

# Human Nature Prepares for a Momentous Leap

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A new psychological theory holds that human beings exist at different 'levels of existence.' At any given level, an individual exhibits the behavior and values characteristic of people at that level; a person who is centralized at a lower level cannot even understand people who are at a higher level. In the following article, psychologist Clare Graves outlines his theory and what it suggests regarding man's future. Through history, says Graves, most people have been confined to the lower levels of existence where they were motivated by needs shared with other animals. Now, Western man appears ready to move up to a higher level of existence, a distinctly human level. When this happens there will likely be a dramatic transformation of human institutions.

For many people the prospect of the future is dimmed by what they see as a moral breakdown of our society at both the public and private level. My research, over more than 20 years as a psychologist interested in human values, indicates that something is indeed happening to human values, but it is not so much a collapse in the fiber of man as a sign of human health and intelligence. My research indicates that man is learning that values and ways of living which were good for him at one period in his development are no longer good because of the changed condition of his existence. He is recognizing that the old values are no longer appropriate, but he has not yet understood the new.

The error which most people make when they think about human values is that they assume the nature of man is fixed and there is a single set of human values by which he should live. Such an assumption does not fit with my research. My data indicate that man's nature is an open, constantly evolving system, a system which proceeds by quantum jumps from one steady state system to the next through a hierarchy of ordered systems.

Briefly, what I am proposing is that the psychology of the mature human being is an unfolding, emergent, oscillating, spiraling process marked by progressive subordination of older, lower-order behavior systems to newer, higher-order systems as man's existential problems change. These systems alternate between focus upon the external world, and attempts to change it, and focus upon the inner world, and attempts to come to peace with it, with the means to each end changing in each alternatively prognostic system. Thus, man tends, normally, to change his psychology as the conditions of his existence change. Each successive state, or level of existence, is a state through which people pass on the way to other states of equilibrium. When a person is centralized in one state of existence, he has a total

psychology which is particular to that state. His feelings, motivations, ethics and values, biochemistry, degree of neurological activation, learning systems, belief systems, conception of mental health, ideas as to what mental illness is and how it should be treated, preferences for and conceptions of management, education, economic and political theory and practice, etc., are all appropriate to that state.

In some cases, a person may not be genetically or constitutionally equipped to change in the normal upward direction when the conditions of his existence change. Instead, he *may* stabilize and live out his life at any one or a combination of levels in the hierarchy. Again, he may show the behavior of a level in a predominantly positive or negative manner, or he may, under certain circumstances, regress to a behavior system lower in the hierarchy. Thus, an adult lives in a potentially open system of needs, values and aspirations, but he often settles into what appears to be a closed system.

Human existence can be likened to a symphony with six themes. In a symphony, the composer normally begins by stating his themes in the simplest possible manner. In human existence, our species begins by stating in the simplest way those themes which will preoccupy us through thousands of variations. At this point in history, the societal effective leading edge of man in the technologically advanced nations is currently finishing the initial statement of the sixth theme of existence and is beginning again with the first theme in an entirely new and more sophisticated variation. That is, man has reached the point of finishing the first and most primitive ladder of existence: the one concerned with the emergence of the individual of the species *Homo sapiens* and his subsistence on this planet. The first six levels of existence, A-N through F-S, have accordingly been called "Subsistence Levels." ('A' stands for the neurological system in the brain upon which the psychological system is based; 'N' for the set of existential problems that the 'A' neurological system is able to cope with. Thus, in the 'A-N' state, one calls on the 'A' system to solve the 'N' problems of existence.) These six subsistence levels comprise the initial statement of man's themes in its very simplest form.

The six subsistence levels of man's existence have as their overall goal the establishment of individual survival and dignity. Once having become reasonably secure, both physically and psychologically, in his existence, the individual becomes suddenly free to experience the wonder and interdependence of all life. But he must notice at the same time that the struggle for man's emergent individuality has imperiled the very survival of that life. Thus, just as early man at the most primitive level of subsistence (A-N), had to use what power he could command to stabilize his individual life functions, so G-T man, the individual who has reached the first level of *being* must use what knowledge he can command to stabilize the essential functions of interdependent life. Similarly, B-O or tribal man gathered together in communities to insure his individual, physical survival, and our G-T man of the future must form communities of knowledge to insure the survival of all viable life upon this Earth. We see therefore that the six themes

constantly repeat, even though man progresses from the simple statement of individual subsistence to the variation of the interdependence of life. This stately succession of themes and movements is the general pattern of the levels of existence.

In this discussion of man's present and future, the first three subsistence levels must still concern us because many people, from aborigines to newly emergent nations, are still living at these levels of existence.



According to psychologist Graves, man climbs an "existential ladder," that is, he moves through a series of distinct psychological stages. At present, he says, most Western people are in the stages known as D-Q, E-R and F-S. But there are signs they are now preparing to move into the higher stages, G-T and H-U.

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Here are brief descriptions of the levels as I have come to know them through my research:

### **Some Characteristics of Various Levels**

#### **Automatic Existence (First Subsistence Level)**

Man at the first subsistence level (A-N), the *automatic state* of physiological existence, seeks only the immediate satisfaction of his basic physiological needs. He has only an imperative need-based concept of time and space and no concept of cause or effect. His awareness excludes self and is limited to the presence of physiologically determined tension when it is present, and the relief of such tension when it takes place. He lives a purely physiological existence. Man the species, or man the individual, does not have to rise above this level to continue the survival of the species. He can continue the survival of the species through the purely physiological aspect of the process of procreation. He can live what is for him, at the A-N level, a productive lifetime, productive in the sense that his built-in response mechanisms are able to reduce the tensions of the imperative physiological needs and a reproductive lifetime. But this level of existence seldom is seen in the modern world except in pathological cases.

As soon as man, in his food-gathering wanderings, accrues a set of Pavlovian conditioned reflexes, which provide for the satisfaction of his imperative needs, and thus enters his 'Garden of Eden,' he slides almost imperceptibly out of this first stage into the second existential state, and established form of human existence, the *tribalistic way* of life.

### **Tribalistic Existence (Second Subsistence Level)**

At the second subsistence level, the B-O autistic state of thinking, man's need is for stability. He seeks to continue a way of life that he does not understand but strongly defends. This level of man has just struggled forth from striving to exist and now has his first established way of life. This way of life is essentially without awareness, thought, or purpose, for it is based on Pavlovian classical conditioning principles. Therefore, B-O man believes his tribalistic way is inherent in the nature of things. As a result he holds tenaciously to it, and strives desperately to propitiate the world for its continuance.

At this level a seasonal, or naturally based concept of time prevails and space is perceived in an atomistic fashion. Causality is not yet perceived because man perceives that forces at work to be inherent. Here a form of existence based on myth and tradition arises, and being is a mystical phenomenon full of spirits, magic and superstition. Here the task of existence is simply to continue what it seems has enabled 'my tribe to be.'

But here, more by chance than by design, some men achieve relative control of their spirit world through their non-explainable, elder-administered, tradition-based way of life a way of life which continues relatively unchanged until disturbed from within or without. When the established tribal way of life assures the continuance of the tribe with minimal energy expenditure by solving problems N by neurological means A, it creates the first of the general conditions necessary for movement to a new and different steady state of being. *It produces excess energy in*

*the system which puts the system in a state of readiness for change.* But unless another factor, such as dissonance or challenge, comes into the field, the change does not move in the direction of some other state of being. Instead, it moves toward maximum entropy and its own demise, since it becomes overloaded with its accretion of more and more tradition, more and more ritual. If, however, when the state of readiness is achieved, dissonance enters, then this steady state of being is precipitated toward a different kind of change. This dissonance arises usually in youth, or in certain minds which are not troubled by memories of the past and are capable of newer and more lasting insights into the nature of man's being. Or it can come to the same capable minds when outsiders disturb the tribe's way of life.

When, at the B-O level, readiness for change occurs, it triggers man's insight into his existence as an individual being separate and distinct from other beings, and from his tribal compatriots as well. As he struggles, he perceives that others - other men, other animals, and even the spirits in his physical world - fight him back. So his need for survival comes to the fore.

With this change in consciousness, man becomes aware that he is aligned against predatory animals, a threatening physical universe, and other men who fight back for their established way of existence, or against him for the new way of existence he is striving to develop. Now he is not one-with-all, for he is alone in his struggle for his survival against the draconic forces of the universe. So he sets out in heroic fashion to build *a way of being which will foster his individual survival.*

### **Egocentric Existence (Third Subsistence Level)**

At the *egocentric level* (C-P), raw, rugged, self-assertive individualism comes to the fore. This level might be termed 'Machiavellian,' for within it is all the author of *The Prince* considered the essence of being human. History suggests to us that the few who were able to gain their freedom from survival problems surged almost uncontrollably forward into a new way of being, and also dragged after them the tribal members unable to free themselves of the burden of stagnating tribalistic existence. History also suggests that the few became the authoritarians while the many became those who submitted. The many accepted the 'might-is-right' of the few because such acceptance assured their survival. This was so in the past and it is still so today.

This Promethean (C-P) point of view is based on the prerogatives of the 'haves' and the duties of the 'have-nots.' Ultimately, when this way of life, based historically on the agricultural revolution, is established, life is seen as a continuous process with survival dependent on a controlled relationship. Fealty and loyalty, service and *noblesse oblige* become cornerstones of this way of life. Assured of their survival, through fief and vassalage, the 'haves' base life of the 'right' way to behave as their might dictates. A system develops in which each individual acts out in detail, in the interest of his own survival, how life is to be lived, but online a

small number ever achieve any modicum of power and the remainder are left to submit.

Both the authoritarian and the submissive develop standards which they feel will insure them against threat, but these are very raw standards. The submissive person chooses to get away with what he can within the life style which is possible for him. The authoritarian chooses to do as he pleases. He spawns, as his *raison d'être*, the rights of assertive individualism. These rights become, in time, the absolute rights of kings, the unassailable prerogatives of management, the inalienable rights of those who have achieved positions of power, and even the rights of the lowly hustler to all he can hustle. This is a world of the aggressive expression of man's lusts openly and unabashedly by the 'haves,' and more covertly and deviously by the 'have nots.'

Now man moves to the lasting security level of need and learns by avoidant learning. As he moves to the D-Q level he develops a way of life based on the conviction that there must be a reason for it all, a reason why the 'have' shall possess so much in life yet be faced with death, and a reason why the 'have not' is forced to endure a miserable existence. This search leads to the belief that the 'have' and 'have not' condition is a part of a directed design, a design of the forces guiding man and his destiny. Thus, the saintly way of life, based on one of the world's great religions or great philosophies, comes to be. Here man creates what he believes is a way for lasting peace in this life or everlasting life, a way which, it seems to him, will remove the pain of both the 'have' and the 'have not.' Here he seeks salvation.

### **Saintly Existence (Fourth Subsistence Level)**

At the *saintly level* (D-Q), man develops a way of life based on 'Thou shalt suffer the pangs of existence in this life to prove thyself worthy of later life.' This saintly form of existence comes from seeing that living in this world is not made for ultimate pleasure, a perception based on the previous endless struggle with unbridled lusts and a threatening universe. Here man perceives that certain rules are prescribed for each class of men and that these rules describe the proper way each class is to behave. The rules are the price man must pay for his more lasting life, for the peace which he seeks, the price of no ultimate pleasure while living. The measure of this worthiness is how much he has lived by the established rules. But, after security is achieved through these absolutistic rules, the time comes when some men question the price. When this happens, the saintly way of life is doomed to decay, since some men are bound to ask why they cannot have some pleasure in this life. Man then struggles on through another period of transition to another level, now slipping, now falling in the quest for his goal. When man casts aside the inhuman aspect of his saintly existence, he is again charged with excess energy because his security problems are solved; but this very solution has created the

problems 'R,' how to build a life that will offer pleasure here and now, which eventually he meets through the neurological means of system 'E.'

### **Materialistic Existence (Fifth Subsistence Level)**

At the *materialistic level* (E-R<sub>1</sub>), man strives to conquer the world by learning its secrets, rather than through raw, naked force as he did at the C-P level. He tarries long enough here to develop and utilize the objectivistic, positivistic, operationalistic, scientific method so as to provide the material ends for a satisfactory human existence in the here and now. But once assured of *his* own material satisfaction he finds he has created problems S, a new spiritual void in his being. He finds himself master of the objective physical world but a prime neophyte in the subjectivistic, humanistic world. He has achieved the satisfaction of a good life through his relative mastery of the physical universe, but it has been achieved at a price, the price of not being liked by other men for his callous use of knowledge for himself. He has become envied and even respected, but he is not liked. He has achieved his personal status and material existence at the expense of being rejected even by his use of neurological sub-system 'F,' and begins man's move to his sixth form of existence.

### **Personalistic Existence (Sixth Subsistence Level)**

At the *personalistic level* (F-S), man becomes centrally concerned with peace with his inner self and in the relation of his self to the inner self of others. He becomes concerned with belonging, with being accepted, with knowing the inner side of self and other selves so harmony can come to be, so people as individuals can be at peace with themselves and thus with the world. And when he achieves this, he finds he must become concerned with more than self or other selves, because while he was focusing on the inner self to the exclusion of the external world, his outer world has gone to pot. So how he turns outward to life and to the whole, the total universe. As he does so he begins to see the problems of restoring the balance of life which has been torn asunder by his individualistically oriented, self-seeking climb up the first ladder of existence.

As man moves from the sixth or personalistic level, the level of being with self and other men, the seventh level, the cognitive level of existence, a chasm of unbelievable depth of meaning is crossed. The gap between the sixth level (the F-S level) and the seventh (the G-T level) is the gap between getting and giving, taking and contributing, destroying and constructing. It is the gap between deficiency or deficit motivation and growth or abundance motivation. It is the gap between similarity to animals and dissimilarity to animals, because only man is possessed of a future orientation.

### **Cognitive Existence (First Being Level)**

Once we are able to grasp the meaning of passing from the level of 'being one with others' to the *cognitive level* (G-T) of knowing and having to do so that 'all can be and can continue to be,' it is possible to see the enormous differences between man and other animals. Here we step over the line which separates those needs that man has in common with other animals and those needs which are distinctly human.

Man, at the threshold of the seventh level, where so many political and cultural dissenters stand today, is at the *threshold of being human*. He is truly becoming a human being. He is no longer just another of nature's species. And we, in our times, in our ethical and general behavior, are just approaching this threshold, the line between animalism and humanism.

### **Experientialistic Existence (Second Being Level)**

At the second being level, the *experientialistic level* (H-U), man will be driven by the winds of knowledge, and human, not godly, faith. The knowledge and competence acquired at the G-T level will bring him to the level of understanding, the H-U level. If every man leaps to this great beyond, there will be no bowing to suffering, no vassalage, no peonage. Man will move forth on the crests of his broadened humanness rather than vacillate and swirl in the turbulence of his animalistic needs. His problems, now that he has put the world back together, will be those of bringing stabilization to life once again. He will need to learn how to live so that the balance of nature is not again upset, so that individual man will not again set off on another self-aggrandizing binge. His values will be set not by the accumulated wisdom of the elders, as in the B-O system, but by the accumulated knowledge of the knowers. But here again, as always, this accumulating knowledge will create new problems and precipitate man to continue up just another step in his existential staircase.

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### **Applying Graves's Theory to Management**

Graves criticizes management training programs for trying, in all too many instances, to change managers' beliefs and ways of behaving so as to bring them more in line with the organization's pre-existing methods and beliefs. For instance, such programs may manage from a hierarchical to a "team management."

"These programs do not try to fit managerial development to the beliefs and ways of behaving that are those of the managing person," says Graves. "They attempt, instead, to get the manager to change his beliefs. When organizations foster this kind of incongruency, they cast the manager into a severe value crisis, which often affects his performance adversely."



A second mistake of management, he says, is that it typically does not manage people the way they want to be managed. For instance, many persons like participation management but others do not, yet management has implicitly assumed that participation affects all persons in more or less the same way. In fact, people with an authoritarian cast of mind or with weak independence needs apparently are unaffected or even negatively affected by an opportunity to participate in decision-making.

Graves's research indicates that a worker with a closed personality normally prefers to be managed by the style congruent with his level of existence. If his personality is still open and growing, he prefers to be managed by a supervisor at the next higher level. For example, a closed personality at the D-Q level prefers a paternalistic form of management, while a worker with an open personality at the same level would like to be managed by E-R methods, which allow more freedom for individual initiative.

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## **Personalistic Values Now Flower in America**

Using this framework to approach current American society, we can easily see an efflorescence of personalistic (F-S) values in the popularity of such things as Salem, yoga, the encounter group, the humanistic psychology movement and participatory decision-making in management. By all these means and many others, personalistic (F-S) man endeavors to achieve self-harmony and harmony with others. These individuals do not, of course, see their striving for harmony with the human element as merely a stage they are going through, but as the ultimate, the permanent goal of all life. This short-range vision, which views the current goal as the ultimate goal of life, is shared by human beings at every level of existence for as long as they remain centralized in that particular level.

Using the Theory of Levels, we see that the so called 'generation gap' of the recent past was in reality a *values* gap between the D-Q and the E-R and F-S levels of existence. For example, many of the parents of F-S youth subscribed to E-R values, which emphasize proving one's worth by amassing material wealth. To individuals operating at this level it was inconceivable that their children might reject competition for cooperation and seek inner self-knowledge rather than power, position and things. Worse yet to the E-R parents was the devotion of these young people to foreigners and minority groups who, according to E-R thinking, deserved their unfortunate condition because they were too weak or too stupid to fight for something better. Thus, the foreigners and minorities were characterized as lazy and irresponsible and the youth who defended them as lily-livered 'bleeding hearts.'

In turn, F-S youth contributed to the confrontation because their civil disobedience and passive resistance offended their parents more than outright violence ever could have. These young people not only challenged Might (and therefore Right), but offered no new Might and Right to replace that which they mocked. Consequently, they were rightly (to the E-R mentality) called anarchists, and it was widely said that such permissiveness was wrecking the values which made America great. Of course, our hindsight now tells us that America was not, in fact, "wrecked," and today one can see a great many of the E-R parents who protested against anarchy getting in touch with themselves at Esalen and advocating theories of participative management.

Another outgrowth of the transition of our society from E-R to F-S values was the de-emphasis of technology. Technology was the principal means by which E-R man conquered the world. He did not, like his ancestor C-P man, use force alone, but rather he attempted to understand the natural laws in order to conquer men and nature. Because of the close historical association of technology with E-R values, the emerging F-S consciousness could not help but view technology as a weapon of conquest. Thus, along with rejecting conquest, F-S man rejected technology and in its place set up its exact opposite: Nature. In other words, the exploration of inner man and a return to nature (including all manner of idealized natural foods) replaced the exploitation of nature and other human beings in a quest for material wealth.

The idea of a future suffered a similar fate. American E-R man was always insistent that he had a great future, a 'manifest destiny' somehow enhanced by never having lost a war. Therefore, F-S man, in his rebellion, was forced to throw the future into the same garbage heap as technology, erecting in its place 'the here and now.'

Picture, if you will, F-S man seated in a yoga position, contemplating his inner self. He has completed the last theme of the subsistence movement of existence. There are no new deficiency motivations to rouse him from his meditations. In fact, he might well go on to contemplating his navel to the day of his death, if he only had some suitable arrangement to care for his daily needs. And it is quite possible for a few F-S individuals to live this way. But what happens when the majority of a population begins to arrive at the F-S level of existence? Who is left to care for their daily needs? Who is left to look after the elaborate technology which assures their survival? If we return to F-S man seated in his yoga position, we see that what finally disturbs him is the roof falling in on his head.

This roof can be called the T problems, the ecological crisis, the energy crisis, the population crisis, limits to growth, or any other such thing which is enough of a disturbance to awaken F-S man. Naturally enough, his first reaction will be that evil technology is taking over and that all the good feeling and greenery which made the Earth great is in the process of being wrecked forever. (We remember that

attitude from the days when his father, E-R man, had much the same erroneous notion.) F-S man is correct in the sense that his entire way of life, his level of existence, is indeed breaking down: It *must* break down in order to free energy for the jump into the G-T state, the first level of being. This is where the leading edge of man is today.

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### **The People that Drive Managers Crazy**

Most people in organization in the western world are in the middle levels of existence (D-Q, E-R, and, increasingly, F-S). Managers are used to dealing with such people. Occasionally, however, a manager must deal with people at either a lower or higher level, and then his customary methods fail, Graves says.

People at the C-P level (Egocentric) are found frequently in very impoverished areas. These people exhibit the least capability to perform in a complex industrial world. When a job is available, they do not apply. If they get a job, they do not show up for work or they soon quit. While they are on the job, their habits are so erratic that little work is actually accomplished. Exasperated managers find such people 'unemployable.' Society labels them 'hardcore unemployed.'

To a Gravesian, people at the C-P level are employable, but they must be managed in a special way. The Graves theory holds that C-P people are driven primarily by the need to solve immediate survival problems. Applying the theory, a Gravesian manager would arrange the work situation so that the immediate survival needs of the worker are not threatened and would give him work that can be learned almost immediately.

The manager would also change the hiring requirements so that they do not threaten a C-P person. For instance, the Gravesian manager would simplify and speed up the processing of applications so that people know in minutes if they are hired and, if not hired, are taken immediately to some place where they might find jobs. He would make sure that C-P people are not supervised by self-righteous, do-good managers.

The hard-core unemployed person lives in a world of immediacy, says Graves. Often he must pay money down for almost everything he gets, and because of his immediate reactions to the crises he faces, he may be an absentee problem. To counteract these problems, a member of the organization might be assigned to administer an emergency fund to help the C-P person through difficult periods.

At the opposite extreme, managers must also deal with another group of people whom they find extremely troublesome, the G-T and H-U people. Ironically, these are among the most competent people. They possess knowledge needed to improve productivity in the organization, but often they are kept from improving productivity by ancient policies, inane practices, out-moded procedures and inappropriate managerial styles.

The G-T and H-U people want autonomy, the freedom to do their jobs the best way they know. When management requires such a person to procure permission to institute change when he sees change is needed, it stifles what he can contribute.

The sacred channels of communication seriously hamper the productivity of G-T people, who want to be able to decide when they know what to do. When he doesn't know, the G-T is motivated to seek guidance from those who do know. But a G-T employee's motivation becomes negative when he must waste time going through channels which require him to explain what does not need to be explained to people who do not need to have it explained to them.

The G-T worker reacts negatively when required to ask an administrator's approval for materials he needs in order to be productive. He reacts positively when he can tell his supervisor what he needs to do a job and when the supervisor considers that it is his job to do as his subordinate says. The G-T employee believes that he, not a superior, should make the decisions whenever he is competent to make it, and most G-T workers know that their supervisors are not competent to make the decision.

People who operate at the Being levels are typically competent regardless of their surroundings. Therefore, their productivity is not a function of lower-level incentives. Threat and coercion do not work with them, because they are not frightened people. Beyond a certain point, pecuniary motives do not affect them. Status and prestige symbols, such as fancy titles, flattery, office size, luxurious carpeting, etc., are not incentives to them. Many of them are not even driven by a need for social approval. What is important to them is that they be autonomous in the exercise of their competence, that they be allowed all possible freedom to do what needs to be done as best they can do it. In other words, they want their managers to let them improve productivity the way they know it can be improved. They do not want to waste their competency doing it management's way simply because things always have been done that way.

G-T people are becoming more prevalent, says Graves. They must do their own managing of their own work and of their own affairs. Their procedures must be their own, not those that tradition or group decision-making have

established. When G-T employees are autonomous and are properly coupled with jobs that utilize their competence, one can expect optimum productivity from them.

An H-U employee does not resist coercion and restrictions in a flamboyant manner as does the G-T type, but he will avoid any relationship in which others try to dominate him. He must therefore be approached through what Graves calls "acceptance management" - management which takes him as he is and supports him in doing what he wants to do. It is useless, says Graves, to get an H-U employee to subordinate his desires to those of the organization. Instead, the organization must be fitted to him. If he cannot get the acceptance he wants, an H-U employee will quietly build a non-organizationally oriented world for himself and retire into it. He will do a passable but not excellent job. If there is no change in management and he cannot go elsewhere, he will surreptitiously work at what is important to him while putting up a front to management.

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## **Human Progress Can Be Arrested**

At this point it might be good to take a closer look at what happens when man changes levels of existence. The process itself is similar to some very basic phenomena in quantum mechanics and brain physiology, suggesting that it may in fact derive from the same laws of hierarchical organization. Basically, man must solve certain hierarchically ordered existential problems which are crucial to him in his existence. The solution of his current problem frees energy in his system and creates in turn new existential problems. (For instance, both the self-centering and other-awareness of the F-S state are necessary if the G-T problems of how life can survive are to be posted.) When new problems arise, higher order dynamic neurological systems are biochemically activated to solve them.

Will man inevitably progress, both as an individual and as a species, to higher levels of existence? Or can he become fixed at some level, even regress? The answer is that man can indeed become fixed at one level, and he can regress. A frightening example of cultural regression to the most primitive level of existence is that of the Ik tribe of Uganda which, after losing its lands, degenerated past any recognizable sign of humanity. (See anthropologist Colin Turnbull's book, *The Mountain People*.) Many tribes of American Indians at the end of the last century shared a like fate. Despite this, we must remember that the tendency for man to grow to higher states is always present, and may be likened to the force that enables a tree to crack boulders so that each year it can add another ring to its heartwood. Like the tree, man is most often stunted in his growth by external circumstance: poverty, helplessness, social disapproval and the like. Often, the full expression of

the level of existence at which man finds himself is simply not possible. Few people, for instance, have the opportunity of fully indulging their E-R values by attempting to conquer man and nature. Consequently, man often is halted at this level and develops the 'lust for power' which is so frequently believed to be universal in man.

Man, the species, must fully realize each level of existence if he is to rise to the next higher level, because only by pursuing his values to their limits can he recognize the higher-order existential problem that these particular values do not apply to. E-R man had to become powerful over nature in order to see that beyond the problem of power was the problem of knowing the inner self: the F-S level. He could not very well coerce or manipulate his neighbor into knowing himself. Therefore, his useless E-R values inevitably began to disintegrate as a way of life. Thus it seems that a moral 'breakdown' regularly accompanies the transition from one level of existence to another. Man drops his current way of perceiving and behaving, and searches his cast-off levels for a way of behaving that will solve his new problem. In his frustration, E-R man may protest that he sacrificed for what he got (D-Q level) or make an appeal to law and order (C-P level) to end the demonstrations against him. All this will be to no avail because, naturally, no lower level behavior will solve his new higher-order problem. E-R man will be forced to take the first steps towards a new way of perceiving and behaving: the F-S system. With his first step he becomes F-S man, both because he is now understanding and respectful of the inner self of others rather than being powerful and manipulation, but because the greater part of his energy is now devoted to the problem of how to achieve community through personal and interpersonal experiencing.

We can therefore see that our time at each level of existence is divided between an embryonic period of identifying the values needed to solve the new existential problem, a period of implementing the values toward the solution of the problem, and a period of values breakdown following the successful solving of the problem. It is this final phase of break-down which causes such periodic dismay in society, but dissolution is necessary so that man can be free to recognize new existential problems. There is, in addition, an *appearance* of breakdown which results from the realization of the new values themselves, because these new values are so often the exact antithesis of the old. In that sense, the new values do represent the ultimate breakdown of the current basis of society, or of the individual's way of life.

Finally, there is a singular empirical fact associated with man's transitions from one level of existence to another. As our species moves up each step on each ladder of existence, it spends less and less time at each new level. It took literally millions of years for our ancestors to become tribalistic B-O man, while in the technologically advanced nations today man is moving from the E-R level through F-S to G-T in a scant twenty years. There is every reason to expect we will remain for a long time at the G-T level, then a shorter time at the H-U and other second

ladder levels. At the G-T level, man will begin the task of subsistence again but in a new and higher order form (the survival of the human race), assuming, of course, that no external circumstances, such as a major war or other catastrophe, intervene to arrest our growth.

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### **Levels of Existence**

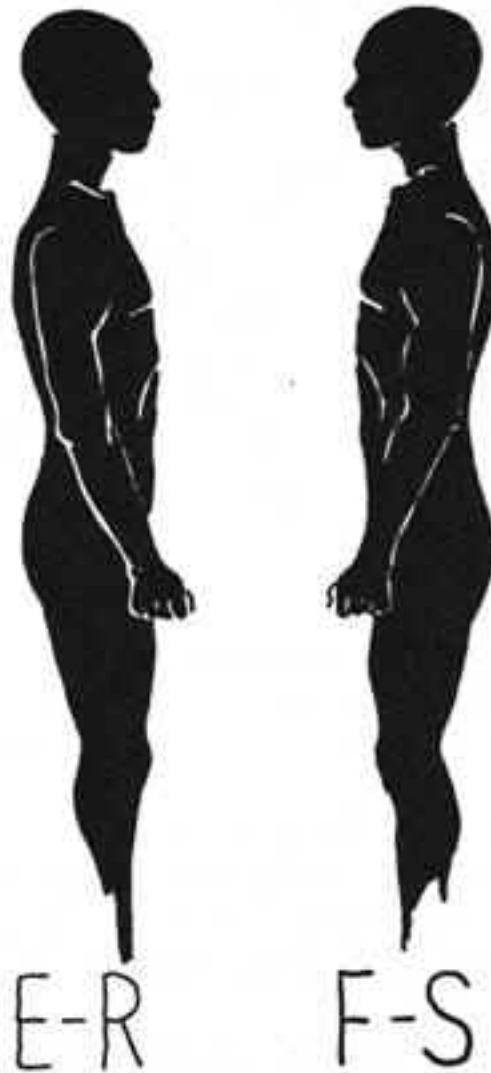
***First Subsistence Level (A-N):*** Man at this level is motivated only by imperative periodic physiological needs. He seeks to stabilize his individual body functions. This level of existence is perfectly adequate to preserve the species, but it is seldom seen today except in rare instances, as in the Tasaday tribe, or in pathological cases.

***Second Subsistence Level (B-O):*** At this level, man seeks social (tribal) stability. He strongly defends a life he does not understand. He believes that his tribal ways are inherent in the nature of things, and resolutely holds to them. He lives by totems and taboos.

***Third Subsistence Level (C-P):*** Raw, self-assertive individualism comes to the fore at this level, and the term 'Machiavellian' may be used. This is the level where "might makes right" thinking prevails. There is an aggressive expression of man's lusts, openly and unabashedly by the 'haves,' more covertly and deviously by the 'have nots.' Anyone dealing with the C-P type must resort to the threat of sheer naked force to get him to do anything.

***Fourth Subsistence Level (D-Q):*** At this level, man perceives that living in this world does not bring ultimate pleasure, and also sees that rules are prescribed for each class of people. Obedience to these rules is the price that one must pay for more lasting life. D-Q people generally subscribe to some dogmatic system, typically a religion. These are the people who believe in 'living by the Ten Commandments,' obeying the letter of the law, etc. They work best within a rigid set of rules, such as army regulations.

***Fifth Subsistence Level (E-R):*** People at the E-R level want to attain mastery of the world by learning its secrets rather than through brute force (as at the C-P level). They believe that the man who comes out on top in life fully deserves his good fortune, and those who fail are ordained to submit to the chosen few. E-R people tend to be somewhat dogmatic, but they are pragmatic, too, and when they find something that works better they'll change their beliefs.



45.

Graves views the generation gap in contemporary American society as a confrontation between E-R and F-S values. F-S children reject their E-R parents' ideal of material wealth and instead, proselytize for the personalistic ideals of co-operation and enlightened humanism.

*Sixth Subsistence Level (F-S):* Relating self to other human selves and to his inner self is central to man at the F-S level. Unlike the E-R people, F-S man cares less for material gain or power than he does for being liked by



other people. He's ready to go along with whatever everyone else thinks is best. He likes being in groups; the danger is that he gets so wrapped up in group decision-making that little work gets done.

***First Being Level (G-T):*** The first *being* level is tremendously different from the earlier subsistence levels, says Graves. Here as man, in his never-ending spiral, turns to focus once again on the external world and his use of power in relation to it, the compulsiveness and anxiousness of the subsistence ways of being are gone. Here man has a basic confidence that he, through a burgeoning intellect freed of the constriction of lower level anxieties, can put the world back together again. If not today, then tomorrow. Here he becomes truly a cooperative individual and ceases being a competitive one. Here he truly sees our interdependence with all things of this universe. And here he uses the knowledge garnered through his first-ladder trek in efforts to put his world together again, systemically.

***Second Being Level (H-U):*** People operating in an H-U fashion have been rare in Graves's studies. Almost all of Graves's subjects who so behaved have been in their late fifties and beyond. What typifies them is a 'peculiar' paradoxical exploration of their inner world. They treat it as a new toy with which to play. But even though playing with it, they are fully aware that they will never know what their inner selves are all about. Graves says this idea is best illustrated by a poem of D. H. Lawrence, "Terra Incognita."

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## Summary Table from the Article

<b>Levels of Existence As Seen By Clare Graves</b>									
Clare Graves's theory holds that human beings develop through a series of "levels" or behavioral states. At each level a person learns and acts in a way that is consonant with the particular level. This table provides a schematic outline of Graves's theory. Each level is designated by two letters (e.g., F-S). The first letter stands for the neurological system on which the level is based and the second for the existential problems it is dealing with.									
Level	Learning System	Thinking	Motivational System	Specific Motivation	Means Values	End Values	Nature of Existence	Problems of Existence	
A-N	Habituation. (The individual adapts to his environment by a process of becoming accustomed to certain things, e.g., a baby gets used to his mother's breast, clothing, face, etc.)	Automatic	Physiological	Periodic physiological needs (e.g., hunger)	No conscious value system; values are purely reactive	No conscious value system; values are purely reactive	Automatic	Maintaining physiological stability	
B-O	Classical conditioning. (The individual learns through the association of one thing with another, as when he begins to salivate when his mother prepares to feed him.)	Autistic	Assurance	Aperiodic physiological needs (e.g., warmth)	Traditionalism	Safety	Tribalistic	Achievement of relative safety	
C-P	Operant conditioning. At this level, people learn best when they are rewarded for learning tasks.	Egocentric	Survival	Psychological survival	Exploitation	Power	Egocentric	Living with self-awareness	
D-Q	Avoidant learning. People at this level learn best when they are punished for errors. Without some punishment, D-Q individuals may not learn at all.	Absolutistic (thinking in terms of dogmas, rules.)	Security	Order, meaning	Sacrifice	Salvation	Saintly	Achieving ever-lasting peace of mind	
E-R	Expectancy. E-R types learn best when the outcome of their behavior meets their expectations; that is, when they behave in a certain way and get the reward that they expected to get. E-R people learn best through their own effort, with mild risk and with considerable variety in the learning experience.	Multiplistic	Independence	Adequacy, competency	Scientism	Materialism	Materialistic	Conquering the physical universe	
F-S	Observational. F-S people learn by watching other people and observing how they react. Their learning is through vicarious experience.	Relativistic (things depend on particular situations)	Affiliation	Love, affiliation	Sociocentricity	Community	Personalistic	Living with the human element	
G-T	At the G-T and H-U levels, since people are in the second ladder of existence and all basic systems are now open, learning in any form can and does take place. Here it is not new means, but changes in other aspects of the total system, such as the relative dissolution of fear, which accounts for changes in ability to learn.	Systemic	Existence	Self-worth	Accepting	Existence	Cognitive	Restoring viability to a disordered world. (How can we live in a world with so many conflicting value systems and no assurance as to which is right?)	
H-U		Differential	Experience	??????	Experiencing	Communion	Experientialistic	Accepting existential dichotomies (e.g., life is the most precious thing there is, yet my life is unimportant)	

*from "Human Nature Prepares for a Momentous Leap," The Futurist, April 1974*

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## Man Now Faces Most Difficult Transition

The present moment finds our society attempting to negotiate the most difficult, but at the same time the most exciting, transition the human race has faced to date. It is not merely a transition to a new level of existence but the start of a new 'movement' in the symphony of human history. The future offers us, basically, three possibilities: (1) Most gruesome is the chance that we might fail to stabilize our world and, through successive catastrophes regress as far back as the Ik tribe has. (2) Only slightly less frightening is the vision of fixation in the D-Q/E-R/F-S societal complex. This might resemble George Orwell's *1984* with its tyrannic, manipulative government glossed over by a veneer of humanitarian sounding doublethink and moralistic rationalizations, and is a very real possibility in the next decade. (3) The last possibility is that we could emerge into the G-T level and proceed toward stabilizing our world so that all life can continue.

If we succeed in the last alternative, we will find ourselves in a very different world from what we know now and we will find ourselves thinking in a very different way. For one thing, we will no longer be living in a world of unbridled self-expression and self-indulgence or in a world of reverence for the individual, but in one whose rule is: Express self, but only so that all life can continue. It may well be a world which, in comparison to this one, is rather restrictive and authoritarian, but this will not be the authority of forcibly taken, God-given or self-serving power; rather it will be the authority of knowledge and necessity. The purpose of G-T man will be to bring the earth back to equilibrium so that life upon it can survive, and this involves learning to act within the limits inherent in the balance of life. We may find such vital human concerns as food and procreation falling under strict regulation, while in other respects society will be free not only from any form of compulsion but also from prejudice and bigotry. Almost certainly it will be a society in which renewable resources play a far greater role than they do today: wood, wind and tide may be used for energy; cotton and wool for clothing, and possibly even bicycles and horses for short trips. Yet while more naturalistic than the world we know today, at the same time the G-T world will be unimaginably more advanced technologically; for unlike F-S man, G-T man will have no fear of technology and will understand its consequences. He will truly know when to use it and when not to use it, rather than being bent on using it whenever possible as E-R man has done.

The psychological keynote of a society organized according to G-T thinking will be freedom from inner compulsiveness and rigidifying anxiety. G-T man, who exists today in ever increasing numbers, does not fear death, nor God, nor his

fellow man. Magic and superstition hold no sway over him. He is not mystically minded, though he lives in the most mysterious of 'mystic' universes. The G-T individual lives in a world of paradoxes. He knows that his personal life is absolutely unimportant, but because it is part of life there is nothing more important in the world. G-T man enjoys a good meal or good company when it is there, but doesn't miss it when it is not. He requires little, compared to his E-R ancestor, and gets more pleasure from simple things than F-S man thinks he (F-S man) gets. G-T man knows how to get what is necessary to his existence and doesn't want to waste time getting what is superfluous. More than E-R man before him, he knows what power is, not to create and use it, but he also knows how limited is its usefulness. That which alone commands his unswerving loyalty, and in whose cause he is *ruthless*, is the continuance of life on this earth.

The G-T way of life will be so different from any that we have known up to now that its substance is very difficult to transmit. Possibly the following will help: G-T man will explode at what he does not like, but he will not be worked up or angry about it. He will get satisfaction out of doing well but will get no satisfaction from praise for having done so. Praise is anathema to him. He is egoless, but terribly concerned with the rightness of his own existence. He is detached from and unaffected by social realities, but has a very clear sense of their existence. In living his life he constantly takes into account his personal qualities, his social situation, his body, and his power, but they are of no great concern to him. They are not terribly important to him unless they are terribly important to you. He fights for himself but is not defensive. He has no anxiety or irrational doubt but he does feel fear; he seeks to do better, but is not ambitious. He will strive to achieve- but through submission, not domination. He enjoys the best of life, of sex, of friends, and comfort that is provided, but he is not dependent on them.

Because of this different way of thinking, human institutions at the G-T level would become very different from what we have today. For instance, those processes and institutions which today are centralized would likely become decentralized, while those which are decentralized might become centralized. Since G-T man performs only necessary work and then only in the way in which he sees fit, there is bound to be drastic change not only in the structure of work but also in the amount of work done, the location in time and space of the work, and the reasons for which it is carried out. As an industrial psychologist, I have already noted a dramatic rise in the number of G-T individuals occupying positions which make them heirs to corporate power. When their time comes, business will shift toward a G-T outlook.

Our institutions of learning will undergo a similar transformation. Today we endeavor to teach children to be what they are not. That is, we prevent them from reaching higher into the existential hierarchy by preventing them from acting out the levels of existence on which they are actually living. Education in a G-T society would encourage all individuals to express their values as fully as possible, thus

freeing the natural growth process from artificial constraints. There would be no poverty and wealth in such a society, but this circumstance would not result from altruism or political conviction, but rather from G-T man's conviction that equal access to a high-quality life is essential for everyone. Though he recognizes that all men are not equal, inequality in the necessities of life is to him an unnatural travesty on all life. The G-T individual who had more than enough would not take pity on the poor nor would he envy a person who had more, but he would simply be very uncomfortable until both had a *necessary* amount.

If this thinking seems strange, we must remember that a description of today's F-S humanity, typified by the Esalen Institute, System Y Management, etc., would have seemed equally perverse and bizarre to those who were E-R men twenty years ago. Those of us who survive long enough to live in a society ordered by the G-T way of thinking - if such comes about - will find it perfectly natural.

But let us not be misled at this point. This theory says the future can never be completely predicted because it allows only for the prediction of the general and not the particular. I could no more predict specific features than a pre-radium chemist could have predicted from the atomic table of elements, that radium would be radioactive. According to my studies, it would be exceedingly presumptuous of the human race at this primitive stage of its development, approaching only the first step of the second ladder of existence, to imagine that the future could be predicted in precise detail. I say this because my studies indicate that something unique and unpredictable, something beyond the general form of the next system, has always emerged to characterize each new level.

From the standpoint of values, the future will be a reversal of the present. Technologically, the future will be a quantitative extension, but values and beliefs will represent a reversal, though in a higher order form. We appear to be headed for a higher order reversal of those values and beliefs we have held most dear and in our institutional ways of living. A few things we might expect when man's life is ordered by G-T thinking are:

- 1) Quality, not quantity, will become the measure of worth.
- 2) Reduction of use will be valued; growth will be devalued.
- 3) Freedom to operate in one's own self-interest will be replicated by the responsibility to operate in the interest of others.
- 4) The measure of educational success will not be quantity of learning but whether the education leads to movement up the existential staircase. Business and other organizations will be judged in the same way.
- 5) The boss will be the expediter of subordinates' desires rather than the director of their activities.

- 6) The political systems which let anyone run for office will be replaced by systems that require candidates to meet certain requirements for office.
- 7) A leisure ethic will replace the work ethic as the primary means of valuing a person. A man will be revered more for his ability to contribute in his non-earning time than in his earning time.
- 8) Work will be increased for the young and reduced for the older, while education is increased for the older and reduced for the younger.
- 9) Actions that promote interdependent existence will be valued more than those that promote the sanctity of the individual.
- 10) Unity with nature will replace unity with God.

Other values can be deduced in this manner: Take anything man has strongly valued in the first ladder of existence, reverse it, put it in higher order form and you have the key to what this theory says. Study the Tasaday tribe of the Philippines, put their values and their ways into a technologically complex world and you have the immediate future of a G-T world. Then follow this new form of the A-N state of existence (the H-U form) and so on, and you can develop a general picture of the remote future of man.

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## **How Human Values Change**

Clare Graves's Theory of the Levels of Human Existence offers a framework for understanding some of the wide variation in human values. Here is a brief description of how a person's values may change as he moves from one level of existence to another.

### **Reactive Values (A-N level)**

No awareness of himself as a separate and distinct being: values are purely reactive in character. Whatever reduces pain or tension is what is good. A man at this level does not judge or believe. He simply reacts to his environment in a way to insure his individual survival.

No man will ever be without some reactive values, because he is always a physiological organism. Depending on the current conditions of his existence, reactive values may dominate his existence or they may be subordinated within emerging higher level value systems.

### **Traditionalistic Values (B-O level)**

The prime end value at this level is safety and the prime means is tradition. Man at this level becomes social, in the sense of being dominated by the traditions of his tribe. Things are valued because man's elders and ancestors seem to have learned what fosters man's existence and what threatens his

well-being. Thus the theme for existence at this level is 'one shall live according to the ways of one's elders.' The individual follows a magical, superstitious, ritualistic way of life. Higher level men may consider these values mysterious, peculiar, and inexplicable way of life, but they do order man's B-O state of existence.

Eventually, however, the time comes when these values fail energetic youth, who have not experienced the problems of their elders, or when other ways of life challenge the values of the tribe. Thus boredom or challenge may lead man to attack the values of his first 'establishment' and thus lead him on to the next level of existence.

### **Exploitive Values (C-P level)**

At this level, man recognizes that he is a separate and distinct being and therefore no longer seeks merely for tensional relief or the continuance of his tribe's established way of life. He now feels the need to foster his own individual survival, a need which cannot dominate him until he becomes conscious of himself (as happens at this level). He now seeks a form of existence which he can control for his personal survival. He proceeds to explore his world and begins to manipulate it intentionally rather than merely passively accept it.

As he manipulates his world, he egocentrically interprets the reward or punishment feedback as good or bad for himself, which is his major consideration. He perceives that many people try but few succeed and, as a result, he comes to believe that the heroic deed is the means to his survival. He values heroism as the means and the epic hero becomes his most revered figure. To the hero or victor belong the spoils and the right to exercise greed, avarice, envy, and pride, for he has shown through his deeds that he is worthy of survival. Might is right, and those who lose have a right only to the scraps that a hero may toss their way. The power ethic prevails.

At the C-P level, man values the ruthless use of power, unconscionably daring deeds, impulsive action, volatile emotion, the greatest of risk. Conquest in any form is valued, and war is the epitome of heroic effort that leads to Valhalla.

For all its negative aspects, the C-P value system is a giant step forward. Pursuing power, some men do succeed in taming the mighty river, or building a city or doing other things that improve the personal lot of some and indirectly help others.

But the C-P way of life and its value system create a new existential problem: The winners (heroes) must eventually die and their admirers

wonder why, and why they themselves are doomed to a miserable existence. Both winners and losers seek a reason for their inexplicable fates.

Egocentric values break down as the 'haves' ask, "why was I born? Why can't I go on living?" and the 'have nots' wonder, "Why can't I find some success in life?" Eventually, they conclude that life's problems are a sign indicating that if one finds the 'right' form of existence, there will be pleasure everlasting. Man now comes to believe that the life is part of an ordered plan, in which it is meant that some shall have more and some shall have less and all shall suffer and die.

And the answer comes: Life is a test of whether one is worthy of salvation. Thus one emerges at the next level.

### **Sacrificial Values (D-Q level)**

In his new existential state, man's theme for existence is "one shall sacrifice earthly desires now in order to come to everlasting peace later." This theme gives rise to the sacrificial value system. Man focuses his earthly existence on the means to salvation, sacrifice of desire in the here and now.

At this level, man does not propitiate the spirits for removal of threat to his immediate existence; rather he is on a quest for ever-lasting peace, Nirvana or Heaven. Typical means values are denial, deference, piety, modesty, self-sacrifice, and harsh self-discipline.

At this level, man accepts his position and his role in life. Inequality is a fact of life. The task of living is to strive for perfection in his assigned role, regardless of how high or low his assigned station. He believes that salvation will come to the man who lives by the rules of life prescribed for him. What one wants or desires is not important; what is important is that he discipline himself to the prescription of his world. He who sacrifices best in the way authority prescribes is most revered. The leader values the life that enables him, if necessary, to sacrifice himself in the protection of the followers. Those who follow value sacrificing in support of the leader.

Life at the D-Q level is a serious business: only institutionalized pleasure is permitted. Rules are black and white, and only the authority that he accepts (for instance, his church or political party) is proper in its definition of virtue and sin. The D-Q systems has much in common with the B-O system, but now it is man's ultimate authority that sets the rules for life instead of his elders.

Graves says that of all value systems, the D-Q level system is one of the most confusing, because D-Q values often are so diametrically opposed that



they seem to be different value systems. For instance, the Moslems and Hindus, often enemies, share the same thematic value system within this point of view. The holy wars of the crusades stemmed from the same value system as the non-violence of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. The systems are basically similar because they emphasize sacrifice now to achieve a better situation later. Doctrinaire Catholicism and atheistic communism are, within this point of view, only polar opposite schema varying from the same central sacrificial theme.

Eventually some people question the price of sacrificial values and the price of saintly existence. They wonder why they can't have some enjoyment in this life. But man cannot move on until he perceives his next set of problems, problems that arise from the fact that he cannot have enjoyment in this life so long as he is at the mercy of an unknown world, the servant of the universe rather than its master. As he perceives this, man begins again to try to adjust his environment to the self and begins the tortuous climb to the E-R level. As the E-R values begin to emerge, D-Q man views them as the ultimate sign of man's depravity; the new independence of E-R man is exhilarating to people caught up in the new values, but impious to those holding the earlier D-Q values.

### **Materialistic Values (E-R level)**

Perceiving that his life is limited by his lack of control over his environment, E-R man seeks greater independence. He is the rationalistic man who 'objectively' explores the world. His theme for existence is "express self in a way that rationality says is good for me now, but carefully, calculatedly so as not to bring down the wrath of others upon me."

The end value of E-R man is materialism; the means value is rational, objectivistic positivism, that is, scientism. "This pragmatic, scientific utilitarianism is the dominant mode of existence in the United States today," says Graves .

The values deriving naturally from the E-R theme are the values of accomplishing and getting, having and possessing. The E-R man personally seeks control over the physical universe so as to provide for his material wants. He values equality of opportunity and a mechanistic, measuring, quantitative approach to problems, including man. He also values gamesmanship, competition, the entrepreneurial attitude, efficiency, work simplification, the calculated risk.

E-R values help create wealth and techniques, and lead to knowledge which improves the human condition, but once they seem to have solved the problems of human's earthly existence, they create a new existential problem

for him. He has not yet learned how to live with his abundance, nor how to live when there are other men who still must live in want. Now man has a new problem and must seek a new way of life and a new value system.

On the surface, his life seems relatively assured, but his subjectivity is gnawing inside him. He feels increasingly a need to belong, to affiliate himself rather than 'go-it-alone.' And so a new theme comes into his existence: "Sacrifice some now so that others can have too."

### **Personalistic'Values (F-S level)**

As in the B-O and D-Q states, the new F-S man values authority; but it is not the authority of his elders' wishes (as at the B-O level) or of the all powerful authority (D-Q level), but rather the authority of his contemporaries.

It is the peer group that determines the means by which the end valued 'community with other people he values' is to be obtained.

On the surface, personalistic values appear shallow and fickle in contrast to values at other levels because the surface aspect of them shifts as the 'valued-other' changes his preferences. But the central core of this system is a very solid process, Graves says. F-S man is seeking to be with and within the feelings of his valued-other. He prizes interpersonal penetration, communication, committeeism, majority rule, persuasion rather than force, softness rather than cold rationality, sensitivity rather than objectivity, taste rather than wealth, personality more than things. The feelings of his fellow man rather than the hidden secrets of the physical universe draw the attention of F-S man. He values 'getting along with' more than 'getting ahead.' Consumer good will take precedence over free enterprise; cooperation is preferred to competition; social approval is valued more than individual fame.

### **Existential Values (G-T level)**

When man finally is able to see himself and the world about him with clear cognition, he finds a picture that is far from pleasant. Visible in unmistakable clarity and devastating detail is man's failure to be what he might be and his misuse of his world. This revelation causes him to leap out in search of a way of life and system of values which will enable him to be more than a parasite leeching upon the world and all its being. He seeks a foundation for self-respect which will have a firm base in existential reality. He creates this firm basis through his G-T value system, a value system truly rooted in knowledge and cosmic reality and not in the delusions caused by animal-like needs.

Today, says Graves, G-T man is developing the future modes of life and values for mankind." For G-T man, the ethic is: "Recognize, truly notice what life is and you shall know how to behave." The proper way to behave is the way that comes from working within existential reality. If it is realistic to be happy, then it is good to be happy. If the situation calls for authoritarianism, then it is proper to be authoritarian and if the situation calls for democracy, it is proper to be democratic. Behavior is right and proper if it is based on today's best possible evidence; no shame should be felt by him who behaves within such limits and fails. This ethic prescribes that what was right yesterday may not be seen as right tomorrow.

The G-T state develops when man has resolved the basic human fears. With this, a marked change in his conception of existence occurs. He now turns his attention to the truly salient aspects of life and sees that the most serious problem of existence to date is how the human species can survive.

At this level the new thema for existence is: "Express self so that all others, all beings, can continue to exist." His values now are of a different order from those at previous levels: they arise not from selfish interest but from the recognition of the magnificence of existence and a desire to see that it shall continue to be.

### **What Is Needed to Rise to a Higher Level of Existence**

Graves says the following conditions are necessary for the emergence of higher level neurological direction of behavior:

1. Potential in the brain. The necessary higher level structures must be there.
2. Resolution of the existential problems with which an individual is faced at the earlier level of his being. This resolution releases psychic energy for an advance, and creates new problems which must be solved. "Much evidence supports the position that man is indeed intelligent enough to put first things first," says Graves. He sees to it, as the late psychologist Abraham Maslow said so long ago, that imperative periodic physiological needs are prepotent over those physiological needs of lesser importance. The latter, in turn, are prepotent over the lowest level psychological needs.

But having the potential and solving the existential problems at a given level are not in themselves sufficient to cause the next higher level system to emerge, says Graves, who believes Maslow was wrong in this respect.

3. Dissonance: A breakdown in the solution of current existential problems must occur. Here, Graves says his data indicate that psychological growth does not arise from the simple satisfaction of lower level needs and the

solution of lower-level existential problems. "None of my subjects made the jump to a higher level without a period of crisis and regression before the higher level system emerged," says Graves.

Dissonance precipitates a crisis, but it does not trigger the emergence of the higher level system. What triggers it are the biochemical changes which ensue during a regressive search through past ways of behaving for an old way that can re-establish the previous apparent solution to the existential problems. This regressive search is doomed to end in arrestment, regression or growth, because the old 'solutions' to former existential problems do not apply to this new problem any better than did the way of life whose inadequacy triggered the regressive search in the first place.

4. Insight. What stops the regressive search and puts man in position to experience the need for the emergence of the next system is insight. He must come by an insight which enables him to solve his *new* problem. But even insight is not sufficient to produce the leap to the next level.

5. Overcoming barriers. When any insight is achieved, there are other people around the individual and few of them may share the new insights. Thus the barriers, one's family, friends, or the Establishment and its way of thinking, must be overcome or ignored if the insight is to begin to propel the great psychological jump.

6. Consolidation factor. The sixth necessary condition is the consolidation factor, which comes into play when the individual actually begins to practice and affirm his new way of behaving. This is the last factor in the change process, the final step in the emergence of the next and higher level neurological system. Here the details of implementing the insights into a new working way of being are accomplished.

#### **Classifying Nations by the Graves Theory**

Nations, as well as individuals, can be categorized according to their level of existence. Graves says that Russia changed from the D-Q level to the E-R level when it went from Stalin to Khrushchev. Now it may be reaching the F-S level under Kosygin. In international negotiations, Stalin was rigid; Khrushchev responded to hard bargaining; Kosygin may try harder to get along with everybody as he and his associates move toward the F-S level.

F-S man may return to the religiousness which E-R man has tended to leave behind, but he does not value religion in the same way as D-Q man did. Religious ritual and dogma are not important to F-S man; what is important is the spiritual attitude, the tender touch.

The ascendance of F-S values shocks the materialistic establishment, which views them as signs of regrettable weakness and as a surrender of self for social approval. According to Graves's theory, however, man has subordinated his self-interest for the time being only; self-interest will return again in a new and higher form, the G-T form of existence.

This next level develops from the resolution of his animalistic problems. He has learned and developed values which would assure physiological satisfaction, provide for the continuance of a way of life, assure him that he would survive whether others did or not, assure him of a future salvation, bring him earthly satisfaction here and now, and enable him to be accepted and liked by others.

Now something happens which changes his behavior markedly, for suddenly the human being is free to focus on himself and the world, and to see himself and his situation as it really is.

### **How People Learn at Different Levels of Existence: A Radical Challenge for Educators**

Psychologist Graves suggests that people in educational systems should be grouped according to their level of existence, and each group educated in a way that is congruent with its members' level of existence.

He comes to that conclusion through his analysis of how people learn at different levels of existence:

**A-N State:** At this level, an individual is motivated only by stimuli which affect his imperative physiological needs. He adapts through a process of habituation or accustomization. Learning, in the sense of change in subsequent activation patterns which are relatively permanent, does not take place at this level.

**B-O Level:** At this second level, the neurological system is activated by changes, particularly sudden changes, in the mode or intensity of the stimuli associated with one of man's innate reflexive networks. Learning occurs only when there is a temporal overlap between innate reflexive states and the appearance of a concurrent stimulus condition; that is, learning takes place through the classical conditioning method (best known through the work of Russian psychologist Ivan Pavlov).

**C-P Level:** Here man is activated to learn by stimuli that can be used to satisfy specific need states such as hunger, thirst, and sex. The means to this kind of learning is operant conditioning or the 'trial-and-error learning method; that is, a person learns by making movements which shortly after being made bring about tensional release from the specific drive state. Learning takes place best when much activity is spent getting to the reward, the reward is presented soon after the act is performed, and the need state is very strong. For example, a C-P personality can best learn to spell 10 words if (1) he spends a lot of time at the task, (2) he gets a candy bar or other food as soon as he has succeeded in learning how to spell the words, and (3) he is very hungry. The C-P personality is egocentric, impulsive and hedonistic. For him the best answer to any problem is the one that brings him immediate pleasure regardless of what happens to anyone else.

**D-Q Level:** People at the fourth level of existence contrast sharply with those at the C-P level because they learn best through punishment rather than reward. At the D-Q level, a person is extremely sensitive to punishment and is motivated, above all else, to avoid aversive stimulation. In other words, D-Q people learn best when they are punished for doing the wrong thing.

"Punishment is a method one should never use if he wants effective, constructive learning from the impulsive, anger-prone, immediate reward-seeking person centralized in the C-P system," Graves warns. "To use the punitive methodology with the C-P is to invite uncontrolled, destructive acts upon the promoter of, or the instruments of, the learning system. But, when the D-Q way of thinking is dominant in man, the most effective means to achieve desired learning is through punitive, aversive stimulation. For some reason related to the presence of an excess of adrenaline in the system, a person centralized in the D-Q state is particularly attuned to aversive stimulation. Learning is accomplished best by getting him to avoid that which will lead to punishment."

In the D-Q state, says Graves, no punishment seems to mean no learning, while too much punishment produces rigid patterns that are very difficult to change, and the wrong punishment seems to leave the person unaffected or to produce negative, hostile learning. For the rigid, authoritarian D-Q personality, learning means spewing back black-or-white answers.

**E-R Level:** At this fifth ['fourth' in text] level, man again learns in an active manner but not in the aggressive, immediate reward, no-punishment fashion as he does at the C-P level. At the E-R level, the major motivating

factors include a challenging ideational content and the degree to which the outcomes meet the person's expectations.

At this level, man can wait for delayed reward if the learning activity is under his own control and is replete with perceptual novelty. Learning at the E-R level does not have to be tied to a specific need state nor is it dependent on immediate reward. The keystones are (1) the opportunity to learn through his own efforts, (2) the presence of mild risk, and (3) much variety in the learning experience.

**F-S Level:** At the sixth or F-S level, an individual acquires new knowledge and potential behavior best through observation, without any direct external reinforcement for his own acts or without even engaging in the behavior he observes. This learning occurs when people watch how others respond to events in the environment or to symbols such as words and pictures. That is, F-S man learns by watching what happens when other people behave one way or another.

**G-T and H-U Levels:** Graves is not yet certain how people learn best at these levels.

### **Different Educational Systems Are Needed**

Since people learn in different ways, Graves maintains that educators must develop separate learning systems for people at different levels of existence.

At the D-Q level, a person thinks in terms of absolute right and absolute wrong, and for this type of person the rigid, authoritarian, highly moralistic style of many traditional schools, emphasizing memorizing and spewing back material, may be appropriate.

People at the E-R level introduce situationalism and relativism into their way of thinking. To them there may be many answers to a problem, but there is one *best* answer. They want to comprehend in an impersonal, objective, distant, rational manner. They see learning as a game which has precise rules which, if mastered, will enable them to win the game. They think in terms of analysis, breaking things into their parts, and they prefer to add up their own conception of the parts.

People who think in an F-S way are unhappy over the absence of personal relevance in any abstractions that are a part of learning. They think in terms of sensing and apprehending rather than in terms of comprehending. They tend to refuse to deal with anything that analyzes or breaks down a learning experience.

For people at the G-T level, knowledge exists in specific settings. The settings differ and so do the knowers. Several interpretations of any phenomenon are always legitimate, depending on the person, his point of view, and his purpose. For students at the G-T level, a teacher's job is to pose problems, help provide ways to see them, but leave to each person the decision of which answers to accept.

The theory of levels goes a long way toward explaining some of the problems currently faced by education, says Graves. In the United States, for example, the concept of education derives primarily from the limiting point of view of people who think only in a righteously moralistic (D-Q level) or technologically objectivistic fashion (E-R). This restricts education to only two of the major forms of human behavior known to exist.

In the righteous, absolutistic D-Q framework, there is a right and wrong in everything. There is absolute right in what education should be and absolute right as to how it should be carried out. Any other approach to education is an erroneous frill. From this viewpoint, the purposed of education is to inculcate the students with the right way to think, act, and believe.

In the technological or E-R viewpoint, education should strive to make the student think in an objectivistic, positivistic, rational, reasoning way. The goal of education is for the student to have hard facts at his fingertips and be able to reach cold, reasoned conclusions.

From Graves's viewpoint, however, the aim of education should be as follows:

- (1) To take the open student from thinking levels of lower complexity through successive stages to thinking levels of higher complexity.
- (2) To provide the closed student with that increase in his knowledge and skills with which he can be comfortable and survive and live better as a human being.

A school or university should have a means of ascertaining the level of thinking complexity of each matriculating student, says Graves. The administrators should then determine whether the student is just entering this form of thinking, consolidating it, or is ready to move on to the next possible way of thinking. If he is just entering the level, he should be grouped with students who are also entering the same system so as to firm up his newly found way of thinking. Open-minded students should be placed in an instructional situation with a teacher who is confronting the same conceptual problems the students are confronted with. Closed students should be grouped with similarly closed fellow students and be instructed by a teacher who is knowledgeable in the complexities of that particular way of living.

### **How People at Different Levels Form Groups**

Graves has tested some of his theories on his students at Union College in Schenectady, New York. In one experiment, he grouped students according to their levels of existence and then gave them various problems to solve.

Students at the D-Q level split up into a number of groups, each with its own leader. Graves likens this to the feudal craft society with elaborate hierarchies within trade guilds.

E-R students had a huge argument which ended when an overall leader emerged.

F-S students worked well with no leader at all.

G-T students would choose a leader who was well-qualified for the task at hand. later they would drop him for another leader better-suited for the next task.

The percentage of his students in the different categories has shifted dramatically in the past two decades. In 1952 Graves found 34% of his students at the D-Q level and 10% at the G-T level. Today the figures have approximately reversed, an indication of the U.S. shift away from the D-Q level.



Progress through the various levels of existence is not inevitable, Graves warns. Man may be stymied by external circumstance, such as poverty, helplessness or social disapproval. Such obstacles loom as boulders in man's path, and can result in fixation at a particular level, or regression to a previous one.



## **Families on Welfare: An Application of the Theory of Levels of Existence**

Several years ago, Clare Graves was asked to give a talk on the future of welfare. To prepare himself, he went out into his community and talked with people who were on welfare or who soon would be. Here is what he found:

### ***Case 1: The Georgio Family***

Mrs. Georgio is a mother of 13 with an unemployed husband. I found her door open. She was sitting, apparently looking out through the door, but she seemed not to see me. So I stopped at the threshold and knocked. She showed no sign of recognition of my presence or my knock; I knocked louder but still got no response; so I walked in, believing she was, by now, certainly aware of my presence. Finally her eyelids lifted, signaling a limited sign of recognition. I told her my purpose was to ascertain her needs so that I could help her.

Slowly, oh, so slowly, she lifted her obviously weary body, uttering not a word. Her right hand extended a feeble sign to follow, which I did. As she moved, she communicated only by gesture, pointing to all the undone things, all that she needed and the overwhelming problems of her brood. Never did she utter a word. When the tour was over, I left, knowing that I had seen what I had expected when I came in, namely that she was centralized at the first level of human existence, and New York's elaborate welfare program was not meeting her needs.

### ***Case 2: The Richards Family***

My second stop was at the home of the Richards family. At my knock the door was opened by a lady holding and comforting a crying baby. The lady recognized me with a wan smile, lovingly patted the baby and offered it to me to pat. When I did so, she responded with a convulsive flood of tears. She threw her arms around me and the baby and drew me into the house, telling me how glad she was that someone had come, because she was at the end of her rope. She said the six weeks since her husband Tim was hurt had been too much for her. She had been trying to feed her family of five on \$15 a week since Tim fell and she desperately needed help.

When I asked what had happened to Tim, she said he fell when we had that slippery snow. I asked if he had seen a doctor. No, she had no way to get him help because she couldn't leave the kids, and he couldn't go by himself.

### ***Case 3: The Franklin Family***

My visit to the Franklin family was short and explosive. I had been informed that Mr. Franklin was on bail for willful destruction of property, that his trial was

almost due and that doubtless he was headed for jail. He answered my knock with a yank of the door which almost tore it from the hinges.

“Who in the hell are you and what in the devil do you want? And can't you see I've got enough trouble without your goddamned questions? What the hell do you expect of me? All I did was break up a few things in that \_\_\_ store when that son-of-a-bitch would not give me what I earned. Sure, I kicked out his \_\_\_ window and what are you and your lousy pigs gonna' do? You gonna' lock me up? You gonna' take me from my wife? You gonna' make me look a no-good man to my kids? All you \_\_\_ officials ever do is yank a man's \_\_\_ out.”

Again I had seen what I thought might be there, welfare does not meet the needs of this family, and our criminal procedures create problems for families like this where the man is centralized at the third level of human existence.

#### ***Case 4: The Martin Family***

Mrs. Martin, a lovely but pitiful widow, said that essentially her needs were for someone to tell her what to do about some problems she had right now. Mary, she thought, was about to or was sleeping with her boy friend. Should she get her some pills? Did I think it was right that Mary should use them? What should she buy with her welfare check? What food should she serve tonight? Ed was going to quit school and go to work because he was big, though very young. Should she let him? What should she do? I asked if she had enough money to meet her needs. "That is not my problem," she said. "My problem is that I don't know what to do and the worker just can't get around to help me."

Here was Mrs. Martin, centralized at the fourth level of human existence. Economically, she was at least at subsistence level, but welfare was not meeting her needs.

#### ***Case 5: The Williams Family***

My last visit was to Mrs. Williams, her husband and two children. I learned that Mr. Williams had quit his job a month earlier when his company put a new foreman over him. He was seeking work, but what he wanted was outdoor construction, not the indoor work that was available. She had to lock the kids, 4 and 5, in the house so that she could baby-sit for others while he looked for work. She had to do this to have some food until the Welfare Department investigated and declared them eligible, because what they had saved had gone in payments for their home. She didn't want to go on welfare, but they had to stay alive. She was certain that they would have to give up their home and lose their equity to get welfare. Did I know of any 'real' work he could do? Did any of my farmer friends need help who could pick him up for work, since he had no transportation?

This family, reaching for the fifth level of human existence, has a current need, one that our welfare system is not organized to meet.

Thus I saw five cases at five different levels of existence, all with needs that were not met simply because, as I see it, the welfare services in my locality are not organized to meet such problems. These problems do not arise from a lack of welfare funds nor a lack of welfare workers, nor do the problems stem from personal psychological problems in the people, none of whom is a psychological case. They are problems which exist because welfare, as now organized in my locality, treats welfare cases from an inadequate conceptual picture of the nature of man. Our welfare system does not have a conception of the growth and development of the human organism which is adequate for the problems.

### ***How to Help Such People***

Mrs. Georgio, our first case, seems to be centralized at or near the A-N level of existence. Behaviorally, it appears that she has no cognitive power to bring to bear upon her problems. There is insufficient energy in her system to activate the higher mental processes, thus she desperately needs someone to think and to do *with* her if not *for* her. She needs the help of human hands above anything else, the help that will reduce her exhaustion, and will do what she does not have the energy to do. If she had such human help regularly for quite a period of time, she might be able to begin to move to the next higher level of existence, where what she faces would not be so overwhelming. But where in our welfare organizations have we developed this reservoir of helping human hands which could nurture this woman to a higher level? We give money and provide advice and counsel, but we do not provide the needed day-in, day-out help that Mrs. Georgio needs.

We could do this, possibly, if only we would change our schools to provide externships or the like for young people bored by meaningless courses in school. If we utilized pride in helping one's own group and took care to avoid any semblance of training children *to serve* out-groups, we might solve two problems at one time, particularly in the externs were from other welfare families and earned their share of welfare by helping people like Mrs. Georgio.

The Richards family, with its crisis medical problem, is seemingly full of magic and superstitious beliefs, and has only a naturalistic time concept and a very limited concept of space. Such people are usually centralized in the B-O state of existence and require welfare services which accommodate the limited cause, time and space concepts of this level of existence. For such people (as well as for those whose level of existence is lower), we need to think of mobile medical services brought directly into the homes. Otherwise we can only expect that their medical problems will exacerbate their other problems.

Our angry man in the third case, the Franklin family, represents probably the most difficult level of existence where welfare is concerned. When centralized at the C-P level, as is Mr. Franklin, an individual lives in a psychological world full of suspicion and anger. We must show almost immediate response to his needs, since the C-P level does not possess postponement capacity. Asking a C-P person to wait while one investigates the legitimacy of his professed need is to induce his anger and bring forth his suspicion that no one really wants to help him in the first place. Man at the C-P level is demanding and in many respects appears to be amoral, particularly if he feels a system is not established to help him right here, right now, and before anyone else.

In the instance of Mr. Franklin, we see the need for increased change in our legal services, in our court procedures and in our correctional procedures, for the needs help to retain his manhood. Otherwise, his angry, suspicious, impatient psychology will break loose in more destructiveness. We must think about how not to emasculate this man in the eyes of his family, even if he should have to go to jail, and we must have some immediately responsive service people whom he can call on for correction of perceived injustice almost as fast as the problem comes to a head. Here there is need for some kind of welfare 'crisis clinic' to which people can turn when the C-P tendency to live by immediate reaction brings upheaval into their lives.

In the Martin family, the widow with two teen-age children seems to live in a D-Q world, where she depends on authority for every movement that she makes. She needs almost constant guidance and support to assure her that she is doing the right thing. But our welfare services operated with a client load that will not provide the very close, almost daily supervision needed by D-Q clients. The needed service would plan her day for her and tell her what to do until she has become secure. The general D-Q need for close and directive supervision is simply not adequately met today.

Our next case, the Williams family, has taken a bold step toward independent, self-sufficient living, and property acquisition, but their foundation is tottering as they face the problem of becoming eligible for aid. In New York State they would have to liquidate their equity to establish eligibility for assistance. In this situation, any guaranteed-loan type of financial support is needed. For people at the E-R level, a guaranteed income and a source for credit would remove the fear of moving out on their own. Without this basic protection to assure them that they can hold on to property (rather than forcing them to liquidate their possessions), people centralized at the E-R level like Mr. Williams cannot grow in independence and become the self-sufficient persons that we want them to be and that they want to be.

These five cases, although oversimplified, do present a picture of our need for a pluralistic welfare system, designed to meet differences of need, rather than a

general system designed to treat clients as if they all had the same problems and the same type of need.



*The author, Clare W. Graves, is a professor of psychology at Union College in Schenectady, New York. He previously served as a criminal psychologist at Cuyahoga City Court in Cleveland, Ohio, and as a professor at Case Institute of Technology and Western Reserve University. He began research in 1952 on what he terms the highlight of his career: his theory of 'The Levels of Human Existence.' He found the theory served as a powerful tool for understanding problems in such different fields as business*

*management, education, criminal justice and welfare. Graves began lecturing on the subject as early as 1961 and is now working on a book, *Up the Existential Staircase*, that will present the theory in a more complete form.*

*[Because of health issues, Dr. Graves was forced to discontinue work on that book shortly after the publication of this article. However, the completed sections of his manuscript, along with additional materials directly from Dr. Graves's own writings and presentations, are available as [The Never Ending Quest](#).]*