

The Great Simplification

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[00:00:00] **Nate Hagens:** Good morning. Frank, was feeling left out, so he wanted to say hello. there is a lot going on in the world, power outage in Spain. The US prints negative GDP. cats living with dogs. Real Old Testament stuff. All right, Frank. it is Wednesday morning, April 30th, and, I have to make this short so that my staff can put this together for Friday morning.

[00:00:32] something happened in response to my Earth Day talk, or my, frankly, on AI and service of life that got me to thinking about the future of this work, this platform. The collective sense making of the human condition. and that's what I'd like to briefly reflect on today.

[00:01:03] I sent the link to my talk to a dear friend, who is a card carrying ecological economist. and I've known for over 20 years. And I said, I think you might like this. And she said, oh, well, it's one of your Frank's on Earth Day. So, I just had a team meeting and she has a pretty big job. Just had a a, staff, kind of a morale boosting meeting and I'm riding high on that.

[00:01:34] And your stuff is kind of heavy and scary and intense and depressing. So I'll try to watch it in the next month or so, but. can't do it. and this is someone who understands our situation and has similar values to me, and she couldn't bring herself to watch it. So I called a friend of mine, inner Circle colleague.

[00:01:59] And he's like, I have the opposite reaction. He's like, I watched it and I got really excited and, driven and like made some calls in my local community. I rewatched your Alexis Ziegler, video on direct current and 300 watt society and I got fired up. But I talked to my neighbor who's an ER doc who watches your podcast and he is like, it all makes sense.

[00:02:26] I just can't do it. It's too heavy and it's too ominous. and you know, it made me think, that there are two arcs happening. There's the arc of our circumstances, which I would argue has been declining since the 1970s when the genuine progress indicator peaked and we started to add debt and globalization to kick the can, of growth.

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[00:02:56] oil production growth went from 6% a year down to 1% a year. kind of the early seventies were the sweet spot. a lot of good music then too. I. And that arc continues to decline this year. 2025 will arguably be the coolest, temperature wise and most stable, politically and socially for the rest of my life.

[00:03:23] And that's kind of ominous, to think about. I don't know if you can hear, but Frank is rolling on the ground, making content and animal noises. it, it's. Kind of like having a root canal, a couple weeks from now because you think about it. So the other graph is kind of like a carbon pulse graph, a normal curve that as things as you perceive things are different or wrong, you wanna learn about 'em, you wanna make sense of 'em, you wanna be able to integrate things and apply them to your own life.

[00:03:56] And broader culture. But as things get worse, how many people really want to sense, make, and want more facts and data? I actually think people have information overload. There's apathy, there's stop telling me about what's wrong with the world, even if it makes, more sense, than I had before. I just want to either enjoy my life or cope or do something in my community and let me sense, make in my garden.

[00:04:26] I don't need to sense make the broader world in this other graph. There is a peak in when our society wants more information and wants to sense, make our collective predicament. I would argue we're past that point. which has implications for this channel. So personally, a long ago I accepted.

[00:04:57] The situation of the global economic Superorganism, and the various scenarios ahead. And so I, focus on this arc of the future that is declining to improve it. to move to a different arc. that's my focus. I no longer focus on the actual situation. I've already grieved for the cultural story that we're being told from governments and institutions and our education system.

[00:05:30] I actually find this information, heavy but empowering, especially if I have a group of humans that I can share and work and talk about this. But this brings up two challenges to me. and the first one is I, him. Less and less interested in following and telling the story of the biophysical macroeconomic situation, which is energy supporting economy.

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[00:06:03] The relationship between energy and GDP, the relationship between energy and technology, the relationship between energy and money, and how that all fits together, with human behavior and ecology and the environment. I'm much more interested in looking at the deep underpinnings of the human brain, the social primate, in at 8 billion, strong.

[00:06:30] And what we can do, with our social. Situation. and there's a spirituality component of that, not woo spirituality, but what is the meaning of life and what do we do at this, species level, rite of passage. And a lot of that stuff has to do with neuroscience and the brain, not so much with gadgets and batteries and different policies.

[00:06:56] So I'm also interested in what do we do in communities looking two or three steps ahead, bio regionalism. I think makes a lot of sense. Regenerative agriculture, regenerative systems. Those are the things that I'm increasingly more interested in. However, the vast majority of our society is still stuck in the what can, what won't happen, and what can't happen, categories, and I think the system synthesis, the sense making that we're trying to do here.

[00:07:31] Moves more people in the, into the what might happen category. And I actually think it's still super important to tell the, full, human predicament system synthesis. And so we're gonna suck it up, and make these eight to 10 hours of videos in coming months, even though I'm more interested in cataloging what people are doing, as pilots, on the ground.

[00:07:56] Because for most people, bio regionalism, which is maybe country and state borders, no longer exist in the future, and we have to, organize things by watershed and by bio region. That sounds crazy to most people, unless you've connected all the dots. The second challenge is audience. you know, a lot of people following this podcast were peak oilers in the beginning, and now I'm having a lot more, someone on grief or on neuroscience or on meaning.

[00:08:32] we have someone coming up on death, Steven Jenkinson and those sorts of things, which I think are highly relevant to the human predicament. I would just hypothesize that people watch podcasts and contents, in four broad categories. One, a big one is entertainment. and we don't do that here.

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[00:08:53] Not so much. I mean, if there weren't the human predicament and climate and debt and ecological overshoot, I'm actually a pretty funny guy. but I'm not so funny anymore, because this is serious. I do crack jokes occasionally, but entertainment is not a category that The Great Simplification would fall under.

[00:09:11] The second would be education and sense making, and that is our main, intended contribution to society. The third is companionship and community and to feel less alone, I think we can provide that. And the fourth is. Giving people agency and direction, and inspiration. I am not so good at that.

[00:09:36] I'm learning about what to do. I don't really know what to do, but I think we wanna highlight a lot more people working on the ground, on all the things, from different perspectives because there's not one answer, for all these things. So I feel a pull towards those latter two categories of community and agency and away from the entertainment and education.

[00:10:04] but it's difficult and I expect that our audience will change and we will lose people, that want either entertainment or education in the sense of how to put on their next Bitcoin or gold trade or whatever. Ultimately, this isn't about, individual prepping. This is about moving the arc of the human trajectory up alongside with the biosphere trajectory.

[00:10:35] And that is a large conversation, a global conversation. And so the audience of viewers that I want, if it's possible, is those pro-social curious. ecologically mature humans, who want to play a role in our future somehow, make their lives better, make their, communities better, make the world better.

[00:11:01] And that may be a small subset, of humans that have the time and wherewithal to watch these, to engage with these and to, psychologically take the seriousness and heaviness on board. and I know you're out there. I know many of you are following this. So what's my main message today? It's that the days of telling the story of how we got to this moment in 2025 are passing us by.

[00:11:33] And now the focus is going to be on what do we do, as a collective society, as a species to change the arc of the downward slope, towards. Better futures than the default. Who do I want, to watch this podcast, to sign up to this

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podcast? It's those people who. If they knew this podcast and this platform existed, they would want to tune in, every week.

[00:12:03] So going forward, if you know of such people, please share, Frank's or podcasts or presentations that we, post here with those sorts of people. they're out there. You're out there. Thank you. I will talk to you next week.