



Evolving Concepts of Time and Space

Part 1

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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? Science, history, politics, psychology, ancient civilisations, alien contact, the new psychedelic revolution, cryptocurrency and other disruptive and distributed technologies and much more.

This is Future Sense.

Nyck: It's about 'time' today; time and timing here on BayFM, and that famous opening to the Pink Floyd song from *Dark Side of the Moon* called *Time*. The clock's ticking. It's almost scary, I find, the ticking of a clock.

Steve: It certainly is on some of the Pink Floyd stuff, that's for sure.

Nyck: I find it scary anyway, just the notion that time is in this rhythmic absolute pulse that's contained; it contains us somehow.

Steve: Yeah, I guess there's also the fear the clock will stop, right? Time's up.

Nyck: Ah, time. So I guess folks, you've gathered quite quickly that that's what we're going to be talking about today.

Steve: I think it's a good extension on our previous show which was all about spin and how spin figures into things—everything. Of course you can't separate space and time, so we are talking about concepts of time, although to be more correct, they're really concepts of space

and time. You can't separate the two because you need the space to actually come up with the concept of time.

Nyck: Which is what Einstein originally proposes, that the fourth dimension is time and space-time is inextricably linked, as you're saying. It's not a three-dimensional world we live in. It's certainly four-dimensional when you factor in that notion of time.

Steve: Absolutely. So we're going to look at the various layers of consciousness in the process of evolution through Layers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc., and talk about how we conceptualise time and space at each one of those layers and how it changes as we develop as individuals and also evolve as a species. We can look back through history at some different examples of how these things play out; how they shape our world, our life, our mythology, our thinking, and the way we behave and those sorts of things.

Nyck: And of course, all of the great philosophers and scientists have always riddled themselves enigmatically about time itself. St. Augustine, for example, said in the Confessions: "Ask me what time it is, I can tell you. But if you asked me what time is, I'm in a loss." Because it's pretty hard to define exactly what time is and our conceptions are certainly influenced, if not created, by our culture, our education and what else, indeed, because there are many factors there.

Steve: There are, and just to set the scene, you might, if you have the luxury of extra time as you're listening, like to get a pencil and paper or maybe your favourite tablet and drawing app, and I'm going to give some graphic examples as best as I can through this audio medium. I'll keep it simple and you can draw these as we go. They might expand the understanding that you gain as we talk through these layers.

Nyck: Obviously don't do this if you're driving, but if you have kids in the backseat on your way to school, get the tablets out, kids, because you should be able to follow this quite easily and you can educate the parents later on in the morning or tomorrow.

Steve: That's right. However, if you're stopped safely in a parked car, being wintertime here, you could breathe on the window and then draw these on there with your finger.

Nyck: Good idea. I like that.

Steve: So let's start at Layer 1, and let me just remind those of our regular listeners and inform those who might be listening for the first time that as we go through our

understanding of the progression of the evolution of humanity, we are talking about a pattern that is fractal, and it also applies to the development of ourselves as individuals. The same patterns apply, all the same principles apply, and you can switch backwards and forwards between those two perspectives.

So, we alternate as we progress from Layer 1, which at an individual level is when we're newborn—we're a new babe in the world and relatively helpless and unaware, but soaking up and learning all the earlier sensory inputs and expanding our understanding very quickly. The theme of the first layer and all subsequent odd numbered layers is 'I-me-mine'. It's all about 'my' perspective, and it's particularly my perspective of this outside world. We're looking from within, but we're looking out to the world and trying to understand what the world is, initially, at this very early time, and what all these sensory inputs are; we're trying to put together a picture. Then, as we progress to the second layer, it becomes a 'we-us-our' focus. So the first layer is individual and the second layer is communal—that's another way of thinking about it—and in the communal layers, we're focused on our internal experience. We're interacting with the outside world, but rather than wanting to understand and change the outside world as we do in Layer 1, in Layer 2 and every subsequent even-numbered layer, we're focused on our internal experience, how the external world is changing our internal experience, and if we want to change our experience rather than change the outside world. That's a common theme that runs through, and I'll remind you as we go through each one of these.

So let's look at the first couple. Layer 1: newborn babe; hunter-gatherer in terms of the emergence of the first 'modern' humans. If we wanted to represent that graphically, we could just get a sheet of paper or our tablet and just put a dot on there. The dot represents the individual and represents the process of emergence. The concept of time is very, very simple. It's an emergent concept of time. It's purely in the moment. There's just now, right there, and all of our sensory awareness is in the now. There's no real sense of who we are. It's just really soaking up the sensory input from this outside world and being in the moment. Any actions and behaviours are absolutely instinctive.

Nyck: So driven essentially by primary needs, as Maslow identified later on, for shelter, food and all of that. That's the focus. There really isn't much else going on. And of course, just to remind you that we are generalising here. This is of model in form, but it's very useful to apply this as we are and to see the generalisation. You can see the nuances within it as you go forward.

Steve: The first three layers are in what we call the 'pre-rational zone', so there's no rational mind in charge here that's thinking about the process that we're undergoing or the actions that we're doing. It's just really reactionary and in the moment. So we've got that dot on the paper.

Layer 2, then, shifts us to a we-us-our focus. So instead of being us trying to make sense of the world, all of a sudden we are within a community setting, and at a species level that represents the emergence of living tribally, where we came together to live tribally and on a

set piece of sacred land. At an individual level, it represents the child with greater awareness within the family setting, at the point where we can recognize our family members, we can interact with them and we have a sense of the scope of the family; we have a sense of how the family is in terms of behaviour and attitudes. So there is a conformity emerging, a set of standards in a tribal setting. They are often described as customs and taboos. In a family setting, it's usually the rules and regulations: 'this is how we do things around here.' In terms of our graphic image, we've got a dot, and now we can draw a circle around the dot.

Nyck: So there's a protection around that dot, too. I guess it's also part of the evolution, that I'm part of a family and that family also gives me that extra bit of security and safety and certainty in my life, being situated within that context.

Steve: Yes, exactly.

So we've got the family around us. In Layer 2 time becomes a cycle, represented by the circle. So it's something that we rotate around and there are fairly simple patterns associated with that cycle. It's always changing. It's always moving around the perimeter of the circle, so you could say it's seasonal. If we look back to our history, back in those tribal days, we see that the stories that we told and the stories that are still being told today from that particular perspective about our ancestors are representing our ancestors within this same cycle. So, it's really just one cycle. Our ancestors live this way, and right through time, we have lived this way. We are in tune with all of all of the aspects of this cycle in terms of the outside world and nature.

It's important to note—and you'll see this in the graphic representation—that as we move through these layers, the old ones don't go away. That dot's still there in the middle of the circle, and now we've got the circle around the outside. We'll be adding to this picture. These concepts are nested inside each other. The layers themselves—of development, of evolution—are nested inside each other, and it's all about compounding, adding to, and expanding the understanding. So the core understanding is transcend and include; never leave anything behind. Bring it with you and find the best parts of that. It's almost like compost for the next generation.

It's also interesting to note that if these tribal stories referred to any kind of significant change that was outside of the natural cycle, it was usually in reference to the origin dot. You had the significant origin stories and this is how things came to be: the Rainbow Serpent moved here and created that. That was the origin story. We had the origin and then we had the cycles that we live within. So there we have the first I-me-mine and the first we-us-our layers.

Nyck: I always wonder about where the now is, because once you've identified the now you've moved on anyway.

Steve: It comes with you though, which is a good thing, right?

Nyck: It comes with you, yes. Does it follow you, though, or is it actually really with you in the now? We could really be silly with this ...

Nyck: We're talking about time and timing today, and Steve is running through the different relationship to time diagrammatically as we go through the different layers with regard to Clare W. Graves's work, and we are extending a lot beyond Graves's work today. We're just giving a bit of a foundation through that frame.

Steve: That's right. In fact, what we're going through today is not part of Graves's work, however, the patterns of consciousness that he describes in his work allow us to derive these sorts of understandings. So let's continue on.

So far we've got Layer 1 and Layer 2. We've got the dot representing I-me-mine at Layer 1, the emergent 'I' within the duality. And then at layer 2, we have the circle around the outside, which represents the emergence of this concept of a cycle at Layer 2: the family around me, time becoming a cycle, and through history, us, our ancestors and our future generations all living within this cycle. That cycle is a very expansive concept, of course. It's not just our personal experience, but the world around us is operating within a cycle as well. So, you'll notice that as we go through these sequential layers, at the individual layers, that is the odd numbered ones: 1, 3, 5, etc., the focus is really on the path, the line, which is a very masculine thing, and then in the even-numbered layers: 2, 4, 6, etc., the focus is on the experience or the circular cyclic aspect. We're switching backwards and forwards between those, but we're also adding to each one as we go, so when we move to Layer 2, we've still got the dot from Layer 1 right there—it's part of the picture.

Now, let's go to Layer 3. Layer 3 is also an egocentric layer. Graves actually called it "Egocentric" in his notes, and it represents—at a species level—the projection of our power. It gave rise to martial societies that were operated around the balance of power, and at an individual level in our own growth, our own development, it represents our wild teen years where we're breaking away from the family circle and we're doing our own thing in a very exploratory way. On your diagram, you can represent this as a line—a masculine line—running from the circle, spiralling back into the dot in the centre, because as a teen, we're really seeking to find out about ourself.

Nyck: Mmm. What is our identity?

Steve: Who are we? Who are we when we break away from the family? Who are we in the world? And what power do we have? So we're spiralling into the dot. And it usually—always—is also related to physical movement through space. It will be physical movement

away from the family. From a historical perspective, it was about moving away from our sacred land that we had lived on all the time and exploring new lands.

Nyck: And usually conquering them and doing some terrible things in the process. That was the martial nature of that era.

Steve: That's right. It was all about power, and when we encountered other people, it was a test of who's most powerful. We're still in this pre-rational zone, so we're still driven by our wants and needs. The rational mind as we know it today hasn't really kicked in. That comes at Layer 4. The want is to be powerful. It's all about keeping score of our achievements. That's represented by things that we're all familiar with from the movies, like, if you've got a bow and arrow, you put notches on your bow for your achievements, or if it's a gun, usually notches on the wooden stock of the gun.

Nyck: [In a Southern drawl] Or your bed post in town.

Steve: That's right. We collect trophies to represent our achievements.

Nyck: There's ma bed there, and I've got forty seven notches on the bed so far. Not sure if that's people I've killed or something else. I can't recall because of the moonshine down in the bar. It's all good.

Steve: That's right. It's woven into our story, isn't it? All of those things - the notches, the trophies and things—they are a way of representing our power, our achievements through time and space.

What's interesting now is that we have three things within our diagram. We have the dot, we have the circle, and we have the connecting line between the two—the spiralling line. This is a trinity, and it's also interesting that at this third layer, it's where we really first achieve a sense of self. This is why Clare Graves, in his research, called it Egocentric, because it's where this ego really presents itself to the degree that we have a sense of who we are now. We've emerged in Layer 1, we've existed within a group in Layer 2—but still so absolutely immersed in the group, we don't really have a clear sense of self—and then at Layer 3, through this process of projection and power discovery, we form our ego really solidly for the first time.

It takes three things to do that, and of course, this is the three things that we find written into all of our religious texts and everything else: the Holy Trinity—the two things that come together to allow the emergence of the third and create something; manifest something.

From Layer 3, an I-me-mine, we move to Layer 4, which is a we-us-our system. In this movement from 3 to 4, we are moving beyond the pre-rational zone into the rational zone for the first time. Layer 4 is where the rational mind emerges, and that, in a physical sense, is

represented by the development of the frontal lobes, which allow us to moderate those more primitive urges, instincts that drive our behaviour. And of course, the rational mind allows us to think and process to grasp the concept of cause-and-effect, and within that, to then make choices about our life and to choose a structure—a structured life.

Historically, this emerged in conjunction with the Agricultural Revolution. All of a sudden we could crop on a large scale, which allowed us to gather together in large groups, and as we started to live in larger groups, the tribal way of living was overwhelmed because of the numbers, just the complexity of the larger group. We had to move to a different way of conformity, and what emerged with this Layer 4 were systems of conformity and most dominantly religious concepts, which gave us structured rules of how to live. So instead of identifying with our tribe, we started to identify with our ethnic group and the belief system associated with that. The thing that kept the ethnic group together and conforming was this agreed set of rules.

Nyck: And usually, as you said, they were given from a power above, which we can't contest and we don't really know the source of. Only a few people have got access to that power, like Moses, for example. This is similar, I guess, to shamanic expression in tribal cultures, but different to the degree that in those cultures, as you're saying, it's very much centred around the seasonal, and the simple and observable rhythms of life.

But when it comes to this next layer—the fourth layer or the blue layer as it's also called—we're talking about dispensed structure, and regulations and rules from some other place. It's not related to the seasons in the same way, like in the song from the Birds which comes from the Bible, itself: 'turn, turn, turn.' It's expressing an older version of that, and now we're in a phase where the priest or the pope or whoever will dispense the wisdom and dictate: this is how you have to live in order to manage the emerging complexity of the new expression of communal living; of community.

Steve: Yes. Those guidance processes are related to the themes of each layer, so in the I-me-mine themes there is usually a central or single source of guidance, while in the we-us-our systems, it's usually a communal source of guidance. And so, in the second layer, for example, we have this shamanic process within a tribe, but it's guided by a community of spirits - the spirits within all of the natural things around us.

Nyck: Animistic.

Steve: Yes, exactly. Then, when we move to Layer 3, which is an I-me-mine system, it becomes a powerful God that's guiding us. It's not actually got to monotheism yet - that actually comes from Layer 4 - at Layer 3, it's usually a bunch of powerful gods; a number of different gods.

Nyck: Yes. I was very confused by that too, but just to reiterate, the things that we're saying, of course, are very large generalisations. It's not just one or the other; it's transitions between.

Steve: And compounding ideas, so you can see how the idea of many spirits compounds to the idea of a powerful series of gods as we have in those ancient mythologies.

So, back to progressing your drawing at Layer 4. We've spiralled into the dot at Layer 3 and now we're going to spiral back out to community—back out to the circle—but instead of being one spiralling path, there are two spiralling paths. This is the kind of pathway or process that's represented in the ancient tai chi symbol where you've got the dark path and the light path, the good path and the bad path, the right path and wrong path. So, the thinking associated with Layer 4 is very linear. It's right or wrong, black and white, and this is represented in our concept of time and space. We have a choice now because the rational mind has been activated. We can choose between those two paths, whereas previous to this we didn't have that rational-minded process of cause-and-effect, right or wrong, acting.

Nyck: So there's a moral imperative—a morality that evolves there—a choice between good and evil, to put it simply, that every human has in that structure.

Steve: Exactly. So we defer back to whatever our guidance is around that—often spiritual guidance—and with the emergence of the rational mind, there's a lot more complexity that emerges as well. So, as well as the two paths, we start to be able to understand and break down what happens on those parts in terms of steps of change. The most extreme example of that is in the *I Ching* from ancient China, which actually had 64 possible steps along the path, from whatever path we were taking from the dot to the outer circle. You can see the duality still represented there in the dot and the circle, but now we've got dual paths as well, so that concept is expanding.

If we look at the mythology of that particular era, we see these archetypal stories of the experiences of change as the mythical characters walk along the path and they make their choices between good and bad. Depending on whether they make the right choice or wrong choice, the good choice or the bad choice, there were different outcomes. So I guess you had two classes of mythical story: the heroic class and then the disastrous collapse represented in the other polarity of that story. In the heroic actions, merging the successful ones, of course, seeking and finding and those sorts of things.

Nyck: Very good. Keep with us, folks and we'll tease this out further. I'm experiencing myself how, as we speak about time, it becomes complex because of our own individual relationship to time as we are now and cultural biases around time that exist, and we'll come to some more of that a bit later on.

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