

I

Introduction – The Lay of the Land of this Book

Spiral Dynamics in Action Quest for the Master Code – An Introduction

About the Book

This book about Spiral Dynamics comes in the autumn of Don Beck's life. The stories told here, he lived. Most of the interventions described here, he facilitated himself. His memory stretches as far back as the Second World War. Today, he still watches international news on every possible TV and radio station, and actively participates as a citizen of his country and a member of the human race. The book was co-authored by Beck, friends and colleagues from Russia, America, Denmark and South Africa. These are elders in the Spiral community, but millennials (3rd and 4th generation Gravesians) were also involved. It is impossible to present a complete record of all the numerous interventions, consultations and strategies for which Beck was responsible. An effort was, however, made to present enough rich narratives for the reader to be triggered, inspired and even moved to action to make the world a better place for all.

The theory described here deals with the complex problem of how individuals, groups and societies handle changing *life conditions*. Systems in people, organizations and society help us to understand the adaptive capability of changing environmental conditions. These conditions in the environment study the following:

- World view: messaging and pattern recognition.
- Degree of complexity: existing or emerging codes of thinking.
- Command and control: the inherent flexibility.
- Organizing principles: the intensity of the condition.
- Elaborating stream implications: the view and implications of the past, present and future timeline.
- Potential: the functionality or health of the system.

The Purpose of the Book

The purpose of the book is not to offer an in-depth academic or theoretical knowledge of the key concepts and constructs described here. Although some attention is paid to the history and development of the theory and the properties and conditions thereof, this book uniquely offers the application of Spiral Dynamics in various geo-political settings in industrial domains and organizational spaces.

The wealth and richness of cases, the ethnographical understanding of different nations and groupings in nations, the depth of academic grounding and the practical work that Beck (on his own and in collaboration with others) conducted in more than 50 years of his practice can hardly be contained in a book like this. To add to this, all the exceptional work that some of Beck's students and associates have done, from a Spiral Dynamics stance, forms an extensive body of knowledge. Beck specifically requested that the book should feel like a potpourri of pearls of wisdom and important pieces of work integrated with specific milestones that have been achieved.

The book is aimed at assisting leaders in organizations and the public sector in the following:

- How to recognize, identify and define the social system's cultural DNA codes that they lead, and elaborate those codes to functions to be performed.
- How everything is impacted on whenever core value systems in the organization's or group's cultural DNA change.
- How to design different kinds of organizations, whether corporate, e.g. banks and mines, educational, religious/spiritual, sports and high-performance teams or military systems, as well as entrepreneurial and service organizations such as airlines and hospitals.
- How to apply the underlying processes, principles and tools of natural design to transcend the old, rigid, top-down leadership and management models.
- How to synthesize approaches to leadership, organizational theory and culture.
- How to go beyond holism into specific functional designs that morph and shift themselves as times change and new problems appear.

An attempt was made not to replicate work that was previously published. Rather, an eclectic compilation of writings and teachings of Spiral Dynamics as taught and interpreted by Don Edward Beck, and conceptualized by Clare W. Graves, are presented in a potpourri of theoretical, business and practical applications. The reader is reminded that, decades ago, Graves said that if one understood the structure and the implications of this theory well, it almost explained everything. That innate essence of this powerful theory, methodology and application may explain why the different parts and chapters may seem diverse and

INTRODUCTION

5

divergent, while in fact they deal with the same phenomenon. This is *humanity's Master Code* as Dr Don Edward Beck coined it.

The body of work is more than the book that you are now reading physically or electronically. In effect, the book only deals with the historical development, the theoretical building blocks needed to understand the concepts that we deal with here and an array of different applications. The book is just the physical manifestation of a wealth of cases, articles, blogs, case studies and sources that are available in a supportive technological network in the Cloud, to provide so much more than only another theoretical book. The intent was rather, firstly, to share the life work of Dr Don Beck, secondly, to illustrate the complex, yet integral, nature of the phenomenon and lastly, to provide a source of insight, lessons learnt and applications in diverse settings from the North to the South, from the East to the West, from politics to sports, and even on how it manifests in art. The following criteria were applied in choosing what to include and exclude in this book, and what to extend into the corresponding webpage:

- Grounding in initial Gravesian thought.
- The unique contribution that Beck brought to the field of study.
- Highlighting the unique integration of supportive theories that Beck offers.
- Application that stood the test of time in terms of the following:
 - Sustainability.
 - Credibility.
 - Transferability.
 - Academic depth.
 - Purist application of the Gravesian and Beckian theoretical foundation.

The purpose of the book is integral in nature. There are a few chapters with deep theoretical underpinning, that were peer-reviewed and presented with the necessary academic rigor from a constructivist ontological and interpretivistic epistemological perspective.

Further, other chapters are focused on the Spiral Dynamics practitioner. Here practical advice is presented on how to deal with real systematic and diverse issues. The unit of study differs from individual level to group to organizational and to geo-political level. An article is even included where Beck was described as the “shrink” that healed countries.

However, most importantly, the emphasis may be on leaders, in both private and public spaces. The solutions and decisions made so far have created the problems that we as humanity are faced with today. We desperately need more complex, systemic, integral and functional thinking to ensure that tomorrow offers different conditions for our children and those who come after us. In this book, a challenge is posed to leaders in all spheres, not necessarily to change their world view, but rather, consciously to ask different questions that will create different outcomes, since what we are doing today is creating significant and escalating side effects. The world is desperately in need of leaders who can interweave the

different gifts that can be unleashed by diversity of thought, as explained by Spiral Dynamics, through functional thinking and a process of integrating, so that simultaneous value-added capacities can manifest synergistically to the benefit of all social systems and also humanity at large.

The Methodology Followed

The methodology followed during the data-gathering phase of the book includes the content analysis of solicited data presented by Beck and his close colleagues. These data include course material, articles published over the years, different courses that were developed and facilitated, field notes, accreditation manuals and physical and electronic letters received from various political leaders, associates and participants of interventions over the years. A rich variety of audio and video tapes were transcribed, and content analyzed. These included original broadcasts of radio and television that featured Beck. Further, a literature review was conducted on the academic sources that influenced the development of Spiral Dynamics as a field of study, but also of PhD theses that applied the theory from a practitioner's stance or from an academic perspective. A large number of contemporary management, leadership, systems thinking, political, economic and cultural books informed the literature study. The reference list that is presented at the end of this book captures these sources. Field notes were taken by Thomas Q. Johns over a period of eighteen months. These field notes were data analyzed and insights gained were incorporated in the text. Niki McCuistion conducted three in-depth interviews that were recorded and transcribed. She also hosted a TV show that was broadcast on the McCuistion network. Further, 36 in-depth interviews were conducted by Dr Rica Viljoen, and audio- and video-taped by Johns over a period of 18 days. Again, these interviews were transcribed and coded. The methodology that was followed to present the chapters in the book is a blend of life history as described by Plummer (2001) and grounded theory as described by Charmaz (2008) and Viljoen (2017). The results of this inquiry are presented in the form of a tapestry of stories, metaphors, case studies, field notes, academic text, life history, theory and applications. Due to the diversity of authors, as well as the varying ontology and epistemology, some pieces are presented in the first person while other sections apply the third person. The academic chapters in the book are peer reviewed.

Structure of the Book

The book is divided into three parts. Each part will be described below. Owing to their systemic, integral and symbiotic relationship the chapters in the parts can even be classified in other parts. The different parts may have different feelings

INTRODUCTION

7

to them. It must be remembered that the book was co-created by diverse authors with diverse value systems in the Spiral. For this reason, some parts of the book may be easier for some readers to relate to, while others may be more foreign or even complicated. Before the actual text starts, a combination of various graphics and figures have been presented for easy reference, and if the reader chooses to quickly refer to the technical arguments that underpin the rest of the book.

Part 1 of the book lays the foundation for the theoretical development of what we refer to as Spiral Dynamics today. Chapter 2 describes the background and the story of Clare Graves, the architect of what was then called the existential staircase. The story of Beck starts when the story of Graves fades out. Although they spent more than a decade together, and it is also well-known that Beck asked Graves for at least ten more years of his time, the symbiotic synthesis of minds ensured the integration of psychological, sociological, political, economic and biological constructs into a deep understanding of the phenomena being studied. This resulted in a meta-theory that can be applied across various fields of study. Such an integral view and multi-disciplinary approach to adult behavior was indeed progressive and unseen in published scholarly texts in the late 1960s.

The third chapter deals with concepts that Beck contributed to the body of knowledge. His doctorate, which focused on the prevention of civil war in America, his dealing with student uprisings during the height of political and racial tension in America in the 1960s and his conflict resolution capability that was molded into a unique art form all widened the application of the original Gravesian writings and publications. These are problems that seem almost impossible to solve, such as Apartheid in South Africa and the social-political-economic dynamics thereof. Concepts such as chords, the Universal Master Code and the rule of SOME are conceptualized. In Chapter 4, the argument is extended to include natural design and the concept of utilizing equations and not solutions to intervene and rewire wicked, social problems.

In **Part 2** of the book, country-specific and geo-political stories are presented in which Beck has been personally involved in an effort to heal the society at hand. Chapter 5 deals with the South African case. This is a case where a minority white group held an economic, political and social position over the majority of suppressed citizens through the divisive Apartheid regime. Beck kept his promise to Graves to visit the only country in the world where they believed all the different value systems, as described by Spiral Dynamics, naturally occurred within the same social system. To prevent civil war, Beck visited the desperate country that found itself on the brink of war 63 times. The full version of the story was published in *The Crucible*. Here, highlights and narratives not previously shared are sketched. Little did Beck know that the South African case would become his own crucible. This was his field test of intervening at a national and geo-political level to promote peace, progress and inclusivity.

In Chapter 6 the story of Palestine is told, as authored by Elza Maalouf, and originally published in *Emerge!*. In this chapter, Maalouf masterfully describes

the challenging situation between Israel and Palestine and shares personal experiences she and Beck facilitated in this conflict-ridden part of the world.

Denmark is an obvious and representative example of a post-modern society with a typical GREEN gravity center. The same goes for the other four Nordic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland). In Chapter 7 a thorough analysis and discussion are presented about what made these countries so successful from a Spiral Dynamics point of view. The chapter will also focus on, and discuss, early signs of Second-Tier consciousness that one would expect in a country which, notoriously, has outlived most of the qualities of the GREEN meme, and as such should be ready for “the momentous leap” that Graves referred to in his 1974 article. Only time will show whether the Nordic countries possess the necessary adaptive intelligences – or are able to develop them – in order to make the next surge on the Spiral.

In **Part 3** the emphasis shifts to industry and a specialized field perspective. Chapter 8 continues to deal with the emphasis on industry but contains a section written by Said Dawlabali. This was originally published in his book *MEME-nomics*. This chapter passionately argues that current economic structures do not necessarily address the issues at hand today. A claim is made for leadership to construct Second-Tier organizations. These are companies that can deal with the complexities of today’s realities and challenges. A new approach towards the economy becomes critical.

A few short stories and cases are presented in Chapter 9 that display scenarios of how Spiral Dynamics can come to life through different lenses. How SD inspired art, how it manifests in religious spaces, what value it can bring to sports teams and how cities can be cleaned without undue effort. The purpose of this section is to assist the reader to find practical application spaces for SD. Further, the stories and cases also speak to the transferability, modifiability and applicability of an integral SD approach.

For the business leader and organizational development practitioner, a case study is presented in Chapter 10. This case study deals with cultural integration that often challenges business leaders during mergers and acquisitions, growth strategies and organizational change and transformation. Spiral Dynamics applied in a Tanzanian case (East Africa) is presented. A Ghanaian case (West African) follows, which illustrates how this theatrical stance can be made practical with sustainable effect through organizational development methodologies such as open-space technology, appreciative inquiry, world café methodology and industrial theatre. Further, Australian (Southern) and Chinese (Eastern) cases are also presented. The business leader is invited to become fluent in SD language, as creating inclusive organizations will be required for leading sustainable companies in future work realities.

In **Part 4**, Spiral Dynamics PLUS is presented. Beck, uniquely, realized that to be YELLOW requires the leader to take functional, systemic and integral decisions. Complementary methodologies and technologies are integrated here. The work of Ichak Adizes is considered in the first section of Chapter 11.

INTRODUCTION

9

Furthermore, in the second section, the values Assimilation Contrast Effect (VACE) is discussed. The use of Vital Signs Monitors (VSMs) is presented. Carkhuff's Seven Skills to deal with conflict are introduced. Value engineering, value management and value circles are discussed in the second section. This chapter is unique in the way in which it shares Beck's construction of solutions to wicked, systemic and social problems. Seven design functions of decision-making are presented, and the importance of language functionalities such as indexing, hyphenation and hyphening are discussed.

Insights gained through being a Spiral Dynamics practitioner for years, and around the world, are presented in the concluding part of the physical book. Here, in Chapter 12 of **Part 5**, Beck and the other authors of the book speak about the future challenges for mankind, the importance of an inclusive world where all different viewpoints come together, and an extension of the integral meta-theory and other related disciplines.

Following this is a compilation of different books, articles, blogs and websites, all of which focus on the way Beck interprets Spiral Dynamics. Links are made to other publications, and similarities and differences in terms of philosophy and interpretation are highlighted. Lastly, an academic base of theses and dissertations is presented, which have studied this specific theory from different angles and perspectives over a period of more than 40 years. The academic effort is continuing today as the Spiral is integrated into the curriculum of various universities, and the academic search for real-life application continues.

Who May Find the Book Valuable?

For the novice reader who has not yet been exposed to Spiral Dynamics, it may make sense to read the classic *Spiral Dynamics*¹ book or even *The Crucible*.² The graphics at the beginning of the book can also help the reader to grasp the complexity of the approach. For the experienced Spiral Dynamics practitioner or business leader, the kaleidoscope of different applications can underline the wide and comprehensive application of Spiral Dynamics theory.

In many ways, Spiral Dynamics can be viewed as the holy grail. Some strive for easy, quick fixes to systemic problems. This is a fantasy that will never yield sustainable results. The more you understand about the theory, the more the depth of application and applicability may intrigue you. The theory is multi-layered. Just when you think you understand one angle of the approach, a new facet appears. As was the case with Graves and Beck, an emergence into this approach can indeed become a lifelong quest for the Universal Master Code. It

¹ Beck and Cowan (1996).

² Beck and Linscott (1991).

provides deep insights for the academic reader and the organizational development practitioner alike.

At the end of every lecture that Beck presents, he always asks the class to recite Humpty Dumpty with him. He is also the proud owner of more than 80 Humpty Dumpties from all over the world. So, let's start where Beck always does:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again ...