



136. Steve McDonald interviewed by Jacob Gossel of Awake Aware Alive Part 1

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Jacob: I'm curious what you've been busy with lately. I know you've mentioned a couple of times when I've contacted you that you've been pretty busy. I know there's just a lot going on in the world right now, so I'm curious what kind of stuff you've been up to.

Steve: Yes, there sure is. I've taken a couple of breaks from podcasting this year, just because I've had other stuff going on, and some of it's been for my own personal healing work as well. So I'm trying to get back into a regular podcasting routine. I'm also just noting what's going on in the world and if I really feel like there's a strong message that seems to need to go out, I'm getting an episode out whenever I can.

So there's been that. I've been doing a lot of backend work. I've just done a little bit more of an upgrade on the *Future Sense* website and a lot of management stuff around the foundation that I run. I think I mentioned before in podcasts, I've got a charitable foundation that I run as the Executive Director, so part of my time is spent managing that; and particularly at the moment with COVID and the whole economic disruption thing, it's required a little bit more attention than usual.

I'm working on a documentary film with Mitch Schultz. Mitch, of course, was the Director of *DMT: The Spirit Molecule*, and has been involved in a few other great documentaries as well. Mitch and I are in the early stages of developing a documentary series about the Graves model and about human history and where we are at the moment in the change process and where we're headed in the near future, particularly with the leap into Second Tier consciousness. We've got a small team that we're working with. Mitch and Nevi, our editor, are based in Austin, Texas, and we're working with Martin Stebbing, who's a graphics guy based in Copenhagen. So we're on Zoom a lot talking about the work.

Like I said, it's very early stage. We're working on a sort of a trailer/teaser at the moment, which is just going to give us a bit of a visual framework to then start working on a feature-length piece, which is going to be the first release, so that that is planned to be an hour long, looking at a condensed version of human evolution from a Graves research-based perspective and poking into the future, looking at this unfolding that's going on right at the moment, and then the big shift into the Second Tier, which I'm expecting to happen on a

global scale within the next 15 to 20 years. So there's a lot of work to be done there. It's probably going to be another year or two before we release anything much, but that's part of what I'm working on.

Also, my partner and I are working on a plant medicine project. I rediscovered my indigenous family roots within the last couple of years. They've been lost since my grandmother was separated from her mother soon after birth back in 1909, so all of that time we'd lost contact with our indigenous arm of the family, and we've just reconnected recently. I'm just about to make my third adventure up to visit them again up in Central Queensland. We've been guided to do some plant medicine work with local plants on our country up there—Goreng Goreng country, it's called.

My partner, Julia, is quite a plant medicine expert. She lectured for eight years for the Australian Bushflower Essences organisation run by Ian White, and she's quite accustomed with the processes of making plant medicines from native flowers. We're going to head up there, and hopefully in the next couple of weeks, we're going to make our first medicine from Goreng Goreng country up there, so we're looking forward to that. So that's the headlines of what I'm working on, and it's keeping me pretty busy at the moment.

Jacob: That sounds cool. Are those plant medicines psychedelic then, or something different?

Steve: Not these ones. The native ones that we're working on are not psychoactive in a general sense. Some of them have some mild psycho activity, but certainly not psychedelic, no. So it's a more conventional type of medicine. When I say conventional, it's not really conventional at all because, you know, it's a very spiritually derived essence—kind of homoeopathic in a way—but it's certainly not in a psychedelic category, no.

Jacob: So are those indigenous plant medicine concoctions or is it more of her own spin on things?

Steve: It's based on the work of an Australian guy called Ian White who came from quite a lineage of plant medicine makers and it's working with Australian native flowers. As far as I know, it's not come from a very clear indigenous lineage, but it's working with flowers that were used as medicines for sure by our Indigenous Aboriginals here in Australia. What happened with this particular one that we're going to start working on is I had a dream earlier in the year, soon after I came back from overseas and soon after the whole COVID thing was really going down globally. In the dream, I was up on my traditional country up there—Goreng Goreng country—and my ancestors came to me and took me to a place and showed me these daisies, and they told me that these are medicines. I woke up out of the dream and I thought, 'holy hell, that was very interesting'. I jumped on the web to look at daisy medicine of what it's used for, and one of the things that can be used for is an antiviral, which seems very appropriate at the moment. So on my second trip up to connect with the

family up there earlier this year, my partner Julia and I went walking in a place called Cania Gorge, which is in the western part of the country there, and I found the daisies that I had to dream about. We went back and looked them up, and sure enough, it's called an Australian native daisy. So this time we're going back up to make some medicine from it, and I've been working with some of my relatives up there who are quite interested in developing further natural medicines from the country up there, so it may well be—well, without a doubt—acknowledged as an indigenous medicine once we've made it and in my indigenous relatives start working with it, yes.

Jacob: Perfect.

There's so many different things that I've thought about wanting to talk to you about since the last time I talked to you, so I'm trying to, like, figure out what the best place is to start, but I'm thinking that I want to mention specifically—I know you mentioned the name *Future Sense*, but I want to let people know right away so they don't have to wait to get to the end of the podcast, that you have an awesome show called *Future Sense* and they should definitely check it out. The format has seemed to change quite a bit. It used to be a weekly show with co-host Nyck Jeanes; now it's just you. It seems to be a bit more, I would say, intentional, maybe.

Steve: Yes. As you say, its www.futuresense.it on the web if people want to go check it out. It started back in late 2017 as a local radio show here on BayFM in Byron Bay, and my colleague Nyck Jeanes has been a radio announcer there for years. So it was really him and I just having a chat about possibilities that gave birth to the show. Then it became a weekly radio show for a couple of years, and as a weekly radio show, we had to fill two hours, so there was a lot of chit chat and interruptions and songs and all those sorts of things like you get on the radio, and for that reason, I guess it wasn't as intentional as it has become now. Then, because of the COVID shut down, the radio studios closed for a while and we couldn't record, so we started recording from my place in a similar kind of format, although it wasn't a radio show so it became a little bit more focused. Then I got guided to go solo with it over the last few months and make it fairly short and concise, so recently I've just been putting out 15 or 20 minute, or 30 minute episodes as opposed to two hours. I'm probably not going to get back to weekly episodes any time soon, but I'll certainly be putting episodes out as often as I can manage in between all the other things that I'm doing.

Jacob: Yes, well, it feels to me like it's a little more bang for your buck, I would say. I mean, I really enjoyed the loose format and the conversational style. It's just fun to listen to you guys talk for me personally, but I think it seems a little bit more purposeful now and more, I guess, very relevant to what's happening right now and sort of like just helping people understand what's going on versus being a little more conversational.

Steve: Yes, thanks. That's good feedback, and that's certainly my intention, is just to make it as useful as possible and, as you say, more bang for your buck kind of thing.

Jacob: I know you've, in many of your own episodes—in your show and when you've been on my show—you've gone over the Graves model a million times, so I don't want to take up too much time with that, but maybe you could just give the quick elevator pitch just for anybody who may be tuning into this for the first time, just to give a little context for where we head.

Steve: Sure. Incidentally, I just put up a resources page on www.futuresense.it (www.futuresense.it/resources/). There's a quick guide to the layers on there and I'm going to keep adding stuff as I get time to that resources page.

The Graves model came from a body of research that began in the early 1950s and went on for about 10 years or thereabouts. Clare Graves was a professor of psychology in upstate New York. He involved a bit over 1000 people—1,065 to be exact—in his field study, and he did all sorts of research in terms of understanding their worldview and their values and their behaviours. He utilised many different kinds of data collection methods including observation, self-reporting, constructed social scenarios, where he would observe people's behaviour, those sorts of things, and then all of the data that he gathered, he gave to a group of seven peers. Without wanting to try and shape their interpretation of the data, he just said, 'have a look at all of this and see what patterns you can find in it', and what came out of that was absolute gold, in my opinion; a very, very insightful model which still stands out in today's world as a unique insight into human nature.

There are three main elements to it. One is that he realised this connection between the complexity of our life conditions and the development or evolution of human consciousness. So human consciousness is quite plastic and adaptive, and depending upon the challenges that we're faced with in everyday life, our consciousness will adapt to operate at certain levels of complexity. He mapped those levels of complexity out as eight 'levels', he called them at the time. I'm calling them 'layers' these days because he did explain that they're not free-standing versions of consciousness; they're all nested inside each other. So you've got the most simple basic survival consciousness at the core, and then over the top of that is another layer and another layer and another layer. He mapped eight of those, and those eight layers, when you look back at the evolution of our species, conform to Hunter-Gatherer behaviour (Layer 1), Traditional-Tribal behaviour (Layer 2), Martial or warlike behaviour (Layer 3), Agricultural-era behaviour (Layer 4), Scientific-Industrial era behaviour (Layer 5), and then, interestingly, they go three steps into what is essentially the future when you're talking about the globally dominant consciousness at the moment.

The next one after the Scientific-Industrial is what he called Relativistic, which is often called Postmodern. It's a very human-centric—anthropocentric, you might say—consciousness that's interpreting everything on the basis of human experience: how does it feel to experience this?; how are we connected to nature? It's very network-centric and it's what is unfolding right now around the world as the Scientific-Industrial structures crumble.

The next thing that we're seeing rushing into the space is this relativistic mindset—very humanistic mindset—saying 'we've lost our humanity; we've got to return to considering the human experience of looking after people rather than just thinking about money, and we have to network together, we have to collaborate, cooperate'. These layers that Graves identified swing between a focus on individuality and a focus on community. So we've been through a very individual era with the Scientific-Industrial Layer 5, and now we're moving back to the communal focus in Layer 6.

Beyond Layer 6, Graves found that there was this, what he called a Momentous Leap between 6 and 7, where the coping capacity of a human just went through the roof; it was literally a kind of quantum leap in our capacity to solve problems and make sense of reality. He identified a very small number of people back in the 50s and 60s who had made that leap and so he gathered a reasonable amount of data on it. How many people there are out in the world right now who are operating at that seventh level, which is the first step into the Second Tier—what he called the Second Tier of Consciousness—I'm not sure, but it's an integrative way of understanding reality where for the first time, it seems the left and right hemispheres of our brain are working in unison.

The first six stages alternate between individuality and community, which is also a reflection of the left-brain and right-brain focus, and so at Layer 7 we stop flipping between those two things and all of a sudden we can bring them all together and work together with those two things, with left-brain and right-brain concepts. That's part of why we've got this amazing extended capacity in Layer 7 and beyond.

Then, Layer 8—he only found six people who exhibited some evidence of that; didn't gather enough data to really say much more than, 'well, it looks like it's got a kind of community focus, although it's still integrated. It seems very spiritual', he said, 'and it's very much based around intuition.' What we've put together since Graves passed away is that it seems like this Layer 8 is going to be the layer that brings the next real global stability for us. We don't have a timeframe on that, but if I had to guess, I'd say 20-plus years from now, probably—thereabouts anyway.

So that was the second key thing that came out of his work, was this layered consciousness pattern, the first being the adaptive relationship with complexity of our life conditions. Then, the third thing that came out of his work was an understanding of how the change process in between those layers plays out—what the trajectory looks like—and it's very, very similar to Joseph Campbell's *Hero's Journey*.

It's kind of like a process of feeling like something needs to change, everything's falling apart, going through a chaotic alchemist's furnace-type experience where we really feel the pressure, and that pressure causes us to rewire our brains and change our body chemistry and those sorts of things; a big breakthrough on the back end of that, and then an integration phase where we sort of greet the world with renewed energy and we're all enthusiastic again, and we're seeing the world differently and we want to become stable and we come back to a place of new stability that's more capable, which represents a more complex layer of those layers of consciousness. So that's kind of like a nutshell explanation.

Jacob: That's great. So it seems like, for people who are maybe further along in that development, it's been pretty obvious that there have been breakdowns of the Layer 5 structures for quite some time now, but it seems like right now there's very acute signs of this happening with the election stuff in the US, and COVID, and all the polarisation and all of this stuff going on. How do you feel about where we're at in that process of the transition from the Layer 5 dominance into this Layer 6?

Steve: What I think is that Layer 6 is, in some ways, not going to be dominant in the way that Layer 5 was. Layer 5 was very individually-oriented and Layer 6 is very communally-oriented, so we shouldn't expect it to show up in the same way. In some respects, it's already got a pretty strong hold on the world, though, because it's network-centric and you look at the impact that networks are having on the world right now. Layer 6's technology has certainly changed the world so much that Layer 5 thinking really can't keep up with that; it can't manage it. If we look at all the things that are failing right now, they're pretty much all the things that were designed before the Internet came into existence. The Internet has made the world so much more connected and so much more complex that these old systems just can't cope with it.

I'm constantly laughing at the Australian government systems here in Australia when they try and introduce computer systems into these old government departments that were designed before the Internet existed and it's just ridiculous, the basic mistakes that they're making. It's a reason why our current forms of government just aren't going to survive this transition, and I guess the US election is front and centre—a global stage show of those failures right now and right before our eyes.

In terms of time, what it looks to me is going to happen is that we're really going to just go through almost like a rolling change process right through the Layer 6 influence. Layer 6 is certainly creating a foundation for us to leap off and make this tremendous Momentous Leap that Graves mentioned, into Second Tier at Layer 7, but I think it's going to be hard to pick where Layer 6 peaks and finishes, and where Layer 7 really kicks in. I don't think it's going to be, certainly not as clear cut as things like the Scientific-Industrial revolutions, which were very clear markers that showed, okay, these are real turning points for that shift between the Agricultural Layer 4 era and Layer 5. I think it's going to be harder to spot that.

When you look at the length of time that each one of these layers of consciousness has been dominant on the planet, they get shorter and shorter and shorter on a kind of a reverse logarithmic scale, I guess. We can see, looking backwards, that the dominance of the Scientific-Industrial era was maybe three hundred years, roughly. The Agricultural era was dominant for many thousands of years, and so we should expect no more than a decade or two, really, for Layer 6. Then we're going to be into Second Tier. I can see that there's a tipping point coming around 2032. There are many, many different sources and techniques that are indicating 2032 as a tipping point and I suspect that will be the tipping point for Second Tier influence on the planet, with a form of stability coming in the late 2030s, probably.

So right now—between now and 2032—I think it's going to be a very confusing and chaotic time. Because of the nature of Layer 6, we shouldn't expect things to get too organised. Layer 6 is very focused on the process of communication, but it tends to often lose sight of concrete outcomes and gets lost in just wanting to keep communicating and talking about things. I guess it's kind of like going into a network where it's a flat network and there's no clear delineation of what's important except for the human bond. The key driver of Layer 6 is deep human connection and so Layer 6 is not going to be distracted or attracted by hard evidence in an old scientific method. It's going to be attracted and distracted by human relationships. Where things feel the best, where the bonds are the deepest, that's where the Layer 6 attention is going to go. So that's going to be very healing for the planet. When you look at the damage that's been done over the last hundreds and thousands of years in terms of conflict between peoples, Layer 6 is bringing tremendous peace and healing to that process, and it's solving a whole bunch of other problems by shifting resources around, but it's not going to bring stable global structures. They're going to come after the Second Tier influence really kicks in.

Jacob: So, how does that factor in the extreme polarisation? I mean, some of it maybe comes from the fact that there are plenty of people still in, you know, 5-dominant and some in 6, and they're seeing the world completely different, but also it seems like even amongst people who might all be more in a 6-dominant space are still sort of getting sucked into these more tribalised—or they're not able to entertain somebody else's perspective. I think I've maybe heard—even you on *Future Sense* mentioned before—that maybe one of the shadow aspects of Layer 6 is accepting everybody except for some specific group; for the people who aren't accepting, or whatever that might be. Maybe you could expand on that a little bit.

Steve: Sure. I often make a joke about it and say, 'we're all really loving people here; we treat people right—not like those guys over there'. So there's this kind of contradiction in the behaviour sometimes, where if you get a group of people together who are all Layer 6, it is going to be beautiful—peaceful and loving and all that kind of thing—but as soon as they bump into another layer of consciousness, it's like, 'ah, here they come'.

Graves' found in his research that in Layers 1 through 6, which he called the First Tier of human consciousness, there's an inbuilt rejection factor in each value system associated with a layer. So what that means is that people will prefer to be around other people who share the same layer—the same value system as them—and they will automatically reject different values that come from other layers. So, even though Layer 6 is essentially seeking inner peace—it's seeking social peace and it's seeking to rebalance our connection with nature, which are all good things that the Earth needs—they are still rejecting older value systems. The strongest rejection is usually the value system that we've just come from, so at a personal level, when we grow through Layer 5 and into Layer 6, then Layer 5 seems old, out of date, bad, you know, even to the point that we want to destroy it. We're seeing a lot of that talk on the planet at the moment—people who want to just destroy industrialisation completely, and go back to living like Layer 2 or something like that. That's a predictable

aspect of Layer 6. That rejection factor is really the biggest issue that we're seeing. It's the source of all the conflict throughout history—this rejection of other values and not being able to understand people from different value systems or layers.

The other thing that's coming into play is what's called a 'values regression'. When we go through the change process, early on in that change process we realise that, 'OK, the way I'm living, the values that I'm living through, aren't working very well, therefore, something needs to change. I'm not sure what it is, though'. Because we can't see into the future and our future values, what we do is we look to the past and we go, 'OK, maybe if I go back to the way I used to live 10 years ago, maybe that'll work again because it worked back then, right?'. So we go on this journey backwards through the value systems. What that means at the moment is people who are transitioning into Layer 6 are going backwards to Layer 4 sometimes. They're coming out of 5, right? 5 isn't working for them and so they'll go back to 4, which is really rigid, authoritarian kind of behaviour. We're seeing a lot of that at the moment. That's really being highlighted, that Layer 4 authoritarian, black-and-white, 'there's only one way to do things and it's got to be my way or the highway', you know, and for some people, they may even be slipping further back into Layer 3, which is very warlike and sees everything as a power struggle and wants to fight in order to resolve problems. So it's a mixture of those things. Firstly, just the inbuilt rejection factor, which means that everybody who's popping into Layer 6 at the moment doesn't like Layer 5—or Layer 4 or Layer 3 or Layer 2 or Layer 1. There are resonances between the communal systems, so Layer 6 may resonate with Layer 4 in some ways because of the conformist nature of the communal systems, and Layer 6 usually resonates very strongly with Layer 2, which is our traditional sort of indigenous tribal ways of living, so you get a harmonic there between the communal systems which also plays out. The sum result is what we're seeing in the world right now: a lot of authoritarian kind of stuff getting thrown around, a lot of people saying 'that's wrong; we've got to destroy the Scientific-Industrial way of living in and change the whole world to live THIS way', which is the Layer 6 way.

Thankfully, once we shift into Second Tier consciousness, that rejection factor disappears. One of the things that makes Layer 7 so capable is that it can directly sense the frequency of value systems, and so when interacting with another person, a Second Tier individual can read the frequency and go, 'OK, this person's coming from here', and there's an inherent instinctive understanding of what that means and how I need to communicate with that person. That just changes everything, because all of a sudden we don't want to we don't fight people, we don't want to destroy different cultures, we don't want to destroy different value systems, and lots more becomes possible.

Jacob: Well, it makes sense because I see so much of the—you could call it communication, but it's not really communication per se—it's maybe an attempt, but it's mostly arguing or fighting or accusing people of being ... everybody's accusing each other of being Nazis, basically.

Something I've been kind of thinking about is—and tell me how you see this—I've made it a point to just, out of my own interest, follow people on social media that have completely opposing viewpoints and just really kind of try to find the best argument for each side of an

argument, you know; the best evidence for each side of an argument, or the most prominent person on each side of some political debate or whatever it might be. It's just very interesting to see the bits of truth in each side that each side would probably agree on; but I don't know, I almost get the feeling that because of our isolation—the extreme amount of isolation that has come from Layer 5—people are so desperate to feel like they're accepted into a certain tribe or a certain group, that it almost seems to shut down the ability to think on both sides of the aisle, and that they have to sort of subscribe to certain ideas or thoughts or whatever along the lines of what fits in that group, so that they make sure that they're accepted and held in that group just for like a survival aspect of that feeling of belonging. Does that seem accurate?

Steve: It does. It's very accurate. What you said at the end there about that need to conform, to fit in, to be accepted, is a key driver of Layer 6. We're looking for deeper human connection and to get that deeper human connection, we've got to be accepted into a peer group. This has caused a lot of confusion over the years among people who've studied some of Graves's work and who've studied developmental psychology generally. Even Ken Wilbur, who I have a tremendous amount of respect for—he's done some amazing work—even Ken got confused with this. The confusion comes from the fact that most people don't understand that the morality and the value system of Layer 6 is built around this need for deep connection. So if you just look at the surface level stuff, like what people are talking about and who they're hanging out with or what topics they might be interested in, you don't really tap into that deeper driver, and because people are just chasing the connection, they can change what they're talking about, they can change what they're interested in, they can change who they're hanging out with, and it looks like they're being dishonest; it looks like they're being immoral sometimes; it looks like they're not being honest to their morals, but actually, they are because they're being genuine in terms of that deep need for connection, and that's what they're following. So it has created a great amount of confusion around the nature of this particular layer of consciousness in the technical world of people who study these things. You've just got to understand that—you've got to understand that what people are looking for is connection.

In terms of finding ways of convincing people with changing their opinions and those sorts of things, it's a common misconception that you can logic someone out of their value system, but you really can't. The value system is rooted in subconscious frameworks which help us make sense of reality. It's a code—it's a very, very deep code that's not in our conscious mind. It's deep, deep down. You can't give someone 20 reasons not to be authoritarian and have them say, 'yeah, OK, yeah, I see; yeah, sure, I'll change', because it's coded in much, much deeper than that; it's just not in the rational mind. So the best thing we can do is to understand where other people are at and appreciate that and use work like Graves's model to help us understand what is motivating them, what they need, where they're at in the change process.

Pretty much all the conflicts that the world has ever seen has come from people wanting to change other people to be like them. It's like, 'look at these people, they've got the wrong God, they're not living the right way, they're breaking all the moral rules, they need to be like

us, we can fix them', and that never works. If we look back at history, we can see it never works. The only time when it kind of appears to work is when there's so much power applied that people have no choice but to bow down in the face of that power, but as soon as the power is removed, they go back to the way they used to be, so it doesn't actually change people, and that's something that humanity's still got to learn. We're still yelling at each other, trying to change each other's opinions and hoping that'll work, when if we actually took notice of history, we'd see it doesn't work.

Jacob: Yes, it's interesting. I see it in the U.S. here more than ever with the political climate—with the election. It's sort of like these two sides that both expand on the same message, like you're saying, which is basically like, 'there's something wrong about the what you think and how you feel, and you need to feel and think how I feel.' Really, ultimately, it feels like it's an obstacle that's an opportunity to expand our perspective, to include both things. Is that some of the drivers for the push to an integral layer—to this integral perspective—is just that the intense polarisation sort of requires the need for this expansion to include all perspectives, somehow?

Steve: Yes, I mean, regarding Layer 6, one of the key characteristics of it is that it's very capable of taking different perspectives. It's has what they call 'the wisdom of the moccasins'. It can put to put itself in someone else's shoes and really start to appreciate what it must be like to be that person. Like I said, it still has that inbuilt rejection factor of other people's values, though, so it can't fully appreciate what it's like to be in another value system, although it might be able to appreciate what it's like to be in a person in a particular scenario in life and have compassion for that.

What happens with this transition in the Second Tier is that we reach the end of the dominance of the rational mind. You can break down those layers into zones, the first one being the pre-rational zone, which is Layers 1, 2 and 3—basic Hunter-Gatherer type stuff; Traditional-Tribal; and Martial or warlike behaviour—and is generally dominated by deep urges and instincts and strong emotions. So when you're dealing with people who are operating through those layers, rational arguments generally don't work very well because that's not what's driving them. They'll listen and they'll understand, but at the end of the day, the deep code is saying, 'follow this urge, follow that instinct, follow that emotion', and that's what they're doing.

Then, Layers 4, 5 and 6—the Agricultural-Authoritarian era; the Scientific-Industrial, highly rational, materialistic; and then this emerging Layer 6 Humanistic, Network-centric—they're all still dominated by the rational mind, so they're looking to use that rationality to change other people, as you've been saying. Layer 6 is also in a very tricky place because it's just about to reach the end of the usefulness of the rational mind and in order to prepare the being to make that transition, what it needs to do is it needs to go back and revisit all the pre-rational stuff as well, just make to make sure everything's in order—that everything's been finalised as much as possible, everything's been healed, all the trauma has been dealt with—so that we've got a solid platform to make this huge leap from, into Second Tier. And so poor old Layer 6 is still dominated by the rational mind—it's trying to quieten that mind

down and there's a million spiritual courses and meditation classes trying to teach you to how to quiet the mind—and so it's trying to cope with that. It's also trying to cope with all these emotions coming up, and it tends to get somewhat easily overloaded by all of this data coming in from all of these, both pre-rational and rational senses in the body. Sometimes it can get quite lost with that overload of inputs and just not know what to do, and so that's where it just goes back to the, you know, 'I need to be around people that I'm bonded with and who make me feel safe and that understand me', and hence that key driver.

But what happens as we get closer to the Second Tier transition is that the usefulness of the rational mind for solving our problems starts to break down, and does break down entirely. So we go through that change process, which is sometimes called the dark night of the soul, where everything falls apart; everything that we've ever used to solve our problems doesn't seem to work anymore. We have to completely give up, fall apart, crash, burn, and then somehow climb out of the wreckage. In that wreckage—in the heat of all that change—is when our neural networks get rewired, our body chemistry balance changes, new hormones come into play, those sorts of things. What's on the other side of that is this direct knowing; it's this, what you might call a kind of deep intuition sense where stuff just comes to us and we can't really explain rationally where it comes from, but we just know what's right. That's the prize on the other side of that hill that we're all heading towards at the moment.

It's useless to try and solve the world's problems with the rational mind right now. I guess useless is probably a bit of a harsh word. It's not useless; it's helpful with problems that are of a certain level of complexity that allows them to be solved with rationality, but as we've been talking about, there are a whole bunch of problems, including getting on with other people where that rationality just doesn't cut it. So we need to understand our limitations. Those of us who have got the broader outlook at the moment, and the understanding of what's going on in the terrain that we're traversing, need to understand that 'OK, some of these things aren't going to get solved right now, and it's actually useless putting our rational-minded effort into trying to solve that, because, you know, that's good. Some people need to be doing that right now.'

But for those of us who can see further into the future, there are more important things that we need to focus on, and one of those, of course, is helping to support the shift of consciousness. I mean, ultimately, that's the biggest thing that we can do, is to support people who are ready to make the shift to be moving from First Tier into Second Tier, because that's where all the solutions of our most serious issues—the serious problems--re going to come from.

Jacob: That makes a lot of sense. I mean, I've found for myself over the past however long it's been—especially the past year or so—that I resonate with some of the Layer 7 things you're talking about, but I feel like I'm still pretty dominated by my rational mind. But I recognise that in certain areas, it is obvious that it requires something more; I move beyond that.

A perfect example is the realm of—and I think we find this in a lot of different areas—but the realm of diet, for example. When I was real strong into Layer 5, I was trying to find the perfect diet and all the evidence and the science behind it and all of these things, and the

further I've gone on the track of trying to find a diet that is really right for me, the more you find evidence—opposing evidence—for any single type of food or diet: 'Eggs are great for you, oh, no, eggs are terrible for you; This is great for you, this is terrible for you', and it starts to push you to find some other source of wisdom within you to guide you as to what you should eat, because these empirically-derived forms of information just seem to be more and more complex and harder to really pin down as to what's true.

Steve: Yes, that's a great example, and if you look at that example through the different layers: Layer 4, the Authoritarian, always looks to a higher authority for a list of rules on how to live life. So from Layer 4, it would be 'OK, the person, the authority that I respect', and it could be 'God that I worship says in the scriptures "here are the things that I should eat" so there's no choice; there's only one right way to do it Layer 4. And then, Layer 5, of course, looks for the best. It discards that higher authority and says, 'no, actually, I can figure it out for myself and I can make it better; I can get the absolute best and be more successful.' So that's where you get all these, 'absolute best diet that you really need to be on' kind of lists coming from. And then in Layer 6, because the focus shifts away from 'my personal success; how can I be the best?', to that need for deep human bonding, it's like, 'OK, here's my network of people that I really trust who I'm bonded with—what do they all say about what they're eating at the moment? They'll sit in a circle and say, 'what are you eating? What are you eating?' Everybody reports what they're eating and then the solution comes from that networked process, right?

But then, when we go into Second Tier. Part of what we're doing in Layer 6 as preparation for Second Tier is connecting with our body, which we've pushed to all sorts of limits in Layer 5 but not really understood damage that we're doing in the process, like with the planet. So in Layer 6, we're reconnecting with nature; we're also reconnecting with our body, and we're starting to listen to our body. We're working with that process of casting out through our network, you know, 'what do we need to be doing right now and how are you doing it?', and learning from that. But then eventually, as we start to transition towards Second Tier, we're connecting with our body to the point where our body's actually speaking to us and we're getting direct knowing coming from our body and we know that: 'OK, I can't eat that because when I eat that, I can feel my liver complaining', or something like that. So that's the kind of space that you sound like you're pushing into at the moment, is getting those direct messages and feeling that 'why don't I feel so good this morning?' kind of feeling, and then you think about, 'OK, maybe it's because I ate or drank that last night.' You start to put all those bits of information together and you will eventually, in second Tier, get to the point where you've got immediate communication from your body that something's right or it's not right, which is then guiding your diet and behaviour.

Jacob: Sounds like something to look forward to because, you know, it just feels like I can sense that I can feel bits of what I feel like you describe in that Integral Layer 7 sort of perception and worldview and coping capacity, but I still feel very much like there's a lot of processing of different things going on and things yet to be healed. So it's like, almost you

can see a certain light at the end of a tunnel, but you know that there's a certain territory that you have to traverse no matter what. You can't just skip to this certain spot.

Steve: Yes, absolutely. It's a process, and it's also one that requires patience. It's just a matter of understanding, and when you've got a structure like Graves's model to inform you, then you can start to make deductions like you just have, that, 'OK, I can see that I'm going through this process. I haven't got all the answers yet, but I kind of understand where I'm headed and I kind of understand what might be next for me', and that's probably about as good as it gets right at the moment.

The other interesting thing about Second Tier is that it's not locked into operating from just one value system, but it's kind of like a shape-shifter. If there's a problem that can be solved by Layer 6 processes, then you'll use that; or if there's a problem that can be solved by Layer 1 or Layer 2, you'll use that. So you're matching the complexity of the issue with the complexity of the solution and just dynamically moving through the layers as you need to.

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