



## 134. Collapse and Decentralisation

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**Steve:** Welcome to Episode 134. I'm Steve McDonald, and in this episode, I'll be looking at why our social systems seem to be falling apart. I'm also going to explain one of the significant trends that's shaping the emerging next-generation social systems, and that is decentralisation. This will involve, firstly, looking at some historical patterns that are typical of rising and falling societies, and then we'll look at the trajectory of the current dominant global paradigm, which is trending away from the individual focus of the Scientific-Industrial era—Layer 5 in Clare Graves's system—towards a future communal focus in Layer 6, which of course includes decentralisation.

As always, I'll be drawing upon the research of Dr Clare W. Graves, which reveals patterns of human consciousness that shape everything we do, and one of the largest predictive patterns that he identified was a long-term swing between living with a focus on community and living with a focus on our individuality. You can think of that as a pendulum swing with, for example, a focus on community that will reach an extreme to the point where it becomes too much and it feels stifling, and then the pendulum starts to swing back the other way to individuality. Eventually that becomes too much; we have too much individuality and disconnection and the pendulum starts to swing back again. Right now in history, we find ourselves in a pendulum swing that's taking us from a very individual era—the Scientific-Industrial era, or Layer 5 in Graves's model—and swinging back towards community again at Layer 6. As we go through these pendulum swings, we are actually in a spiralling motion, so if you look at a spiral from the side in a two-dimensional perspective, you will see it looks kind of like a pendulum going backwards and forwards from one side to the other, yet there is forward motion through the spiral as well. In the case of human history and human development, that forward movement is taking us from a place of relative simplicity in the past to a place of relative complexity in the future.

As we move along that spectrum of complexity, there are times where the complexity starts to overwhelm our way of living, our worldview, our value systems and our social systems, and we have to go through a transformational change in order to adapt to the higher level of complexity. This is where we find ourselves right now: coming to the limit of the usefulness of the Scientific-Industrial or Modern way of living—the Modern values and the Modern worldview—and having to watch those systems that we've created in that way of living start to fall apart simply because it doesn't work anymore. At the same time, we start to see the emergence of a new and more complex coping system.

The only really good, well-recorded precursor we have for this is the transformation from the Agricultural era to the Scientific-Industrial era, and that took place over quite some hundreds of years. There were significant tipping points like the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, for example, but you could go right back to the Middle Ages, and even back further than that, and see that a lot of the chaos that was created around that time was really due to a battle of values between the old values and the emerging new values. What we know about that particular transformation was that society changed from being a very rigid, class-based system where you were born into a class and you were stuck in that class for life, to a relatively flexible, success-based system in the Scientific-Industrial era. That, of course, has led us to where we are right now.

We can look at how significant the changes were and how significantly our technology changed, our ways of managing society changed, and our value systems changed during that period, and overlay that on where we are right now. Of course, the changes won't be the same but in relative terms the degree of change is somewhat similar in this shift. We are really only just entering into the most significant and rapid part of the shift right at the moment.

These eras or layers that I'm talking about have representative value systems and these value systems don't go away. Each new value system—for example, the Agricultural era value system or the Scientific-Industrial era value system—each new one is layered over the top of the previous ones, and so we end up with a nest of value systems. So the Scientific-Industrial era has been the product of a nesting of five separate value systems, from pure survival Hunter-Gatherer existence at the very core through Tribalism and Martial ways of living and Agricultural ways of living and Scientific-Industrial ways of living; and if you look around in society, you can still see those value systems present. These old value systems don't disappear. What does happen is they fall away from being dominant and they are superseded by a newer and more capable value system.

When we look at the historical rise and fall of societies, what we're really looking at is a transition between value sets where the previous value system becomes overwhelmed with complexity and simply can't cope, so its bell curve drops away and you get this overlap with an emerging new value system where there's been a transformation of consciousness and people are starting to think in more complex ways; they can solve problems more easily.

And so we get the emergence of the new bell curve. It's that wave-like motion of moving through these bell curves that's taking us forward on the complexity spectrum of the overall spiralling motion of human development. Added to that, we've got the previous pattern we mentioned, which is that left to right pendulum swing between community focus and individual focus. In those areas where two bell curves are overlapping, we've got one value set and its associated society collapsing, and a new value set emerging and new systems starting to form. It can be extremely polarising—just as we're seeing now globally—and also quite chaotic. During these times, one of the simplest navigation tools we can have is to know whether our world is trending towards individuality or whether it's trending towards community and right now we are trending towards community. So simply by allowing yourself to follow those currents which are taking us forward into building more resilient

communities and bringing resources back to communities instead of being centralised, we can cope much, much better with the change process.

Let's talk now about the emerging value system—the beginning of a new bell curve pattern, which is already underway—and one of the key trends, centralisation. This is a fundamental structural trend that we find in all of the community-oriented value systems. If we look back in history, we'll see this movement between centralisation and decentralisation, with decentralisation in the communal systems and centralisation in the individually-oriented systems.

So what will that mean in everyday life? Well, in the present context, what we're seeing is the centralised systems of the old paradigm becoming less and less effective and creating more and more problems and a natural movement away from that towards decentralisation, which is showing up as a level playing field arrangement of networked, decentralised systems that usually seek consensus within the system.

The key problem-solving strategy of these new, decentralised systems is redistribution of resources and skills within the network. So people look and they say, 'OK, things are out of balance. There's too much of this over there and too much of that over there. We need to shift all of this around and rebalance our world.' Ideally, everybody will have access to everything, and just as that sounds, often Layer 6 aspirations tend to be somewhat idealistic or utopian, so not 100 percent achievable, but nevertheless most useful at this time on the planet. The process of decentralisation also involves the re-localisation of resources, which means catering for variations in local life conditions, serving the majority of people in the places where they live rather than just serving a centralised ruling minority. If you look around the world right now, you'll see this actually happening.

Some examples are: in the case of nation states and political structures and systems, we're seeing the fragmentation of political parties. Often we've had the dominance of just two parties within various nation states over the past decades, and now those two central parties are starting to fragment. We're seeing the rise of small political parties and also a lot of independent members of politics, and the breaking down of the two party system which is becoming quite dysfunctional. There's perhaps no greater example in the media than the American system right at the moment. No country seems to be exempt, though. It seems to be happening everywhere.

We're seeing the fragmentation of the European Union, which again is a breakdown of centralisation, with Brexit and other potential exits on the cards. We're seeing the fragmentation of nation states, and this is something we should absolutely expect given that nation states emerged with the Scientific-Industrial era. We should see that structure changing as the very system changes.

The United Kingdom: we've had Scotland recently voting on whether or not to separate and long-time talk about the breakup of the UK. In the United States, there's been motions and talk of different states separating from the union. Here in Australia during the recent pandemic response, there was a very notable independent theme amongst the various states in Australia, with different states approaching the problem in very, very different ways—some much more harshly than others—and a real absence of national unity in terms of our approach to the pandemic. China, of course, has long had problems with dissident groups

and the most recent thing in the media has been the tension in Hong Kong. So, again, all of these examples of fragmentation are examples of the breakdown of centralisation, and because the old paradigm values prefer competition over co-operation, this actually breeds separation, and this is one of the mechanisms whereby the paradigm has created problems for itself in its latest stage.

Its tendency also to exploit whatever it can, to get the best out of things for the reasons of succeeding, has downgraded many of our social systems as well, from a place of actually serving the community to a place of simply serving those who wield the power. Again, this is all part of that we-versus-me, the communal-versus-individual pendulum swing mechanism.

Examples of decentralisation showing up as evidence of new systems emerging: moves that we see towards independence and the sovereignty movement itself, which is quite big and growing around the world—that is people attempting to legally divorce themselves from centralised control; localised uprisings—we're likely to see a flare up of this, I think, post the US elections and probably not just in the US either, but perhaps Europe and other places as well; and even the possibility of civil warfare, which is essentially warfare between two different value sets, the old value set and the new value set.

Since the wave of Layer 6 values emerged around about the 1960s, we've seen the emergence of a lot of bubbles of these new values represented as communities around the world. Places like Esalen have been leaders in the process of focusing on and developing new solutions based around the new values set, and, of course, with the advent of the Internet, these bubbles of the new values have been able to network themselves together around the world. Certainly where I'm living here, in the Byron Shire in Australia, is one of those bubbles. There are other places around the world, many other places, of course, which have led the way, Northern Europe being one in particular. The West Coast of the USA has been an obvious area, too, and also Hawaii. We're now reaching the point where there are so many of these bubbles around the world and they're so connected through the Internet that we're getting a very significant network effect and quite a bit of momentum, which is, again, a very decentralised approach, having a network of remotely located communities which are connecting together.

The sea change or tree change trend, where people burn out and bail out of the rat race in the cities and move closer to nature is often feeding these new communities. Of course, the outbreak of the pandemic and the shutting down of many centralised offices and people working remotely is accelerating that process as well. As I've said previously, while the pandemic certainly hasn't been fun, it has actually accelerated the process of change. Many of the problems that have arisen as a result of the pandemic's disruption have actually highlighted the need for us to re-localise our resources and rebuild our communities and make them resilient.

In terms of our economic system, the old paradigm's mindset has always been to push everything to its limit in order to get as much out of it as we can. This resulted in the periodic crashing of our economic system which showed up in the stock markets crashing periodically, and the long-term impact of that kind of system design and that *modus operandi* was to shift money away from the majority of people to a tiny percentage—the 1%, as we say—due to the hierarchical nature of that system's operating pattern. The longer that

pattern runs that way, the more extreme it becomes, which makes it quite unsustainable. Like most of the patterns that were produced by Layer 5 values, they were designed to get results quickly and really without sustainability in mind. That's a reflection of the short-term thinking that we typically see in individually-oriented value systems.

There's further evidence of decline in the problems being faced by various central banks at the moment, including the European Central Bank. Overall, the global financial system was forecast quite some years ago to go through a major upset this year, and of course, that has gone ahead exactly on time. One of the organisations that forecast that quite accurately is Armstrong Economics, which is one of our sources for economic information. Of course, most commentators have blamed the economic issues this year on the pandemic. It's almost as if the pandemic has been a very convenient cover for something that was going to happen anyway, and although there's no evidence that I'm aware of that it was a deliberate economic crash, it's quite possible that we might see some evidence emerging sometime in the future that point to at least a small amount of engineering to create this economic disaster that's unfolding globally right at the moment.

So how's decentralisation emerging in the economic arena? Well, most notably in the form of cryptocurrency, which is based on encrypted, decentralised ledger technology. They have been very intentionally designed to try and avoid the problems that were created by the old systems, particularly corruption and overly-centralised control. Because economic power was one of the main tools for control in the old paradigm, the old era, we're seeing a lot of pushback from governments against cryptocurrency technology and considerable efforts are being made, often behind the scenes at the moment, to launch centrally-controlled digital currencies by national governments in an effort to try and hold onto their power, but also take advantage of the new technologies.

Finally, let's take a look at how our healthcare systems are changing. The old paradigm's centralised approach to healthcare has been focused on the allopathic method, and it's been driven by big pharmaceutical companies who prefer to have you keep taking their drugs as long as possible to maintain their profits. So their business interests really don't want you to be cured with one pill, that's for sure. In terms of the medical profession, specialisation has gone from being extremely useful to the point where it's hard to get a holistic diagnosis because doctors have become too specialised and can only treat one of your body's systems and not the whole system. How many people do you know that have been sent between one doctor and another doctor and another doctor trying to figure out what's actually wrong with the overall system? Again, this comes from losing sight of the connections between things. Of course, the current pandemic has really very well highlighted the disadvantages of our current competitive, centralised healthcare systems, and this has caused a great deal of confusion over which drugs work and which drugs don't work, simply because of the competitive actions of the various pharmaceutical companies.

The emerging paradigm is taking multiple perspectives on healthcare, embracing many different alternative understandings of health and well-being in a decentralised fashion, which has been an emerging trend for decades now. The focus is returning to human wellbeing, and it's really centred on the person and caring for the person. The human body is being reimagined as a complex network that needs to be understood holistically; as one

interconnected system. Instead of attending a centralised health care facility, our emerging decentralised approach provides us with a vast array of alternative treatment choices.

That's it for this episode. I hope you've enjoyed the show. I'm recording this on the 14th of October and the biggest thing on my radar at the moment is the US presidential election in early November. I think there's a strong likelihood of civil unrest and economic disruption in the weeks and months following the election, so that will be the focus of the next episode of *Future Sense*. I hope you'll tune in.

Thanks for listening and take care.

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