



Spiral Dynamics – Introduction

All life wants to grow and develop on a personal, collective, societal and organizational levels.

Our *individual* and *collective* path of development

"Why do people react so differently to situations?" – "Why do some people predominantly like appearances and are oriented towards them, i.e. labels, luxury, celebrities, whereas others seek the depth of existence and focus on being, are interested in and committed to nature and society, life and death?" – These were the questions posed by the psychologist [Clare W. Graves](#).

Thus, in the course of the 1950s, he collected relevant data and created a model¹. Building on Graves' research and following the developmental psychology of [Jean Piaget](#), in the mid-1990s [Don Beck](#) and [Chris Cowan](#) developed a *spiral-shaped*, upwardly open model over **9 levels** (with fluid transitions), which shows an individual as well as a social-cultural **development of consciousness**, which they called [Spiral Dynamics](#)®.

Each level has its strong/bright and its weaker/darker sides, which is only an observation and not a judgement. Their gifts are indicated in *brackets* in the title of each level.

When a new level (stage/step) unfolds, we also change our behavior and habits² to adapt to these new conditions. Furthermore, a change in consciousness can promote a change in values.

An **example** of practical application: In ending [Apartheid in South Africa](#) in the mid-90s, [Don Beck](#) worked with Nelson Mandela and Frederik De Klerk, among others. After Mandela, however, the work with *Spiral Dynamics* could no longer be continued because his successors Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma could not muster any understanding for it; an understanding that usually sets in during the transition phase from Modern (5) to Postmodern (6).

¹ A model can bring the understanding of reality closer, such as the [ball and stick model for molecules](#). But any model is *not* reality itself, only an approximation like a map. – Graves' *meme* model is very broad, because a meme is a worldview, a value system, a psychological level of existence, a belief structure, an organizing principle, a way of thinking and living.

² A **behaviour** is repeated by someone who is aware of it, while a **habit** is repeated by someone who is *not* aware of it.

I Consciousness of Unity WE



1. Archaic Consciousness (providing life)

At the beginning of life, still completely unconscious and *without* a distinct individuality, i.e. in a quasi "paradisiacal state", the human being lives entirely *in* the moment, *in* being, *in* the web of life³, *in* unity and *in* a natural, symbiotic connectedness. The only thing of importance is to somehow get by and survive.

2. Magical Consciousness (providing connection)

The cohesion in the extended family, tribe or clan with its customs, traditional myths and rituals offers sufficient protection and familiar security. This makes people feel part of the larger order of the forces of nature, the environment and their ancestors. Wise men, elders and shamans **interpret the world** and the cosmos.

3. Warrior Consciousness (providing power/strength)

Because life is experienced "as a struggle of the strongest for power, honor, respect and wealth", it is always necessary to be superior to others and to prove oneself in self-chosen heroism and unscrupulous struggle against enemy images, to break constraints and to assert one's own interests immediately. As a doer, I **shape "MY world"** and build "MY empire".

4. Traditional Consciousness (providing beauty)

Now it is important to create an identity through role models (strong authorities/leaders/gurus) and guidelines (clear rules and laws) as guarantors of law and order, meaning and morality. Deviations and ambiguities are neither recognized nor tolerated. Religion **interprets the world**, which follows a divine plan and assigns people their place.

5. Modern Consciousness (providing understanding)

Learning through experience, humans want to **improve the world and life for themselves and others** in the pursuit of autonomy, independence and personal happiness. Through strategic, efficient action and the search for the best solutions, progress emerges, which, thanks to science and technology, wants to make a "good life" and material prosperity possible for all.

³ Permanent life-network of unity, to which all living beings are always connected in a natural manner *unconsciously*, but to which the human being loses the memory due to his ego-development, but which one can *consciously* remember and *consciously* reconnect to later on.

6. Postmodern Consciousness (*providing love*)

After the *outer world*, the *inner world* needs to be **explored**, which connects psychology with the unconscious, the feminine. With the newly discovered focus on feeling, patriarchal traditions abruptly break down and humans, due to growing social and ecological responsibility, want to promote a sense of community and unity and share the resources of nature and society among all. Alternatives are created in nutrition, religious rites, sexual experience and orientation, ancient knowledge (esotericism) and in new forms of education.

This transition is followed by "a great leap in consciousness": • *instead of competition, there is cooperation (collaboration),* • *instead of a focus on conflict, there is a new focus on consensus (consensuality), and* • *instead of separation (analysis), there is unity (synthesis and holism), and* • *instead of an either-or mindset, there is a unifying as well as!*

7. Integral Consciousness I (*providing harmony*)

The path is the destination, therefore the process with open heart-to-heart communication is at the center, which combines novel experiences, other perspectives and even opposites into a new unity and harmony and strives for the common good of all beings. In the process, new forms of personal, inner freedom reveal themselves without harming other people or nature.

8. Integral Consciousness II (*providing wisdom*)

The world reveals itself as an infinitely enriching stage for experimentation and experience of working for all humanity, life and the "universal/divine", which is recognized/remembered and respected as "mystery". A strong collective of individuals unites and unfolds a minimalist way of living where *less is actually more*.

9. Consciousness of Unity (*providing happiness*)

All polarities flow together in harmony and all actions come from inner guidance and intuition – a *conscious* connection/merger in **unconditional love!**

In our meritocracy we are taught to judge everything. But – and I emphasize this once again – *Spiral Dynamics* is without judgement! It is like a neutral map or a navigation device that shows a path of development with levels that build on each other. It is like a river: from the source it becomes wider and deeper with its many tributaries. No one would say that the Danube or any other river is less valuable or important at its source than further down. Every phase and every development are important.

Urban