

The Great Simplification

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[00:00:00] **Nate Hagens:** Good morning. I took most of the last two weeks to travel, to one destination and stay with a friend, and I had an experience there that I decided to share because it might be relevant and helpful to some of you, many of you. My friend's organization is working adjacent to the more than human predicament.

[00:00:28] Many on his team follow the podcast, or I think at least watch the Franklys. And as such, I felt completely at home at our dinners and on our hikes. I felt especially at home in that I didn't need to have low EROI conversations, where I had to spend a long on-ramp discussing what I do and why and how the pieces fit together.

[00:01:01] It was all implied and understood, even though, surprisingly to me, we didn't speak about it, or at least very little, and not at dinner. One night, we went out for Chinese food, and it was one of the funniest dinners that I've had in years. I kind of felt like a stand-up comic, and I had forgotten aspects of myself that had not shown up in a long time.

[00:01:34] And it wasn't until I got home that night, and reflected on what was different. We didn't talk about climate or AI or energy depletion or the geopolitical cluster we're currently hip deep in, but we all knew that each of us knew all these things. And it took such an experience for me to realize that usually I'm in a room that's too hot talking about all the systemic risk and the gory details, or too cold, talking about football or fireworks or this or that politician without any deep analysis or awareness or nuance, or recognition of the times we're alive in.

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[00:02:25] And it struck me that it took such a group of humans who knew all these things but were being their best human selves regardless, that I could fully be myself, and I had missed that person. I mean, I think we're doing good work here with the podcast, but it is, a tiny-- well, not a tiny, but a mid-size sliver of the totality of Nate 'cause these are not funny topics.

[00:02:57] but when I was with this group of 10 or 11 people, these were people who could see and sit with both the beauty of the world and the horror of the world, and show up with joy and meaning and presence, and still get up in the morning and work on things that matter even given our approaching cultural cul-de-sac.

[00:03:26] And for me, it was like breathing pure oxygen, which was especially poignant after coming home and being with all the wildfires and, you know, the last few months of the Art of the Hormuz deal madness and all the, the flip-flopping and the societal aircraft carrier hitting an iceberg with respect to what's going on in Iran and all the things Reality depth perception requires both eyes open at the same time.

[00:03:59] I think some people have the horror eye closed for good reasons, and some people have the beauty eye closed. And in both of those cases, the world kind of goes two-dimensional and gray. These were 10 people with both eyes open, and for pretty much a week, my social world had full 3D depth again

[00:04:26] All right, so why did this hit me as hard as it did? two years ago, after spending six weeks in India with 30 people for a month, I said on one of the, subsequent Franklys that I had been naive about community, that I had thought it was about borrowing your neighbor's lawnmower or trading garlic for potatoes, but that the real benefit showed up in my physiology, the oxytocin, the serotonin, of close, repetitive daily interaction with other humans and dogs, in India's case.

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[00:05:07] Last week was a booster shot of that lesson, which I had gradually forgotten over the last two years. I got a shot of oxytocin I didn't know that I was low on, kind of like discovering a deficiency at the exact moment someone hands you a vitamin. My mammalian body did some accounting that my analyst brain would not or could not.

[00:05:36] We are Homo sapiens. We are herd animals, and we evolved in small bands where everyone saw and reacted to the same world outside. And for a couple decades now, I've been seeing a different world than most of the people in whatever room I happen to be in, and I don't think I had really internalized what that costs me until the cost went away for a week.

[00:06:05] And despite the connections and relationships around the world from this podcast and my networks, I realized that oftentimes I paradoxically find myself lonely. None of this is to complain about the online community. I have a big online community. I'm grateful for every single day. My systems ecology folks who I've been exchanging ideas with for going on 20 years, and the thousands of you who see what I see, who write to me, who are doing remarkable things where you live. But oxytocin in its truest sense doesn't travel through fiber optic cable per se, and the internet has nearly infinite bandwidth for information, but very little for f- the felt presence that only happens with presence with other beings.

[00:07:08] And in my case, and I suspect in many of yours, other beings who deeply understand all the facts and trends and risks that are now all converging. I have a family who I love dearly. My brother, his wife, and son were here the last three days. I have local friends. I have farmers and neighbors who would help me in a crisis.

[00:07:30] What I don't have, at least not yet, is ten people fluent in the more than human predicament without a need to talk about it all the time within driving distance of my home. And I suspect a lot of you listening are in the same position,

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aware, engaged, and locally alone. As we increasingly converge on reality or as reality converges on this system synthesis, this is likely going to change out of necessity.

[00:08:04] So of the no regret strategies I can recommend here, I cannot more strongly recommend finding a local community as this is foundational for the work ahead, even if the work is only on yourself. And I do feel like The Great Simplification, this platform has a role, and dare I say responsibility to assist in this, and we're taking this seriously and working on some things.

[00:08:38] I didn't work much during the last two weeks, but I crafted about a dozen Franklys, so the next few months will be replete, with content, and some fantastic podcasts coming up. I hope you are well