



At the Tipping Point

Flourishing In a Time of Chaos



At the Tipping Point

This piece is an attempt to draw an accurate map of rapidly changing territory. But more importantly, it's an exploration of how businesses and individuals can flourish amidst increasing chaos.

[While I generally try to keep my pieces under 15 minutes of reading time, this paper clocks in at just over twice that because it is a synthesis of some interesting ideas.]

You Are Here

"The goal of forecasting is not to predict the future, but to tell you what you need to know to take meaningful action in the present."

– Paul Saffo



Renowned investor Howard Marks recently wrote a long diatribe on the futility of forecasting. He concluded:

"A few years ago, a highly respected sell-side economist with whom I became friendly during my early Citibank days called me with an important message: 'You've changed my life,' he said. 'I've stopped making forecasts. Instead, I just tell people what's going on today and what I see as the possible implications for the future. Life is so much better.' Can I help you reach the same state of bliss?"

Here at The KCP Group, we tend to agree. One of our [core principles](#) is that “a truly valuable expert can tell you precisely what’s happening right now, then their opinion, then their forecast. In that order, because the first part is already hard enough.” We all understand that forecasts like “Interest rates will be 4.46% in April 2023” should be treated with justified skepticism.

But the forecaster-bashing might have gone a little too far. In fact, certain universal patterns consistently recur across different scales and timeframes. If you can work out where you are in that sequence, you actually have a decent chance of anticipating a range of future outcomes. If you correctly anticipate those future outcomes, you can change your behavior in the present. One of the most fundamental patterns of reality seems to apply to this exact moment in history. Like Howard Marks’ friend, it’s a path that may even result in achieving a “state of bliss.”

**This piece is our own attempt to answer the question we ask experts:
*What’s happening right now, and what does that mean for all of us in the future?***

I call the sequence that’s particularly relevant to today’s environment:

Simplicity => Tension => Synthesis (STS for short)

The STS Map – An Archetypal Pattern

A really good sign that an idea is important is that it repeats across different sizes and timescales.

For example, you hear a piece of music (simplicity). You then consciously deconstruct it into notes and learn it painstakingly. You compare your practice to the way the music is supposed to sound (tension). Eventually your playing matches the music you originally heard (synthesis).



Simplicity, Tension, Synthesis.

In Dr. Iain McGilchrist's brain hemisphere model, the right hemisphere takes information from the outside world, and it moves to the left hemisphere for analysis. It's then compared to the world again using the right hemisphere. If your internal left hemisphere model of the world and external information are different, this causes an [unpleasant tension or cognitive dissonance](#).

For example, say you believe you are a gifted musician, but in fact you sound horrible. All the external evidence from booing audiences conflicts with your perception of yourself. That tension can give way to a "phase shift" or sudden insight (synthesis). You gain a more complete understanding of your behavior, and ideally you can then work to match it to reality.

We evolve by continuously updating our models to incorporate new information. The more efficiently we can do that, the more effectively we can interact with the world. This process can take the form of little "a-ha!" moments of insight. But it can also happen in a much more dramatic way. If your whole life and worldview are at odds with reality, that can set you up for serious suffering. Consider, for example, an alcoholic who is unaware of the scale of their drinking problem. Sometimes that tension is resolved through an overwhelming awakening experience, or the famous "moment of clarity."

Surveys have found that somewhere around 30%-40% of the U.S. population have had a "phase shift" moment in their consciousness. These are consistently rated as among the most meaningful experiences of their lives. It's as if it's direct contact with the flow of the outside world, evolution. It's why the experience is commonly described as "even more real than reality."

What's incredibly interesting is that the tension stage of this ubiquitous STS pattern can be applied at a much larger scale. We can use it to explain the difficult moment we currently find ourselves in as a society and species.

The Pain of Tension

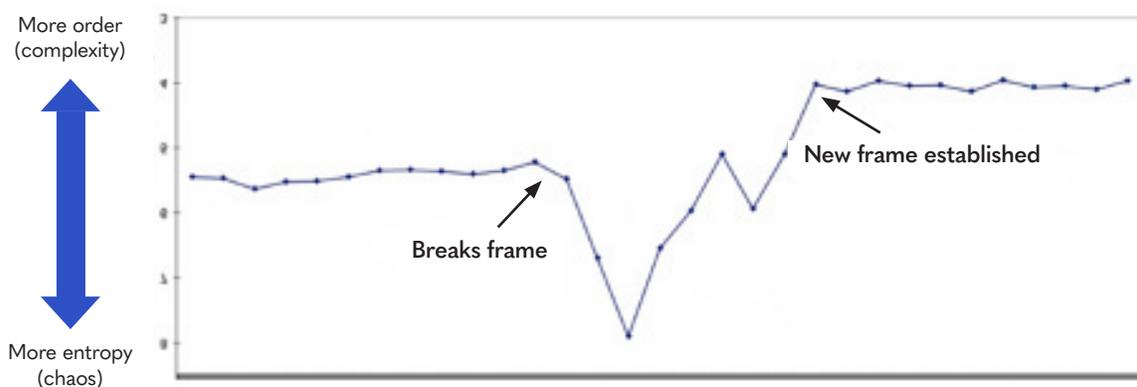
Many [aspects of our modern existence](#) are increasingly at odds with information coming from the world around us. At the planetary level, it's resulting in environmental destruction, inequality, world wars, genocide, and nuclear arms races. The broad causes of this dynamic are excess competition, zero-sum games, and "multi-polar traps." This is simply the exclusive elevation of narrow interests at the cost of the whole. Within an evolutionary context, highly competitive environments are surprisingly fragile. Every species ends up so perfectly specialized that any large change in the environment drives everything extinct. Very few species are adapted to survive humankind. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) recently reported that wildlife populations around the world have dropped nearly 70% in the last 50 years.

We have incredible comfort, safety, and predictability. More people globally now die from obesity than malnutrition. But it seems that comfort is a necessary but not sufficient condition for flourishing. The widespread loss of meaning, disconnection, and digital alienation is exacerbating a mental health pandemic. The CDC recently reported that 42% of U.S. adults exhibited symptoms of anxiety or depression in early 2021. The tragic conclusion from the latest data is that our children [are bearing the worst of it](#). Like canaries in a coal mine filling with invisible gas, our most sensitive children can detect this underlying dissonance and dysphoria. The share of American high school students who say they feel “persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness” has risen from 26% in 2009 to a horrifying 44% in 2021. This is the highest level of teenage sadness ever recorded, and it was rising sharply well before the pandemic.

I have explored this topic [at length](#), but the far more interesting and optimistic implication of the STS model is that tension and breakdown are a necessary precursor to synthesis. This collapse is obvious all around us currently as trust in the system craters. According to Gallup, the average confidence Americans have in major institutions is currently the lowest since the start of their dataset in 1979. The wildfire is incinerating every outdated and destructive mindset while creating a fertile space for something new to emerge.

Signs of a Synthesis

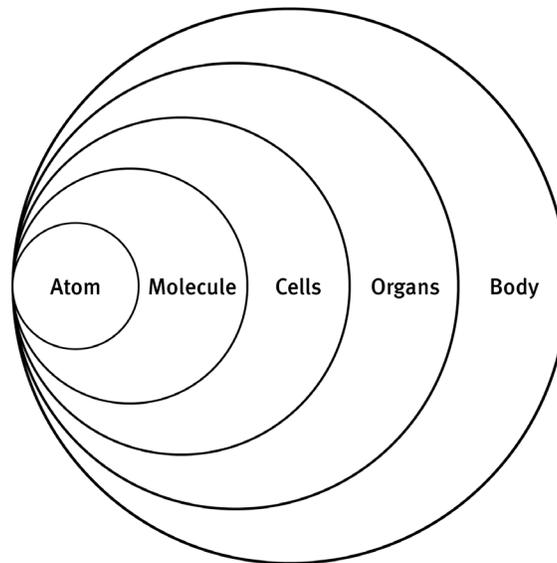
Human societies and natural systems tend to move in cycles of competition and cooperation. When excessive competition results in a lose-lose for all participants, that creates the tension stage. Like a moment of insight, the tension gives way to a sudden collapse into chaos of that failing system and the reestablishment of a more inclusive and cooperative model. This new level is more complex. In the context of having an insight, it leads to a more accurate picture of the world. Evolutionary psychologist Brett Andersen has a simple but effective visualization:



The structure of a phase shift. Source: [Brett Andersen](#)

One of the [central insights](#) from Ken Wilber's audacious attempt to create a theory of everything was the process of "transcending and including." Like a Russian doll, every level of greater complexity **both** transcends the limitations of the previous level, **and** includes the less complex structure. For example:

- Molecules transcend and include atoms.
- Cells transcend and include molecules.
- Organs transcend and include cells.
- The whole body transcends and includes organs, and so on.



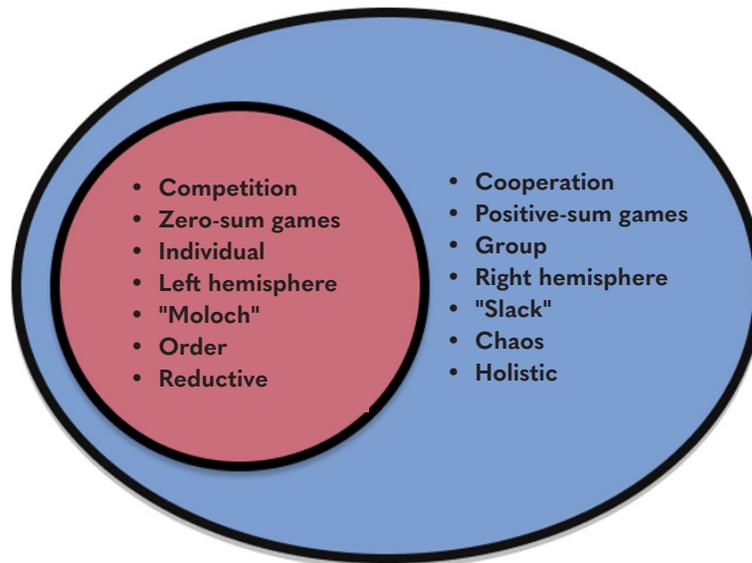
Holons. Each stage transcends **and** includes the prior stage.

To predict how something may evolve, work out how it transcends and includes its prior stage.

Humans evolve rapidly through a combination of competition and cooperation. Our transitions tend to be from smaller zero-sum games to larger positive-sum games. This isn't naïve optimism; both game theory and evolution confirm that cooperation is a better strategy at scale in an iterated game. In his absolutely fascinating essay "Intimations of a New Worldview" (below), Brett Andersen argues that we are evolving to cooperate at ever larger scales. He offers a uniquely optimistic view of our collective future. It's also unusually well-grounded in mainstream science, complexity theory, and evolutionary psychology. It was a significant influence on this piece.

Positive-sum games, sometimes called infinite games, are played for their own intrinsic enjoyment. Brett uses the example of a pickup basketball game: There is a clearly-defined competition, but everyone benefits from the enjoyment of playing. These kinds of games allow us to evolve very rapidly, because the consequences of failure are relatively limited. The current imbalance toward zero-sum games is causing invisible mental tension and very real suffering.

A "phase change" would result in the contents of the red box being transcended by the blue box, *while still including them*.



The evolution of the present Holon: a nested union of both.

To predict how somethings may evolve, imagine how it can move from zero-sum to positive-sum.

It would follow that there would be **huge advantages**, both economic and personal, from being able to anticipate and build the bridges from one stage to the next.

Here are some practical examples from the world of business:

CAPITALISM

This is the most optimistic vision for the evolution of modern capitalism. A well-structured market economy is a competitive game where everyone benefits from technological progress and a rise in living standards. The problem is when the parameters of the game are ill defined, and it doesn't include the bottom of the pyramid or the broader environment we live in as true participants. The costs for the losers of the game are too high.

The good news is that we seem to be in the very early stages of internalizing more externalities. We're seeing the early seeds in fiscal stimulus, ESG, wage inflation, and greater work-life balance. All of these are in some way controversial or clumsy. But it seems like capitalism has already started transcending its own limitations to include more of the game's losers. There is early evidence of more positive-sum "slack" emerging throughout the system.

COMPANIES

At the corporate level, short-term competition can work very well, very quickly. But companies that demonstrate *real* longevity tend to focus on the **health of their entire ecosystem**, from customers to suppliers. This is an example of positive-sum over zero-

sum. Companies that replicate natural systems benefit from the resiliency meticulously refined over millions of years of evolution. According to a report by the Bank of Korea, the data supports this: of 5,500 companies over 200 years old in 41 countries, 56% of them were in Japan. Most of them are small family businesses with a strong commitment to generational transition and a focus on sustainability over profits. By keeping their broader environment healthy, they are better positioned to weather unexpected volatility.

It's not just a matter of resilience, corporate *creativity* also seems to follow the archetypal STS pattern. Safhi Bahcall's book *Loonshots* studied the most prodigious sources of breakthrough innovations. They seem to mimic the phase-change structure. He suggests dividing firms into two units with one focused on creative work and the other more routine "franchise" work. This tension between opposites creates synthesis, emergence. Indeed, Rory Sutherland, one of The KCP Group's previous speakers, explicitly talks about the need for corporate "alchemy." This is a tension between rational and "irrational" to produce a creative synthesis (insights [here](#)).

EXECUTIVES

The STS model is also applicable to modern business strategy at a deeply practical level. How do you make managers continuously adaptable to a world where change is accelerating? Can you do it in a positive-sum way? Lia DiBello, past speaker for The KCP Group, has done fascinating work on "[strategic rehearsals](#)." It turns out sitting in a stale meeting room and passively learning by PowerPoint just isn't that effective. She found that it was only after first experiencing the "visceral failure" of their old operating procedures that executives could learn new models. That creates the necessary breakdown stage. As the unconscious learns so rapidly, she even claims it can take about 60 decision cycles to reprogram mental models in a bounded domain. Thus there are fields where the 10,000-hours-to-mastery rule made famous by Anders Ericsson can be compressed into more like six hours. We become wiser through the number of repetitions of a trial-and-error cycle. Her innovation was to create a safe simulation for it to happen. Rather than the outdated executives all getting fired, she allowed them to fail rapidly in a low-consequence environment. She helped turn a high-consequence finite game into an infinite game; it became "play."

INNOVATION

In 1997, *Wired* magazine published an issue titled "The Long Boom." It was generally pretty prescient. They anticipated a digital tech boom that would last decades. This would be driven by increasing connection to the internet, which was then very much in its infancy. The authors also correctly anticipated the risks of an energy crisis, the slowing of European integration, and even a pandemic. The original author Peter Leyden recently produced a follow-up article laying out the case for "The Great Progression" from 2025-2050 (see below). He sees positive tipping points already underway in artificial intelligence, biotech, and energy. Here are the key transitions he expects:

MEGA CHALLENGE	Terrorism	→	Climate
ENERGY	Carbon	→	Clean
TRANSPORTATION	Internal Combustion	→	Electric
CULTURE	Boomer-centric	→	Millennial-centric
POLITICS	Conservative	→	Progressive
ECONOMICS	Private Sector	→	Public Sector
CAPITALISM	Shareholder	→	Stakeholder
WORK	Physical	→	Virtual
PRODUCTION	Industrial	→	Biological
GEOPOLITICS	Middle East	→	Asia

Source: [PeterLeyden.com](https://peterleyden.com)

I reference this piece here because many of these transitions are explicitly zero-sum to positive-sum. That said, I'm especially wary of *irresponsible* progress in artificial intelligence and synthetic biology. Our access to increasingly godlike technologies demands impeccable moral responsibility. Moreover, current events couldn't have better illustrated that we also need a more clear-eyed approach to the harsh realities of a decarbonization transition. [Vaclav Smil's recent book *How the World Really Works* (insights [here](#)) exposes a lack of realistic thinking on the global energy transition].

Leyden notes that, in basic political terms, a more conservative Boomer generation is rapidly giving way to a more progressive Gen Z. But the most curious thing is that humanity currently has the capacity to cooperate to solve our largest problems, but for whatever reason we simply don't. The key point that's relevant to this piece is that many of our problems essentially relate to a failure to cooperate at the necessary scale:

"Humans are going to have to work at a planetary scale with a level of global coordination that we have never done before. We may have to pull off that global effort with two competing coalitions of democratic and authoritarian states."

– Leyden

That sounds a lot like competition nested within cooperation at a greater scale than before. This would be an evolutionary sequence where a more cooperative global game transcends and includes the current competitive nation-state/corporation-focused game.

Optimism invites skepticism. But as Einstein intuited, "No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it." **Our inability to cooperate at a global scale is at root a consciousness problem. Therefore, any examination of the future is incomplete if it doesn't explore this topic.** The good news is that an emergent, bottom-up shift in consciousness seems like it's already underway.

A New World Needs a New Worldview

A synthesis stage for Western consciousness would mean we transcend reductionist science and philosophy in favor of a more holistic worldview. Our consciousness *itself* moves from zero-sum to positive-sum. What does that mean?

I was recently recommended Richard Tarnas' book *The Passion of the Western Mind*. The epilogue is one of the most fascinating chapters I've read. One of his basic arguments is that the move into dry, abstract reductionism since the Enlightenment has actually been a part of the *necessary* tension process. His conviction on the universality of this pattern comes from an unusual place.

Tarnas was a contemporary of Joseph Campbell and Abraham Maslow at the legendary spiritual center Esalen in Big Sur. Tarnas also worked with Stanislav Grof, whose unique approach he credits with staggering breakthroughs in depth psychology. He said Grof's results were incomparable to anything else he witnessed in over a decade at Esalen.

Grof first experimented with LSD, then after it was made illegal, he invented "holotropic breathwork," which aimed to produce an equivalent effect. Initially Grof's patients worked through traditional psychological traumas. For example, their relationship with their parents or negative childhood experiences. But gradually they would encounter a far deeper confrontation with their own birth. This experience had a surprisingly consistent pattern to it:

"Grof found visible a distinct sequence, which moved from an initial condition of undifferentiated unity with the maternal womb, to an experience of sudden fall and separation from that primal organismic unity, to a highly charged life-and-death struggle with the contracting uterus and the birth canal, and culminating in an experience of complete annihilation. This was followed almost immediately by an experience of sudden unexpected global liberation, which was typically perceived not only as physical birth but also as spiritual rebirth, with the two mysteriously intermixed."

– Tarnas

It's *precisely* simplicity, tension, synthesis. The implication of Grof's work is that the tension stage is somehow fundamental to the resolution of our deepest conscious and unconscious traumas. It results in a phase shift transition in our consciousness, often at the darkest moment.

Tarnas saw a whole host of evidence for this transition point at a societal level as long ago as 1991:

"It is visible in the widespread urge to reconnect with the body, the emotions, the unconscious, the imagination and intuition ... And it is evident as well in the great wave of interest in the mythological perspective, in esoteric disciplines, in

Eastern mysticism, in shamanism, in archetypal and transpersonal psychology, in hermeneutics and other non-objectivist epistemologies, in scientific theories of the holonomic universe, morphogenetic fields, dissipative structures, chaos theory, systems theory, the ecology of mind, the participatory universe – the list could go on and on.”

This new synthesis doesn't reject reductionism, but transcends and includes it in a new, more complete model. It integrates analytical intelligence in our more holistic, embodied intuitions. As McGilchrist notes, the left hemisphere is literally competitive with the right, but the right's attitude is more of a burden of care over the left. He believes the zero-sum mentality has been reflected in a gradual neurological imbalance favoring the left. An urgent rebalancing from left to right also implies transcending and including our narrow egos into our broader "self." This transition is highly beneficial for the quality of our thinking, and McGilchrist argues that.

“The right hemisphere is responsible for, in every case, the more important part of our ability to come to an understanding of the world, whether that be via intuition and imagination, or, no less, via science and reason.”

But most importantly it has a sense for the whole and our place within it. It sees the world in a positive-sum way relative to the left hemisphere and its highly verbal but predatory character. As he has also noted that “the right hemisphere is engaged in social bonding and empathy, the left hemisphere in social rivalry and self-regard.”

Evolutionary transitions tend to be bottom-up. Our “unconscious” right hemisphere leads our exploratory attention. So the signs of a transition will be mirrored by what society is currently collectively interested in. It's being reflected in the increasing popularity of yoga, meditation, breathwork, embodiment, and the expansion of consciousness in general. Bessel van der Kolk's 2014 book on embodied trauma, *The Body Keeps the Score*, went unexpectedly viral during the pandemic and spent most of 2021 top of the *New York Times* bestsellers list.

It's like we are being collectively drawn toward the phase change Grof's methods induced in his patients.

Why Does Any of This Matter?

“One thing that comes out in myths is that at the bottom of the abyss comes the voice of salvation. The black moment is the moment when the real message of transformation is going to come. At the darkest moment comes the light.”

– Joseph Campbell

Will this phase shift ever happen? We could still be talking in terms of decades. Maybe centuries. How deeply do we need to descend into the abyss first? Moreover, the very nature of phase shifts is that their timing is unexpected.

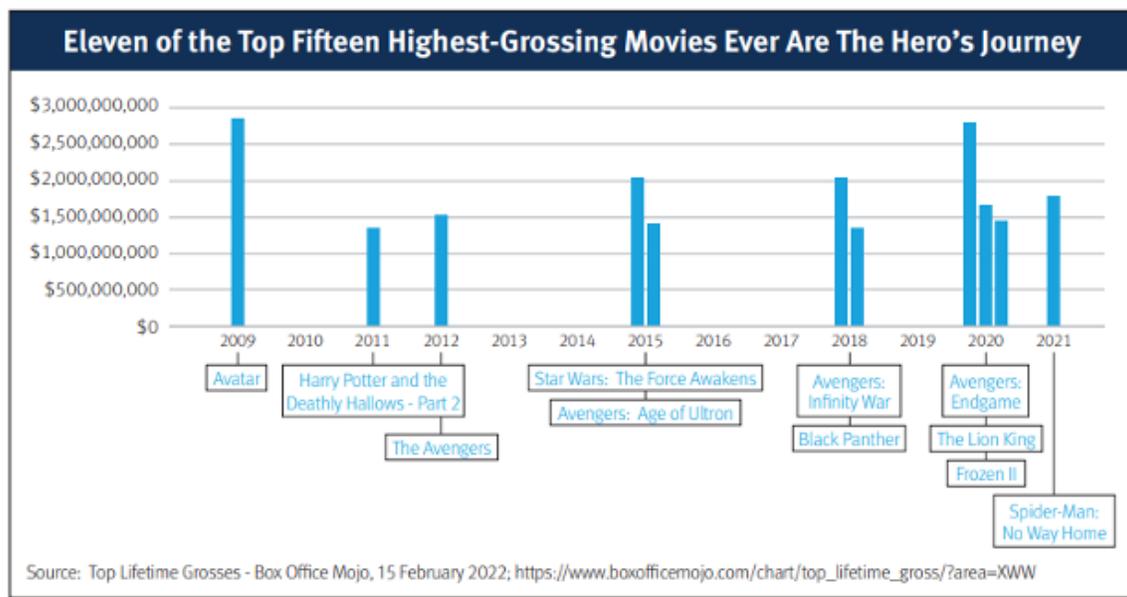
But basic physics also confirms that tipping points also tend to escalate rapidly. The same applies to shifts in culture. Harvard's Erica Chenoweth's study of 325 protests from 1900-2006 found that once 3.5% of the population was actively participating in a social movement, success appears to be inevitable. A truly global phase shift is obviously more dramatic than a local social movement, but we are also interconnected in a way we never have been before. This presents the potential for nearly instantaneous revolutions.

While the Westernized competitive mindset is effective short term, it is by no means globally ubiquitous. As I've [explored before](#), different cultures and indigenous peoples have radically more inclusive views of the world. For example, Tyson Yunkaporta's book *Sand Talk* (insights [here](#)) argues persuasively that the Australian aboriginal perspective is intrinsically more positive. Moreover, chaos theory, complexity theory, and fractal geometry keep awkwardly "rediscovering" that indigenous wisdom might actually offer an accurate description of how the world really works.

Tarnas and Yunkaporta both believe a small number of realigned individuals can help catalyze a phase shift, by being a "strange attractor" in the network. **This is how you could move from forecasting the movements of the system to positively influencing it.** This is akin to consciously becoming the butterfly in a typhoon or grain of sand in an avalanche. We have exponentially more agency than either of those things, both positively and negatively.

As I've pointed out ([a lot](#)), Brett Andersen also believes that the "hero" is a generalized example of someone who can not only appropriately disrupt their own frame, but that of those around them. This requires sacrifice because the hero has to put themselves into a heightened state of dissonance in order to bring through fresh insights that are significant enough to disrupt the entire stale paradigm.

It's therefore notable that this myth is currently so dominant; it's the precise arc of 11 of the top 15 highest-grossing movies ever. The story follows the STS pattern precisely, because it describes this evolution in consciousness. The hero starts in stasis (simplicity). They hear a call to adventure (tension), they transcend their ego (a phase shift), and they return at a more integrated level of consciousness (synthesis). Many of these contemporary stories are now *explicitly* about consciousness and environmental destruction. The highest grossing movie ever, *Avatar*, is a hero's journey that specifically results in a transition from a zero-sum ecological mindset to a holistic one.



A key point is that it is entirely possible for the individual to catalyze cascading positive changes in the system, and any of us can be that individual. Moreover, if our individual consciousness is the right place to start, it frees us from the crippling anxiety of needing to think up top-down systemic solutions to existential problems. Especially as these kinds of interventions are **often very wrong**.

The Inversion of the World

The new worldview that emerges from all of these insights is quietly radical. In shifting from playing finite to infinite games we move from a “destination-based” view of our lives to a “flow-based” view.

We therefore shift from asking “What will the world look like in future?” to “How do I best align with the unfolding present?”

Recent discoveries in artificial intelligence from Ken Stanley have confirmed what the mystics have known for centuries. Fixed goals are actually relatively ineffective when it comes to producing genuine emergence, evolution, and novelty. They can also make us dangerously inflexible when it comes to reacting to sudden external changes.

Instead it’s about orienting toward “interestingness” at any given moment. An approach akin to crossing the river by feeling the stones. This can sometimes feel like an overwhelming choice of infinite options. The good news is that this draw is also emergent, driven by evolution.

“Feeling” is the right term here too. Our limited left hemisphere is highly verbal, but our exploratory attention is somatic and emotional rather than purely rational. “Flow” or a felt-sense of meaning are a helpful guide to when we’re on the right evolutionary path.

[Attractors help direct our interests to the places where we feel most alive.](#) This relationship is reciprocal with the outside world. It’s sometimes as simple as asking “What am I interested in?” The delicate balance of what grabs your attention and what holds your attention. Past speaker for The KCP Group and cognitive science professor John Vervaeke uses the example of the handle of a cup. We see it and know it can be grasped; it stands out from the environment as something we can interact with. The same principle works with ideas and information that signal to us as being “graspable.”

Just as when we’re drawn to a romantic partner, what attracts us narrows down the infinite number of things we could pay attention to.

Synchronicities, *meaningful* coincidences, are the way our environment signals back that we're on the right path. If we are closed to that sense of meaning, everything seems random; nothing is a cup handle. Yet if we're too open, we see cup handles everywhere, even where they don't exist. So in an *extremely non-sentimental way*, that means your ability to give and receive “love” should affect how successfully you can navigate the world. Joseph Campbell was being surprisingly specific when he urged us to “follow your bliss, and the universe will open doors where only there were walls.”

Sadly the STS model suggests that finding your own infinite game is often insanely hard, as it may first require tension, then a breakdown. It would therefore follow that midlife could be an unusually difficult time. This would be especially true in a culture that doesn't have an established understanding of how to transition to the synthesis stage. A recent working paper using data from half a million people in the developed world found a staggering spike in midlife crisis indicators. These range from alcohol dependence, to extreme depression and suicide. The authors concluded, “We believe the seriousness of this societal problem has not been grasped by the affluent world’s policymakers.”

But the devastating collapse of our inadequate old models can open a space for greater receptivity to guiding outside information.

Conclusion: Finding Our Role In the Universe

We become wiser and more complex by constantly transcending and including prior models. Putting competition back *within* cooperation. Putting the analytical left hemisphere *within* the holistic right. This makes us more complex, and evolution seems to optimize for increasing complexity. The more complex something becomes, the more conscious it becomes. The human brain is the most complex thing in the known universe. If that's true, then we are at the absolute bleeding edge of creation in the universe.

The aim of the individual infinite game is therefore to become increasingly complex and conscious. As our consciousness transcends and includes more of reality, we get more integrated. This *ideally* results in an ever-higher degree of what Vervaeke calls “relevance realization.” Essentially as our model of the world gets more accurate, through repeated insights, we get better at concentrating our efforts where they have most leverage.

Wisdom is knowing what information is important.

As Brett Andersen has noted, mainstream science is increasingly finding that our participation in positive-sum games is **biologically and psychologically optimal**. This is precisely what you’d expect if it’s the goal of evolution.

A fun example comes via a 25-year-long study in Copenhagen. It found that regular tennis players added 9.7 years to their lifespan relative to sedentary people. Health club workouts added just 1.5 years. One likely reason of many is that tennis can be played purely for its own sake, unlike the gym which is often a means to an end. It’s the difference between a finite, goals-based game, and an infinite game played for its own pleasure. As positive-sum games are lower consequence, they can be played more frequently and by more people. Hence the overall rate of evolution accelerates for everyone. Federer makes Nadal a more complete player, but nobody else gets better at bicep curls when you go the gym. The same applies to the pursuit of wisdom; we all benefit from a more enlightened population.

It also follows that businesses and individuals that facilitate this transitional bridge will stand to benefit over the long term, while simultaneously becoming both more creative and resilient. Andersen cites a 2021 paper by Mark Miller and his colleagues titled “The Predictive Dynamics of Happiness and Well-Being:”

“The more one engages with nonzero-sum activities the more opportunities for development emerge – new skills to hone, new qualities to develop, new people to engage and collaborate with. The pursuit of nonzero-sum activities is therefore likely to be conducive to maintaining metastable attunement, and therefore to living a flourishing life.”

It’s magical that this conclusion generally aligns with the ubiquitous global hero myth, the vast majority of religions, [indigenous wisdom](#), and [particularly Taoism](#).

In Summary

1. The “simplicity, tension, synthesis” model is helpful for understanding the nature of evolution.
2. The middle “tension” stage can involve immense difficulty and suffering because it requires the breaking of a previous frame. It seems to describe where we are as a culture. We are experiencing an excess of competition.

3. The synthesis stage “transcends and includes” what has come before. This leads to emergence and greater complexity. [I have previously [detailed a series of practices](#) that have helped me personally with the perpetually unfolding process].
4. Our society, economy, consciousness, and institutions will increasingly resemble positive-sum games. We are optimizing for playing these games on an ever-greater scale.
5. Evolution optimizes for increasing complexity. The more complex something becomes, the more conscious it becomes. The human brain is the most complex thing in the known universe.
6. The goal is therefore to become more complex and more conscious. We do that through acts of synthesis. The more insights you can generate, the faster you evolve. Progress in consciousness, wisdom, also results in you transcending your previous frame and including the new insight.
7. The ability to find and pursue positive-sum games is related to flourishing. This process has no known endpoint, because it is pursued for its own sake.

There is no known limit on how conscious we can each become. There’s no end to the game, and it’s so enjoyable you wouldn’t want it to.

Related Reading

1. **Read.** [Tom Morgan Synthesis](#) by Infinite Loops (49 minute read)
 - **Why read.** I was very touched that the team at Infinite Loops wrote a comprehensive synthesis of everything (!) I’ve written since joining The KCP Group. Not only that, there are some amazing questions and challenges to my favorite ideas and worldview. Here’s the intro from author Ed William:
 - o *I wasn’t familiar with The KCP Group’s Tom Morgan, writer of The Attention Span, before researching him for an upcoming Infinite Loops episode. I can now say that, out of everything I’ve read this year, Tom’s blog has probably had the most profound effect on me and my worldview.*
 - o *Tom’s underlying thesis is that we as individuals and as society are currently lost in abstracted, disembodied models of thought, and that the route out of this is to recalibrate our inputs in pursuit of a new, more integrated balance (eagle eyed readers will note the parallels with Brett Anderson here). In Tom’s words:*
 - o *Taken together, all these ideas hint that Westernized, intellectual, abstract, head-centered thinking just isn’t the totality of human potential. Moreover, the reintegration of this way of thinking into a more holistic relationship with the world may be our individual and societal destiny.*

- o *There is much to unpack here, and there is a lot to Tom's worldview that I would like to challenge. But if Tom's goal is to expand the way his readers think about the world, then as far as I am concerned, he has been unequivocally successful.*

2. **Read.** *"The Great Progression"* in *Wired* (1 hour 20 minute read).

- **Why read.** Peter Leyden's follow-up to his prescient forecasts of 1997. With optimism in short supply, this is an unusually exciting vision of America's place in the future.
 - o "The next 25 years will see the introduction and scaling up of not one but three fundamentally new technologies that will have world-historic impact. We're heading into a triple-whammy tech boom – not just another Long Boom, but a Long Boom Squared."
 - o "We're going to have to leverage the full capabilities of advanced technologies in three fields that will have world-historic repercussions.
 1. In infotech we're going to get all 8 billion people on the planet connected and eventually connect literally trillions of things. We're going to need to take advantage of the full superpowers of artificial intelligence and advanced robotics helping humans do things that we alone could never do.
 2. In biotech we're going to master genetic engineering and even the much broader biological engineering in order to redesign as many products and materials and foods as necessary to be fully sustainable and more closely in sync with nature, meaning low-impact and biodegradable. We're going to jumpstart the new industries of synthetic biology and begin in earnest the Biological Age.
 3. And in energy tech, of course, we're going to do something that's never been done: Transition as many people as possible as fast as we can from one foundational source of energy based in carbon to an array of energies that will from now on be clean. Part of that world-historic effort may be to finally cross the threshold of nuclear fusion and harness the energy that powers the sun and all stars.

3. **Read.** *Intimations of a New Worldview* by Brett Andersen (90 minute read).

- **Why read.** A repost in case you missed it in my last piece. The reason why Brett's piece is so uniquely radical is that it offers a genuinely plausible, optimistic worldview backed by evolution, complexity theory, and cognitive science.

Tom Morgan

Director of Communications and Content

Special thanks to Brett Andersen, Daniel Abrams, David Fuller, David Weinstein, Will Oliver, Nikolai Bratkovski, and my wife, Diane, for applying the blowtorch of simplicity to my prose.

STIFEL | The KCP Group

www.thekcpgroup.com

(317) 571-4600 | (800) 382-4353

600 East 96th Street, Suite 575 | Indianapolis, Indiana 46240

Stifel, Nicolaus & Company, Incorporated | Member SIPC & NYSE | www.stifel.com