

Summary of the Spiral Dynamics Model by Ken Wilber

In *Integral Psychology* I present charts that summarize over 100 developmental psychologists, East and West, ancient and modern and postmodern.

Spiral Dynamics is only one of the 100, but I have recently been using it quite a bit because it is simple and fairly easy to learn, even for beginners. Based on extensive research begun by Clare Graves and developed by Don Beck and Christopher Cowan, Spiral Dynamics sees human beings evolving or developing through eight major waves of consciousness. For convenience, I will reprint my brief summary of these from *A Theory of Everything*.

Spiral Dynamics and the Waves of Existence

The first six levels are "subsistence levels" marked by "first-tier thinking." Then there occurs a revolutionary shift in consciousness: the emergence of "being levels" and "second-tier thinking," of which there are two major waves.

Here is a brief description of all eight waves, the percentage of the world population at each wave, and the percentage of social power held by each.

1. Beige: Archaic-Instinctual

The level of basic survival; food, water, warmth, sex, and safety have priority. Uses habits and instincts just to survive. Distinct self is barely awakened or sustained. Forms into survival bands to perpetuate life.

Where seen: First human societies, newborn infants, senile elderly, late-stage Alzheimer's victims, mentally ill street people, starving masses, shell shock. Approximately 0.1% of the adult population, 0% power.

2. Purple: Magical-Animistic

Thinking is animistic; magical spirits, good and bad, swarm the earth leaving blessings, curses, and spells which determine events. Forms into ethnic tribes. The spirits exist in ancestors and bond the tribe. Kinship and lineage establish political links. Sounds "holistic" but is actually atomistic: "there is a name for each bend in the river but no name for the river."

Where seen: Belief in voodoo-like curses, blood oaths, ancient grudges, good luck charms, family rituals, magical ethnic beliefs and superstitions; strong in Third-World settings, gangs, athletic teams, and corporate "tribes." 10% of the population, 1% of the power.

3. Red: Power Gods

First emergence of a self distinct from the tribe; powerful, impulsive, egocentric, heroic. Magical-mythic spirits, dragons, beasts, and powerful people. Archetypal gods and goddesses, powerful beings, forces to be reckoned with, both good and bad. Feudal lords protect underlings in exchange for obedience and labor. The basis of feudal empires -- power and glory. The world is a jungle full of threats and predators. Conquers, out-foxes, and dominates; enjoys

self to the fullest without regret or remorse; be here now.

Where seen: The "terrible twos," rebellious youth, frontier mentalities, feudal kingdoms, epic heroes, James Bond villains, gang leaders, soldiers of fortune, New-Age narcissism, wild rock stars, Atilla the Hun, Lord of the Flies . 20% of the population, 5% of the power.

4. Blue: Mythic Order

Life has meaning, direction, and purpose, with outcomes determined by an all-powerful Other or Order. This righteous Order enforces a code of conduct based on absolutist and unvarying principles of "right" and "wrong." Violating the code or rules has severe, perhaps everlasting repercussions. Following the code yields rewards for the faithful. Basis of ancient nations . Rigid social hierarchies; paternalistic; one right way and only one right way to think about everything. Law and order; impulsivity controlled through guilt; concrete-literal and fundamentalist belief; obedience to the rule of Order; strongly conventional and conformist. Often "religious" or "mythic" [in the mythic-membership sense; Graves and Beck refer to it as the "saintly/absolutistic" level], but can be secular or atheistic Order or Mission.

Where seen: Puritan America, Confucian China, Dickensian England, Singapore discipline, totalitarianism, codes of chivalry and honor, charitable good deeds, religious fundamentalism (e.g., Christian and Islamic), Boy and Girl Scouts, "moral majority," patriotism. 40% of the population, 30% of the power.

5. Orange: Scientific Achievement

At this wave, the self "escapes" from the "herd mentality" of blue, and seeks truth and meaning in individualistic terms -- hypothetico-deductive, experimental, objective, mechanistic, operational -- "scientific" in the typical sense. The world is a rational and well-oiled machine with natural laws that can be learned, mastered, and manipulated for one's own purposes. Highly achievement oriented, especially (in America) toward materialistic gains. The laws of science rule politics, the economy, and human events. The world is a chess-board on which games are played as winners gain pre-eminence and perks over losers. Marketplace alliances; manipulate earth's resources for one's strategic gains. Basis of corporate states.

Where seen: The Enlightenment, Ayn Rand's Atlas Shrugged, Wall Street, emerging middle classes around the world, cosmetics industry, trophy hunting, colonialism, the Cold War, fashion industry, materialism, secular humanism, liberal self-interest. 30% of the population, 50% of the power.

6. Green: The Sensitive Self

Communitarian, human bonding, ecological sensitivity, networking. The human spirit must be freed from greed, dogma, and divisiveness; feelings and caring supersede cold rationality; cherishing of the earth, Gaia, life. Against hierarchy; establishes lateral bonding and linking. Permeable self, relational self, group intermeshing. Emphasis on dialogue, relationships. Basis of value communities (i.e., freely chosen affiliations based on shared sentiments). Reaches decisions through reconciliation and consensus (downside: interminable "processing" and incapacity to reach decisions). Refresh spirituality, bring harmony, enrich human potential. Strongly egalitarian, pluralistic values, social construction of reality, diversity, multiculturalism, relativistic value systems; this worldview is often called pluralistic relativism. Subjective, nonlinear thinking; shows a greater degree of affective warmth, sensitivity, and caring, for earth and all its inhabitants.

Where seen: Deep ecology, postmodernism, Netherlands idealism, Rogerian counseling, Canadian health care, humanistic psychology, liberation theology, cooperative inquiry, World Council of Churches, Greenpeace, animal rights, ecofeminism, post-colonialism, Foucault/Derrida, politically correct, diversity movements, human rights issues, ecopsychology. 10% of the population, 15% of the power. [Note: this is 10% of the world population. Don Beck estimates that around 20-25% of the American population is green.]

With the completion of the green meme, human consciousness is poised for a quantum jump into "second-tier thinking." Clare Graves referred to this as a "momentous leap," where "a chasm of unbelievable depth of meaning is crossed." In essence, with second-tier consciousness, one can think both vertically and horizontally, using both hierarchies and heterarchies (both ranking and linking). One can therefore, for the first time, vividly grasp the entire spectrum of interior development, and thus see that each level, each meme, each wave is crucially important for the health of the overall Spiral. As I would word it, each wave is "transcend and include." That is, each wave goes beyond (or transcends) its predecessor, and yet it includes or embraces it in its own makeup. For example, a cell transcends but includes molecules, which transcend but include atoms. To say that a molecule goes beyond an atom is not to say that molecules hate atoms, but that they love them: they embrace them in their own makeup; they include them, they don't marginalize them. Just so, each wave of existence is a fundamental ingredient of all subsequent waves, and thus each is to be cherished and embraced. Moreover, each wave can itself be activated or reactivated as life circumstances warrant. In emergency situations, we can activate red power drives; in response to chaos, we might need to activate blue order; in looking for a new job, we might need orange achievement drives; in marriage and with friends, close green bonding. All of these memes have something important to contribute.

But what none of the first-tier memes can do, on their own, is fully appreciate the existence of the other memes. Each of the first-tier memes thinks that its worldview is the correct or best perspective. It reacts negatively if challenged; it lashes out, using its own tools, whenever it is threatened. Blue order is very uncomfortable with both red impulsiveness and orange individualism. Orange individualism thinks blue order is for suckers and green egalitarianism is weak and woo-woo. Green egalitarianism cannot easily abide excellence and value rankings, big pictures, hierarchies, or anything that appears authoritarian, and thus green reacts strongly to blue, orange, and anything post-green.

All of that begins to change with second-tier thinking. Because second-tier consciousness is fully aware of the interior stages of development - even if it cannot articulate them in a technical fashion -- it steps back and grasps the big picture, and thus second-tier thinking appreciates the necessary role that all of the various memes play. Second-tier awareness thinks in terms of the overall spiral of existence, and not merely in the terms of any one level. Where the green meme begins to grasp the numerous different systems and pluralistic contexts that exist in different cultures (which is why it is indeed the sensitive self, i.e., sensitive to the marginalization of others), second-tier thinking goes one step further. It looks for the rich contexts that link and join these pluralistic systems, and thus it takes these separate systems and begins to embrace, include, and integrate them into holistic spirals and integral meshworks. Second-tier thinking, in other words, is instrumental in moving from relativism to holism, or from pluralism to

integralism. The extensive research of Graves, Beck, and Cowan indicates that there are at least two major waves to this second-tier integral consciousness:

7. Yellow: Integrative

Life is a kaleidoscope of natural hierarchies [holarchies], systems, and forms. Flexibility, spontaneity, and functionality have the highest priority. Differences and pluralities can be integrated into interdependent, natural flows.

Egalitarianism is complemented with natural degrees of ranking and excellence. Knowledge and competency should supersede power, status, or group sensitivity. The prevailing world order is the result of the existence of different levels of reality (memes) and the inevitable patterns of movement up and down the dynamic spiral. Good governance facilitates the emergence of entities through the levels of increasing complexity (nested hierarchy). 1% of the population, 5% of the power.

8. Turquoise: Holistic

Universal holistic system, holons/waves of integrative energies; unites feeling with knowledge; multiple levels interwoven into one conscious system. Universal order, but in a living, conscious fashion, not based on external rules (blue) or group bonds (green). A "grand unification" [a "theory of everything" or T.O.E.] is possible, in theory and in actuality. Sometimes involves the emergence of a new spirituality as a meshwork of all existence. Turquoise thinking uses the entire Spiral; sees multiple levels of interaction; detects harmonics, the mystical forces, and the pervasive flow-states that permeate any organization. 0.1% of the population, 1% of the power. With less than 2 percent of the population at second-tier thinking (and only 0.1 percent at turquoise), second-tier consciousness is relatively rare because it is now the "leading-edge" of collective human evolution.

As examples, Beck and Cowan mention items that include Teilhard de Chardin's noosphere, chaos and complexity theories, universal systems thinking, integral-holistic theories, Gandhi's and Mandela's pluralistic integration, with increases in frequency definitely on the way, and even higher memes still in the offing....