

An Introduction to Spiral Dynamics Integral The Spinning Thread of Right Human Relations

Rosemary Wilkie, is an accomplished story teller and writer of children's books that contain the seeds of the natural laws and values with which to live by. She also teaches and gives talks on Spiral Dynamics.

The current turmoil in the financial markets is a striking lesson in the interdependence of the human race. It has burst upon us when we are already deeply concerned about climate change, food supply, social deprivation, and the wars and terrorism arising endlessly between peoples with conflicting values and belief systems. We are being forced to question everything we took for granted and at the same time expand our awareness to the entire world.

Fourteen billion years ago an awesomely powerful impulse sprang from the void, from God, from the Source, creating energy, light, matter, galaxies, stars and planets, Earth, the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms. And, more recently, as life became more complex and organised, it produced consciousness.

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Michal J Eastcott

We are apt to forget the wholeness of the processes and experiences in which we are involved. Michal Eastcott, co-founder of Sundial House, wrote in (*'The Story of the Self*) that throughout the ages this life force has fought for its very existence, but that its germ of intention, its will to continuity and development, has never wavered. The law of evolution governs life on earth. No form of life can remain unchanged for long without crystallising and disappearing.

History records many examples of turbulence, profound change and mass migrations. With hindsight we see that it is in chaotic times that great new ideas appear. We need new ideas urgently now, because Einstein said: no problem can be solved from the level of consciousness that created it. Tribal antipathy that would once have had only local significance can now have world-wide implications. It is no longer possible to ignore growing separation between the haves and the have-nots in the world, or to deny the impact of our life-style and technological advances on the planet. Humpty Dumpty has fallen off the wall and all the king's horses and men (our total resources) cannot put him back together again.

Ancient teachings and modern research now combine in what is known as developmental psychology, defining distinct stages of development that swing from the individual to the collective and back. . . .sequentially emerging stages are themselves organised within a larger dynamic system, and are related to each other within a living evolutionary spiral of development. Maslow's basic hierarchy of needs is well known. Robert Kegan, Jean Piaget and Jane Loevinger produced other classifications. However the greatest contribution to the field is that of Clare W. Graves, a professor of psychology in Union College, New York. He studied *values*, asking each interviewee to describe their ideal person, and a clear pattern emerged, a pattern validated by subsequent research and experience. His painstaking research, begun in 1952, showed how the sequentially emerging stages are themselves organised within a larger dynamic system, and are related to each other within a living evolutionary spiral of development. Each stage is shaped by its relationship to the other stages. Every baby as it grows recapitulates human cultural history. Psychology is a *process*.

After Graves died in 1986 his work was continued by his colleague Dr Don Beck, who field tested it with black and white South African leaders during the transition out of apartheid. Don Beck and his student Christopher Cowan published a book in 1996: 'Spiral Dynamics.'

They ascribed colours to the stages, for easier comprehension:

PURPLE: In fearful primitive times, we found safety in our tribe by according divine status to frightening natural forces, and placated the spirits with magic.

RED: When these rituals began to stifle us, some began to think 'what about me?' and assert themselves ruthlessly, craving honour and heroism.

BLUE: In the ensuing anarchy and chaos, we sought order and meaning, and found it in self-sacrificing and unquestioning obedience to an absolute God or king.

ORANGE: Then individualists found absolute order oppressive, became tired of waiting for future reward, and competed to create the good life for themselves here and now.

GREEN: When materialism failed to bring happiness, we became egalitarian and turned inwards to rediscover human feeling and spirituality. Each step represented *new thinking for new times*. Transcending and including what had gone before.

Each stage is called a 'MEME', (building on Richard Dawkin's use of 'meme' to describe units of cultural information: eg: puritan work ethic, power dressing). A 'MEME' - values meme - is like a container within which our values and beliefs form and fit, and which attracts and repels others. We are so immersed in the one we inhabit we are not usually aware of it.

The first tier is one of mutual incomprehension. People immersed in the beliefs, habits and customs of one of the above stages *cannot* understand the thinking of those in other first tier stages. It is only when we shift up to the second tier, **YELLOW** and **TURQUOISE** that we gain the broad perspective that enables us to understand them all.

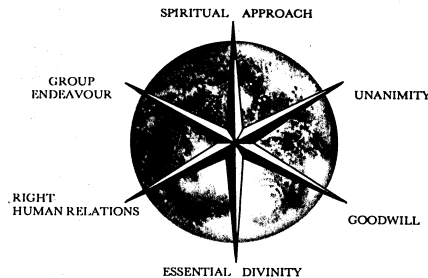
For example: the peasant clearing a patch of rain forest thinks of feeding his family, the buyer of his cows will fight to keep his job, the corporation that employs him thinks of its profits, westerners campaigning to preserve the rain forest worry about global warming and the future of the planet. Different life conditions. Different ways of thinking

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Different times force us to think differently. We must now outgrow the confines of our belief in science, which was a necessary stage in evolution. We do not have to abandon it, we have to transcend and include it. We have evolved in a similar way many times before.

This is the first of six articles describing Spiral Dynamics Integral in much more detail. This will enable you to see yourself and those around you with greater clarity and compassion, and to gain profound insight into the challenges of life in the twenty-first century.

As we meditate on the laws and principles that maintain planetary integrity, let us remember that evolution is at work, and that our individual and collective decisions are already shaping the future. We are co-creators of evolution. The responsibility is ours.



A Group is not a place or a person or a group of people, it is a field of consciousness.

GLOSSARY

MEME - MEME reflects a world view, a valuing system, a level of psychological existence, a belief structure, an organising principle, a way of thinking or a mode of adjustment. It represents, firstly then, a core intelligence that forms systems and directs human behaviour. Secondly, it impacts upon all life choices as a decision-making framework. Thirdly, each MEME can manifest itself in both healthy and unhealthy forms. Fourthly, such a MEME is a discrete structure for thinking, not just a set of ideas, values or cause. Fifthly, it can brighten and dim as the Life Conditions (consisting of historic Times, geographic Place, existential Problems, and societal Circumstances) change.