Nate Hagens:** this point, I

[01:29:51] **Iain McGilchrist:** will not

[01:29:51] **Nate Hagens:** choose this. I will choose the other thing. The writing formalizes it into a social contract, which social contracts in our evolutionary past were kind of important. Yes. So it's formalizing the intent. Exactly.

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[01:30:04] **Iain McGilchrist:** And it's like a sort of, it's now out there. It's not just nebulously in my mind.

[01:30:08] It's like, you said this. It links you in the past with you

[01:30:14] **Nate Hagens:** now. I actually tell my friends I plan to exercise every day or do whatever because there's a little bit of responsibility than me just saying it in my mind. I stopped doing that when I realized that I wasn't going to do it.

[01:30:28] **Iain McGilchrist:** It was just embarrassing.

[01:30:31] **Nate Hagens:** That too. I've had that trajectory. Let me ask you this, given your lifelong scholarship on the brains and behaviors of Homo sapiens, putting aside for the moment, the dire straits that we face, can you imagine humans alive? 500 years from now, a thousand years from now, 10, 000 years from now, which would be equidistant from when we left the stability of, 290, 000 years, on the Pleistocene in our formative years.

[01:31:05] What sort of social structures. Given all your knowledge of our brains and behaviors would be most conducive to surviving and thriving for the long term, our species, what do you have to say about that? One of

[01:31:21] **Iain McGilchrist:** the products of thinking about these things is realizing that you can't predict them, but having said that, let me do a foolish thing and make an attempt.

[01:31:31] I think that for all the apparent advantages of large block societies, we have to, as usual, find the sweet point between being individual and being totally, unified. so, atomism is not a successful way for a society to flourish, but neither is to great forces of dirigism and convention. So, you need to have, probably something, In the region of small groups, and here Dunbar has made this point, that small social groups around 130 or something of the kind seem to be maximally effective.

[01:32:24] And I can imagine that. I mean, it matters very much whether you know people, and there are small communities in which, broadly speaking, you do know everybody, and you know their reputation, and if they act, that will not be secret,

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and therefore people have an enormous, incentive to, to, act well for a start, but also to trust one another because they need one another and to share their lives.

[01:32:49] Now, if we were able to do that, would be a very good start. Other things that I think would be required would be if We are still on this earth and I, don't give much for our chances anywhere else.

[01:33:08] Closeness to the earth. you see, we didn't have to do anything. It's extraordinary, isn't it? I didn't do a bloody thing to produce the absolutely wonderful richness of everything that's going on out there. it's a pure gift, you know, and it's the middle of winter and I have a bird table out there and just.

[01:33:35] Just seeing the birds, you know, is so beautiful, seeing the very first hellebores beginning bravely to open their buds in the middle of the darkness of winter. It's extraordinary, the whole thing, throughout the whole cycle. It's a gift that has zero value in our economic system. It's absolutely Extraordinary that is the case, but you are so right, and it's that kind of thing, you know, I'm talking about when I say we need to re engage with our social life, our rootedness in nature, and in the cosmos, not just because it's good for us, because it is, and there's massive evidence that without those connections we, don't thrive, but because it's also And good for them.

[01:34:20] I mean, I believe we give, back as we, relate, you know, the relations work both ways. An encounter is an encounter for both parties. And at the moment, our encounters with nature and with the cosmos are horribly diminished. And that makes us think that we are horribly diminished. And we then stopped using the faculties that we may have.

[01:34:43] After a while, you don't. have the faculties anymore because you didn't exercise them and we don't know what it is we're capable of. I mean, that is another very important point. I mean, we totally underestimate what we could do, and we need to start thinking, acting as if. I mean, I think it was in the Martianist Hemisphere, I said, On the matter of God, one of the things you can do is to begin by acting as if there were a God.

[01:35:11] You're not saying there is, you're just saying, okay, what's it like to act as if there is one? Because I think unless you do that as if exercise, you won't actually

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find out anything about the, what you're really wanting to discover. If you sit coldly waiting for the thing to declare itself to you, you can wait until you're in the So, we need to open ourselves to, the beauty that is a gift.

[01:35:34] We need to be able to increase the beauty that is in the world. I think each one of us can in very little ways. We don't have to be, Leonardo to do that. And also to simply Eschew lies. I mean, just to not any longer voice things that we all inside know are lies, but we all say them anyway, because we feel we'll be attacked if we, then say them.

[01:36:00] So don't say the lies. That's very important. You know, another thing Solzhenitsyn's great speech, you know, is a Nobel speech was, one word of truth outweighs the whole world, which is a Russian proverb. So to add to what is good, to respond to what is good, to live with and enjoy what is good, to add to what is beautiful, to live with what is beautiful, to respond to what is beautiful, and to do the same with what is true.

[01:36:25] These are the reasons for being here, in my view.

[01:36:28] **Nate Hagens:** So let me integrate what you just said with an idea that's been rolling around my head the last two days and I think later today I may record a frankly on it. There was a famous book around 25 years ago by William Rees Mogg and I forgot the other author called The Sovereign Individual that has had a big influence on a lot of Silicon Valley tech bros type of people which is that cybernetics and cryptocurrencies and all these things would become so Prolific that power would be able to be transcended and, cross nation state borders and individual humans would be able to amass huge amounts of power that would cross borders and transcend.

[01:37:17] No, but I think in the battle, and I don't like using the word battle for obvious reasons, but in the situation we face between power and life, I think we also Have a responsibility. Some of us, the 3 percent that you, mentioned earlier to become sovereign individuals, wide boundary style, which is to have the intellectual framework of systems ecology, but above that, to have the physiology of What you mentioned, the stillness and listening and slowing down and the parasympathetic nervous system and the psychology of, all this and the, spiritual aspect of it and

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the ecological and the cultural and that we need humans to, I mean, you didn't use these words, but to, wake up and become.

[01:38:12] Better, different, than we have been. Yes. In a Zen sort of way. but also in an activist sort of way and the difference between the sovereign individual in the sense of the book and what I have in mind is that there's lots of these people that meet each other and start to act differently and behave differently, and they're living the right brain, left brain integration that you've been such a champion of and they find each other.

[01:38:41] And then something else happens, and that's something we can't predict yet. is something like that what we're discussing? You

[01:38:49] **Iain McGilchrist:** see, the trouble with the expression like the sovereignty of the individual is that it's compatible with a number of wholly different kind of perspectives.

[01:38:58] **Nate Hagens:** Well, I was just using the name of the book.

[01:39:00] Yeah, I know. I'm not, saying that, yeah. But since

[01:39:02] **Iain McGilchrist:** you've introduced it, requires comment in a way, because when I was saying that we have choices, that is one expression of the sovereignty of the individual. I would reject the idea that we are sovereign in the sense that ultimately we owe things only to ourselves.

[01:39:20] We don't. We owe things massively to society and to others. And I think this is something that's being lost. I think that now there are enormously rich, I mean really obscenely rich people in the world, far richer than many of the industrial magnates of the 19th century. But a lot of those industrial magnates did absolutely fabulous things with their wealth.

[01:39:46] And I know that some people now do, but some of them just seem to want to exert power and control.

[01:39:52] **Nate Hagens:** So given what we face, the, concept of the sovereign individual is an oxymoron. I see the trouble is,

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[01:39:59] **Iain McGilchrist:** it's language again. What does one mean here? I am an individual in one sense. And I don't think I should lose myself, but I should lose my ego.

[01:40:09] The self, the individual, is a complex one, and, you know, Jung made the distinction between the ego, which is what you need when you're struggling to establish yourself as a separate individual from your mother, the child. You have tantrums, and, you know, I want that. And that, if it goes on into adulthood, you want to get rid of.

[01:40:28] but you're not a better person for losing yourself, and why would you have been brought into existence to abolish yourself? No, you need to nourish yourself. And so, what a self means is very important, and it must have this interconnected quality. It is part of A system, once again, it is not just an individual.

[01:40:49] It's like those points in the net of Indra that I'm sure I've spoken to you about, this idea in the Vedantic tradition of a net that the god Indra covers the universe with. And at every point in the net there hangs a jewel, and in each jewel all the other jewels in the net are imaged. So that relationship between connected And separate, not fused, but nonetheless working together, is what we need.

[01:41:19] We need individuality, but we need also, desperately need, a degree of selflessness in the way we think. But that is not always well interpreted. It's not self destructive self abasement and attacking yourself. I mean, that's histrionic and actually very unhelpful. And to a psychiatrist, a person who's always just attacking themselves, they're not helping themselves or anyone else.

[01:41:44] They need to actually stop and think, now what can I actually

[01:41:49] **Nate Hagens:** reasonably expect of myself

[01:41:51] **Iain McGilchrist:** and

[01:41:51] **Nate Hagens:** do? Here's a question I've asked other guests I didn't anticipate to ask you, but since you are so meticulous and authentic, when I say a statement that the clarity of the words, how much of our disconnect between the

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left and the right hemisphere dominance in our culture is due to English being the lingua franca?

[01:42:12] And the way that the English language is constructed relative to some indigenous languages that have lots of verbs instead of nouns. Have you thought about that? I have thought about it, of course.

[01:42:23] **Iain McGilchrist:** and I, don't know about that. I think I'm pretty much divided on it. I remember when I learned at school, I wasn't learning Chinese, but the Chinese language depended much more on verbs than I did, and much less on nouns.

[01:42:46] I thought that was rather interesting, and it is quite relevant to the right left hemisphere divide. Except that it's nothing simple like the, idiographic language of Chinese is in the right hemisphere. It isn't, I'm afraid. Anyway, I don't want to go there because that's a whole other thing. but the English language has certain qualities that make it very rich.

[01:43:13] it's a mongrel language and therefore draws from many roots. And we have sometimes the same word apparently. but drawn from different roots and they mean different things, but I also am aware in learning other languages, and I'm not very good at any of them, but I am very fond, particularly of German, that I'm constantly coming up against words in German for which we have no exact equivalent, and so I'm not sure it's the indigenous tribes that I don't know enough of.

[01:43:45] I mean, and also all the languages are so different anyway, but and probably you can't carry on a kind of civilization with a language, which is, I mean, one of the things that I remember describing is, the business of tonal language in which you can communicate over a long distance by simply using tones, you'd actually need words.

[01:44:12] That works very well in the Amazon basin and so on, but it probably isn't the way we would have carried on in a settled agricultural society. I don't know. Languages, some languages are good some, for some purposes and not for others. I find it frustrating that, that English doesn't have some concepts that there are in other languages.

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[01:44:35] Particularly, I feel that one of the problems for philosophy, this is so basic, is that we have only one word for know. I mean, K N O W. In every other language I'm aware of, they distinguish sharply between knowing a fact, like Paris is the capital of France. And knowing Paris, because you live there for several years, I mean, it's a completely different meanings, but in the English language, we just have this one word.

[01:45:03] So I'm constantly having to say when I'm talking about this, I'm using no in the ken and connector sense, not in the vis and savoir sense, or whatever, yeah.

[01:45:13] **Nate Hagens:** I wanna be respectful of your time and, your evening just outta curiosity, it is around dinnertime in the Isle of Sky. Yes. to the, west of Scotland.

[01:45:23] what might you be having for dinner tonight? Ian? Do

[01:45:26] **Iain McGilchrist:** you know? I'm having some leftover chicken . Okay. Nothing terribly exciting. excellent. But I think it will be cured. and probably very delicious. So I hadn't really decided.

[01:45:41] **Nate Hagens:** I started this interview with a prepared question and I will end it with a prepared question and everything in the middle was, kind of, on the fly.

[01:45:52] what, if anything, gives you hope that humanity could shift our ways of thinking in time to avoid systemic collapse? Well, a number of things, really.

[01:46:03] **Iain McGilchrist:** The first is that, anybody's guesses about where the future of humanity lies are just that, guesses, and it's very difficult to predict the future, and there have been times in the past when one might very well have thought, you know, that we were killing ourselves, and are we going to die of plagues, and there will be no more humanity, and, so it's not the first time we've been here.

[01:46:32] secondly, I think that when shit hits the fan, so to speak, people do get serious about action and unfortunately we're so comfortable at the moment that we don't realize how close we are to the brink. And I think that our comfort, I mean,

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I'm no one to speak here. I lead a comfortable existence, of course, but I think the comfort can blind you to various things, to the proximity of danger, but also can make you less, less grateful for what is good, less struck with wonder at it, and just more grateful for sort of slobbish and complacent fit in one's outlook.

[01:47:24] but I think that when things really get tough, then people do start, you know, doing things together. And, you know, the fact that people are talking about these issues far more than they were ten years ago, they're collaborating and beginning to make these small, mitochondrial centers, half a dozen of which I'm very honored to be connected with and do very little for, but I'm grateful to, for the connection.

[01:47:53] I love the way that young people are now generally much more open to talk of the sacred and the divine than they used to be, it no longer seems, smart to be, dismissive of it. I think they realize there's something very badly missing and It's always very hard to articulate, but there they are.

[01:48:17] I love the way that they come up to me after I've given a lecture, as I particularly remember the lecture tour I did in America and the lecture I gave in Cambridge, and afterwards, a crowd of young people came up and wanted to talk to me about it, and felt that there was something important there.

[01:48:37] That's good as far as I'm concerned that because the future is what young people will do I mean what I can do is either here or there But it's what they will do that will govern everything and I like to think I can offer some insights but there we are so I do think that and also I just am hopeful because I can't believe, I mean, humanity may very well be very much diminished in number and in power, and that may be a very good thing for humanity.

[01:49:14] And I don't think though that humanity will be completely wiped out, and I think that whoever survives will by definition have the attitude that will enable them to be able to carry things forward in a more, oh dear, that word sustainable sounds so bureaucratic, but what I mean is a way that can actually be Sustained by, us and our poor suffering planet.

[01:49:43] One of the difficulties is, the language,

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[01:49:45] **Nate Hagens:** isn't it? But there we go. Is there any question that, I could have asked you that you would have liked me to ask?

[01:49:51] **Iain McGilchrist:** Well, yes, possibly. Although I have talked about it once or twice. on other podcasts, but then, good heavens, I can't expect people to see more than a tiny handful of them.

[01:50:03] But it's my, growing conviction of the directedness of the cosmos. So, I read, Jude Curran, who as you probably know is a physicist, who's written philosophically about physics, astrophysics. And one of the things that comes through very clearly is that long before there was life, there was a sort of meaningful direction to the way the universe was going.

[01:50:30] It was, creating more complex, more beautiful structures. And it was exploring potential. And I think this idea of potential is something I really want to get across, that we, that whatever you may think about this cosmos, whenever it started as this simple ball of a few elements, it had the potential, it must have had the potential, because we've seen that potential fulfilled, to grow in complexity and order and beauty.

[01:51:04] And eventually to create life, and eventually to create Barthes Matthew Passion. I mean, this is the point. If you believe that matter is simple dust of no consequence and absolutely without meaning or consciousness or direction, then it's quite extraordinary stuff. Because after it's been milling around, bumping into itself for a few billion years, it happens to write Bath's Matthew Passion, which is one of the most sort of, you know, consciousness altering experiences you can have.

[01:51:40] So, what, I think there was directiveness in the, in, in the cosmos, and that gives me hope that the direction won't just be cut off. And then on top of that, far more interestingly really, is the business of life. I suppose that when I was young, but not for the last 30 years, but in the first part of my life, I probably thought of life as being very separate from anonymous because of how very obviously different it is.

[01:52:12] But, I've moved from a position where there's a hard border to one where there isn't really. And I'm not really talking about the nitty gritty of RNA and all that. I'm just, that comes into it. But what I'm thinking is that the qualities of life

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are actually there in a very, minimal form in the universe that we like to call inanimate.

[01:52:41] So. It does structure itself. It does respond. It isn't just passive. It starts to do things. It expands in places and so on. So it's, building, it's creating. And with life, this process is simply a billion fold more powerful. And instead of taking literally millions of years for a reaction to take place, it can now take place, you know, in fraction of a second.

[01:53:14] And, again, I'm not just talking about chemical reactions, though that is also true. But what I'm really talking about here is our responsiveness to the cosmos. We come out of the cosmos, but we're not the cosmos. we're both in it and we're distinct. we're one with it and we're not. And it's the ability in that situation where there's separateness, but not by any means total disjunction, that there can be relation.

[01:53:46] And I believe the cosmos is essentially relational, that everything is relational, that relations exist before the relata, before the things that are related. And the reason that there is a cosmos is that the ground of being, whatever that means, and it's impossible to capture it in thought or language, but whatever it is that underwrit this whole thing happening, has the nature, a creative nature.

[01:54:13] It is essentially creative, and it is essentially relational, which is why in most cultures that I know of, in their spiritual tradition, it is thought of as love, and love is nothing if it is not relational. And that Therefore, there is something that comes into being in relation with that ground of being and that is the cosmos that we are part of.

[01:54:37] And in that cosmos, there is a dance going on between the ground of being and, the stuff that we call cosmos. And At a certain point, life kicks in here, and life enables responsiveness to accelerate in unimaginably, both in time and in degree. And what that means is that suddenly we are able to respond to values, purpose, and direction.

[01:55:06] And that we see these, and I'm very clear about this, that these are not things that we have made up. These are things that we didn't invent to cheer ourselves up. They are things that we either discover, or don't discover. And in

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discovering them, our role is to respond to them, to be grateful for them, to experience awe, and to wish them well, and to bring more of them about in the little way that we can.

[01:55:34] Because, you know, again, little as we are, we

[01:55:38] **Nate Hagens:** don't know how big that is. So I didn't understand all that. but something about it rang true to me, which was the exact same reaction I had two years ago when I came across your work. So I will chew on what you just said, but if I could summarize it as we're headed for a precipice in our current civilization, but despite that, chaos and disruption, that there is some arc or thread of an expansion of consciousness and creativity in life that's emergent that you, your scholarship has latched onto.

[01:56:17] There's something there that's important and that we can't fully describe it. I mean, in some ways. This podcast is called the great simplification. A subtitle may be the, the inexorable expansion of, Nate's right brain, access, because I'm, I really in working with you and under and reading your stuff, I was pretty left brain dominant when I started, you know, this inquiry 10 years ago, 15 years ago into this.

[01:56:44] So I feel what you're saying. I don't fully understand it. but I, it's, it motivates me. I'd be very happy if you do,

[01:56:53] **Iain McGilchrist:** now or on another occasion, to say, you know what I don't understand is, Eric, because I don't, I do think that I can, I mean, you may not agree with what I say, but I think I can account for all that I've just said.

[01:57:05] I believe you. What I just want to say, no, before we sign off, I just want to say one thing. You just said that I think where you used to be rather left brained and now you think of yourself as more right brained. Well, I'm on a, I'm on a path, I think. You're on a path, good. But the point is this, that in doing so, you are enacting this shift that is what I refer to.

[01:57:29] And the lovely thing that I hear from people is that in reading my work, they do get aha moments. And they do say, once you've seen it, you can't unsee it. You have to see everything in that light. And that is. Pretty good as far as I'm concerned. So I just wanted to say that before we sign off,

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[01:57:46] **Nate Hagens:** you are a beautiful human being and a scholar and exemplar of humanity.

[01:57:53] And I have to just thank you for all of your work that you've parsed and condensed for others. And it's 2500 pages of parsing. But, there's a lot of nuance, as you've pointed out. So thank you. And, Please come back in another year, maybe with Patrick Ophuls or some other combination, because there's a lot there, that can't be easily, summarized in two hours.

[01:58:21] Well, that's lovely.

[01:58:22] **Iain McGilchrist:** I, draw a veil over the delusional in what you just said, and just thank you for the kindness of it.

[01:58:31] **Nate Hagens:** To be continued, my friend, thank you so much. Thank you. If you enjoyed or learned from this episode of The Great Simplification, please follow us on your favorite podcast platform. You can also visit thegreatsimplification.com for references and show notes from today's conversation. And to connect with fellow listeners of this podcast, check out our Discord channel.

[01:58:56] This show is hosted by me, Nate Hagens, edited by No Troublemakers Media, and produced by Misty Stinnett, Leslie Batlutz, Brady Heine, and Lizzie Sirianni.