



Addressing Tipping Points for a Precarious Future

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One of the purposes of the Kavli conference was to place together contrasting perspectives on the tipping points theme. This is particularly true of the relationship between the two contributions of this Part in the context of the science-based Chapter 2.1. Tim Lenton is well aware of science– policy relationships, so he frames his analysis both from the perspective of evidentiary science and the organized prognoses of informed commentators. Giles Foden, who is a writer, but also a student of complex systems and indeterminacy, offers (3.1) the framing of metaphor and narrative for providing another insight into the reading of tipping points. He recognizes the power of bringing together contradictory and novel information to kick-start revelation as fresh ways of creating understanding. He sees the notion of ‘tipping’ as being both a tap or a hit, and the transformation of the object or process which is struck or tilted. This allows for the joining up of analysis and interpretation on the one hand, and narrative and scenario on the other, where the process of speculating about the future is one of both storytelling and prognosis. In this way, Tim Lenton’s prognoses depicted in Figure 2.2 are but one version of the metaphor process offered by Foden.

What we discern here is the mixing of three sets of observation which perhaps lie at the core of this book. One is the longevity of the concept of abrupt change in the lexicon of language and metaphor. So ‘tipping points’ may be a relatively recently coined phrase, but the notion of tip and travel (or transformation caused by some form of hitting or forcing) is well settled in the linguistic tradition.

A second concept is the bringing together of many ideas and perspectives which cause some form of fresh outlooks, or revelation, of ‘contemplative consciousness’ to use the phrase offered by Laurence Freeman in **(p.48)** Chapter 5.1. Here may lurk the devices for the kinds of transformative beginnings we search for in Part 8.

The third view is that provided by Matthew Taylor in this section (3.2) and by Camilla Toulmin (7.4). This is the scope for enabling individuals and groups to be confident about letting go of the interpretations of rapid and convulsive change as these perspectives are influenced by peer pressure and by personal mindsets, and to have the opportunity and courage to explore new ways forward, both for personal behaviour as well as for collective resilience.

Giles Foden had provided the spark for this scope for transformative action, and Laurence Freeman offers the spiritual and meditative under-pinning for the process to evolve without internal intellectual crises or external stress. We are very grateful to both of these authors for initiating this vital perspective on tipping points in such a rich interdisciplinary manner, and to their companion commentators Matthew Taylor (3.2) and David Atkinson (5.2) for reinforcing their contributions. Tipping points are as turbulent for the mind as they are for the planet.

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