



## 105. Moral Outrage

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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? Political 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:** This is *Future Sense* with Nyck Jeanes, myself, and Steve McDonald.

Frustration and fear seem to be pretty endemic on the planet for many reasons—of the inaction or lack of focus on what people consider to be the major issues of the day, whether it be the climate crisis or social injustice or the many other issues that we have—and we're probably seeing what relates to a term that I actually didn't even think about until you brought to my attention yesterday: the term 'moral outrage'. Clearly, once you start thinking about that, we are seeing a lot of moral outrage, so we thought we would have a look at what that means and why that may be so prevalent at the moment, at this time on the planet.

**Steve:** Sounds good. What have you got there?

**Nyck:** I've got an article here from Tanya Luna, who is the Co-CEO of *LifeLabs Learning*. She's an author, a researcher and a co-host of the podcast *Talk Psych to Me*, and she has written a piece a few days ago called *Guilt Moral Outrage and the Oscar Speech*, which refers to Joaquin Phoenix's recent speech at the Oscars, "intending to stir connection and empathy", so she says (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/surprise/202002/guilt-moral-outrage-and-oscar-speech>). For many it did just that, and for many others, it sparked moral outrage. And why? Well, Phoenix invited viewers to join "the fight against the belief that one nation, one people, one race, one gender, one species has the right to dominate, use and control another with impunity." She says that: "For the majority of the audience members, to call for human rights and equality produced a cognitive congruence—a psychologically pleasing consistency between Phoenix's words, their beliefs and their self-concept. It was only when Phoenix added 'species' to the list that nodding heads turned to furrowed brows.

Not only did some people dislike the lumping of speciesism with other forms of isms like racism and sexism, they felt compelled to take action, sharing their anger on social media."

**Steve:** I guess the use of that word, 'species', really implied that he was talking about you, right? 'Who, me?'

**Nyck:** I don't know. I think he's talking about animals, I think, but those people who are not vegans yet and who perhaps don't support the rights of all species on the planet, go like 'I think that's going too far and I'm not happy with that. Don't speak for us.'

**Steve:** It's certainly pointing a finger at all humans, that's for sure.

**Nyck:** There's another example in this article, just to quote this piece to give a bit of a context to it. There was some "research by Rothschild and Keefer in 2017", Tanya Luna says in this article, "that might explain this intense reaction." She says: "After inducing moral guilt in their participants, the authors discovered the participants coped by finding a third-party target of moral outrage. For example, learning that they had purchased clothing made by child labourers led to expressions of outrage against the wrongdoing corporation, which then reduced feelings of guilt and personal culpability. Rothschild and Keefer aptly named this reaction a 'cleansing fire'." In other words, by a third-party outrage that actually is not really affecting you directly, people felt better about themselves in doing so.

**Steve:** Yes, and that sounds exactly like what's known as 'psychological projection', where people project their difficulties onto something else or someone else.

**Nyck:** Yes, and they also go on to say it's like a "coping mechanism or defence mechanism protecting people's positive self-concept." In other words, it feels good to have that outrage about something that, in that situation, you are not really capable of doing that much about. Or are you? Are you actually going to change your habits? Are you not going to go down to the local store and buy a pair of sneakers made by child labour, and so on?

**Steve:** Certainly it's a way of protecting one's self-image or ego. If we can put the fault of whatever it is that we're feeling uncomfortable about outside ourselves, then it means that we don't have to face ourselves and perhaps impact our self-image in some way.

I think you've got an article here from *Psychology Today* on the *Psychology of Moral Outrage* (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychology-tomorrow/202002/the-psychology-moral-outrage>).

**Nyck:** Yes, there are quite a few. I was going to bring attention, just in the wider context, to a piece in *Psychological Science*, which talks about social media in particular, because a lot of this outrage becomes viral because of social media, of course, and the way that these platforms operate now. In many cases, social media posts that are met with moral outrage were never intended to be seen by people outside of the poster's social circles, so it's interesting. I mean, people are talking in the bubble of themselves to each other, and that's kind of okay, but once it leaks out, as it can do with social media, suddenly becomes something else and gets out of hand. Then the outrage sort of goes both ways.

**Steve:** That's true. One of the difficulties, too, is that social media platforms seem to be regularly changing their algorithms, which impacts who gets to see what you write; and often quite unexpectedly, without announcing anything, they'll change an algorithm so that all of a sudden what you think is just going to be seen by your friends, gets seen by friends of your friends and those sorts of things. And of course, everybody has a voice—everybody who can get access to social media has a voice now—so there seem to be a lot more voices out there.

**Nyck:** There's another article I have here from *Johns Hopkins University* by Molly Crockett, an article called *Moral Outrage Overload? How Social Media May Be Changing Our Brains*—even going that far—but clearly, there's some research that she has done which indicates that if you get supported in your outrage—the expression of outrage—then you get quite a strong dopamine hit (<https://hub.jhu.edu/2019/09/25/molly-crockett-social-media-outrage/>). The "dopamine pathways are triggered in the brain, flooding it with positive reinforcement." However, if it goes awry and people start objecting to you, you don't get that hit anymore. And again, as I said earlier, there is a protection in some sense with social media because you can be anonymous. You might have an avatar, for example, and of course, you're not actually meeting people face-to-face that you are outraged against, or those who are contesting your outrage.

**Steve:** Yes, and getting back to the self-image or ego again, when you get reinforcement from other people following some kind of projection like that, of course it makes the ego feel good because you're getting reassured that there's nothing wrong with you. It's not your fault; you don't need to look at yourself.

**Nyck:** It's interesting in the original article about the Oscars—and we will post all these links to these articles—there's a piece here about how to learn from your feelings of moral outrage. These are interesting questions and I'm interested your comments on these. Tanya Luna suggests to ask yourselves about the feelings of moral outrage that might rise in you, and these questions are: "Am I feeling threatened?", and if so, "what do I feel is at risk?", and this comes back to this frustration and fear that we will elucidate on further. "Might I have feeling guilt or shame, and if so, why?" Am I doing enough? How can I make a change? How can I make a difference? "How do these feelings clash with my identity, values or self-concept?", and that's a big one. And lastly: "What would make me feel more whole, clean or

aligned with my beliefs moving forward?" Then she goes on to say: "Real personal growth starts with spotting your own cognitive dissonance." That's an interesting one, isn't it?

**Steve:** I think that's a very accurate observation. Very, very good.

We certainly have a lot to complain about at the moment. I mean, the world is in disarray and many of our social systems are not working like they used to. We're faced with potentially some very, very large global-scale issues that we don't seem to have solutions for at the moment—or if we do have an idea of how to address them, we don't seem to know how to make them happen. Just looking at Graves's model, there are some clues here which point to reasons why we're seeing an outbreak of moral outrage and why people are so unsure, upset and angry about things at the moment, and wanting to express that. The first one is that our change state is in transition.

So the change process takes us from stability when things are fine and then we respond or adapt to changing life conditions by feeling stressful when things don't seem to be working quite as well as it used to; and often, when we feel that initial stress, we don't know why and we just kind of wake up and think to ourselves, 'I don't quite feel right today; there seems to be something wrong, but I'm not sure what it is.' Then that can send us on what we call a "regressive values search". That feeling is telling us that our way of living—our value set—maybe doesn't match what's required in the world right now. When that feeling becomes strong enough, the stress reaches a certain level and it can drive us to start to think back, typically to a previous time where things were okay, and how we used to live back then, and usually, in examples of major transitions or major change, that means thinking back to a time when we held different values and lived a different set of values.

**Nyck:** But of course, there's a huge disjunct there between the fairly obvious need in our societies for a new set of values and this regressive search back to this place of safety and comfortability of older values that worked then, and I guess that's quite a psychological screw-up for many people, to hold those two things in place.

**Steve:** It is. It can be a bit of a no-man's land. We find ourselves thinking life isn't working all that well, remembering a time in the past when it did work well, and facing the dilemma, I guess, of: 'what are my values, then? Should I go back to living the way that I used to? Or do I continue trying to make the current ways of living work?' and for many people, they probably wouldn't even think about the idea of value systems or values. They're just basically reacting to what's going on in life and thinking 'things aren't good; I remember a time when things were good; maybe I need to change somehow', and inevitably that leads us, eventually, into a place where our value systems are falling apart; and that falling apart is a necessary part of the change process because, like any structured system, if we're going to change the structure, the old structure has to disassemble itself or be disassembled somehow.

At the moment, in our assessment, the whole world is going through a values shift—not just one value shift, but multiple simultaneous values shifts—the most prevalent, when we look at the dominant global values, which are generally centred around the Scientific-Industrial era values.

**Nyck:** Competition, corporation, consumerism, and so forth.

**Steve:** Yes. We see them failing to cope, basically—they're not sufficient to manage the complexity of the world anymore—and this is showing up, of course, right across society. It doesn't matter what area you want to look at, you'll see structures—organisations—starting to lose the plot, in disarray, not functioning well, and an increase in radical behaviour. There is some revealing of illegal, immoral behaviours—there are quite a lot of revelations around that at the moment, and, of course, it also fits with the astrological patterns going on at the moment, doesn't it?

**Nyck:** It does indeed, yes. Big planets in Capricorn for those who are interested in that: Pluto and Saturn and Jupiter moving through Capricorn and disrupting everything. If you're an astrologer, you'd subscribe to that view, and it seems pretty certain that's what's happening; and that collapse of the value systems, of course, that's where moral outrage arises from, partly because people are seeing those old values not working anymore and are raging against the machine, so to speak, so: 'Why aren't you changing? Why can't you look at this? This is wrong; you're wrong; those corporations are wrong; that governments are wrong; that leader is wrong', and projecting that frustration onto the powers that be now, knowing that they're not doing the job but not knowing where to go with that, and what is going to emerge from that.

**Steve:** Yes. There's an old adage that goes: "Anger is fear expressed", and I think that's a very accurate description of what's behind fear. Usually if you're angry, if you really stop and think about it, there's a fear under there somewhere which is making you angry. If we look around the world at the moment, we're seeing the process of corporate capture running rampant, where everything seems to be controlled by people who've got enough money to control it—often large corporations—even to the point of controlling governments, which seem to be working for their own self-interest in the interest of their corporate sponsors, rather than the interest of the general public in most cases.

**Nyck:** We've seen the 'sports rorts' and the other rorts in our own government here that are now currently in the news, and the denial of that, and the moral outrage understandable against that—that pork-barrelling and manipulation, really, of the supposedly democratic system.

**Steve:** Yes, and there was another news report here in Australia this morning about another project which was around funding to alleviate traffic congestion, most of which was apparently also spent in electorates that were running a fine line in terms of who was going to win them, and it's been in the government's favour.

So there's a lot of that going on, and we're also seen generally, over the last decade or two, a very clear move away from the rule of law. Laws and moral structures are generally created within the communal value system, so historically, we're talking about Traditional-Tribal living where we had very clear customs and taboos, which were our guidelines on how to live life. Then we went through an Egocentric-Warlike stage where we saw the rise of warlords and those sorts of things, and that was an individually-oriented value system, and it's in those that we tend to break the rules. So they often arise because of feeling suffocated by the rules, and then we go crazy and want to do whatever we can get away with. Inevitably, evolution swings us back to the communal way of living again, and historically the next one was the Authoritarian-Agriculture era, which gave rise to our religious structures—all of the main religions that we have at the moment—and their rule books with lists of what to do, how to weave life.

**Nyck:** Bring down the tablets from the mountain.

**Steve:** Exactly. And then, with the rise of social media and the insight that we have inside organisations, things are coming to light—being revealed—that we didn't know about and couldn't see before, and we're seeing that there's actually a lot of law-breaking and immoral behaviour going on at the moment. It's reasonable to say that the Scientific-Industrial era—again, another individually-oriented era—was, to a large extent about making our own rules, and from a religious standpoint, we moved away from the idea in the Agricultural era that answers came from God if we needed to know about anything, to the point where, 'hang on a minute, we can we can do science and we can discover the answer to ourselves and we can make up our own rules and inform them around our personal needs.' Our personal success was the main driver during that era, and the moral code that emerged from that is about being successful first and foremost, and doing whatever you can get away with. What that meant in practice was that you knew who you needed support from in life, whether it be an organisation or individuals, in order to be successful personally, and so you didn't want to damage those connections in any way that might put your own success in jeopardy.

**Nyck:** Mining companies, lobby groups, etc., etc, for example.

**Steve:** So you were strategic about it. You had a strategy and you would be very careful not to dirty your own nest, as they say. Again, with the insight that we have, particularly through social media where anybody in any organisation, regardless of their place, any organisation can have a global voice. We're seeing that some terrible things have been done behind the curtain of public image, which was managed very carefully, of course, during that era, and

some of those issues are making headlines in the news today. The treatment of Julian Assange is a great example, and I believe that the hearing is being held today about his potential extradition to the USA.

**Nyck:** There's a report I have up in front of me of how his meeting with his lawyers in the Ecuadorian embassy was bugged, and they were listening. I would have thought that would have thrown the case out of the courts right away, but I'm sure it won't. Not yet.

**Steve:** We'll see what happens there.

We might take a break and we'll come back and just look at some of the evolutionary issues that are behind the rise of moral outrage at the moment—some of the aspects of human nature, which really point to the fact that we should be expecting moral outrage right now—and maybe take us to the question of what we should be doing about it.

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**Nyck:** You're tuned to BayFM, here on *Future Sense* with myself, Nyck Jeanes, and Steve McDonald, and we're talking about moral outrage. Do you have some? Yes, you probably do.

**Steve:** Indeed. Life conditions are changing on our planet, and Clare Graves, in his research, found this amazing link between the complexity of life conditions and the adaptive nature of human consciousness. When there was a significant shift in complexity, our consciousness would sense that and change the way that we interpreted reality at a very, very deep subconscious level, which showed up at a surface level as things like a values change. In other words, the things that we place importance upon changed and then that played out through our behaviour.

**Nyck:** That's a function too, of capacity, isn't it? Of an increasing capacity due to changing life conditions, enabling that more existential ability—the ability to think existentially on a bigger level.

**Steve:** Exactly. It is an increasing capacity, the shift itself.

Maybe the most widespread example of change in life conditions at the moment is climate change on the planet, which is affecting everybody, everywhere. This and many other changes are triggering a values shift for many people. At a global scale, we're seeing a shift from the values associated with the Scientific-Industrial era—Layer 5 in Clare Graves's model—to the next, more complex value system, which is Layer 6, and is typified by a network-centric approach to life and structuring things and networks; a very humanistic attitude, and a tendency to take an anthropocentric viewpoint on things and see them in terms of their impact on human experience.

It's also important to remember that this is not the only shift that's taking place. There are countries that have been living in an Authoritarian way—and China is a great example of that at the moment—that are probably experiencing a whole range of value shifts. A significant amount of people would quite possibly be feeling the urge to shift from Layer 4 to Layer 5 and take a more Scientific-Industrial approach to things, and that's certainly evident in the growing industrialisation we see in China. Also, India is another example—in a similar category there.

**Nyck:** It's also interesting with China, I think, that because of that, or in concert with that—and I've read some reports on this—that people are quite unwilling to contest their government and the situations there, and yet things are changing and they know things are changing. I guess as people come out of poverty, and more and more people move into the middle class in countries like China, it's trade-off between 'I get more wealth, get more security, more safety; and I'm not going to actually contest my government or the structures of society, even though I don't actually really feel like I agree with it anymore.' We've certainly seen that in Hong Kong. That's an obvious example there.

**Steve:** And the prevalence of those Layer 4 Authoritarian values, where people are actually looking to sacrifice their freedom in service of a higher authority—that's one of the primary motivations of that value set—you can see that they're still quite prevalent and it's played well in terms of the requirement to lock down whole cities for the coronavirus threat because people are very willing to sacrifice their own freedom in order to serve the greater good.

**Nyck:** Interesting point. You wonder whether in the States or in this country, whether the same sort of compliance would apply. Probably not.

**Steve:** I don't think we would see that, simply because of the more individually-oriented value systems that are at play.

Typically, when we shift from one value system to the next, we go through this change process that I mentioned earlier, which can take us through a bit of a values no-man's land where we're not quite sure what our values are or what to believe; what to hang onto. Part of that is the aggressive search to look back to the values that we used to live by. Often we'll try them out, and we're certainly seeing a lot of that in society across the world at the moment: people trying out the old Authoritarian, very rigid black-and-white values from a time where life was simpler. But in fact, the net effect of that is to speed up the movement—the shift itself—because they don't work and they don't work to a greater extent than the Scientific-Industrial values.

**Nyck:** I guess the moral outrage is an expression of exactly that, and it is definitely on both sides of the political spectrum. There's this polarisation into 'your' point of view, 'your' safety



zone, and the outrage that you might feel against someone who doesn't comply with how you see things and what you believe in.

**Steve:** That's right. When we go through a values shift, it's very normal in the First Tier—that is the first set of six value systems—that we have a strong rejection of what came before, so we're seeing that play out, certainly: a very strong rejection of the old Scientific-Industrial way of living. Because the communal systems are where we create our moral codes—and that is by necessity, because in communal systems, when we're living together in large groups, we need to have a set of rules to live by, otherwise things don't work—there has to be conformity and people are drawn to want to conform. We are in the process of creating a new moral code which is associated with Layer 6, and that's certainly being pioneered in certain countries and towns and cities around the world, but now we're looking to lock that down on a global scale.

For those who are newly shifting into Layer 6, once you get through the hardest part of that change process—through the chaotic phase where we go through the pressure of changing our biological systems and our psychological systems—once we pop out the other side of that, there's immediately a kind of evangelical drive that comes with having successfully reached the new value set. And even though we haven't integrated the new values, and might not even be living them fully, we want to tell everybody else about them and we want to tell everybody else that they should be living that particular way.

**Nyck:** Interesting. I've got a quote here from Norman Doidge, who wrote *The Brain that Changes Itself*. He said: "Idealogues are people who pretend they know how to make the world a better place before they've taken care of their own chaos within."

**Steve:** That's right, and that's a direct reference to this sort of evangelical energy in what we call the renewal phase. So once we break through the perceived barriers of being able to live life the way that we want to live it, we get energised, and it's like we've seen the light at the end of the tunnel. We haven't got there yet, but we've seen it, and we're so energised and happy about that, that we have to expend that energy somehow, and certainly some of that at the moment, I think, is coming out as this moral outrage of telling other people that they should be living like we want to live.

**Nyck:** Yes. I have a piece here called *The Psychology of Moral Outrage*, and it talks about the crucial findings that show that it has an emotionally regulating effect, especially in groups; in collectives who have the same view and who can be outrageous—morally outrageous—together (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/psychology-tomorrow/202002/the-psychology-moral-outrage>). This is actually very, very helpful to them because they feel that they're not wrong, and you couldn't possibly be, as you are doing the right thing with your moral outrage within the group or the setting that you exist in. This is a reason to be a bit suspicious, according to this article, of anyone whose moral outrage is too visible. That's

interesting because, as we're saying, moral outrage is certainly justified. It is an evolutionary position, you could say, and yet also too much moral outrage has, as I said earlier, a negative effect, too. If you get too much negative back of too many things coming at you, then you can feel dampened down and that you're actually wrong again, so it has a sort of strange loop effect.

**Steve:** It does. 'Justified' it is a word I probably wouldn't use. It's to be expected at the moment, given the life conditions, and I think it is normal human behaviour under these sorts of circumstances that we're facing.

**Nyck:** Ah, yes, thank you for that.

**Steve:** There are some very specific issues related to Layer 6 values which are also feeding this particular moral outrage outbreak that we're seeing—epidemic maybe. Do you want to dive into those now or should we take a break?

**Nyck:** No, not yet.

**Steve:** We'll start? OK, let's talk about them.

One of the things about Layer 6 is that, remembering that we've come from Layer 5, which has been very materialistic, very scientific, very clinical and also very individually-oriented, so it has deconstructed in its own way, many of our support structures—the nuclear family, our communities, towns and community groups, and those sorts of things have waned under that particular way of living—and so a big part of Layer 6 is reconnecting with our emotions and learning how to express them. Because this is an evolutionary shift into Layer 6, we are expanding. We're gaining finer emotional perception and the capacity to express our emotions better. Of course, as soon as we pop into that place, we want to practise that, and it's quite a contrast to the kind of emotional coolness that we saw in Layer 5. I'm reminded, for some reason, of the James Bond movies, where everything was very cool and you could kill people and that wasn't really a concern. That seemed to be, I guess, an extreme example of that Scientific-Industrial way.

I think there is certainly more tolerance among people who are living according to Layer 6 values of other people expressing themselves, even to the point of being extremely permissive and saying that everybody should have a voice, therefore, we must listen to people, whatever they have to say, without putting any boundaries on that; and encouraging people to express themselves more and be emotionally expressive. We're certainly seeing more of that at the moment.

**Nyck:** And of course, social media makes it much easier to do. As the same article, *Psychology of Moral Outrage* says: "Social media content is far more likely to be shared and

retweeted if it expresses moral outrage", and in fact, many social media companies also employ algorithms that prioritise content in feeds that is emotional in nature and likely to contain examples of moral outrage.

**Steve:** That's right, so we often can end up in a social media bubble of like-minded, like-thinking people, and of course, as you said before, there's that issue of the dopamine hit which can come from successfully expressing our outrage and getting positive feedback around that, which may well be an avoidance mechanism—avoiding facing whatever it is that's making us angry inside. Layer 6 being a communal value system, it's very much about conformity. As I said before, these communal value systems are where we construct our moral codes that guide us on how to live, particularly in community, and therefore, there's a natural tendency towards conformity which can lead to groupthink in extreme examples, and even cult-like behaviour, where people become afraid of saying something that doesn't fit with what the group feels or what the group expresses. The main fear there is being disconnected from the group because a central driver of the Layer 6 is this need for deep human connection, so often we will minimise rational thoughts in order to hang onto that group connection; the emotional aspect of that.

**Nyck:** Yes. We'll take a little bit of a break and we will come back here on BayFM.

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**Steve:** We're talking about moral outrage and why we should expect to see a lot of it around at the moment, and we certainly seem to be. We're talking now specifically about the emerging paradigm, the immediate value system that, on a global scale, humanity seems to be shifting to right now, which is out of the Scientific-Industrial paradigm and into what's often been called the Relativistic or Postmodern paradigm, which is characterised by a very humanitarian approach. It's like we've lost our humanity in the Scientific-Industrial era and we're trying to bring it back. There's also a very network-centric way of organising ourselves, and a tendency to want to judge everything and put everything in the frame of human experience, which is often called an anthropocentric view. This emerging value system—Layer 6 and Graves's model—as a communal system, it's characterised by the desire to change oneself to fit with what the world requires of you. So it's like you've got a radar kind of scanning your life conditions outside you and figuring out, 'OK, how do I need to adapt to this?' as opposed to individual value systems like the paradigm that we're just moving out of—the Scientific-Industrial era—which are the opposite. In those individual systems, the desire is to change the outside world to fit with what you want, personally, and we certainly did that. When we look back at the Scientific-Industrial era, we changed the world in many ways, good and bad. Even though we hear a lot of talk from the emerging paradigm about wanting to change the world, and what should be changed in the world and how it should be changed, there's far more talk than action. We can see that process of primarily changing ourselves to fit with what we think the world needs of us and wanting other people to change in that way as well, to conform with the way that we feel. Being the last system in

what Graves called the First Tier of consciousness—that's the first six layers of human consciousness—it's also the last stand for fear-driven behaviour, so one of the main aspects of this transition from First Tier to Second Tier consciousness, which happens between Layer 6 and Layer 7, is the falling away of fear as a major driver of behaviour. Really, what we're facing here is the last stand of fear, and I think it probably makes sense to expect that to be significant.

**Nyck:** We're certainly seeing a lot of it and driven in all sorts of ways to make people afraid, basically, so it's an interesting pushback against that—that beginning of letting go of the fear, as you say.

**Steve:** It is, absolutely.

In between the value systems, during the shift process, we see this kind of slingshot dynamic where it's like the tension has to be increased by pulling the elastic band back on the slingshot in order to move us into the next value system, and the Second Tier shift—that shift between 6 and 7—is, as far as we know, the largest shift that humanity has ever made, so we ought to expect that slingshot to have an awful lot of tension on it, and I think this giant upsurge of fear is feeding that tension in a way that is necessary for our own evolutionary shift. We know what fear does to the rational mind: it shuts down those parts of our brain that lead to logical responses to problems, and it leads, therefore, to irrational behaviour, like, for example, thinking that all you need to do is get the government to change a policy and the weather will change, which is a very widespread belief right now.

**Nyck:** And generally, I guess, the extremes of moral outrage are a lack, perhaps, of sufficient rationality with regard to a particular issue. Nothing wrong with that, as you said. It's expected that moral outrage will happen in this climate of life that we live on the planet, and you have to sacrifice, perhaps, some degree of rationality to be that—not to take in all the factors, all the scientific research, all the inputs that might give you a more complex appreciation of a particular topic, for example.

**Steve:** Yes, what we're talking about here is a subconscious dynamic, so it's not as if people are choosing to be irrational. It's simply that they're being overwhelmed by their emotions. Because it's a communal system that thrives on and requires conformity, people who have already shifted into that Layer 6 value set are going to be very critical of people who don't conform, so there's going to be a general cry for conformance, and we're seeing that in the global climate debate at the moment where everybody is being urged on a moral basis—on the basis of moral imperatives—to conform to what the group feels should be done.

**Nyck:** To quote George W. Bush: "Are you with us or against us?"

**Steve:** Yes.

There are some very interesting dynamics in Layer 6. Each one of the First Tier value systems has what we call a shadow aspect, and that plays out as a link to a previous value system, and it's always the value system three steps down. So for Layer 6, the shadow aspect is played out as an expression of Layer 3, which is an Egocentric and individually-oriented value system, so it's interesting that whatever the primary dominant value system is, whether it's communal or individual, the shadow is the opposite of that, which makes sense, I guess, doesn't it?

So what we're seeing from this emerging paradigm, Layer 6, is an egocentric shadow, and that's showing up in kind of self-centred approach to perceiving the world, and also to behaviour as well, and the fact that people are calling this the anthropocentric era is certainly a representation of that self-centredness and an unconscious self-centredness. The shadow, by definition, is something that hides in the shadows that we can't see until it is somehow brought to our attention and we face it as part of our own development. Another example of the self-centeredness is the selfie itself—the tendency for people want to take pictures of themselves and promote them.

Another interesting aspect of Layer 6 is what plays out as criticism of people being judgemental. When you think about it, if you're criticising somebody for being judgemental, then you're actually judging that person, which, of course, is something that completely gets lost in the process. Essentially, it comes down to, again, this drive for conformity, the strong—subconscious, in most cases—desire for people to want to get other people to conform, to want to be the way that they should be in that person's eyes in order to conform with the emerging paradigm and the standards and morals that are being woven together by the emerging paradigm as it's still in the process of emerging right now to a mature state. Again, that whole process—all of those sorts of imperatives—can, in extreme cases, result in quite painful personal attacks, and rather than addressing the issue at hand, whether it be climate change or whatever, then resorting to criticising and trying to bring down the individual who's the source of whatever information that you're rejecting.

**Nyck:** I saw a social media post yesterday from our good friend, a wonderful poet, an artist and a great man who said that, 'my goodness, social media today is rampant with aggression and outrage and negative expressions of all sorts of things'. I guess there's literally a climate on social media that's emerging these days. Certainly on Twitter that happens often: a sort of bluster, a storm of particular outrage about something or other; one direction or the other.

**Steve:** Yes, I use Twitter a lot, just to try and gauge the state of the world, and on purpose, I follow people whose values I wouldn't normally express myself, so I've got a really varied group of people that I follow on Twitter just to see what people are talking about.

**Nyck:** Get out of the bubble.

**Steve:** Exactly, and from time to time, I'm seeing days where my entire feed is just almost about one topic, where everybody's just raging about one topic. It's quite interesting and rather extreme at the moment.

**Nyck:** There's another article here from *Psychological Science* called *When Moral Outrage Goes Viral, It Can Come Across as Bullying* (<https://www.psychologicalscience.org/news/releases/when-moral-outrage-goes-viral-it-can-come-across-as-bullying.html>), and that's another aspect, right there. This is some research about social media where people can be quick to call attention to racist, sexist or unpatriotic behaviour, for example, but when that outcry goes viral, those challenging the behaviour may be perceived less as noble heroes doing the right thing and more like bullies. There's some real science about this, that when participants, for example, saw a post that was challenging, it was a post of an obscene gesture that someone was pretending to do, or shout, next to a sign that read "Silence and Respect at Arlington National Cemetery". Participants saw the post was just a single comment—I've said this already before—and they found that laudable, but when suddenly a whole echo of that comes about and there's a whole bunch of people, then suddenly they have a different view. The conclusion that they came to about this, I think is rather interesting, that: "Our findings illustrate a challenging moral dilemma: a collection of individually praiseworthy actions may cumulatively result in an unjust outcome. Obviously, the implication is not that people should simply stay silent about others wrongdoing," said the researchers, "but I think it is worth considering whether the mass shaming of specific individuals is really the best way to achieve social progress." I think that's rather interesting.

**Steve:** I think it is interesting, and there's certainly a lot of collateral damage to this process. I guess it raises the question, 'what can we do about it?' and I think the answers are simply to do things that support the mature emergence of this next value set and pull this out of this transition period where there's more anxiety and more fear than we would find if we were in a stable phase of change. Those things could include things like building resilient networks and communities, and on a local level with personal contact, ideally, because while we might feel connected and get the impression that we're connecting with people on social media, at the end of the day, we're not actually connecting in the true sense of the word. It's a remote connection, which is without the kind of cues that we get when we had personal contact with an individual—from body language, from sensing somebody else's vibration, those sorts of things.

**Nyck:** Yes, indeed. There's another piece from the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* which points to this (<https://isiarticles.com/bundles/Article/pre/pdf/119220.pdf>), and the difference between moral outrage and empathic anger, meaning anger about wrongful deeds or harmful consequences that actually affect people right in your reality: your family, your friends, your close associates. That's understandable, and of course, you're going to get that and feel that with your close associates, if you're really having that one-on-one personal interaction or physical interaction with people. But moral outrage actually is, as we've already

talked about a little bit, at distance to some degree, and makes you feel better at best, but doesn't necessarily make the changes that you want to change right here, right now with people that you're with. Walking your talk, I guess, is another way to put that also.

**Steve:** Exactly, and as I said before, it's essentially psychological projection, and when you get a hit out of doing it—a dopamine hit in terms of feeling support from other people—and feeling that you've done the right thing despite the fact that you're probably avoiding some fear inside you that you're not addressing, it could become an addictive behaviour. The biggest challenge I see for the emerging paradigm, really, is to take action to address the issues which are the root cause of our frustration at the moment. The reason I say that that's a challenge is that as a communal system, Layer 6 is essentially focussed on conforming with a group and changing themselves in order to be accepted, be liked, and to be able to conform and be part of whichever group they identify with. It's not so much about taking physical action to change the external world, which is more an individual value system task. So despite the fact that it might not be what we're primarily drawn to do, if we can take action locally to resolve what we see as the key issues driving our frustration, we of course, will see results from that.

The problem that we're facing at the moment is that we're living among systems which are failing. We are less and less able to rely on governments to resolve our issues, even though we're putting more and more energy into trying to motivate them to change their ways. So if we can create our own local systems—not just sustainable systems, but regenerative systems—and even looking at the basic elements of life, like supplying food, energy, water, those sorts of things to our local communities in the face of the potential failure of our large-scale systems in the future, taking local action to adapt to climate change—and what I mean by that is to enable us to continue living in sustainable and regenerative ways despite the changing weather and the extreme weather that we're experiencing which really ought to be our focus at the moment—rather than just making a lot of noise and urging somebody else to do something, is actually taking action locally to adapt ourselves and adapt the way that we're living, and first and foremost, to look after ourselves: self-care, self-balance, having a daily practice which can renew our balance, renew our reconnection with the earth, and also support our own process of development so that we can move towards the integration and through the integration phase of these new values and start to live in a stable way according to the new value set and our new moral code.

**Nyck:** Someone has texted in and said: "We need a community of Second Tier elders to hold people's issues with nuanced compassion that looks beyond superficial condemnations."

**Steve:** That would be a wonderful thing, and it will come in time. It just prompts me to mention a couple of points before we finish off, about those who might be in the transition from First Tier to Second Tier—from this sixth value set into the seventh. Being the largest shift that we are probably ever going to be faced with in our lifetimes, it's also potentially the

deepest and darkest night of the soul, going through that, so it is typically quite challenging because of the amount of tension that we need to experience in order to shift us that far.

**Nyck:** And yet fear is not the best posture to adopt in that scenario, so that's an interesting paradox in itself.

**Steve:** It is an absolutely interesting paradox and a big challenge. During that transitional time, from 6 to 7, Graves found in his research back in the 1950s that often a fear of humanity not surviving arises. Back then, the key issue was the potential of global nuclear war, so whatever the issue of the day is, we're likely to latch onto that and hold some fear of humanity not surviving, and, of course, the process of transition to Second Tier takes us through that peak of fear and beyond it to the point where fear is no longer a driver of our behaviour. It doesn't mean that we don't feel fear anymore. It just means that in terms of driving our behaviour, it's no longer as forceful as it used to be. So, as a species, we can also anticipate this issue of fear and all of the consequent behaviours that it produces, including moral outrage, to continue to be a significant challenge as we move through this transition from First Tier to Second Tier.

**Nyck:** We'll have to conclude there. Thanks for joining us here on Future Sense, and we will be back next week. Tune in online, and tune in to our podcast via [www.futuresense.it](http://www.futuresense.it). Thanks for joining us.

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