

Relevant Education

What you need to know to consciously participate in the most consequential 25 years in Humanity's history

Relevant Education for Humanity's Transition Book Overview

<http://Relevant.Education>

For an overview of the whole project vision, and to register to stay up to date, visit the website.

This document is a draft of the Prologue to the book "*Relevant Education for Humanity's Transition*", along with overviews of its six other Parts.

The content overview also serves as a first draft of the syllabus for other instantiations of the educational material.

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The Prologue

This Prologue is an extended introduction to the book and the overall Relevant Education project, of which the book is a part.

Understanding WHY the book and the project exist is perhaps even more important than the book's contents.

If you're the sort of person who rarely finishes a book, please get to the end of this Prologue as a minimum. That will provide the best return on time spent.

It introduces the idea of Humanity's Transition, outlines the Relevant Education Project, introduces the core idea of "From Finance to Flourishing" and describes the outline of the book itself.

Humanity's Transition

Should we be excited or terrified about the future?

Our current era is the most wonderfully exciting time to be alive!

Inexorable technological innovations, global wealth increasing and undernourishment decreasing year after year, life-saving and life-changing medical breakthroughs, fewer kinetic wars than ever in human history, new digital tech with far-reaching positive societal implications, global literacy rates climbing though increasing rates of enrollment in primary education, secondary and tertiary education increasing, reduction in extreme poverty, more people living in democracies, increasing life expectancy, lower child mortality, greater than ever acceptance of the norms of equality and inclusivity... and a great deal more.

On the other hand...

Our current era is the most frighteningly terrifying time to be alive!

A climate crisis that will disrupt the lives of hundreds of millions of people, demonstrable vulnerability to pandemics that could become regular and possibly much more serious, the growth and growing acceptance of authoritarianism, the increasing capitulation of morals and values to wealth and power, extreme and growing wealth inequality, the erosion of ecosystems (oceans, wildlife populations, deforestation, desertification) and depletion of many natural resources - especially water, psychologically disruptive technology, widespread mental health crises, agenda-driven news and media that make it almost impossible to get to the truth of critical issues, highly destructive tech that could be built in a basement (e.g. gene technology, swarming killer-drones, cyber attacks on infrastructure), our inability to coordinate for the good (e.g. we failed to meet nearly all the UN Millennium Development Goals, and are way off track on the Sustainable Development Goals)... and a great deal more.

The question is... which is the reality? The answer is - both.

Things are changing at an unprecedented speed, scope and depth - in both positive and negative ways. This indicates an increasing instability that is shaking the very underpinnings of our global civilization.

The consequence of us hurtling headlong down these two trajectories is that, after 50,000 years of development, humanity is in for its biggest transition yet.

Humanity's Past Transitions

This won't be humanity's first transition. During our (homo sapiens') 200,000-300,000 year evolution, we've gone through a number of huge transformations, each involving dramatic changes in our individual psychology, collective culture and technology / systems for living.

- The first transition was around 50,000 years ago when something happened to the human psyche that allowed us to start dominating all other species. (This wasn't genetic evolution – our genetic makeup hadn't changed for around 200,000 years.)
- Around 12,000 years ago we started the switch from hunting and gathering to settled agriculture (the agricultural revolution).
- Starting around 2,500 years ago (often referred to as the start of the Axial Age) most of the major mono-theistic religions and early philosophies came into being - Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Platonism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.
- Around 350 years ago we entered the Age of Reason. This created the ideals of reason, science, humanism and progress which gave rise to the industrial revolution, democracy, capitalism... and eventually to the comforts and relative peace (for some) of today.

(Note about the Age of Reason: Following the Scientific Revolution, thinkers in late 17th century Europe started challenging religious convictions and dogma using the principles of reason, science, humanism and progress. This period is called the Enlightenment or The Age of Reason. But note that this 'enlightenment' has nothing to do with spiritual enlightenment.)

I cover these transitions in more detail in *The Ages of Humanity - Inner and Outer Changes*. They are recognised by scholars as major inflection points in our history, and many now believe we are heading into another one which will be deeper and more consequential than any in the past. But there are two differences:

- The timescales for the transitions have been getting shorter, so rather than taking thousands or hundreds of years, this one will most likely happen in the next decades.
- We are now a global civilization operating at a level of complexity and potential for impact - for both good and bad - that's virtually impossible for us to comprehend.

This means that, whereas the past transitions were transformational for humanity in the sense of 'progress' (on the whole), the coming transition may not be. This time there is a possibility - perhaps a strong probability - that the transition will be to something dystopic, or chaotic, or even existential.

By using the term transition I can cover both possibilities: a transformation (progressive) or a collapse (regressive). Or even a collapse followed by a transformation.

I cover these ideas in Types of Transition and Transition Paths within the section [What we might next become](#).

Why make such a fuss? Aren't there obvious solutions?

It depends who you ask. There are, broadly, three schools of thought with different sorts of answers. They can be differentiated according to how they regard progress and the Enlightenment – aka the Age of Reason.

The three schools of thought are:

1. Undo the Enlightenment : “back to simplicity”

This is a somewhat fringe school of thought which argues that we should abandon technological progress and revert to a simpler, more ecological, back-to-nature lifestyle. The Enlightenment led us to the brink of ecological disaster, and we need to undo it.

2. Double-down on the Enlightenment : “*more of the same, but better*”

This mainstream school of thought argues that we are not, in fact, in a precarious position. That all the current data indicate things are, generally, continuing to improve. The Enlightenment principles worked their magic over the last 350 years and transformed the awful misery of feudal medievalism into the comfortable, well-fed, easy-going, one-click-delivered-next-day life of today's standardised urban dweller. To secure our future and overcome our current problems - such as climate change - we just need to double-down on the Enlightenment principles and make appropriate tweaks and adjustments.

3. Transcend and Include the Enlightenment : “the next transformation”

As you'll have guessed, this is the school of thought that underpins the thinking behind this book.

“Transcend and Include” means that we don't abandon the Enlightenment principles, but neither do we rely on them exclusively.

The Enlightenment ideals have truly been transformative. Circumstances for the average human being today are better than at any point in history. The Enlightenment ideals are indeed an inexorable progress machine.

But the kicker is that many of the devastating problems we are currently facing were actually caused by Enlightenment principles - as I'll explain in a moment.

Clearly, if a set of principles is causing problems, the solution cannot be found within those principles - no matter how much they are tweaked. Some newer, higher-order principles need to be applied, whilst retaining the non-problematic elements of the original set of principles (i.e. transcend and include).

Much of Relevant Education highlights the problems caused by Enlightenment principles, as well as seeking to understand what the higher-order principles might be, and exploring current ideas of how they might be put into effect.

There are very many thinkers and writers aligned with this school of thought - although calling it a 'school of thought' perhaps suggests more uniformity of view than actually exists. Such as it is, it goes by a variety of names, based on different ideologies and philosophies. The best known are Metamodernism, Integral Theory and GameB. However, there are also many thinkers and writers expressing similar ideas without explicitly aligning themselves with those ideologies or philosophies.

Problems with the Enlightenment

For all of its undoubted successes, the Enlightenment had a number of fundamental misconfigurations during its setup. I'll return to them in various sections of the book, but they are important enough for me to summarise here.

First, in seeking to promote reason instead of religious dogma and blind faith as the path to truth, the Enlightenment ideals also led to the elimination of the inner world - the interior - as something real. Reality came to be defined by science as that which can be measured and studied objectively. Quite apart from the philosophical arguments about the nature of reality, dismissing the interior as not being real had far-reaching and deeply disturbing consequences. It created a view of a cold universe with no meaning or purpose to anything - in stark contrast to the essence of being human, where we expect and search for meaning and purpose everywhere. This inevitably impoverishes our connections to the universe, to our environment, to each other and even to ourselves; which in turn affects our values and decisions.

A second misconfiguration is to do with causality. The Enlightenment model of the universe is that it is made up of objects that change due to specific, often single, causes. For example, gravity causes planets to orbit suns. Of course, that is true, but the same logic is totally inadequate for explaining the emergence of consciousness (if, indeed, it did emerge - more in Part I), or the behaviour of economic markets. Or for finding solutions to overfishing and cutting down rain-forests. Or for allocating individual blame when child protection services fail. The world has suffered dearly because of this simplistic notion of causality.

The third misconfiguration has the most obvious impact: there is no 'off' switch for the drive of the Enlightenment ideals. Progress came to be defined as material progress, the pursuit of material progress was turned on, and that was that: who would ever want to slow down or stop 'progress'? Except that the resulting inexorable and exponential progress on a finite planet is inevitably hitting the boundary of limited resources for production and space for disposal. And this same progress is constantly stressing and will potentially break the global organising systems - such as legal, financial and political frameworks and institutions - with additional dramatic consequences.

I will be returning to these themes regularly, with specific examples, throughout the book.

Relevant Education

This is about the broader Project of Relevant Education, as described on the website Relevant.Education

Relevant Education - the WHAT

Humanity's transition provides the overall context for the project Relevant Education, which is predicated on two assumptions:

First, that Humanity is headed for a transition - whether a progressive transformation or a regressive collapse.

Second, that the likelihood of the transition being a transformation depends on the degree of our conscious participation. In other words, it depends on the consciousness, understanding and wisdom behind millions of decisions and millions of small and large actions by millions of people.

With that background, Relevant Education is:

What you need to know to consciously participate in Humanity's most consequential 25 years.

... which is the tag-line of the book and the project, of course.

The simple fact of being alive during these coming decades means that you WILL be part of this human and civilizational drama. There are no passive onlookers any more. Just "getting on with my life" automatically involves taking actions that are part of the drama.

But the idea is to consciously participate with the right knowledge, understanding and wisdom, because, again, what we're all taking part in is both terrifying and exciting.

The reason it's terrifying is...

...if we don't make fundamental changes to how just about everything works in our global civilization, it's going to continue its default trajectory into some form of collapse. Every civilization in history has collapsed, but we have never had a global civilization before. If this one collapses it could very well spell the end of 50,000 years of Humanity's (i.e. OUR) development.

The reason it's exciting is...

...the changes required to avert civilizational collapse (assuming that it's

possible) are so fundamental and all-encompassing that they constitute the most dramatic, exciting and almost unimaginable transformation in humanity's history. Our values, our culture, our technology, all our organising systems - our whole civilization - is subject to re-design. We, the folk alive at this time (including you and I), have the responsibility to do whatever we can to create the most appropriate and wisest responses to this ultimate challenge.

What could be more exciting, fulfilling and meaningful than that?

Relevant Education - the HOW

With that context, the aims of Relevant Education are to help you with:

Aim One: Learning lots of stuff

You won't be an expert in any of the topics after reading this book, but you will have something of a clue about the topics and their relationships.

Aim Two: Getting more people - who at least have something of a clue - to participate in the ongoing learning and conversing

Once you have read the book, learned lots of stuff and have something of a clue, you'll be able to more easily and effectively participate in the ongoing learning and conversing. This is much more important than it may appear.

Aim Three: Finding and defining your own unique role

...or perhaps understanding the significance of the role you are already playing.

Aim Four: Adopting and enhancing your own personal development practices, and growing in wisdom

If the transformation is to happen in time, it will require many more people to develop and to increase their capacities - no matter what their role. In other words, a transformation will require a significant increase in global wisdom.

This book is the first strand of the Relevant Education Project. The main focus of the book is helping with Aim One: Learning lots of stuff, but it also briefly covers Aims Three and Four in [PART SIX-Participating in Humanity's Transition](#).

All four Aims are addressed by one or more of the other strands of the Project.

Relevant Education - the OTHER AGENDAS

I'm writing this section in the context of this book, but it actually applies to all strands of the Relevant Education project.

Every author hopes that their book will change the people who read it in some way. Here, I'm being explicit about what I'm hoping will change - inasmuch as I'm able to express it.

Systematic dismantling of assumptions

We're not going to transform humanity by simply reconfiguring the status quo. What's needed is something much, much deeper, and possibly dangerous.

It's going to require us to play around with the very fabric of our society and civilization; with the accepted norms and established institutions that hold it together; with our sense of our selves and all of our many roles; with our notion of reality, meaning and purpose.

We need to challenge our very deepest assumptions. For example, our assumptions about:

- the very nature of reality and causation
- our sense of our own selves and identities;
- the meaning of meaning and purpose;

We need to challenge our assumptions about our history, our current civilization and its structures. For example, about

- the story of how we (humanity) got to be what we are;
- the very notion of the continuity of our civilization;
- the future of our societal structures;
- the adequacy of nation states and cities;
- the way we allocate power and govern ourselves

And we need to challenge our assumptions about everything related to how civilization operates, such as assumptions about:

- the nature, purpose and length of education;
- the purpose of employment and jobs
- the role and nature of money, debt, capital and investment;
- the net benefit of a market economy;

- the relationship between economics, ecology, sustainability and growth;
- the nature and role of health care, mental care and social care
- our ability to continue using energy at the same per capita rate, even with renewables;
- ... and much, much more

And we need to challenge our assumptions about our own role in humanity's transition.

In Part I I'm quite explicit about the fact that I'm challenging assumptions, but, as I've indicated above, this assumption-challenging agenda manifests itself throughout the book.

Taking different perspectives

Participating in Humanity's Transition has nothing to do with adopting positions within currently established spectra (politically left vs right, religious vs secular, global vs local, rural vs urban, public vs private, capitalist vs socialist, individual vs collective etc.). Instead, it requires us to move above and beyond these established dichotomies.

To do this requires thinking and understanding in new ways. It requires us to take different perspectives.

A simple example will make this clear.

On the one hand, we have the Circlists. They believe that everything should be based on circles. Circles are beautiful, smooth, encompass the full 360 degrees and have infinite lines of symmetry.

On the other hand, we have the Rectanglists. They believe that everything should be based on rectangles. Rectangles are fundamental, perfect building blocks, you're not constantly changing direction as you walk round them and you can unambiguously define just two lines of symmetry.

The Circlists and Rectanglists argue and debate interminably and become stuck in their dogmatic positions. The Circlists cannot, or refuse, to understand the Rectanglists point of view, and vice versa.

If we're lucky, a very insightful Cylinderist appears on the scene, and if the Circlists and Rectanglists are open-minded enough, they will listen to the arguments and see there is a third, integrative perspective. Look at a cylinder from an end, and you see a circle. Look at it from the side and you see a rectangle. Both perspectives are true, but partial. When viewed from the new 3-D multi-perspective, there is no conflict.

There will be various examples in the book where I'll make this different perspective-taking explicit, and many other times when it's implicit.

The ability to take other, or even multiple, perspectives is a big factor in developing wisdom (see Wisdom). This isn't something that can be taught, as far as I know: if it could, I'd be taking the course myself! But, perhaps, it's something that can be absorbed by exposure. And mayhap this book can help.

This is one of the other agendas.

To see the challenges, think of the politically left-right or religious-secular polarities. Try out these questions about your own point of view:

- How much antipathy do you feel for the other side?
- Is there any possibility at all that you got it wrong and the other side is right?
- Or, at least, can you see the world from their point of view? Is there at least some truth in their perspective?
- How open are you to the possibility that both perspectives are partial, and that there is a higher, integrative perspective?

Triggering emotions

The very nature of the content I'll be covering could have an emotional impact on you. In fact, if I've done my job even tolerably well, it will have an emotional impact - and this is the third of my other agendas.

In case I haven't made it obvious enough already, let me state it explicitly: unless we find a way to fundamentally change just about every aspect of our global civilization, the coming transition will be a collapse into chaos or dystopia.

[Important aside: if you're nodding in agreement with the notion that we need need to change "every aspect of our global civilization", remember that you and I are part of that civilization; so nodding in agreement is tantamount to agreeing there is a need for each of us to change. And I don't mean anything as trite as "avoid flying and do more recycling".]

Conversely, if we do manage to achieve a transformative transition, just about every aspect of our global civilization will have been ... transformed!

As I said at the start of Prologue I - this is the most frighteningly terrifying and wonderfully exciting time to be alive. Inevitably, the topics I'll be covering will include:

- **A potentially soul-destroying catalogue** of civilizational dysfunctions within a self-perpetuating system that appears to have no path for their resolution
- **A systematic deconstruction of many basic assumptions** (see above)
- **Inspirational ideas and exciting perspectives on how humanity can**

move towards a transformation, along with the contours of what a transformed humanity could look like, the astonishing potentials for humankind and - most importantly - the sorts of processes needed to continually generate and refine the processes of continuous transformation: this is not a one-off change of state.

So:

I'm hoping you will be shocked, depressed (temporarily) and deeply concerned by the catalogue of dysfunctions and our default trajectory. And I'm hoping you will be deeply unsettled by the questioning of so many previously unchallenged assumptions about almost everything around you.

But most of all, I'm hoping you will feel intense excitement and a palpable potential in yourself and in others; I'm hoping you will be inspired and motivated by the prospect of humanity effecting the most consequential transformation in our 50,000 year history; and I'm hoping you will be open and intensely curious to uncover the role you will play in it.

We are all unbelievably fortunate to be alive today.

From Finance to Flourishing

The topic of this section is a thread that runs throughout the book - if not explicitly, then implicitly.

We want there to be change. Not tinkering at the edges, but deep systemic change. To understand how to achieve systemic change, we need to consider some fundamentals of Systems Theory - a topic I cover briefly in The formalization of Systems. The key insight regarding systemic change is this:

Core to any system are the 'paradigms' - the unstated assumptions that drive everything. The system's paradigms influence its goals; the goals affect its self-organization; the self-organization determines the rules and incentives. And the incentives result in actions. You can change the goals and organization and rules and incentives to try and achieve systemic change, but to the degree those changes don't align with the paradigms, the system will re-configure and adjust so that, overall, those paradigms remain in place. All that changes is the way the paradigms are complied with. For as long as they remain in place, they are always complied with.

This is a highly-condensed summary of the wonderful article by Donella Meadows ("Leverage Points: Places to intervene in a system). The bottom line is that, unless you adjust the paradigm(s) that drive the system, changing anything else will have little effect.

This will be a little clearer with the example of the 'system' we're concerned with, which is our global civilization. So, what are the paradigms at the centre of our global civilization? I would argue they are something like

'Money measures worth' and

'Our purpose (global, national, organizational, personal) is to increase wealth'

This is far from an original thought, of course. To quote from the Bible (Timothy 6:10): "For the love of money is the root of all evil"

Power also has a role here, but that is usually closely aligned to money.

Whereas Tim suggests Christian faith as the solution, I take a systems approach and suggest the need to replace the "pursuit of money" paradigm with a "pursuit of flourishing" paradigm:

"Our purpose (global, national, organizational and personal) is to increase the flourishing of all beings."

On reflection, this is not so different from the Christian edict to love our neighbours.

In other words, instead of our individual and collective actions being driven primarily by what will increase finance (by which I mean personal wealth, organisational profit and national GDP), they must change to be driven primarily by what will increase flourishing (see Suffering, Happiness & Flourishing) - individually and collectively.

I summarise this idea as: From Finance to Flourishing.

If the idea of a focus on flourishing sounds utopian... well, what did you expect? As I said, we're not talking about edge tinkering here.

Before ending this section, let me try and deal with some of the obvious objections to this idea.

Firstly - it's impossible to achieve utopia, almost by definition.

Changing from a finance to a flourishing paradigm may sound utopian, but it's not. Just as the finance paradigm has not resulted in everyone becoming wealthy, neither will the flourishing paradigm result in everyone always flourishing. But such a change in the agreed, unstated assumption of what civilization is aiming for would be stupendous. (Talking of utopia, see Pro Utopia or Protopian? for the nuances of this idea).

Secondly - how can you talk about "flourishing" to someone living on under \$1 a day?

Clearly, ensuring everyone has at least their basic needs met is part of increasing human flourishing. To the extent that that requires money, then finance has to be part of the equation. Just not the driver.

Thirdly - how can it be possible to create a plan to change the civilizational paradigm?

It isn't possible.

No-one sat down and devised a blueprint for switching civilization to be driven by finance. Instead, it emerged without any conscious plan in place

In a similar way, the switch to a flourishing-driven civilization cannot be planned with a blueprint - it has to emerge. But there is a difference; in this case we know we need to make a switch, so there has to be an element of conscious emergence this time.

It's a case of facilitating its emergence as a result of appropriate changes across ... pretty much everything! (See [A systematic deconstruction of our assumptions](#) above for a partial definition of 'everything'.)

At its simplest, it requires each of us to keep the idea in mind - the idea of increasing flourishing for ourselves and all other beings - when making decisions, taking actions and assessing proposals.

Which is the point of making it explicit here.

The Structure of the Book

The problem with books is that they are designed to support the logical, serial progression of a set of concepts, or a narrative. In that they are wonderful, with their numerically tagged pages, bound into an unchangeable sequence.

The problem with the subject matter of this book is that it doesn't lend itself at all well to being represented as a serial progression of concepts. So if you find topics being repeated in multiple places, and a lot of cross-referencing, that's the reason.

This is the overview of its structure.

[PART ONE-Challenging the fundamentals](#)

This covers the contexts that also are called upon in other contexts. I start with Worldviews, then move on to Philosophy, Science and Religion, followed by Being, Knowing, Changing, Becoming (evolving/emerging) Meaning and Purpose.

These topics crop up again in PART TWO (how they have changed over time), PART THREE (what they need to become for us) and in PART FOUR (how they are core to individual and collective growth and wisdom.)

[PART TWO-Reviewing the past, examining the present](#)

The Past: The big picture of Cosmic History

The Present: What we've done to ourselves. Our crises and civilizational risks.

Responses: Some approaches to solving our problems that are likely to do more damage, or, at best, are worthy-sounding re-configurations of the status quo.

In Between: What sort of transition paths might we be subjected to?

[PART THREE-Growing, deciding, acting & flourishing](#)

Building on the previous contexts, this Part deals with the dimensions through which we can grow, make decisions, act and flourish, both individually and collectively.

It also covers Politics, Law, Governance and Education.

[PART FOUR-Operating our Civilisation](#)

This provides brief analyses of multiple specific aspects of running a society, including core business sectors, technology, energy, money and markets, care, culture etc.

[PART FIVE-Conceiving, gestating and birthing a transformed Humanity](#)

Having challenged the fundamentals, reviewed how we got here and understood the dynamics of growing, acting and flourishing as individuals and collectives - we are now in a position to examine how we might transform.

This is where we deal with The Future.

Not a blueprint, of course, but a series of lenses and perspectives on what 'transformation' could mean.

[PART SIX-Participating in Humanity's Transition](#)

This is, again, about Being, Knowing, Becoming, Doing and Flourishing: but this time specifically applied to YOU.

[PART Seven - Appendix - Frames for Better Thinking](#)

Useful ideas that crop up all over the place.

PART ONE

Challenging the fundamentals

So - you managed to get through the “interesting but maybe not all that relevant” stuff in the Prologue, and you're itching to get to the nitty-gritty, down-to-earth, practicalities of humanity's transition.

But then you read the chapter headings in this PART ONE, and your heart sunk. It all seems too philosophical and ungrounded.

“When do we get to the *RELEVANT* part?” you ask.

This IS the relevant part! I didn't include this philosophically-oriented stuff at the start just to be perverse.

I did it because we're not going to be able to conceive a transformed civilization by building it based on the same core assumptions and understanding of the world that underpin our current civilization. That wouldn't be a transformation: it would simply be a reconfiguration of the same thing.

PART ONE is *precisely* about challenging our core assumptions about, and understanding of, the world.

“But”, you may counter “I don't make any assumptions about the world - I take it as I find it. And I certainly don't have a philosophical understanding of the world. And most people are the same - so I still don't see the relevance of this Part.”

I beg to differ. The first chapter, [Worldviews and cultural indoctrination](#), explains that you DO make assumptions about the world, and you DO have a philosophical understanding of the world. And they affect you deeply.

Of course, that's true of everyone, which makes this PART ONE the *most* relevant starting point for the book.

The remaining chapters fit together like this....

In [The Roles of Philosophy, Science and Religion](#) I put those three disciplines into their respective boxes. This is important because it is from them that we derive our fundamental assumptions about and understanding of the world.

I then make an apparently random, and apparently non-philosophical detour into neuroscience where I talk about [Hemisphere-based knowing](#) - about the brain's

hemispheres. In fact, this has deep philosophical implications and it's very hard to overstate the depth of understanding that this perspective offers.

Next, I challenge some pretty basic assumptions about both the nature of reality and our ability to understand it in [No Thing is what it seems](#). I follow this up in [Being and Knowing](#) where I get more specific in the challenge about the nature of reality (basically, "materialism is bunkum"), and about the ways we can know.

So far, I've been talking from a perspective of 'static things' or an 'unchanging reality' - but of course, that's rubbish! Or at least, it's very partial. So I need to introduce the idea of [Changing and Becoming](#), where I cover the ideas of evolution and emergence with some twists.

And finally - to emphasise just how relevant this all is (in case you're still sceptical) - I cover [Meaning and Purpose](#), pulling in elements of Being and Changing. These topics crop up again in PART TWO (how meaning and purpose have changed over time, and what they need to become for us) and in PART FOUR (how they are core to individual and collective growth and wisdom.)

But wait ... there are more challenges to the fundamentals.

In [Where we've come from](#) in the next Part, I also point out the virtual impossibility of the universe coming into existence, of it persisting, of life forming and of consciousness emerging. (Don't blame me if this contradicts your very existence. I'm just referring to the experts.)

Chapters in this PART

Chapter 1 : I know nothing

Chapter 2 : Worldviews and cultural indoctrination

Chapter 3 : The Roles of Philosophy, Science and Religion

Chapter 4 : Hemisphere-based knowing

Chapter 5 : Being and Knowing

Chapter 6 : Changing and Becoming

Chapter 7 : Meaning and Purpose

PART TWO

Reviewing the past, examining the present

At school I gave up history as soon as I could: I simply couldn't see any point in looking back. I now admire kids who opt to study history amidst the clamour and pressure to go for science, mathematics and technology - important though they are.

Obviously, in the context of humanity's transition, we can't possibly look to the future without a meaningful perspective on where we've come from - at all levels. And, critically, an assessment of what we've done to ourselves.

That's the scope of this PART TWO.

In fact, I cram most of the 'history' into [Where we've come from](#). This isn't a set of dates of when stuff happened, but a collection of ways of examining our history from various perspectives. I connect to key themes in PART ONE, including notions of Reality, Becoming, Worldviews and Religion.

I begin to take stock of where our history has got us to in [What we've done to ourselves: Crises of sense and meaning](#). Although there's a lot great stuff we've achieved (I'd rather be alive now than at any time in the past), we've screwed up our individual and collective psyches pretty badly: and this is the main theme of the chapter.

In [What we've created: Civilizational risks](#), I catalogue the (primarily physical) risks we've created for ourselves - largely due to the psychic screw-ups I described in the previous chapter.

Those two chapters can come across as terribly depressing, so in the next chapter I cover some possible responses. But don't get too excited, because this part of the book is the dark part, and I stick with that sentiment in [Delusions and dangers of current responses](#).

Finally, I begin to look to the future. The link to the next Part is in [What time is it?](#) where I look at possible transition paths - some of which take us to a transformation, others to elsewhere. Words and phrases used to describe this include *A liminal time, A time between worlds, a phase shift*.

Chapters in this PART

Chapter 8 : Where we've come from

Chapter 9 : What we've done to ourselves: Crises of sense and meaning

Chapter 10 : What we've created: Civilizational risks

Chapter 11 : Delusions and dangers of current responses

Chapter 12 : A Time Between Worlds

PART THREE

Growing, deciding, acting & flourishing

This is where I look at the inner workings...

This PART THREE looks primarily (but not exclusively) at the Interior dimensions of our society, from both individual and collective perspectives. (In other words, the 'left quadrants', which I cover in Query All Quadrants in the Appendix [Frames for Better Thinking](#)).

A critically important lens through which to view these topics is the idea of growth or development.

It's obvious that we grow and develop as individual humans: although we tend to assume that development stops once we get thrown out of our parents' house and have to fend for ourselves. That's something I point out has been debunked in [Individual & Collective Growth](#).

And the other core topic in that chapter is the idea that groups of individuals also develop through stages, and those stages map very closely to the stages of individual growth. This links back to History Via Ages of Humanity in PART TWO.

In [Individual Growing, Deciding, Acting & Flourishing](#) I cover topics related to the human psyche, including problems with current psychology, the nature of human nature, individual development, flourishing, wisdom and more.

In [Collective Growing, Deciding, Acting & Flourishing](#) I examine how groups of humans develop and evolve.

The final two chapters - [Politics, Law and Governance](#) and [Education](#) - could have been included in: [PART FOUR - Operating our Civilisation](#), but I include them in this PART THREE since they are fundamentally important aspects of our growing, deciding, acting and flourishing.

Chapters in this PART

Chapter 13 : Individual & Collective Growth

Chapter 14 : Individual Growing, Deciding, Acting & Flourishing

Chapter 15 : Collective Growing, Deciding, Acting & Flourishing

Chapter 16 : Politics, Law and Governance

Chapter 17 : Education

PART FOUR

Operating our Civilisation

This PART FOUR is something of an “everything else” catchall.

Two fundamental elements of the operation of a civilization are Governance and Education. But these are so fundamental, I put them into PART THREE - Growing, deciding, acting & Flourishing.

In this PART FOUR, I've included (almost) 'everything else' associated with operating a civilization.

For each topic I cover its dysfunctional aspects - and their implications - along with current activities and potentialities for how that topic could evolve to support a transformative transition.

That's the theory, anyway. In practice, it's often not clear whether current activities and potentialities of a topic will end up being transformative or result in novel and even more dangerous dysfunctionalities. But that in itself is worth being aware of.

Chapters in this PART

Chapter 18 : Money, Markets and Economics

Chapter 19 : Geopolitics and Globalization

Chapter 20 : Living & Working Environments

Chapter 21 : Energy & Minerals

Chapter 22 : Ecology and the Environment

Chapter 23 : Health and Social Care

Chapter 24 : Culture, Arts and Media

Chapter 25 : Technology

Chapter 26 : Food Production

Chapter 27 : Artificial Intelligence: The disruptive driver of disruptors

Chapter 28 : Digital, Biological and Materials Technology

Chapter 29 : Transportation

Chapter 30 : Hidden Power Dynamics and Sources

PART FIVE

Conceiving, gestating and birthing a transformed Humanity

Now we're getting somewhere! This is where I outline the blueprint, right?

No, of course not - as I've mentioned several times.

The title of this PART FIVE gives a metaphorical flavour of its content.

We, as humans, are intimately involved in the conception, gestation and birth of other humans - but we don't create a plan. Instead, we are stewards of biological processes that follow their own dynamics and perform what is, when you think about it, nothing short of a miracle.

We can't take the metaphor too far, but we are conceiving, gestating and birthing a transformed humanity. At least, that's what we're aiming for.

Although we're dealing with a sort of global birthing, conceiving in this context doesn't mean a global sex orgy. It's much closer to the other meaning of conceiving - imagining.

As with a human birth, when birthing a transformed humanity we again have to be intimately involved with the conception, gestation and birth. And again, we cannot create a plan or process for it to happen. Again, we have to be stewards of some 'processes' that follow their own dynamics and perform what will be, when you think about it, nothing short of a miracle.

But here is where the metaphor breaks down.

With human birthing, the processes are biological and evolved over billions of years. With the birthing of a transformed humanity the processes need to be cultural, societal, psychological, systemic and global.

And blatantly, we can't afford to wait a billion years for the processes to evolve. Even a billion milliseconds (11.5 days) is too long. We need to start stewarding these conception, gestation and birthing processes for humanity's transformation by next Tuesday - at the very latest.

So what's to be done?

Finally, some good news! Those processes have been in place (and have been evolving) for tens of thousands of years. Humanity has been through several transformations in the past - for which no plans ever existed. We acted as stewards for the conceiving, gestating and birthing processes, and for the most part we did this completely unconsciously.

I described these past transformations of humanity in PART TWO in the section History Via

Ages of Humanity within the chapter [Where we've come from](#).

And in the first chapter of this PART FIVE - [Levels of Humanity's transformation](#) - I use the same idea to speculate about the depth or level of transformation we now require with the levels of past transformation.

As befits something that is explicitly NOT a plan, the chapters in this Part are something of an ad-hoc collection of perspectives on the conceiving, gestating and birthing of a transformed humanity.

[The Next Developmental Level](#) refers to the chapter [Individual & Collective Growth](#) in PART THREE to provide a developmental perspective (psychological and cultural).

[The difficulty of describing what has yet to emerge](#) picks up ideas of change and emergence from PART ONE.

[How can we respond to the Metacrisis?](#) takes the perspective of a response to the idea of the Metacrisis which I described in [What we've done to ourselves: Crises of sense and meaning](#) in PART TWO.

[Systematizing Systemic Change](#) takes the critically-important perspective of a systems-wide approach - re-emphasising the idea of From Finance To Flourishing and of including the interior when considering a 'system'.

[The Religious Instinct 3.0](#) takes the ideas about Religious Instinct 1.0 and 2.0 that I covered in [Where we've come from](#) and discusses what role religion might play (if any) in a transformed humanity.

[Contours of a transformed Humanity](#) tries to outline some contours of what a transformed humanity could be like, drawing on conceptual models and also on practicalities described in [PART FOUR-Living and producing](#)

[Long-term perspectives](#) considers timeframes of 1000 years and more.

Chapters in this PART

Chapter 31 : Levels of Humanity's transformation

Chapter 32 : The Next Developmental Level

Chapter 33 : The difficulty of describing what has yet to emerge

Chapter 34 : Systematising Systemic Change and Enabling Emergence

Chapter 35 : Ways of responding to the Metacrisis

Chapter 36 : The Religious Instinct 3.0

Chapter 37 : Future Forecasts of Key Sectors

Chapter 38 : If the answer isn't Education, you're asking the wrong question

Chapter 39 : Contours of a transformed Humanity

Chapter 40 : Long-term perspectives

PART SIX

Participating in Humanity's Transition

This doesn't have to be complicated.

It doesn't need to involve dramatically changing *what* you do (although it might), but it will probably mean a dramatic change in *how* you do it, as well as how you relate to those around you and how you respond to the dramatic changes that are likely to start happening to you.

This PART SIX links back to the key themes in PART ONE (Being, Knowing and Becoming), pulls in themes from PARTS 3-5 to help with the Doing, and finally, ends with a Flourish.

Chapters in this PART

Chapter 41 : Participate by Being & Knowing

Chapter 42 : Participate by Becoming

Chapter 43 : Participate by Doing

Chapter 44 : Participate by Flourishing

Appendix - Frames for Better Thinking

This Appendix consists of a collection of 'frames for better thinking'.

For the most part, these frames have been extracted from broader philosophical thought, but each is self-contained enough to be understood - in principle at least - on its own.

Because references to them appear in multiple places, I've collected them together into an Appendix at the end of the book. That way, you won't feel pressured to read through them all at the start, before you come across specific instances of them.

The first time you come across a reference to a frame, it will be worth your while to come to this Appendix and read through its description.

Sample Information Sources

The following is a partial list of actual/potential sources, in no particular order:

Books

A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science, and Spirituality (Ken Wilber)

The Listening Society: A Metamodern Guide to Politics, Book One (Hanzi Freinacht)

Nordic Ideology: A Metamodern Guide to Politics, Book Two (Hanzi Freinacht)

Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist (Kate Raworth)

The New Economics - A Manifest (Steve Keen)

Rethinking Humanity: Five Foundational Sector Disruptions, the Lifecycle of Civilizations, and the Coming Age of Freedom (Tony Seba & James Arbib)

Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing The World (Anand Giridharadas)

Action Inquiry: The Secret of Timely and Transforming Leadership (Bill Torbet)

The World We Create: From God to Market (Tomas Björkman)

Bildung: Keep Growing (Lene Rachel Andersen)

Education in a Time Between Worlds: Essays on the Future of Schools, Technology, and Society (Zak Stein)

Integral Psychology: Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy (Ken Wilber)

The Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays (Owen Barfield)

Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind (Yuval Noah Harari)

Scale: The Universal Laws of Life and Death in Organisms, Cities and Companies (Geoffrey West)

The Dictator's Handbook - Why Bad Behaviour is Almost Always Good Politics (Bruce Bueno de Mequita and Alastair Smith)

The World For Sale - Money, Power and Traders Who Barter The Earth's Resources (Blas & Farchy)

Thinking in Systems: A Primer (Donella Meadows)

Cynefin - Weaving Sense-Making into the Fabric of Our World (Dave Snowden)

Trump and a Post-Truth World (Ken Wilber)

Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future (Peter Senge)

Complexity: A Guided Tour (Melanie Mitchell)

Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership and Change (Prof. Don Edward Beck and Christopher C. Cowan)

Enlightenment Now (Steven Pinker)

The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity (Toby Ord)

The Web Of Meaning (Jeremy Lent)
Being a Human (Charles Foster)
The Dawn of Everything (Graeber and Wengrow)
Evolution's Purpose (Steve McIntosh)
A Brief History of Thought (Luc Ferry)
War and Peace and War (Peter Turchin)
On Tyranny (Timothy Synder)
Cynical Theories (Pluckrose and Lindsay)
Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World (Tyson Yunkaporta)
The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know Is Possible (Charles Eisenstein)
The Essentials of Theory U (Otto Scharmer)
Man's Search for Meaning (Viktor Frankl)
Reality Blind - Integrating the Systems Science Underpinning Our Collective Futures (Nate Hagens & DJ White)
Global Catastrophic Risk (Bostrom and Cirkovic - Eds)
Entangled Life - How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds and Shape Our Futures (Merlin Sheldrake)
Seven Brief Lessons on Physics (Carlo Rovelli)
New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future (James Bridle)
Principles for Dealing with the Changing World Order: Why Nations Succeed or Fail (Ray Dalio)
Science Ideated: The fall of matter and the contours of the next mainstream scientific worldview (Bernado Kastrup)
More Than Allegory - On Religious Myth, Truth and Belief (Bernado Kastrup)
Metamodernity: Meaning and hope in a complex world (Lene Rachel Andersen)
The Green New Deal - Why The Fossil Fuel Civilization Will Collapse by 2028 and The Bold Economic Plan To Save Life on Earth (Jeremy Rifkin)
The Future We Choose - Surviving the Climate Crisis - (Christiana Figueres, Tom Rivett-Carnac)
Bildung: Keep Growing (Lene Rachel Andersen)
Galileo's Error: Foundations for a New Science of Consciousness (Philip Goff)
Feeling and Knowing: Making Minds Conscious (Antonio Damasio)
Goliath: The 100-Year War Between Monopoly Power and Democracy (Matt Stoller)
The Matter With Things: Our Brains, Our Delusions and the Unmaking of the World (Iain McGilchrist)
The Master and His Emissary (Iain McGilchrist)

The End of the World Is Just the Beginning - Mapping the Collapse of Globalization (Peter Zeihan)

Where does money come from - A guide to the UK monetary and banking system (Ryan-Collins, Greenham, Werner and Jackson)

A VERY partial list of articles/article sources

The Consilience Project - Catalyzing critical conversations for the future of human civilization - most articles on this site (Civilization Research Institute)

Ecological civilization: A premise, a promise and perhaps a prospect (Freya Matthews)

Policy Proposals for an Open Knowledge Commons Society (Michel Bauwens, John Restakis and George Dafermos)

P2P and Human Evolution: Placing Peer to Peer Theory in an Integral Framework (Michel Bauwens)

The Evolutionary Manifesto / Strategies for Advancing Evolution (John Stewart)

How to Win the Future: An Agenda for the Third Generation of the Internet (a16z)

Future Proof: The Opportunity To Transform The UK's Resilience To Extreme Risks (Ord, Mercer & Dannreuther)

Political Systems In an Age of Complexity (Si Platform)

The Transition Talk (Landry, Hall, Schmachtenberger)

Levels of Regenerative Agriculture (Soloviev & Landua)

Rethinking Climate Change (Arbib, Dorr, Seba)

Global wealth report 2021 (Credit Suisse)

Metamodernism and the Perception of Context (Jonathan Rowson)

Nine Levels Of Increasing Embrace In Ego Development: A Full-Spectrum Theory Of Vertical Growth And Meaning Making (Susanne Cook-Greuter)

Love in a Time Between Worlds: On the Metamodern "Return" to a Metaphysics of Eros (Zachary Stein)

The Galileo Commission Report: Beyond a Materialist Worldview - Towards an Expanded Science (Harald Walach)

Posthumanism (Diane Marie Keeling and Marguerite Nguyen Lehman)

Embracing Complexity : Towards a shared understanding of funding systems change (Ashoka)

Time to care: Unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis (Oxfam)

If education is not the answer you are asking the wrong question (Zak Stein)

Education Must Make History Again: Remembering Comenius in a Time Between Worlds (Zak Stein)

Toward a new gospel of wealth (Darren Walker)