67. State of the Shift October 2019, Part 2

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Future Sense is a podcast edited from the radio show of the same name, broadcast on BayFM in Byron Bay, Australia, at www.bayfm.org. Hosted by Nyck Jeanes and well-known international futurist, Steve McDonald, Future Sense provides a fresh, deep analysis of global trends and emerging technologies. How can we identify the layers of growth personally, socially and globally? What are the signs missed; the truths being denied? Political science, history, politics, psychology, ancient civilisations, alien contact, the new psychedelic revolution, cryptocurrency and other disruptive and distributed technologies, and much more.

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Nyck: I'm not even sure they're our views, exactly. They're just views we're presenting. It doesn't mean we're attached to them because I think to be a complete human as much as possible is to be able to receive and accept and look at as much information—diverse information—as you possibly can. That would seem to be a scientific approach, generally.

We are talking today about the state of the shift on the planet from our little perspective here on *Future Sense*. Thanks for joining us.

Steve: That's right, so if you're feeling like you're in a shift, you're probably right. We'll just talk briefly about the situation in the Middle East, which is very, very confusing and we don't pretend in any way to know what's actually going on there, because I don't think many people do. I'd even suggest that some of the key players in what's going on there don't really understand all of the dynamics that are influencing events right now. I just do want to point out, though, some of the issues that are lying under the surface,

particularly around the conflict that's just broken out at the moment between Kurds and Turkey in Syria. They are, first and foremost, going back a little ways, the idea of putting a gas pipeline through Syria to supply natural gas to Europe. That was, it looks to me, like the foundational issue that gave rise to the conflict in Syria in the first place, and that wasn't reported by the mainstream media. Of course, we can't always believe what we hear in the media these days, and that's part of the reason why we talk about some of these alternative viewpoints on this show, because they don't get the airtime that they deserve. So that was essentially a conflict that erupted between Russia and the US around the supply of fossil fuels, and the European market was key to that because Russia, as I understand it, supplies a fair amount of fossil fuels to the European market.

Nyck: A very large amount.

Steve: If that pipeline went through Syria, that was threatening to change that arrangement and that balance, and so Russia obviously didn't want their set-up disrupted; the United States probably did want to disrupt what was going on for Russia. Then, of course, the public face of the conflict was situated around Islamic State and all of that stuff which has arisen out of the previous conflicts, which had been, at least fuelled if not initiated by the United States in the Middle East and very much situated around fossil fuel availability also. So it's a very confusing situation—it's definitely not what it appears in the in the mainstream media.

You've also got the other issue, which again is really not being reported in the mainstream media, and that is China's plan to reopen the old Silk Road and have that supply route running right across the old USSR and down into Eastern Europe there in the Middle East, and, as I understand it, terminating or having its major Middle Eastern hub in Iran. We're all aware of the conflict that's going on between China and the USA at the moment, which is, at surface level, mostly about trade; at a deeper level, there's probably a lot of cyber-warfare and stuff going on there. It's a battle of an established old superpower and what seems to be an emerging superpower, and also having a big influence on what's happening in the Middle East, but again, not being reported in the mainstream media. So you've got the USA, you've got China, you've got Russia, and then you've got the local countries and their respective circumstances, all feeding into what's happening in the Middle East, which makes it extremely confusing.

Nyck: And thus allegiances are changing at all times. It's very hard to know who's on whose side.

Just on those statistics, 30% of the EU's petroleum oil imports and 39% of total gas imports come from Russia—that was in 2017. That's a lot, so Europe are very dependent on Russia, and clearly, if they can own more of the resources and the

pipelines that go into these countries, then there's a financial windfall for Russia or for whatever country owns and controls these resources.

Steve: Exactly, so you can see how opponents of Russia might have been very interested in opening up that pipeline supply through Syria itself, which, of course, required controlling that country and hence all of the conflict that's been going on there.

I also want to mention that Trump's pulling out the small contingent of US troops which were left in northern Syria, which seemed to open the door to Turkey to go in and attack the Kurds as they're doing at the moment. In situations like this—and this is similar to something that I've experienced personally, which was when I was in the military and got deployed to Somalia in the early 1990s to bring peace to what was a fairly violent conflict going on there and which was increasing a humanitarian catastrophe by stopping the United Nations from feeding people who were starving—and what I witnessed in that experience was that we went in there as an external artificial influence and we certainly did create peace for as long as we were there, but as soon as we left, the peace was no longer. I honestly had a sense on about the second day that I was in Somalia that we weren't going to fix the underlying issues that were causing the problem there. We could certainly temporarily stop the violence and we did, but in terms of the underlying problems which needed to be resolved, they weren't being addressed at all. The same, of course, has been going on in the Middle East, so the underlying problems and conflicts that sit there at a very deep level are, of course, disrupted by the influence of outside countries coming in with military forces, but at the end of the day, when the dust settles those problems are still there, so as soon as you take the US influence out, for example, all of those old problems are going to bubble back up again and they need to resolve themselves. Water needs to find its own level.

Nyck: Yes, water needs to find its own level. In some ways, that's a really simple way of looking at it, in a way, to justify perhaps, the more hands-off that we are with other countries, the better, especially the great United States of America, which has involved itself in the affairs of so many countries for the last 100 years, if not more. It's almost unbelievable, and most of you out there who probably listen to this kind of show and to this station would be very aware of that—that project of America that seems to be perhaps coming to an end; and as you said earlier, China as perhaps the new empire rising is another equation altogether, and the US perhaps is, wisely under Trump, maybe one of the wise things he's doing is—although sort of randomly, it would seem—withdrawing US troops from these regions and perhaps that's ultimately a positive.

Steve: Yes, and the Scientific-Industrial mindset, particularly in the case of the United States, has led to war becoming part of the business model with a massive military-industrial complex, which, of course, Eisenhower warned against.

Nyck: 1960.

Steve: After the end of World War II. It's a way of making money—it's a massive way of making money—and I don't see that happening in China, certainly not on any scale that compares to what the US have been doing for many years. I think the shift of power from the United States to China, which looks inevitable and has been predicted by many people, I think, is going to bring a different set of circumstances. I really don't think it's swapping out one superpower for another superpower of the same kind.

Nyck: I think that's exactly right. I think that because of that, I think that's probably why the US is nervous about the many aspects of that changing of the guard, so to speak, because China will do it differently. They might not do it well—China's got big problems as we know. What they're doing in Hong Kong is an issue, but as Steve said earlier, so far, they haven't done anything too violent against the protesters there and let's hope that doesn't happen.

Steve: No, I've quite frankly been surprised and impressed by the peaceful nature of China's attempts to bring control.

Nyck: Overall, yeah, true.

Steve: There's a lot of polarisation going on in the world at the moment and this is coming from this values regression that's taking place—this regressive values search where people are feeling that things aren't right; the way that we've been living doesn't work anymore; we've got to find a new way, and of course, the first natural instinct is to go backwards, which is a very strong evolutionary dynamic, because by going backwards and going back to all the values, we increase the tension for change, like pulling back an elastic band on a slingshot. The more tension there is, the more likely we are to change, and by going back to all the values which are even less appropriate for the present circumstances, it becomes more and more clear that the values that we're aware of aren't going to cut it anymore, and they throw us into this transformational process which happens in that chaos zone of the change dynamic. By going back to the pre-scientific value said, which is the Layer 4 Authoritarian set of values which come from the Agricultural era and which we saw playing out during a lot of turbulence in the Middle Ages, which again was another time of transition between values sets as the old Authoritarian-Agricultural era values were coming to the end of their use-by date and people were making a regressive switch back to more violent values sets, which gave rise to a whole bunch of violence around the world, but which also threw us into this transformational dynamic which led to the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions and the scientific era.

A key characteristic of this Layer 4 authoritarian value set that we're now regressing back to is a very rigid, dogmatic approach. That, of course, is evident in the structured religions which came out of that era where there was a very clear and specific set of instructions on how to live life appropriately, which always came from a higher authority, and in the religious cases, the higher authority was God who couldn't be questioned, right? Because he was never here or didn't answer when you asked.

Nyck: What do you mean, God's not here? Hey?

Steve: And so what we're seeing in current affairs now is the re-emergence of this rigid, dogmatic attitude where any opposing opinion is just not tolerated—it's just not right to even entertain or listen to or allow people to speak another opinion.

Nyck: I hate to mention Peter Dutton again, but his latest example of that, of course—a good example of this—is his response to the *Extinction Rebellion* protesters, which is 'lock them up until they change their thinking.'

Steve: Exactly. That's a great example. This is why historically, as we've come into the scientific era, religions have been particularly anti-science because the science doesn't fit with this list of instructions that we got from the higher authority. And so that whole value set, that way of approaching things, is being transposed onto current affairs now, and perhaps one of the most prominent examples of this dogmatic, old-fashioned religious-style thinking is the current climate debate. Nyck's making a funny face here, because no doubt he's feeling a bit anxious about us even mentioning this, and that's just a big sign of how dogmatic this global discussion has become in some cases, around whether the climate is changing at all, or, if it is changing, how it's changing and what the climate is going to be like in the future.

Nyck: And what the responses should be to it.

Steve: That's right, and a lot of this debate is extremely confusing because people are saying the word 'science' and saying the 'science says this', but they're behaving from that old-fashioned dogmatic value set, so it's like a religious debate where people say, 'no, my God is right, your God is wrong, we can't even entertain anything that you say, don't say it', and that whole way of relating is being transposed to the climate. People are saying, 'no, my science is right, your science is wrong, you don't understand the science; no, you don't understand the science, you can't even say what you're saying, just shut up and we're not going to listen to you.'

Nyck: Or, George W. Bush II, of course, famously said, 'you're either with us or against us', and I think that's the kind of thinking we're seeing too much of right now in the world over these really serious and important issues. We need a much broader debate over these things to really find a clearer strategic way forward in the long term.

Steve: Yes. The key to understanding what's going on in a holistic sense, of course, lies in listening to both sides of a polarised argument. Anybody who's ever been involved in any kind of a process of conflict resolution would understand that you don't just make one person shut up and listen to the other person. If you try to resolve a conflict that way, it just doesn't work, you have to listen to both sides of the story. Unfortunately, we're not getting both sides of the story through a lot of media at the moment. There was a rather interesting—and, might I say, extreme—example of that recently when *The Conversation* website, which is quite famous internationally as a portal for academic thought, where many highly educated people write short essays about various current affairs ...

Nyck: And generally very good.

Steve: And generally very, very good, but they came out recently and made a declaration that they would not be allowing (in inverted commas) "climate deniers" to express their opinions through the website, which is very interesting—that they're actually shutting down one section of the debate—and this is essentially anti-scientific behaviour; anti-scientific thinking, which harks back to this pre-science era, pre-science set of human values.

Nyck: And of course, we're not saying the climate is not changing—climate has always changed. We're not saying, either, on this programme, that climate is not changing perhaps more than it was or in some other way that we don't understand, but certainly what is happening is that we are aware of it on a global level. We're also aware of the incredible environmental damage that has been done generally on this planet, not just to the weather—perhaps to climate—but to the rivers, to the oceans, to the forests, to the soil, to these things. In some ways, perhaps a broader conversation needs to be taken on, I think, a bit more. That's my personal opinion at this point in time.

Steve: Yes, and in favour of embracing the polarity, we do sometimes talk about science which we believe takes a more complex approach to the climate issue and is worth listening to, but which is actually being suppressed in the mainstream media. We have a story here today which involves a letter that was written to the United Nations and presented to the United Nations by a group of 500 scientists and professionals on the same day that Greta Thunberg spoke to the United Nations in the New York gathering.

Of course, Greta absolutely dominated the media coverage from that particular event, and this letter does not seem to have been reported in the mainstream media.

Nyck: And it's significant. It looks like it comes from a Dutch website called *Clintel* [Climate Intelligence]. I'm sure you'll find it, it's quite a significant piece.

Steve: We'll post a link to this PDF document that we're referring to on *Twitter* and *Facebook* after the show (https://clintel.nl/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ED-brochureversieNWA4.pdf). It's titled *There Is No Climate Emergency* and the opening paragraph says: "A global network of 500 scientists and professionals has prepared this urgent message. Climate science should be less political, while climate policies should be more scientific. Scientists should openly address the uncertainties and exaggerations in their predictions of global warming, while politicians should dispassionately count the real benefits as well as the imagined costs of adaptation to global warming and the real costs as well as the imagined benefits of mitigation."

Nyck: It says a bit later: "Our advice to political leaders is that science should strive for significantly better understanding of the climate system, while politics should focus on minimising potential climate damage by prioritising adaption strategies based on proven and affordable technologies." There's quite a lot in that, but that's a fairly reasonable statement to me.

Steve: Yes, and it's actually a fairly brief document—it doesn't go into a lot of detail at all—but the longest part of the document is the list of 500 scientists from around the world who have put their names to this statement from a whole bunch of different countries, and many countries that aren't necessarily obvious in terms of what's being covered by the mainstream media. There are a lot of scientists from Northern European countries which have generally been regarded over the years as being more progressive in terms of the emergence of more complex values; and some scientists that we've spoken about previously on the show, such as Dr Valentina Zharkova, who's an astrophysicist and mathematician who is based in the U.K. at the moment, who's done some amazing research on solar dynamics which points to solar forcing as an influence on the climate, contrary to mainstream narratives.

Nyck: And of course, as always, you've got to do your own research. I had a look briefly at a couple of the individual scientists in this list that I just picked at random, just to see who they were as much as I could, very quickly because I only received this late last night. There's a lot of press out there about the influence of money from various corporations and interest groups around the world to support the climate denialism. We're not talking about that here—we're talking about an expansion of the debate to

open up the discourse to a richer and more complex way of looking at these issues. It seems to us—seems to me for sure, as I've gone on—that we are seeing and receiving an ever-increasing truncated and narrow version of the science out there and we need to do better than that, that's for sure. if we're going to really find the right, so to speak, the appropriate strategies, as we said before in that piece.

Steve: That's right, and even science itself is polarised at the moment. There are scientists with appropriate qualifications who are arguing on both sides of the fence here and it's important, if we're going to understand what's really going on and deepen our understanding of climate dynamics, that we embrace both sides of science and all of the polarised opinions that are contributing to the current circumstance, to actually find somewhere in there the truth of what we face coming down the track. If these scientists are correct in claiming that there is no climate emergency—and I assume what they mean by that is that the climate is just doing what it's always done and that is, changing—what we're seeing is just another iteration of natural cycles which have been repeating as long as we know. That does not discount the fact that a human emergency might be approaching.

Nyck: Yes, absolutely.

Steve: Part of the loss of value in this polarised climate discussion is we're losing the distinctions between some very, very fine issues—some very detailed issues and very complex issues—and we're seeing the conflation of issues like pollution of the atmosphere and climate change, which are actually two different things.

I don't think anybody would really argue that humanity doesn't need to clean up its act and stop polluting our biosphere, but people are being lumped together into these two camps, and if you're against anything, you're against everything from the point of view of the other side of the polarised parties. But on this show, we are seeing good evidence from various people who have a good record of accurate predictions of natural cycles, that there may be a human emergency approaching, which is revolving around our capacity to cope with and adapt to climate change. If the climate changes faster than we can adapt as humans, then we are facing serious disruption of things like food production, massive population mobility as people are no longer able to live in certain areas of the planet, and these are the things that our politicians and leaders really need to be focusing on, is our capacity to adapt and how we might need to adapt rather than just arguing who's right and who's wrong.

Nyck: I mean, this is really fantastic—just this simple statement, it seems to me anyway—the notion of adaption. We don't really hear about adaption. We're hearing about ourselves in response to what appears to be a crisis—one or the other, pick any

crisis whatsoever—but we never really talk about how we adapt enough, I don't think. That capacity to do so, which is really what we're about on this show—that we actually have capacity as individuals, as communities and globally, to shift, to move to a bigger paradigm, if you will, a greater version of events that encompasses more complexity—that we're actually capable of understanding complexity more if we give ourselves the space and time and energy to do so. Rather than to fix yourself in a position, be open to the possibility that we can adapt to what are generally and genuinely serious crises on this planet. No doubt about that.

Steve: Very, very true.

Nyck: Let's take a break.

Nyck: We're talking a little bit about the state of the shift here today on *Future Sense.*

Steve: And particularly the need for us to adapt to what may be coming down the track. We've just been talking about climate change and the need to adapt to that. There's been some really interesting weather happening which we're just going to skip through very, very quickly, in Europe and also North America. People might remember that there was a particularly vicious winter in North America last year as the polar vortex came down into and across Canada and the USA, and although that's not happening right at the moment, there are early signs of another very, very cold winter in North America. One of the implications of last year's winter was the disruption of food production, which I think is absolutely front and centre one of the things that we need to look at adapting in the future, because some people that I respect are predicting food shortages which may peak around 2028 and the years immediately after that.

Nyck: Grow your veggies, folks.

Steve: In Manitoba, the Premier there declared a state of emergency recently as a large snowstorm slammed the province. In British Columbia, there were 41 cold records broken in 48 hours as cold weather hit that part of Canada. In Europe, Moscow recently shivered through its coldest summer in recorded history of over 150 years of weather data. These things are all very real and happening in the real world as opposed to happening in computer models, and I think that's a very important aspect of the whole climate discussion—we need to distinguish what's being predicted in a computer model

and what is actually happening in the real world, and those things are often not the same at the moment.

Nyck: And we're just pointing here, of course, to the complexity of this space. It's not one direction—it's unpredictable, or certainly less predictable than we think it is—much less predictable than we think it is.

Steve: That's right and it's encouraging to see that the Russian Deputy Prime Minister recently suggested creating an organisation of grain exporters similar to the *Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries*, *OPEC*. He suggested that we needed to solve the problem of world hunger, and that's the kind of thinking that we would encourage where people are looking at, 'okay, what are we facing right now? What's emerging?' Certainly, disruption to agricultural growing seasons has been emerging recently, most particularly with cold weather and also drought in countries like Australia. These are the problems that we're going to need to solve in the future, so thinking about them now is very, very encouraging, and some kudos to Russia for looking into the future and not getting lost in arguments about who's right and who's wrong.

What are you got on your list of current affairs there, Nyck?

Nyck: Before we run out of time, I did want to mention the piece from *Harvard University* that we mentioned earlier, which, as far as we can tell, has had no mainstream reporting whatsoever—correct us if we're wrong. It's a piece from www.cid.harvard.edu called *The Atlas of Economic Complexity* (https://atlas.cid.harvard.edu)—that's the title—by the *Growth Lab* at *Harvard University*: "Harvard Growth Lab's Research and data vizualisation tool used to understand the economic dynamics and new growth opportunities for every country worldwide." This is a very, very in-depth analysis of the economic trajectory of all the countries in the world, or most of the countries in the world—133 or 143, something that. Australia has slipped from about 57th in 1995 down to about 93rd in terms of its complexity, meaning that the ground of our economic stability, of our management, of all of our industries, our resources, everything we do as a nation in this country has become narrower, has become less supported—less development, less research, less money—and in fact, we are now seen to be in a state where we are going to really just go downhill. As it says, I think at one point here, we are a very smart country, but we're kind of dumb in terms of what we've done and how we've created our strategic focus economically, certainly in the last 20 or 30 years, if not longer.

Steve: The simple version of that is, you've probably heard the old expression, 'don't put all your eggs in one basket' because if you drop the basket, you break all your eggs,

and Australia, from an economic standpoint, has most of their eggs in very few baskets in terms of where our money comes from. This website is really wonderful—it's worth a look. You can go into the *Atlas*, it's freely available, all the data there. I've just pulled up Australia's data from 2017 on my computer screen here, and they're showing what Australia's export income was generated by in the year 2017. It's spread across very few large buckets, really—things like petroleum gases, coal, iron ores and concentrates; travel and tourism is a big source of income for Australia, obviously. I mean, if you just take those, what are the three biggest segments there? Iron ore and concentrates—coal; the next biggest one is actually tourism, but then it's followed very, very closely by petroleum gases. If for some reason, and you might have to use your imagination here—it's a stretch—if, for some reason people started moving away from fossil fuels in the world, then how would that impact Australia's economic base, with coal and petroleum gases being two of our largest sources?

Nyck: Which is precisely why, I guess, they're resisting any sort of call for real action on these issues.

Steve: That's right. What this data is pointing to is an opportunity for countries to look at where their eggs are in their economic basket and diversify and encourage a broad spectrum of sources of income so that if there is disruption in one particular sector, it doesn't disrupt the whole country and throw us out of balance, and Australia certainly seems to be in danger of that at the moment.

Nyck: Well, the graph shows, as I said, that we've fallen from 57th in terms of our economic—and it's not just economics, it's more to do with what we do as a people here, what we produce, what we create, how our intelligence is applied to making and creating things—and we've dropped from 57th in 1995 to 93rd. It says: "Australia is less complex than expected for its income level. As a result, its economy is projected to grow slowly." That projection is about 2.2% annually over the coming decade, ranking in the bottom half of countries globally. This positions us very badly unless we do something quite significantly different pretty quickly, I'd imagine.

Steve: That's right, and for our leaders to apply some intelligence to this problem, they need to have some intelligence.

Nyck: Oooohhhh.

Steve: And that seems to have been a little bit rare over recent years, where, as we were talking about earlier in the show, as old systems start to decay, they attract less

attention from more capable people, and I don't think anyone would argue that we're seeing a dumbing down of our political processes globally at the moment. People just haven't got their eye on the ball. With simpler values sets being applied to the problem of managing complex countries, we're seeing people focusing on very simple issues like insecurity and 'will I get elected in the next election?' and those sorts of things, rather than thinking longer term and addressing some of the serious and complex issues which are mounting and mounting.

Nyck: Of course it's very difficult, because it's all about life conditions in many ways, and the life conditions for the average person, even in our supposedly advanced, developed, Western, democratic, free-market economies, are not real good for a lot of people. I just point a very simple thing in America, not so far off: Jeff Bezos, the world's richest man, is cutting health benefits for part-time workers at *Whole Foods*. The move will leave 1,900 people without health insurance. Why would someone do that? I mean, the guy's got US$114 billion. It's mentioned in here that if you gave each of his workers half a million dollars, you'd still have 113 billion. It's extraordinary to see this trickle-up economics that has governed the world for a long time, and now we've seen the severe results of this in terms of just simple life conditions for people like this.

Steve: That's right. Well, of course, the founder of *Whole Foods*—which is a very progressive supermarket chain, as the name suggests, which was founded, I understand, in Texas—the original founder sold it off to Jeff Bezos and Jeff Bezos is clearly operating from different value set, and so that's the degradation of values there.

On the positive side, back to Australia, according to a report in *The Conversation*, which we mentioned earlier in the show, Australia is the runaway global leader in building new renewable energy.

Nyck: Yes, which not many people … in fact, why isn't this reported more than it is? It's incredible.

Steve: That's right, so that does sound a little horn of hope there for Australia, despite the economic situation that we find ourselves in. This is being measured at a per capita rate, so per head of population, Australia, in terms of renewable energy, is growing at 10 times faster than the world average. Between 2018 and 2020, Australia will install more than 16 gigawatts of wind and solar, an average rate of 220 watts per person per year. So that's really encouraging, and there's a lovely graph here which shows us leading the way considerably. The closest competitor on a per capita basis is Germany. In 2018, Australia generated 200 watts per person of renewable energy per year; and Germany was at what looks like about 80 to 90. After that, you've got the whole of the EU, which is down under 50, the US is close to 50, so we're way ahead of the rest of the

world on a per capita basis, which is really, really encouraging. It sounds like a bit of hope there.

Nyck: Yes, fantastic.

Another topic we talk about a lot here is health and the future of medicines—preventative and also curative—and the new psychedelic revolution which we talk about a fair amount on the show here. Interesting that the Tasmanian poppy farmers have suddenly found themselves a bit at the centre of the US opioid crisis. I knew Tasmania grew poppies, but I didn't realise it grows something like 50% of the world's poppies for opiates, so they're a bit in the firing line with the crisis in the US, and of course, the pressure, particularly from medicinal cannabis, to perhaps replace, ultimately, the use of opiates in many, many cases for some of those conditions.

Steve: That's right. It's no surprise, then, that politically the emergence of medical cannabis has been suppressed here in Australia. Some experts that I respect have said that the Australian medical cannabis system was set up to fail and there's a possible reason there. Lucy Haslam, one of the pioneers of medical cannabis here in Australia, came out and said in a recent media interview that she was told by one of the people who wrote that legislation here in Australia that the government wasn't going to let the opium industry get disrupted by medical cannabis, so that kind of explains the slow progress here and this is pretty typical.

Nyck: Indeed. I have a really simple solution, which I'm sure, with a few tweaks, could work, and that is simply get rid of the poppies and grow some medicinal cannabis down there in Tasmania. I'm sure would be just as valuable.

Steve: Well, it's encouraging to see that you can do that in the ACT [Australian Capital Territory] now.

Nyck: You can do that in the ACT.

Steve: There are signs of progress, folks. It's not all bad news.

Nyck: No, it's not.

Steve: On the health side as well—and this is an animal health thing—people might be aware that they've had a really bad year in China this year with African swine fever

taking out a whole lot of their pigs. They've been burying massive amounts of pigs in mass graves up in China which is obviously disrupting the pork supply, and pork, I think, is a pretty popular food in China. There's a recent report in the *ABC News* that African swine fever has now broken out in Timor-Leste, so that's that is a concern. In general, the threat of global pandemics, both animal and human—and, of course, some of those things cross over from animal strains to human strains as well—so this is one of the things that we need to be aware of and we need to prepare for. There was another article this week just pointing out that the world really isn't well prepared for global pandemics at the moment and that's something that we should be focusing on.

Nyck: Yes. And of course, with regards to the threat of disaster, we've seen so many—even in recent times—notions that the world is coming to an end. I saw this on social media the other day, briefly: the Cold War, the oil crisis, Nostradamus and Halley's Comet, the Indonesian invasion of Australia, the Y2K bug, 2012, the Asian bird flu, AIDS, the global jihad, the Ebola pandemic, and, of course, climate change—a new ice age, which was touted before, in the 70s and even earlier than that, the 1920s as well, and global climate change; global warming. We always seem to have some sort of end-times idea in front of us, many people on this planet. It seems to be a sort of human condition, perhaps—part of what drives us, indeed.

Steve: I think it's also linked to this big shift in consciousness that's coming in. Clare Graves, who we sometimes quote on the show, in his research, he identified a very marked shift between what he called the First Tier and Second Tier of human consciousness, and that, in some way, is actually an end of time—it is the end of a complete chapter in human history. What emerges on the other side of this quantum leap in consciousness is a markedly different version of human and some people are even suggesting that we're seeing here a transition to a new species of human. I'm more and more starting to think that that's quite possible and I'm following the science around that quite closely, so it's perfectly natural from that perspective that people might feel like there's an end coming.

Nyck: An eschaton is the proper word for that—eschatology, the study of the end times—and for thousands of years, as you're saying, at crucial points, humanity has always feared the asteroid, the comet, the dark of the moon, and various other things that portend something horrific, and finally arriving for us. So clearly, it's part of our DNA almost, that we think this way to a degree.

Steve: Yes, it's coded into those value systems. This is the interesting thing about coming at this whole discussion from a consciousness point of view, is looking at how our consciousness seems to be coded in the same way that a computer is coded to

shape us to think in certain ways, given particularly the level of complexity of our life conditions—how those ways of thinking and coping and behaving shift when the life conditions reach a certain level as they increase. It's quite fascinating.

Nyck: The word consciousness is a word that science still avoids, although there is increasing interest in the idea of consciousness. I just wonder, as we've got a minute or so, how you would define consciousness?

Steve: It's such a broad topic. I guess to me, the most fundamental definition would be that which enables us to be aware of reality; and not just to be aware of reality, but to interact with reality, to interpret reality, to make sense of reality.

Nyck: And, of course, reality itself being, well, perhaps a moving feast, but certainly having different levels or layers, because most people apprehend or think they are aware of reality on one level, but perhaps are missing other places, and that may just be human interaction—being able to read another person's response and reactions and emotional responses to something, for example.

Steve: It's fair to say that when a person is living according to a particular set of values in this layered arrangement of different layers of consciousness, that they are essentially living in a world of its own—they're interpreting the world in a very particular way. These coded systems within us, they shape our very frameworks for making sense of reality itself. To give a couple of really crude examples, the third layer reality is like a jungle where you've got to fight to survive, and so everything is interpreted through that lens; whereas in the next layer up, your reality is a place where you have to follow a set of rules in order to live a righteous life, and our behaviour is shaped very differently by those two different perspectives—just two examples. So we're living in a world of many worlds and all of the people around us who appear to be, and are, in the same physical space, they're actually mentally, consciously, quite possibly operating in very different bubbles.

Nyck: Absolutely. I think we'll leave it there for today. Thanks for joining us on *Future Sense.*

Steve: Yes, thanks for joining us. To give a super quick summary, some of the things that are on the radar that we need to be preparing for are extra cold winters and potential disruption of energy generation and food supply as a result of that cold, which is happening right now in North America; and the coming economic hiccup early next

year—and, of course, the big one for next year seems to be the US elections and potential unrest around that.

Nyck: And I think something that's important to both of us, and that's generally the state of mental illness—we didn't talk about that—costs the Australian economy $60 billion a year, research shows. I think that's an area where we can do a lot of good to help people to face these crises in a more holistic and a more conscious way.

Steve: That's right, because the tension being created by this change process is quite possibly generating a lot of mental illness as well.

Nyck: Yes.

We'll be with you next week, folks. As we said, you can check out the edited podcast within a couple of days through www.futuresense.it and our *Twitter* account @futuresenseshow where we post some of the articles we've referred to. We'll be with you next week here. Thanks for joining us.

Steve: Thanks for listening.

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