



Problem Solving in the Second Tier of Consciousness

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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.

Steve: I just came across a post by a friend of mine who's an anthropologist, Alex Gearin, who's based in China now. I met Alex because he did his PhD on ayahuasca practices in Australia, so being involved in the psychedelic world, our paths crossed. Alex has been teaching at a university in China for two years now at a place called Xiamen. I just want to read this out because it's a wonderful observation of his experience of being in China for two years and what's going on there. It's rare that we get an insight like this from somebody that we know who's actually living there.

"After about two years in Xiamen, it's wild to consider how my eyes fall differently on China now. Yes the middle kingdom has become capitalism on steroids. Yes narcissus's pond of materialism and consumerism has allured the masses. Yes the talented obsession with selfies reigns supreme. Yes the intense encounter with the 'modern' is refracted into the soul's chamber of mirrors. Yes other cameras circle heaven and hell for reasons far more concerning than selfies. Yes peasant families of recent generations are now driving Teslas and eating lobster. Yes the values of sacrifice and pride are pumping the economy towards a radically new way of life. This is all in line with some of my initial expectations. But I didn't expect to see thriving youth cultures with potent visions that fly beyond the modern spectacle, or diverse local hubs experimenting in cosmopolitan arts, music and literature, or people playing with consciousness in colorful new ways, or Taoists, Buddhists, and shamans spilling onto the streets, or undergraduate students well-versed in the critical thinking of Foucault, Graeber, and others. Whatever the experiments with modern living here will soon become, it's going to be different than I expect. That we can expect."

That's beautiful. Thank you so much, Alex. What a wonderful insight. Very, very cool.

Nyck: Wow, that's fantastic, and it really goes to complexity. I mean, it's very easy to say 'China is this way, the US is that way, Australia is this', and it's just not the case. They're full of

individuals and collectives which are demonstrating different elements and different layers of consciousness; different complexities, different ways of seeing everything.

Steve: That's right. That simplistic judging often loses the complexity and the richness within different cultures. You can go to any country in the world and find an amazing range of values and behaviours and perspectives.

We're going to dive in a Second Tier now, and before we start to talk about Layer 7's way of addressing problem solving, I want to talk about some transitional things. We spoke about the nature of First Tier and the things that shape how we solve problems, including compulsions and fears and those sorts of things. These are the very things that start to come to our attention during the transition phase as we're growing into Second Tier out of Layer 6; things like becoming aware of the fears that drive us, and perhaps giving thanks for the way those fears have served us well in getting us to where we are now because they have served a very constructive purpose through our growth; also noticing and addressing our compulsive behaviours. We typically get lost in connecting and talking because it feels so good in Layer 6—it is indeed one of the compulsions of Layer 6—and it can be to the detriment of constructive action, which is what I was getting at before. We're starting to notice those things and starting to notice how, when we get carried away by some compulsion, that we neglect other aspects of life, and being more attentive to the problems that might arise as a result of that.

Because this transition from Layer 6 into Layer 7 in the Second Tier is actually the biggest and arguably the most difficult transition that any of us have ever been through—and it certainly was that for me—then we find we are subject to an avalanche of problems. So we're pressured, I guess, by the complexity and by the degree of the problems to start to notice and address these things that I'm talking about.

In relation to the rejection of other value systems, we are becoming more accepting—more compassionate towards people that we previously would have judged as being wrong, and perhaps rejected as being not relevant—and expanding our heart field to allow that compassion to play out; also, noticing when we feel that rejection and considering that we may be reacting to what is simply a different set of values in another person rather than something that's ultimately incorrect or wrong.

If you're in transition, those things may touch you in some way and be relevant, and if you haven't started that journey of transition into Second Tier yet, then these are the sorts of things that are worth contemplating and meditating on.

Nyck: Yes, and appropriately a couple of texts here. This one as just come in: "Dr. Graves gave an ethical warning when using Spiral Dynamics", which is not its term, but we'll stay with that, "that people have a right to be who they are. Instead of using it [the system, the model] to change them, we should use the model to approach them as they are."

Steve: That's exactly right, and that speaks to what I just mentioned, right there. Of course Graves, from his field research and lots and lots of analysis, understood that what ultimately changes people is their life conditions and that they adapt naturally to changes in their life conditions. As anybody who works in the area of change would no doubt realise, you cannot urge a person to change or pressure them to change. If they do change as a result of pressure, it's not sustainable change. It's just a convenient and temporary adaptation to get away from the pressure, basically.

Nyck: Good point, and of course, that is from a lovely document that you found the other day from Clare W. Graves from 1981, talking about this layer—the first layer, the first 'being' level and the Second Tier in this model (https://www.clarewgraves.com/articles_content/1981_handout/1981_summary.pdf). Talking about solving problems, he writes: "Thinking exists in different settings and knowers think in different ways thus thinking is in terms of several legitimate interpretations and several sets of values are legitimate, depending on the thinker and his or her positions of and for existence", so basically employing different approaches to a particular problem from all the layers embedded in, or, as we often say, nested within each other; there are answers in all the different layers, still. It's not that one supersedes the other completely and demonises or discards it, 'baby out with the bathwater' kind of thing. They are always going to be appropriate at certain times as certain responses to certain challenges.

Steve: That's exactly right, and that's a factor of these layers of consciousness and layers of value systems that we talk about being nested inside each other. They don't go away; they are simply dominant at different times, depending on what life conditions call upon. We all have all of these previous systems nested inside ourselves and we can all, at various times, shift and change quite dynamically to operate from different systems.

Some of the things that drop away as we move into Second Tier are, first and foremost, fear as a motivator. It doesn't mean we stop feeling fear; what it means is we still feel fear, but it's just not a major motivator anymore, and we certainly don't feel it anywhere near as often as we used to when we were in First Tier. Ultimately, when it comes to acting, it's not our driver. We also free ourselves of compulsions. This is not a thing that happens magically, as a result of a magic wand waving. I wish it was.

Nyck: I can attest to that.

Steve: It's something that we have to grow through over time, so you might find parts of yourself in Second Tier and parts of yourself still in First Tier. That's a very, very normal thing.

Nyck: And on compulsions: for myself, wherever I am exactly, I'm so intensely aware these days of my residual compulsions, and it's kind of humorous in a way, which I think is not a bad approach. It's better, rather than taking it seriously and beating oneself up about them,

to look at them and think, 'I've still got these compulsions and they probably don't serve me, and let's see how we can transition out of these effectively as time goes on.' It seems to be a reasonable approach to me.

Steve: That's right. We all still have work to do and it's something that happens over time, so be compassionate to yourself as well in this process and understand that it doesn't happen overnight.

What can happen overnight sometimes is the tipping point where your dominant system moves from being Layer 6 to Layer 7. When I look back to my experience of that, it did happen quite quickly, and interestingly, it happened at a time immediately after I obtained the *Spiral Dynamics* book and read about it. So as it was happening, I kind of thought, 'shit, this is what I read in that book', and when that tipping point happened, I still had a lot of work to do. I still had fears, I still had compulsions, and still had rejection happening, and those sorts of things, but I had tipped over the divide between Layer 6 and Layer 7. Ultimately, I had my roots down in Layer 7 and could easily fall back on that, but I would still notice a tendency to slip backwards into 6 at various times and I think this is quite a common experience.

Nyck: And of course, paradoxically, it's interesting because the fact that you became aware as you received the *Spiral Dynamics* book is a synchronicity, which is an aspect of Second Tier consciousness itself.

Steve: Well, yes, and that, I think, was something that was voiced by Jung in his later years. Jung's psychology was very much Layer 6 psychology, however, he was certainly pushing into Second Tier when he started to move into that area of noticing synchronicity and living life according to it; very much so.

Another synchronistic thing that happened to me at that time when I went through the transition was that somebody gifted me the book *Shamanism* by Mircea Eliade, which is an absolute classic for anybody who is an academic studying shamanism. I was up to the chapter about initiatory sickness when I got particularly sick and went into hospital, and that sickness was the tipping-point factor for me. Very interesting; rather synchronistic.

Nyck: Interesting text here regarding what we were just talking about there: "How do you contact the layers of consciousness that are nested previously and shift them to operate from different systems? And where do you start to shift compulsions?"

Steve: First and foremost, it's not a logical process. It's not a conscious process; it's not something that we do to ourselves. It's an adaptation in the same way that that fish that crawled out of the water eventually grew legs. It didn't sit there on the beach one day and say, 'how can I figure out how to turn these fins into legs? What do I need to do? I need to

get in touch with my fins and get them to start growing toes.' It's a natural process of adaptation. It happens over time and the best thing that we can do is to look at our life conditions, to look at the problems we're facing in life and to actively address those problems, because by meeting those problems where they are, then we will naturally assist ourselves to transition to a higher level of complexity.

Nyck: In my relatively brief experience, you could say, I think the other aspects of other layers of consciousness that are nested sort of arise naturally when needed somehow in response to life conditions; in response to whatever challenges perhaps are in front of you. They become present in a way.

Steve: Yes, and it's good to be very curious. Curiosity is an amazing tool when it comes to personal growth: just to notice, when you do catch yourself perhaps slipping down the spiral and operating from a more rigid, raw or reactive value system, to just go, 'well, isn't that interesting?'.

Nyck: 'Rigid, raw or reactive'. There's the three r's that you can be conscious of.

Steve: That's it, yes.

One of the other things that falls away as we move in a Second Tier is rejection of other values, so we find ourselves bumping into people who are clearly thinking and acting differently according to some different moral code than we are, and rather than assuming that they're wrong and we need to fix them, just to notice any rejection within ourselves. As we move in the Second Tier, we will notice the absence of that rejection and that feels very clean in an emotional way, I think.

Nyck: It's very freeing, but it's not easy. It's definitely an edge that we're playing because clearly our history, in my opinion, for most of us in First World countries, there is a strong tendency to reject that which we don't like, and as you move forward, that rejection becomes unpalatable, somehow. It's not very useful; it doesn't make you feel any better to go: 'Trump is an idiot', et cetera, et cetera. It can make you feel better momentarily, but it doesn't actually do the job; doesn't actually get anywhere, having that response. But it is tricky, in a sense, to detach that much because then you kind of feel—I'm talking about myself, here—I can feel sometimes too detached from the situation. But actually it's a relaxing position because then I can look at a much bigger frame—a much bigger picture—much easier, without those emotional hooks that catch us so easily.

Steve: Yes, and it comes back to what you're needing in the moment to feel good, really. If you're being more driven by Layer 6 values, then the compulsion there is around deep connection with other people, and if you're still feeling that, it's just an indication that that's

still a Layer 6 dynamic that's relatively strong for you perhaps, at times. Notice how that fluctuates as well.

Really, a big part of navigating through Layer 6 and transitioning into 7 is very much about getting in contact with yourself—that deep connection with yourself—as well. I guess that's a paradoxical aspect of Layer 6, because it's very much a 'change self' system, but we also have this strong driver to connect deeply with others. I guess it's almost breaking down the barrier between self and other, and by helping someone else connect deeply with themselves, then we achieve the same for ourselves.

Nyck: I guess that Layer 6, as the last layer in the First Tier as identified by Graves's research, is a transitional layer, so to speak, it does encompass that paradox of going in, but also wanting to change the outside from within. There's complexity there.

Steve: Yes, and there's a growing urge to want to do that as we move through 6; and also the fear grows as well. It's interesting, as with any complex system, before any radical change, you'll often get a spike in the opposite direction, so with fear dropping away radically in the movement to Second Tier, we can expect that just before that we'll get a big spike in fear; our fears will increase. You can see that playing out on the world stage right now, particularly around environmental issues.

Nyck: And you can see a lot of people because—and we're generalising here; we've always owned that—but in First World countries, I think a lot of people now, in my experience around here, for example, are really challenging that fear response in themselves in that transition period: 'It's not really something to be afraid again and again and again. Even though conditions are certainly saying to me that I should be scared, it's not useful anymore; it doesn't actually do the job.'

Steve: Yes, and that's quite likely a symptom of getting over that tipping point with a bit of a landing in Layer 7, Second Tier, but we ought to expect and understand that this change comes through tension, so in the transition from Layer 6 to Layer 7, we need to have sufficient tension created within ourselves to make everything pop and reconfigure. So it's not something that we look forward to, but it's an inevitable dynamic in this change process.

Nyck: Yes, and thanks for your texts. Peter says: "Beautiful to hear you talk so compassionately about the challenges of transition. It can be a rollercoaster. Thanks, guys", and thanks for listening too. We'll take a break here.

Nyck: We're finishing up our discussion today about problem solving.

Steve: We are and we're talking about a Second Tier problem solving now.

I came across a document from 1981 when Clare Graves was still around doing his thing. I found it on www.clarewgraves.com and there's a bunch of stuff on there to explore, and obviously some things there I haven't even discovered yet. I'm in the process of reviewing and writing a forward for a book about his work, called *The Change Code*. It's a result of a lovely lady from Portland, Oregon, named Monica Bourgeau, who reached out to me and asked me to support her. She's writing that book and it's my great pleasure to be helping her finalise it and write the forward. I'll announce when that book's available. It hasn't gone to be published yet.

Nyck: And we'll post this document also.

Steve: Yes, I'll post this document. It's a summary statement called *The Emergent Cyclical Double-Helix Model of the Adult Human Biopsychosocial Systems*, which is what Graves called his model

(https://www.clarewgraves.com/articles_content/1981_handout/1981_summary.pdf).

Nyck: You won't be tested on that.

Steve: No. He did apologise when he announced the name, too.

Nyck: Biopsychosocial systems. Good word, actually.

Steve: Absolutely, and of course, that means that it takes account of our biology, psychology, our social behaviours, and the systems that we construct in the world.

This is a short handout which was prepared by Christopher Cowan for a presentation that Dr. Graves gave in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1981. Christopher Cowan, of course, is one of the authors of the *Spiral Dynamics* book; he did that with Don Beck.

I am going to read the description that Graves gave in the handout of Layer 7, which is the first layer in the Second Tier, and really the only layer in the Second Tier that he had any solid data on. He got bits and pieces of Layer 8, but really not enough to make too many conclusions about it. He's saying that: "This system is triggered by the second set of human survival problems. These are the problems of the threat to organismic life produced by the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th existential ways [or Layers in our terminology]." So what he's saying is that humanity, and simply the way that we've lived and behaved through the First Tier, has really created this complex set of problems which is actually driving our transition to Second

Tier so we can develop the extraordinary capacity that we need to develop to be able to solve the problems that we're facing in the world today.

He goes on to talk about his opinion of how certain brain cells are activated as part of this process. He did a bit of cross-referencing with some biologist friends of his when he was doing the research, and he says: "This tremendous increase in conceptual space markedly changes the thinking of the human when operating at this level. Fear, but not anxiety practically disappears", so that's interesting. "Fear practically disappears, but not anxiety. Compulsiveness is gone [full stop]. A person has ambition but is not ambitious. He or she has anxieties, worries and concerns, but they are not bothersome to the person. No need is felt to overcome them because they do not intrude. He or she thinks of how to deal with them so as to feel comfortable, but does not feel compelled to master them. Anger or even hostility is present, but it is intellectually used rather than emotionally driven." That's a very interesting comment too. Whereas in First Tier, anger is something that carries us away, and often we will regret later our expression of anger, we have come to a sufficient balance in Second Tier where we can let it out when we need to, but very surgically in order to deal with a particular social interaction.

Nyck: And there's certainly been talk about that in the New Age world; about healthy anger and non-projected anger, which I guess is the first sort of intimations of that move towards this feeling; this approach towards anger.

Steve: Yes, he's talking about using it intellectually to meet someone where they're at in order to constructively progress an interaction, rather than allowing yourself to be emotionally driven by anger. "Concern is felt, but solutions do not have to be." I'm not sure exactly what he meant by that. I think, again, he's pointing to the lack of compulsion. So whereas, previously, we might feel compulsive drivers to impose solutions, when we come across a problem, we'll feel the concern, but we won't feel that we have to actually provide a solution.

Nyck: Well, in the next sentence he there, he says: "Care for others is displayed, but one does not feel compelled to care or be cared for." That's really interesting. When I read that one, I thought this is really a bit of a transition that's happened for me. I know that I can feel that in myself so I can understand that one very much.

Steve: Yes, and I think what he's saying is that we feel the concern and compassion, but we don't feel compelled to act on it, necessarily.

Nyck: But you may. You may be in the moment of something and you may be called to and know that that is what you're to be present for.

Steve: Yes, it's appropriate, exactly.

"Things done well or on time are preferred, but things not done well or not on time don't mean the end of the world."

Nyck: Oh what a relief.

Steve: Yes, very accepting and easy to get along with in that respect.

"Knowledge exists in different settings and knowers think in different ways. Thus, thinking is in terms of several legitimate interpretations and several sets of values are legitimate ...", and he's talking about the whole set of First and Second Tier values up to 7, "... depending on the thinker and his/her positions and for existence", or in other words, life conditions. So everything is contextual, in other words.

"The world is seen kaleidoscopically with different views demanding different attention. Thinking is in terms of the systemic whole and thought is about the different wholes in different ways." So, we're seeing the world in terms of these layers of value systems, and each one is seen as a system and we're looking at a whole system of systems. That's when he talking about in terms of "different wholes"; he's talking about the different systems within the entire array of systems.

"Thought strives to ascertain which way of thinking or which combination of ways fits the present set of conditions", in other words, which values or which combination of different values are appropriate to apply in this circumstance. We become like a shapeshifter and we can move freely up and down this spiralling array of different value systems and deploy whichever value systems we feel are most appropriate at the time.

"Thinking is in terms of what's best for the survival of life, my life, their lives and all life, but not compulsively; and what is best for me or thee does not have to be best for she or them. My way does not have to be yours, nor yours mine, yet I have very strong convictions about what is my way, but never such about yours."

Nyck: That's a big one.

Steve: Yes, we allow people the freedom to be who they are.

"They think in terms of authority being centered in the person in terms of his/her capacity to act in this or that situation." Interesting that, here in 1981, he was adapting his pronouns there.

Nyck: Yes. Very obvious that early, which is important to be conscious of.

Steve: Very progressive.

"[Authority] is not derived from age, status, blood, etc. It is situational. It must be earned and it must be given over to the superior competence of another. Thinks in terms of competence, not trappings"; and: "Thought is of being there to help and helping if help is desired, but not helping to straighten out, to shape up, to gain power or control over other people. Sees life in terms of life continuing hereafter, not in terms of my life continuing in a hereafter."

Nyck: "In *a* hereafter". I think that's where he sees life in terms of life continuing hereafter in some way, not in terms of my life continuing in *a* hereafter. It's a very big move, actually, psychologically.

Steve: Yes, not just my life. It's not self-centred in that way.

"Accepts and lives with the facts of differences and that one is relating to people who are different. Shows readiness to live with differences." There's that acceptance of different value systems. "Accepts that life is an up-and-down journey from problem to solution, with no mean point ever to be found", so we're always in dynamic motion on these journeys of being up and down and solving problems and facing new problems.

Nyck: I think many of us are seeing that when we hear our politicians go 'blah, blah, blah, here is the solution.' Many of us, I think, are going like, 'well, no, there is no "one solution."' People are immediately suspicious of when someone claims there's a solution to something.

Steve: That's right, and we're seeing a lot of that being wheeled out at the moment with the regressive values, slipping back down the spiral where people say, 'no, this is it, this is the way it is, it's not going to change, just accept it, blah, blah, blah.'

"Spawns facilitative management, management wherein the managed and the managing change according to the fit between problems and competencies to deal with the problems". In other words, whoever is most competent in a particular circumstance ought to be managing that particular problem-solving process. This is interesting because I saw this in the military, going back decades to that late 80s really, where there were practices which you wouldn't find in other parts of the military—and I'm talking about special forces like the SAS—where despite the rank structure within a small group, when they were operating, the whole group would defer to whoever had the competency to solve a particular problem, so it wouldn't necessarily be the most senior person doing that, and that's exactly what he's saying here is a Second Tier characteristic.

"In this system, management is based on the assumption that people have unequal competencies and capacities and unequal needs. Assumes the person will produce if one organizes so the competencies are expressed to fulfill the needs. Integrate them with organizational needs is its dictum." Again, a confluence of personal needs, group needs, and organisational needs, so they all flow in the one direction.

Nyck: Reminds me of a piece, and I won't go into depth now, from Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great American writer, which is called *The Talent is the Call* and identifies exactly this notion that each individual has a unique talent, and to identify that in a given structural system is the key to a person actually being who they are and continuing the best that they can contribute.

Steve: Yes. So this is the way out of the other side of the collapse of hierarchies that happens in Layer 6 where we reduce hierarchy to the point where no one's in charge, and of course that creates chaos, ultimately. The way out of that is this shifting, dynamic leadership process where we recognise who has the competency and allow them to lead in a particular circumstance.

"In this system, the means to the end or organizational goals are restructured to fit the individual characteristics of the organizational member rather than attempts to restructure the person to fit organizational needs. The manager's role is to rework the organization so that its goals are achieved utilizing people as they are, not as someone wishes them to be or perceives they should be."

Nyck: Beautiful.

Steve: How beautiful is that? That's a wonderful summary from the man himself, Clare W. Graves from 1981, of the problem-solving strategies of Layer 7, the first layer in the Second Tier.

Nyck: We're out of time. We'll have to say goodbye right now. All those pieces will be posted on our Twitter account and on our Facebook page for you to check out.

Steve: Thanks so much for listening. It's been a pleasure.

Nyck: We'll be back next week.

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