



## The 6 Deep Strata Concept 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](http://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:** Hello to you and welcome to my co-host, Steve McDonald. Good morning, Steve.

**Steve:** Good morning, Nyck.

**Nyck:** This morning we are going to be talking about a deeper dive into some of the layers of being; the layers of evolution, if you will.

**Steve:** Yes, we talk a lot about human nature on this show, and often the way we present it is simplified to some extent, just simply so we can get the concepts across in a short space of time, but the more you dive into human nature, the more complex it becomes. So we just want to unpack a little bit more of that complexity this morning without making it too difficult to understand, and reveal some of the hidden drivers and the kind of mysteries around human nature, which often leave us puzzled as to why people do what they do.

**Nyck:** Yes, who isn't puzzled by that?

**Steve:** Exactly.

**Nyck:** No matter where you sit, in your particular evolutionary spiral, you are definitely puzzled by somebody else out there.

**Steve:** Exactly, yes. So we're going to look at something called the 6 Deep Strata Concept, which we have raised on the show previously, quite a while back, and then look at how some of the deeper levels in that strata can be driving things that show up very differently at surface level.

When we're presented with someone's words, their behaviour, and then try and reconcile that with the deeper values, it can be very confusing because those deeper values might be the same in many different cases, yet result in completely different behaviours and actions and motivations.

**Nyck:** And this is quite a turnaround from how most people—I hesitate use that term—but how most people think about things: that if you are in a particular frame of expression of values, you're likely to be living in a similar way, somehow, but it's actually not the case.

**Steve:** That's right. It's very easy to stereotype and it's I guess it's one of the ways that we try and make sense of the world, is by grouping people together in stereotypes, but that also leads to misunderstanding in many cases.

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**Nyck:** We're going to take a bit of a deep dive this morning into layers of development and how we move from one evolutionary paradigm, so to speak, to another; some of the challenges and the deep structures they're in, and how they operate.

**Steve:** Yes, and expand on that too, to look at how the value systems, which are like very, very deep drivers that sit in our subconscious, can impact our behaviour the way that we think and act, obviously, in unexpected ways and in different ways. So people with the same deep driving values can show up very, very differently in everyday life, and that can be terribly confusing. So we do—uh, I guess we don't really apologise for the extra complexity, but this is a little bit of a trip down the rabbit hole this morning and a little bit beyond it.

**Nyck:** And we shouldn't apologise for complexity. We like to encourage people's approach towards complexity. I know it's easy to think things should be just simple--linear, from a to b, cause-and-effect, however ...

**Steve:** The most important thing at the moment is that the world is becoming such a confusing place and there are so many weird things going on out there that are difficult to explain. We really need to start digging a little bit deeper in and understanding of human nature to make sense of these things, and that's what it's all about, really. So we are going to start by talking about the 6 Deep Strata Concept—and we'll tweet an image of this after the show and post it on Facebook as well, if you want to look at it later—but this is something

that's come out of the Spiral Dynamics movement (<https://twitter.com/SteveMc1/status/1178476744698843136/photo/1>). As best I understand it, I believe that this list of Strata was developed by Don Beck, who is one of the authors of the *Spiral Dynamics* book, in conjunction with Christopher Cooke, who was a *Spiral Dynamics* consultant and was one of my teachers many, many years ago when I was learning about *Spiral Dynamics*. I've added the sixth layer to it. So originally it was called the 5 Deep Strata by the *Spiral Dynamics* group.

**Nyck:** That's Steve McDonald for you. He's got to add another layer.

**Steve:** It starts out looking at surface-level behaviours and actions. These things are very apparent to us; they're easy to observe, not always easy to understand in terms of the deeper things, and so let's go deeper and see what lies underneath those.

The surface level behaviours and actions of people are influenced by the systems and structures that they live within and the artefacts that they interact with—so these are the immediate aspects of their life conditions—and those things are designed by mindsets which sit below at the third level, and those mindsets are a conscious thing. If you ask somebody about their mindset, they're aware of it and they can describe it to some extent. Below the mindset, at the fourth level, sits what we call “value systems” or “core intelligences”, and these are related to the layers of consciousness. Each layer has its own associated value system, or you could call it a Core Intelligence, and that sits in the subconscious. So, particularly for people who are living and operating through the First Tier of six layers of consciousness, those things are invisible. However, when we transition into the Second Tier of consciousness, we start to develop a sensory capacity to directly sense the frequency of those core intelligences, which is quite interesting. So they're sitting at the fourth layer and are subconscious for most people; and they adapt to our life conditions, both internal and external.

Internal life conditions are really all-encompassing in terms of our psychological world: everything in our history that shaped our psychology and everything in the present moment that is impacting our internal world that we class as life conditions, together with everything that we are experiencing externally. So it's an all-encompassing word—life conditions—both internal and external. There's a dance going on between those life conditions, internal and external, and our dominant value system. Our dominant value system acts like a framework through which we make sense of reality. So all the sensory input, both internal and external, is interacting with that value system; we're constructing a way of making sense of what's going on, and we're responding according to what's coded into that particular value system.

Below that again, at the sixth level, sits an evolutionary impulse, which seems to, as best we can figure out, apply to everything in this physical reality. Everything seems to be driven by an evolutionary impulse. Everything is evolving, it seems, when we look back in history and see the trajectory and the way things are changing.

**Nyck:** Some people would immediately contest that in terms of consciousness and the idea that consciousness itself evolves. How would you respond to that?

**Steve:** I'd respond carefully to that. I wouldn't make a blanket statement about it, but what I would say is that the manifest things that consciousness is expressed through evolve.

**Nyck:** OK. The manifest things through which consciousness is expressed—that evolves itself.

**Steve:** Yes, that's what I'd say. Whether consciousness itself evolves is a question I can't answer.

**Nyck:** I don't think anybody can. This is the big question, isn't it? One of the big questions.

**Steve:** Yes. What's interesting about looking at this 6 Deep Strata is it offers an avenue for understanding other humans and relating better with other humans. If you go through an analysis using these six layers, you start at the bottom with that evolutionary impulse, which applies to everybody and everything, so you're starting from common ground there. It doesn't matter who a person is, what their attitudes are towards something, or how they behave. They, like you, are driven at some level by that evolutionary impulse. How aware of it they are consciously, and how responsive they are to it, varies, of course.

**Nyck:** And of course, we're not just talking about Darwinian science here. We're talking about a much more complex approach to evolution.

**Steve:** That's right. Darwin was concerned, really, with material evolution.

**Nyck:** What's most efficacious to privilege in terms of evolution over things that weren't useful anymore, so to speak.

**Steve:** Yes. So from that common ground of the evolutionary impulse, we've then got layers five and four, which are our internal and external life conditions and our dominant value system, or value systems to be more correct, because everybody is mostly operating across about three different value systems, and the value systems are one and the same as the layers of consciousness that we always talk about on this show.

For somebody who was in the mainstream Modern Scientific-Industrial world, part of their personality would be operating out of the previous Authoritarian-Agricultural way of being

human, and a part of it would likely be pushing into the Postmodern-Relativistic, Humanistic way of being. That's, again, very much a generalisation, because everybody's different. Every human being on the planet is different; no-one's exactly the same. We need to generalise to give a general understanding of human nature. So there's a dance going on there between life conditions in our value systems.

You can think of the value system like a computer code. It is absolutely coded with particular structures that prompt responses to the environment in different ways, and there are very specific themes. Later in the show, we'll talk about those very specific themes at this deep level which apply to the different layers of consciousness or value systems. There's this dance going on there and so you can have two people who are operating from different value systems who will encounter their life conditions—I'd argue that no two people have the same internal life conditions because our histories are all quite different, but the external life conditions, of course, can be quite similar—and so two people operating from two different value systems might respond in very different ways. For example, somebody might be operating from the third layer of consciousness where the value system is coded to interpret everything as a power struggle—life's a jungle; you've got to fight to survive—and so encountering something externally, the first thought might be: 'What's going on here? How do I need to fight this?' Whereas someone from Layer 4 of consciousness—that particular value system is coded to sacrifice one's self for a higher purpose, so they might be asking: 'Okay, what's the righteous thing to do here in the situation?' Or, 'what's my duty here; what do I need to do according to the higher instructions from whatever higher authority they've latched on to from that particular value set?'

Now, that makes sense, right? It's fairly simple to understand: different value systems, different responses. However, the tricky thing is, you can have people who come from exactly the same layer of consciousness and who are coded according to the same value systems, who respond differently.

**Nyck:** Expressing completely different aspects on the surface, so to speak, when they're in their ways of being.

**Steve:** That's right, and the reason that that happens is because the coded aspect of the value system is really a general theme, and that general theme can be applied in many, many different ways. Of course, we all have free choice to some extent, and again, that's a whole other rabbit hole. We won't go there right now. Maybe another day.

So it's true to say, according to our research-based understanding of human nature, that two people in the same physical life conditions, and with the same operating system in terms of their values and their consciousness, can respond and latch onto different things. Probably one of the most often used examples is in the topic of religion.

When we look at the religious impulse, which is driven out of the fourth layer of consciousness—what we refer to as the Agricultural era way of being human—where society was class-based; it's a communally-driven value system based around self-sacrifice for the greater good; it codes us to look for a higher authority that will guide us on how to live a life

in a righteous way; and the reason behind doing that is so that we can be rewarded later on. Classically, of course, in a religious context, that reward comes in the afterlife. However, you can have—and obviously we do have in the world—many, many different types of religions. So that same driving value system might cause one person to latch onto Christianity and another person to latch onto Islam or Judaism or some other similar structured religion. They're guided by the same value systems—the same themes at that deep fourth level of the 6 Deep Strata—and yet it's going to play out quite differently. So then the mindsets, which are the third layer that emerge from Christianity versus Islam, can, of course, be different and we see that in the everyday world. Then, going up another level, the systems and structures and artefacts that are designed by those mindsets can show up extremely differently. If you've ever been into a Christian church and then gone into a mosque, you'll see it's a very different structure and it has a very different design.

**Nyck:** Even just the feel of it indicates that too; the psychic vibration of those spaces are very different, even though they have the same purpose, as you're saying. They have a purpose to worship the higher authority.

**Steve:** That's right, exactly, and the rituals and things that you see are quite different also.

Getting up to the top of the 6 Deep Strata, at the first level you've got people's behaviours and actions, which are influenced by all those things below, and again, they can show up quite differently. This is one of the more confusing aspects of human nature. Often when we look at the surface level stuff and we see somebody doing something differently, we assume that their values are not the same as ours. But actually at a deep level, they may be very, very similar.

**Nyck:** And that itself is a great learning, but as you've already said, of course, in this First Tier of consciousness that we talk about—the first six layers—it's very hard to identify other layers, or to see them as individual or standalone paradigms in themselves.

**Steve:** It is. They are essentially invisible, and this is part of the confounding aspect. When we're living through those first six layers of consciousness—we're talking, from a species perspective, about everything from Hunter-Gatherer through to the emerging paradigm now, which is this next level communal, Humanistic way of being who we are, which is very ecologically-conscious and very much concerned about the damage that we've done, particularly in the previous fifth Scientific-Industrial way of living, and this is just bubbling up and exploding all over the world at the moment, particularly through the climate issue, of course. As we live through these layers, right up to and including that emerging one—and I say emerging in a generalised context, because the dominant global paradigm right now is shifting from Scientific-Industrial to this emerging Humanistic, eco-conscious kind of way of being human—right up to and including that sixth layer, these core intelligences, value systems, at the fourth level of the deep strata are essentially invisible. We don't see them at

all. What we do see is we see people's behaviours and actions; we see the structures and the artefacts that people make; we get a sense of the systems they might design and live by; we have some understanding of their mindsets; but then really the fourth layer is totally invisible. We just can't see it.

**Nyck:** It's amazing when you think of this in terms of the religious example that you've been giving there. Wouldn't it be wonderful just imagining that a religion could see another religion—an opposing religion, if you will—as having those sort of same core intelligences somewhere and thereby being able to understand each other in a better way than they can.

**Steve:** We see it emerging at the sixth layer. In this current paradigm that we're shifting to at the moment, we see things like churches uniting and we see multifaith organisations where people are getting a sense that, 'okay, maybe we're all actually worshipping the same God; maybe there is but one creator and we're just interpreting that or seeing that creator from different perspectives'. This is a rational-minded understanding that's developing, and what happens when we flip into Second Tier and go to the seventh layer is, it goes beyond just a rational-minded understanding into a direct sensing capacity, which is beyond the rational mind.

**Nyck:** Yes, at which point, I guess, all the labels of churches and the various artefact structures and systems can fall away and give room for whatever else; whatever other expression that expresses exactly that. There are deeper connections, deeper openness and deeper understanding of that.

**Steve:** Yes. These things will be appreciated as the richness of human culture in general—all these different ways that we have of doing what we do—and this is also one of the reasons why this emerging paradigm is predicted to be the most peaceful expression of humanity yet, because we're starting to get that rational-minded understanding that, 'oh, hang on a minute, actually, there's more commonality than we think.'

**Nyck:** Yes, more commonality than we think. I think that's a beautiful way to look at it.

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**Nyck:** We're teasing out some of the drivers; some of the compulsions also that create the tension that allows us to move towards personal growth and evolution in humans; species evolution as well.

**Steve:** Yes, we've been talking about the 6 Deep Strata: six different layers that are influential to human behaviour. Our actions and words are the top layer of that strata, so what we

experience of other people in an everyday sense is the tip of the iceberg. When people are teaching this stuff, they often use an iceberg analogy to show that what's visible is just a really, really small part of the overall structure.

We're just going to talk now through the different layers of consciousness and look at what some of the fundamental themes are that are sitting down there in our subconscious, which then shape our mindsets and the systems and structures that we create, and the way that we behave and speak in the world. Each one of these layers applies both to humanity at a species level, and also to us and to our growth as human beings from being a newborn through to being a mature adult.

Where we end up in this group of layers of consciousness here, which are nested inside each other—like the layers of skin on an onion—where we end up as our dominant operating system or dominant value system really depends on the complexity of our life conditions. So it's not a judgment about somebody's worth; it's actually a reflection of somebody's life conditions and where they've had to adapt to and operate from in order to survive adequately on the planet.

We'll start at Layer 1, which at a species level refers to when we first became human. Often we call that Hunter-Gatherer kind of existence. We don't have a lot of good information about it because we didn't have written language back then and so the records aren't all that good. Plus, we've got all these gaps in our history, which are forever being revised and updated. I'm still reading Freddy Silva's latest book at the moment called *The Missing Lands*, which is absolutely fascinating, about megalithic history and some of these amazing builders that we had way back before the time that our recorded history goes to. There are many, many mysteries and unexplained aspects of human history there, which I'm sure will eventually come to light.

**Nyck:** A good topic for us in the future, for sure. I really love the things that are being revealed. It's also funny you say that because I saw something the other day about the notion that all those great civilisations—those megalithic structures and the pyramids; South America and Easter Island and all of those places—all these incredible structures are the artefacts of civilisations that didn't quite make it—that actually failed—and that we're actually now the one who is going to succeed on the planet. This is just one take that I was looking at the other day.

**Steve:** Absolutely. I have a lot of faith in Freddy Silva's work. I'm a big fan of his and I commend his writing and his videos for anybody who's interested in this sort of stuff. One of the things that he's making really clear in this book, called *The Missing Lands*, is that the oldest structures on the planet that we can find are actually of superior construction quality, and if you look at the civilisations that are built upon these old structures—and he's talking about things like the Egyptian pyramids, the things at places like Lake Titicaca in Peru, and many, many other sites all through the Americas, and really all around the world; this other place that they've found in Turkey, Göbekli teki, places in Indonesia now where they're finding very, very old pyramid structures, which even the Indonesian government is reluctant



to actually admit or accept—they're finding that the oldest structures are actually of the best construction quality in terms of the quality of the stonework, how the stones are fitted together, the size of the stones, some of which we couldn't move today with all the technology we have. So there's something clearly that, in a mainstream sense, we don't understand about our history here, and I always like to just give that rider when I'm going through this evolutionary sequence from Hunter-Gatherer onwards, because things are not necessarily exactly as they seem.

**Nyck:** No.

**Steve:** But at the Hunter-Gatherer level, in Clare Graves's research, he described the main theme here as: "Express self now to satisfy our basic needs of survival", and it's quite simple. He did refer to human existence at this level as being very much similar to an animal-like existence. Obviously, there was something from a point of view of consciousness which distinguished that shift from us being non-human to human—and I'm sure we'll get more detail on that as the years go by—but essentially, at this Layer 1, in the same way that when we're first born, we simply live to survive and really nothing more, we were also doing that at the Hunter-Gatherer level, initially anyway.

**Nyck:** And as you've already alluded to, and right there again, this structure, this model also, can very much apply just to an individual and certain times of their life. As you're saying, that age zero to 18 months or so, that is encompassed by this first layer—the instinctive self—and that drive just to stay alive, basically.

**Steve:** Yes. At an individual level, as a baby, we're basically starting to make sense of living in this reality and trying to figure things out; trying to figure out who these big blurry blobs are that pick us up.

**Nyck:** But they're giving me food and they're touching me occasionally, hopefully in a good way. Hopefully they're loving me and hopefully they're actually nurturing and caring for me. For those who receive that, that's a really good start to your structure; to your way of being, and for those who are not, that's another challenge.

**Steve:** Yes. Interestingly, when Clare Graves was doing his research, he spent about nine years gathering field data from various participants—1,065, in fact, in his field study—and this first layer was missing from his data, essentially because he wasn't asking babies to write papers and questions! He was smart enough to realise that there was something missing and he ended up locating a tribe in the Philippines called the Tasaday Tribe that he recognised were significantly different than most other tribal indigenous people on the planet. He used

them to help him understand this more basic layer. Years later, the Tasaday had their own website called [www.tasaday.com](http://www.tasaday.com).

**Nyck:** Did they? They certainly evolved very quickly. Or did they?

**Steve:** So the second layer refers to our childhood existence at a personal level when we start to walk and talk and we can communicate and we can understand; we start to learn about the customs within the family—what you do, what you don't do—and the structure of the people around us: the father and mother figures, the extended family and those sorts of things. At a species level, that equates to Traditional-Tribal existence where we've gathered together from the Hunter-Gatherer existence, and this being a communally-oriented layer or value system, as opposed to an individually-oriented one, we developed the tribal structure, which scientists tell us typically refers to up to about 150 hundred fifty people.

The theme there that Graves wrote down was: "Sacrifice self to the way of your elders". This involves focusing on our internal world, because the communal systems do that—they're more focused on the internal world than wanting to change the external world; we want to feel safe and secure and tribal interaction allows us to do that. We learn that by following the customs and avoiding the taboos within our tribe or our family, then this will ensure our wellbeing. From a bigger picture sense within a tribal existence, it will lead to the continuation of our lineage; the continuation of our stewardship of our country, which is sacred to us; and it will also ensure that we please our ancestors' spirits and our creator spirits as well. All of these things are structured to help us feel safe and secure living that way: 'We know this is going to be the outcome, because our ancestors did this for many, many years and life cycles before.'

**Nyck:** "Keep the spirits happy and the tribe's nest warm and safe", as one other commentator says about this layer.

**Steve:** That's right, and the really interesting thing about this is because these layers and nested, they're all inside every one of us. Every one of you listening here, whether you're listening to the podcast later or you listening to the show live, this is a part of you. You have that essential survival element that needs to satisfy all of those things that you must satisfy in order to survive. You have this tribal layer also, which is drawing you to want to feel safe and secure within a community of some sort and to have structures like customs and taboos; things that you can do.

**Nyck:** Well, we all do. Many people have rituals don't they? This is the thing, especially in this emerging sixth layer, which is the resonance with this layer—one of the communal layers—this notion of rituals of one sort or the other: having a sacred place in your home; doing the same thing every morning, like doing a yoga practice; doing a meditation every morning. All these are kind of resonances to some degree with this layer, aren't they?

**Steve:** Yes, all layers within us.

The third layer, which develops at an individual level—the development starts early on, but typically it's flowering in the teenage years and it's marked by that individual kind of splitting away, or wanting to split away at least, from the family structure; to learn about who they are as an individual within the world. It's in what I call the pre-rational zones.

All of these three layers that we're discussing now sit within a pre-rational way of operating, so what that means is it's prior to the full development of the rational mind. The rational mind not in charge. What's in charge is my urges, my instincts, my immediate wants. Typically in this layer, as it's expressed, we see an absence of cause-and-effect understanding. It's like, 'I want to eat this lolly now, right before dinnertime, because I feel like it.' We don't have the hardware and the software running to actually moderate our behaviour and stop and think, 'OK, if I eat that now, a) It's going to mess up my blood sugar level, and b) I probably won't eat my dinner.'

**Nyck:** That's a later layer of thinking.

**Steve:** Exactly. Graves characterised the deep theme that sits in our subconscious associated with this third layer as: "Express self now, to hell with others", and he emphasised the need to avoid shame.

**Nyck:** That's interesting. Explain that. I didn't quite understand that one.

**Steve:** Yes, I'll unpack that just a little bit more.

This, being an individually-oriented layer, is focused on the external world as opposed to our internal world, and we're looking to change the world to suit ourselves. The world is perceived at this layer as a jungle and we've got to fight for what we need and want. Everything's a challenge; everything is some kind of power struggle. We are led to want to have power over others—and parents, don't you just know that when the kids get to this point?—and that can be both physical and emotional power; different expressions of power. Graves called the layer Egocentric. Our self-image and our image in the eyes of others is absolutely paramount. It's key to our experience of life and making sense of the world. Therefore, to be shamed or to feel shame is a terrible, terrible fate for somebody at this layer. In extreme cases, it can lead people to suicide because they feel so ashamed.

**Nyck:** And I guess we see this in some cultures, of course, in the East. I'm thinking of Japanese culture, for example, which, at an earlier time—and to some degree now, I'd imagine—express this layer of being.

**Steve:** Absolutely, and of course, Indigenous deaths in custody are a great example of that: the terrible, terrible shame of having this happen to you, and it's so shameful that you feel like you can't continue with life, in extreme cases, of course.

We might take a break there and we'll come back and continue through the layers.

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