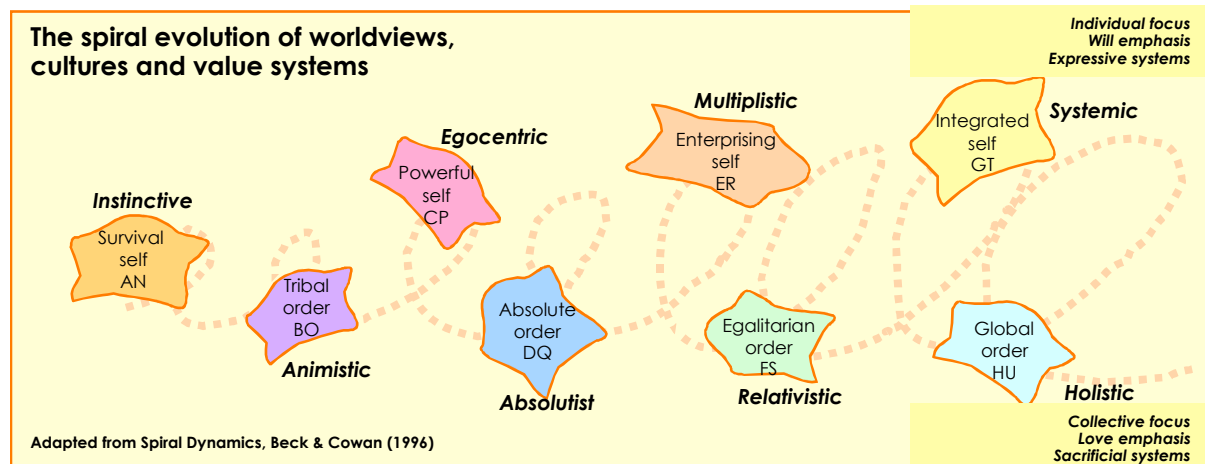


# Spiral Dynamics and Value Systems

“Our thinking creates problems that the same type of thinking will not solve”  
Albert Einstein

“Without some sort of worldview, we remain lost in the blooming buzzing confusion of experience, as William James put it. In other words, all of our individual perceptions are, to some extent, embedded in particular worldviews. Within these worldviews, we still possess abundant freedom of choice, but worldviews generally constrain what we are even considering choosing.”  
(Ken Wilber, p262 One Taste)



Spiral Dynamics (developed by Dr Don Beck and Chris Cowan and based on the work of the late Professor Clare W Graves) is an approach to understanding the development of individual people, organisations and societies. This system goes the closest of any I have come across to revealing the ‘hidden codes’ or underlying patterns behind how and why people, organisations and societies, change and evolve. The basic Spiral Dynamics evolutionary value systems are described below. In reading the table, start at the bottom (AN) and work upward:

The 8 Value Systems	Basic motives	Thinking	Structures	Process
<b>8 Turquoise: Holistic (HU)</b>	Attention to whole-Earth dynamics and macro level actions	Holistic	Global networks	Ecological
<b>7 Yellow: Systemic (GT)</b>	Flexible adaptation to change through connected, big picture views	Systemic	Interactive	Integrative
<b>6 Green: Relativistic (FS)</b>	Well-being of people and building consensus gets highest priority	Relativistic	Egalitarian	Consensual
<b>5 Orange: Multiplistic (ER)</b>	Possibility thinking focused on making things better for one-self	Multiplistic	Delegative	Strategic
<b>4 Blue: Absolutist (DQ)</b>	Absolute belief in one right way and obedience to authority	Absolutist	Pyramid	Authoritarian
<b>3 Red: Egocentric (CP)</b>	Enforce power over self, others, and nature through exploitive independence	Egocentric	Empires	Exploitative
<b>2 Purple: Animistic (BO)</b>	Blood relationships and mysticism in a magical and scary world	Animistic	Tribal	Circular
<b>1 Beige: Automatic (AN)</b>	Staying alive through innate sensory equipment	Automatic	Loose bands	Survivalist

Adapted from: Spiral Dynamics, Beck and Cowan (1996)

## The key concepts

- There are eight Value Systems that describe fundamentally different 'world-views', belief structures and operating systems. These Value Systems emerge in a consistent pattern and sequence according to the prevailing **life conditions** and challenges experienced by an individual, organisation or society. In Graves' terminology (AN, BO, etc) the first letter is a code for the type of life conditions (A, B, C, D, etc.) that give rise to a type of thinking or value system, as represented by the second letter (O, P, Q, R, etc).
- The Value systems describe types (of thinking) **in** people rather than types **of** people.
- None of the Value Systems is inherently better or worse than any other.
- The Value Systems describe **how** a person thinks, not **what** is valued.
- The Value Systems are like living organisms that can ebb and flow as our existence conditions change. People are capable of change and our brains and minds can adapt to the conditions of existence which emerge.
- Individual Value System profiles will reflect an infinite number of combinations and patterns, due to the uniqueness of everyone's development.
- Everyone is motivated, but we are not all motivated by the same things.
- This model can be applied equally to the development of individual people, organisations or societies.

## The principles of the Value Systems spiral

- A new worldview or value system tends to emerge and subsume previous levels when the existing worldview is inadequate to the critical challenges and problems experienced.
- The successive Value Systems alternate between 'expressive' systems which emphasise the individual and 'sacrificial' systems that emphasise the needs of the collective. In simple terms, individualism gives rise to the need for collectivism and vice-versa, with this fundamental dichotomy finding more and more complex and sophisticated expressions.
- An individual or organisation will tend to have a centre of gravity within one value system, although different aspects of the individual or different areas of an organisation may hold to different levels. There is a similarity here with the Psychosynthesis concept of sub-personalities, in which different parts of ourselves need to be recognised, accepted and synthesised within the context of the self/Self.
- Previous levels do not disappear – they remain subsumed to the total flow and add texture to the new and more complex value system, 'on call' in case the problems that awakened them to service reappear.
- The Systemic and Holistic value systems represent a step change in worldviews, a 'Second Tier' of thinking that is aware of and able to work with the whole spiral.
- Culture 'development' takes place within a value system, whereas cultural 'evolution' involves a progression from one value system to another
- Every human individual has the capacity to evolve to any level on the spiral.
- You may well find similarities between some of the Value Systems and the stages of psychological development in other theories (e.g. the Leadership Maturity Framework built on Loevinger's work), or for example, the chakras model of human energy levels.

## The Value Systems and organisational culture

The concept of organisational culture is now well established, although there are still plenty of different views about what it is and how it works. One way of describing and understanding the culture of an organisation or group is in terms of the 'value systems', ways of thinking or worldviews that prevail in individuals and groups. Often different value systems compete and clash for domination over each other within an organisation. This can be a cause of many organisational problems, although by increasing awareness and understanding of what is going on, it is possible to create a healthy mix and co-existence of different value systems. Another important way of looking at culture is in terms of the health of the overall human system and the change processes or transitions the organisation goes through over time as it's centre of gravity moves from one value system to another.

## The Value system in organisations

The 8 Value Systems	The management style in the organisation is...	People are most motivated by...
<b>2 Purple:</b> <b>Animistic (BO)</b>	<b>Family-like</b> – you are taken care of by a good leader who upholds traditional ways. The group comes first.	<b>Belonging</b> - Respectful of powerful figures. Following the traditions and customs of the past. Staying in the fold.
<b>3 Red:</b> <b>Egocentric (CP)</b>	<b>Autocratic</b> – there's one person in charge that tells you what to do or there are turf wars between competing 'powers'	<b>Respect</b> - Looking good in front of your boss and getting rewards or respect. Challenging and proving yourself to be a hero.
<b>4 Blue:</b> <b>Absolutist (DQ)</b>	<b>Bureaucratic</b> – everyone follows the rules that are laid down fairly to maintain order. Penalties or punishments keep misdemeanours in check.	<b>Duty</b> - An opportunity to perform your duty with sacrifice and honour. Learning to be disciplined. Creating or keeping order.
<b>5 Orange:</b> <b>Multiplistic (ER)</b>	<b>Economic</b> – enterprising and innovative behaviour gets rewarded. Constantly improving performance through finding and sharing best practices.	<b>Achievement</b> - The opportunity for success and progress. Striving to achieve personal or collective goals and live well.
<b>6 Green:</b> <b>Relativistic (FS)</b>	<b>Social</b> – a supportive team of equals developing their human potential. Decisions involve consensus building. Individual developmental needs are recognised and supported.	<b>Community</b> - Participation and affiliation in a group. Recognition of human rights, dignity and equality. Fulfilment through personal development and growth.
<b>7 Yellow:</b> <b>Systemic (GT)</b>	<b>Systemic</b> – a competency based network where methods are adapted to the task in hand. Blending different styles and solutions to do what works.	<b>Freedom</b> - To work as one chooses. Access to knowledge and systems that connect all the parts together. Opportunities to grow in knowledge and competency.
<b>8 Turquoise:</b> <b>Holistic (HU)</b>	<b>Global</b> – taking a global or worldwide view, blending insights from anywhere for the good of the whole. Engaging with the energy field of the whole system.	<b>Unity</b> - Being part of a global network seeking universal solutions to universal problems. Mastering synergy and synchronicity for the overall health of the system.