

“In the midst of mounting economic political and environmental challenges comes this extraordinary book as proof of the birth of the new leadership needed to save our planet. What Don Beck and his colleagues have penned on these pages is nothing short of genius... This is a must-read for leaders who are serious about becoming conscious trailblazers for our planet.”

**John Mackey, CEO, Whole Foods Market**

“Don Beck is not only a creator of new knowledge and a thought leader of repute but also a superb advisor, supporter, encourager with practical insight.”

**George Lindeque, PhD, Former Executive Director of ESKOM**

“*Spiral Dynamics in Action* gives a lens which illuminates trends amidst the world’s diversity that were invisible before. More importantly, this book gives us a perspective through which we can understand current affairs, crises and conflicts, and attempts to use this knowledge for the betterment of society, the environment and mankind. This field guide is a must-read for anyone wanting to understand and positively impact the world around them.”

**Rabbi Anton Klein, Union of Orthodox Synagogues (UOS) and Director of the Beth Din (The Jewish Ecclesiastical Court)**

“As with many such visionary-creative spirits, while being profoundly on target, Dr Beck may also be just slightly ahead of his time. This book represents the leading edge of Integral thinking-in-action. We now have a north star that can point our way home if we are willing and able to read our charts. This is the map.”

**Bert Parlee, PhD**

“*Spiral Dynamics in Action* took me on an exhilarating ride of self-discovery, and provided me with the tools to thrive in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural environment. The authors of *Spiral Dynamics in Action* made Clare W. Graves’s work on the ‘Emergent, Cyclical, Double Helix Model of Adult Biopsychosocial Development’ meaningful and practical to implement in everyday life. Reading the book has transformed my life. It is a must-read.”

**Herman Bruwer, Sale Engineer, InterSystems, South Africa**

“*Spiral Dynamics in Action* shows Beck still has as much to contribute as a geopolitical consultant and provocateur of global and societal level change, now focusing on the wicked problems and social messes of 2017 and beyond.”

**Darrell Gooden, PhD, Certified Associate & Instructor, Adizes Graduate School**

“In today’s volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world, diversified leadership is required for driving productivity. *Spiral Dynamics in Action* transcends neuroscience to learning opportunities that shape the business world.”

**George Maluwi Damien, Employee Engagement and Communication, Damang, Ghana**

“The richness of this book is in its presentation of the concept of Spiral Dynamics in both the theoretical and practical forms in a bid to advance human consciousness. By understanding ‘the deep underlying archetypes of humanity’ and analyzing people’s mentality, leaders can engage and address the people’s needs at all levels of society without exclusion. This book acknowledges the formulation of new paradigms as people constantly adapt to their dynamic environments and advocate for multifaceted government structures that are accommodative to the differing value systems that exist.”

**Dr Joyce Toendepi, Leadership and Change Facilitator, Mandala Consulting  
www.mandalaconsulting.co.za**

“This book brings together the most important concepts and approaches for dealing with large-scale, complex, human challenges. Social problems such as poverty, crime and corruption, education disparities, and political polarization become tractable using a practical framework that embraces complex dynamics and a deeper understanding of human nature.”

**Kevin Kells, PhD, Team Earth <http://team.earth>**

“This book will be a valuable and essential tool assisting companies in understanding and managing diversity in the workplace.”

**Henk van Zyl, HR Executive and Specialist, Co-determination, South Africa**

“I now rely upon this essential cognitive framework each day to solve complex business challenges and make integral contributions to my clients. I am forever indebted to Dr. Beck.”

**Joseph Rende, Social Infrastructure Development Executive**

“This book creates a pathway towards a society that is characterized by inclusivity, authenticity and one that values deep wisdom. Through listening to all the voices in the system, leaders are empowered to ask the questions that lead to synthesis and building the adaptive capability to benefit society at large.”

**Dr. Anna-Rosa le Roux, Consulting Psychologist and Master OD Practitioner, South Africa**

# Spiral Dynamics in Action: Humanity's Master Code

Don Edward Beck, Teddy Hebo Larsen,  
Sergey Solonin, Rica Cornelia Viljoen  
and Thomas Q. Johns

**WILEY**

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*Dr Don Edward Beck*

# Foreword

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By Ronnie Lessem

Spiral Dynamics is arguably the first, major, systemic, conceptual system and complex way of thinking about everything that addresses the “big picture.” Holistic perspectives, that are currently in vogue in cutting-edge executive leadership thinking, provide a mechanism and methodology for looking at macro and micro issues simultaneously. These perspectives lay down a specific, practical and usable change technology that aligns and connects all of the variables; stakeholders, cultures, sub-cultures and other interests within an elegantly designed organism. The perspective in this book is one that integrates technology, business systems and human dynamics within a seamless, interactive process. Nothing similar to Spiral Dynamics can be found in any applied literature, journals, bestseller books, academic programs or consultant packages. It stands alone. This makes it difficult for many to get their minds around the whole because we are so trained to focus on parts. We are accustomed to looking for quick fixes, single-cause analysis and solutions, car-wash interventions or micro-applications.

For me, the reason for the existence of Spiral Dynamics, as cited in Chapter 12 of this book, says it all. What I then have to say can only whet the appetite for the formidable work that Clare Graves and Don Beck in America, Loraine Laubscher and Rica Viljoen in South Africa, Said Dawlabani and Elza Maalouf as Lebanese Americans, Teddy Larsen and Sergey Solonin as Europeans, and the innumerable others cited in this book, have accomplished to further the lot of individuals, organizations and whole societies across the globe.

I first met Don Beck in South Africa, early in the 1990s, after reading his extraordinary book, with co-author Graham Linscott, *The Crucible: Forging South Africa's Future*. I immediately gave Graham a call, as I was in the country at the time, and asked him, “Who is this man, Don Beck, and how I can meet him?” With due humility, as such, I became the midwife for the first book by Don Beck and Chris Cowan entitled *Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership and Change*, some two decades ago. This formed a key part of our then Blackwell series on *Developmental Management*.



It was no accident that this seminal work would emerge out of a meeting Don and I had in South Africa, as the new country was being born in the early 1990s. For it was in South Africa that I had already met Rica Viljoen, and thereafter Lorraine Laubscher, in the context of a project on *South African Management*. This was the first of its kind, and is still today the only one that attempted to uncover the role that Africa had to play in management. Central to our work on such was Spiral Dynamics, and the multi-faceted cultural memes that thereby underlay that great “rainbow” country. Why then was the *Spiral* of such seminal value to us?

Before answering that question, let me move across to Israel and Palestine, where I have spent so much of my life outside of Africa and Europe, and where great work was done, as we shall see, by Beck, Maalouf and Dawlabani. For decades now we have been grappling with the dynamics of economy and of enterprise in that region of the world, in a way that takes account, not only of the organizational and personal dynamics we find there, but of the overall societal ones. Again, the insights provided by the cultural memes of Maalouf were incredibly important. For how else would we uncover the genius of a place, of a people, notwithstanding all the trials and tribulations along the Palestinian–Israeli way, if we were not to take account of all these, including their dynamic interaction, for good or ill?

And now we go to the Nordic countries. Norway has played such a key part in the now faltering “Middle East” peace process. In fact, living in Europe as I do, though Africa and specifically Zimbabwe is my place of birth and origin, I have always felt that these Nordic nations were the evolutionary catalysts on the European continent, if only they rose to the occasion. In fact, my erstwhile Indian co-author, Sudhanshu Palsule, spent many years teaching at a college in Denmark when writing our *Managing in Four Worlds*. Thereby I was introduced to Danish “northern” folk traditions, and the folk colleges born out of this. Our book at the time, in the mid-1990s, was duly informed by such, as well as by folk traditions of the east, west and south.

So we have America, South Africa, Palestine and Israel, Denmark and also Russia, where I recently made my latest writing journey through *Integral Advantage: Emerging Economies and Societies*. There I discovered the “Second Tier.” This was the ultimate wisdom of that great country, if you like, that both communism and capitalism have completely by-passed. Let me then return to my earlier question: what is so special about *Spiral Dynamics in Action*?

It is the very fact that it crosses all these frontiers, from east and west to north and south. What is so tragic about most of the literature on leadership today is that the “West,” primarily America, leads, and the rest follow. It is as if Donald Trump ruled the world! Yet, via Beck and Graves, together with Laubscher and Viljoen, Maalouf and Dawlabani, Larsen and Solonin, we have that other America, that place where all worlds meet, rather than their being “melted down” into one amorphous mass.

# Preface

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By Dr Don Beck

*“We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”*

Albert Einstein (nd)

We live in a complex, peculiar and dangerous world.

Why, after half a century of international diplomacy and peace-brokering, can’t Israel and its neighbors make peace? Why do some African countries continue to spawn brutal political regimes that destroy their own economies, kill their own people and rape their own women? Why is America so polarized that collegial debate on issues now seems a faint memory of an earlier age? When did America and its close allies in Northern Europe begin to think so differently on global issues? And why did that happen?

These are the kinds of questions we need to answer. And we won’t find the answer by looking at the surface. Today’s headlines are just revealing the symptoms – not the cause.

We each have many ways of seeing things – lenses that color our perception of the world. We don’t all think alike. We don’t all have the same values. We don’t all see the world through the same lens. That is what makes the twenty-first century so complex and dangerous. We now have more than six billion humans with different world views connected by migration, air travel and the internet into one intermingled whole. Most of us are convinced that our view is right, our values are right. We are pushing and shoving and growling and threatening and carrying banners that say, “My way or no way.” Some of us are even killing each other.

How did we get here? And how do we get out of this mess? How do we structure systems that handle the complexity of our interconnectedness while allowing people to grow and move naturally through the stages of human development?

The answer to that is a quest I've been on for 40 years:

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What is the Universal Master Code that explains how humans have emerged?

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And how does this Master Code of Humanity inform what we must do next to keep emerging on a positive course?

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I am an optimist. I believe in the power of humans for regeneration. As a baby, my mother would sing the state song of Oklahoma to me, “There’s a bright, golden haze on the meadow,” followed by the chorus, “Oh, what a beautiful morning . . .” Never mind that Purcell, Oklahoma situated in the Great American Plains was part of “tornado alley,” and we lived with the constant threat of losing everything every time dark clouds came up from the southwest. I was a child from the land of the golden haze. I knew all was well.

But more than just an intuitive feeling, history confirms the validity of an optimistic outlook for human beings. Our history is one of regeneration as we time and time again tackle challenges and create new ways of living and thinking to solve those challenges.

As a young professor, I was looking for the Rosetta Stone<sup>1</sup> of human development. I spent 20 years delving into the best and the newest of what psychology had to offer, and was well on my way to being recognized as an emerging leader in dissolving conflict. I knew that solutions to conflict lay deep in the human psyche, deeper than most of us could explain. I also knew that if we understood human development, not just how we changed but why we changed, we might be able to successfully address any number of human dilemmas.

When in 1974 I read Dr Clare Graves’ article in *The Futurist*<sup>2</sup> on human emergence I found what I was longing for – a meticulously researched explanation of why humans emerge and how they do so. Emergence is not an event. It is a never-ending process. We are always engaged in the process of becoming something more than we were and not yet what we will be.

Graves, the professor emeritus of psychology at Union College in New York, had spent decades unlocking this process – one research subject at a time – until tens of thousands of individual cases yielded a pattern for human emergence. The name he gave his discovery was as exacting as his collection of data. Graves called his discovery “the emergent, cyclical, double-helix model of adult bio-psychosocial behavior.” That is a mouthful but it boils down to this. When

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<sup>1</sup> The Rosetta Stone, the carved tablet discovered by Napoleon’s armies, unlocked the Egyptian writings, by translating the hieroglyphics into Greek.

<sup>2</sup> Graves, C.W. (1974) Human Nature Prepares for a Momentous Leap. *The Futurist*, April. Different authors refers to this article numerous times throughout the book. In the text that follows we will refer to this article as the Graves (1974) article.

## PREFACE

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challenges come up that we cannot solve at our present level of being, we make a leap to a newer, higher-order system biologically, psychologically, socially and spiritually. Later, this theory became known as Spiral Dynamics.

The old system does not go away, however. It remains a part of us, accessible to us when we need it. Clearly, we have a powerful and dynamic mind. It recalibrates itself in response to *life conditions*, and it does so quickly. While human genes take their own sweet time to bring about change, codes on the evolutionary spiral can pop up virtually overnight.

What Graves's research showed was an explanation of how humans emerge. He named eight levels, and declared more levels will come. Six of these constitute First-Tier codes and include the organizational structures with which we are familiar, such as tribes, empires, holy orders, strategic capitalism. These are the systems, each convinced of the rightness of its code of values, which are battling each other today for supremacy. The future lies, however, in what Graves saw as a great leap to a Second-Tier system. His research found a few individuals who were expressing a new view that encompassed all of the First-Tier codes. These individuals understood that to move forward from here, humans must accommodate each level of emergence by providing healthy conduits for movement through the codes. And the answers to doing that lay with a new way of thinking.

Humanity is in a state of constant motion. We are shaped by the code of the Spiral. In short, we can change our own psychology. The brain can rewire itself. Society is not static. Today's problems are yesterday's solutions. Evaluation and revolution are part of our future. We are on perpetual treks of the mind. Many believe we are now passing through such a momentous transformation, a major turning point, a history-making sea change. A new different pattern of thought is beginning to emerge worldwide, and in various fields of human activity. Graves, in Roemicher (2002, p. 125) predicted: "The present moment finds our society attempting to negotiate the most difficult, but at the same time the most exciting transition the human race has to face to date. It is not merely a transition to a new level of existence, but the start of a new movement in the symphony of human identity."

That is what this book is about. It is about the Universal Master Code, the underlying code that contains all past codes and all codes to come. Understanding humanity's Master Code will not only solve today's challenges but will take us further faster with less conflict than we thought possible. And we *must* understand this code. Not just because we have people with Attila-the-Hun mentalities eyeing nuclear weapons as a means to build their personal empires, but because we also have biochemical and medical technologies that are challenging our very concept of what it means to be human. We have to deal with both these extremes and do it well.

It can be done. I have field-tested Graves's research for 40 years, adding both to the research and practical applications of this body of knowledge. I have embedded myself in every code. I found practical ways to create what I call the Power of

the Third Win – you win, I win, the planet wins. This book is about that journey, the journey to find Humanity’s Master Code.

With this book, I attempt to offer new insights and ways to challenge societal, business and political leaders alike, with doing things differently. The book extends into a website with the name [www.spiraldynamicsglobal.com](http://www.spiraldynamicsglobal.com) where a depth of articles, blogs, newspaper clips, academic theses and other sources of Spiral Dynamics application can be found. This body of knowledge will also emerge and deepen over time.

I will gently suggest that many of our usual constructive dialogue and leadership ways are limited whenever we are phased with complex, wicked, systemic problems where the risk to polarize is inherently present. Here I challenge leaders to construct sustainable cultures where leadership develops, propagates and updates a compelling vision, a sense of transcendent purpose and a series of superordinate goals to create a common cause for a complex culture.

In the words of Ken Wilber ([spiraldynamics.net](http://spiraldynamics.net): np): “spiral dynamics is one of the first integral psychologies now available, and as presented by Don Beck, I give it my highest recommendation. It has profound implications for business, politics, education and medicine, and it will give you the tools to begin applying these revolutionary ideas in your own field immediately. Don’t miss it!”

My hope is that through my life’s work and this book, I can leave a legacy of value-adding social systems and functional geo-political spheres, while simultaneously inspiring individual leadership to co-create a future we all want.

## Figures and Graphs as a Map for the Book

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In this part of the book a compilation of different figures and graphs is presented for the easy synthesis of the reader. It serves as reference to the various colors, codes, value systems and thinking structures that inform the different codes that are at play in *Spiral Dynamics*.

Readers are invited to familiarize themselves with the different archetypes, and organizing patterns and illustrations of how each code will inhibit different ways of creating meaning and integration. Further, emphasis should be placed on how the different codes pose different questions of existence – not one better or more desirable than the other. The original quote of Graves is not that one value system is better than another. He stressed that the best system for a specific set of conditions will be the most congruent one.

Readers are also reminded of *The Crucible, Forging South Africa's Future* by Beck and Linscott, originally published in 1991 and reprinted in 2006, 2011 and 2014; and the classic *Spiral Dynamics, Mastering Values, Leadership and Change* by Beck and Cowan, published in 1996 and reprinted in 2006. Various other publications described in Part 5 also elaborate on the theory and the diverse implications thereof.

Beck reminds us that while studying the different maps presented here, we must remember that the codes are not notes but chords, that a person is not a color, rather that there are *codes in people, not codes of people*.

Understanding the different codes and their unique intelligences and gifts but also their side effects is a critical leadership skill for the future world of work, and for ensuring sustainable cultures and a sustainable planet.



# I

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## 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

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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*<sup>1</sup> book or even *The Crucible*.<sup>2</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> Beck and Cowan (1996).

<sup>2</sup> 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 ...

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# The Architect of the Existential Staircase – Clare Graves

## Clare Graves and the Existential Staircase

*“Damn it all, a person has the right to be who he is.”*  
Graves, in Beck and Cowan (1996, p. 28)

Clare W. Graves worked as professor of psychology at the Union College in the upper Hudson Valley in Connecticut, America. The aftermath of the Second World War stimulated him to search for a fresh reason for the shifting views of human nature. As a developmental theorist, Graves was interested in the ways in which different people conceptualized maturity differently, and why some, but not others, navigated through emerging and often chaotic phases of human existence. In the book *Spiral Dynamics*, Beck and Cowan explained that the Gravesian orientation was to integrate bio-, psycho- and socio-dynamics; and to “mesh human knowledge and breaching the walls of academia that separated disciplines and fields” (1996, p. 29). In Figure 2.1, Clare Graves in his prime can be seen.

Graves was a professor of psychology and originator of a theory of adult human development. He was born in New Richmond, Indiana. He was deeply rooted in the work of Freud, Watson and Skinner, Rogers and the Maslow conceptual system. He even studied the latest cognitive psychological theories of the time. Students would ask him which theory was right. This created a deep-rooted conflict in Graves. This dilemma can be seen in the argumentation of different political stances; why are there different economic arguments, different views at conferences; why all the different theories and why do they conflict? Graves even considered leaving the academic space; but in 1951, he undertook research to try and understand the phenomenon better. He asked people to conceptualize the phenomenon by reflecting on the following:

- Healthy people are ...
- People who are mature are ...
- People who have it together are ...



Figure 2.1 Clare W Graves at the height of his academic career.

Graves had literally thousands of these conceptualizations. Initially he tried to map the themes from the data in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, but soon realized that there were additional patterns where people did not always ask individual questions. Sometimes self-sacrificial systems are also addressed. It became quite clear that:

- Different people expressed different world views.
- Different people said different things over a period of time.
- Certain patterns appeared in his data analysis of changes from one world view to another.

Graves (1996, p. 28) was a visionary in his conceptualization of this systemic framework, which he described as "the psychology of the mature human being is an unfolding, emergent, oscillating spiralling process marked by progressive subordination of older, lower-order behavior systems to newer, higher-order systems as a man's existential problems change." Graves (1974) assumed that:

- Human nature is not static or finite but as conditions of existence change, new systems are formed. Old systems stay with us.
- As a new system is activated, our psychology and adaptation to new conditions emerge.
- The world is an open system of values with an infinite number of models of living available to us, and there is no final stage to which we must all aspire.

## THE ARCHITECT OF THE EXISTENTIAL STAIRCASE 13

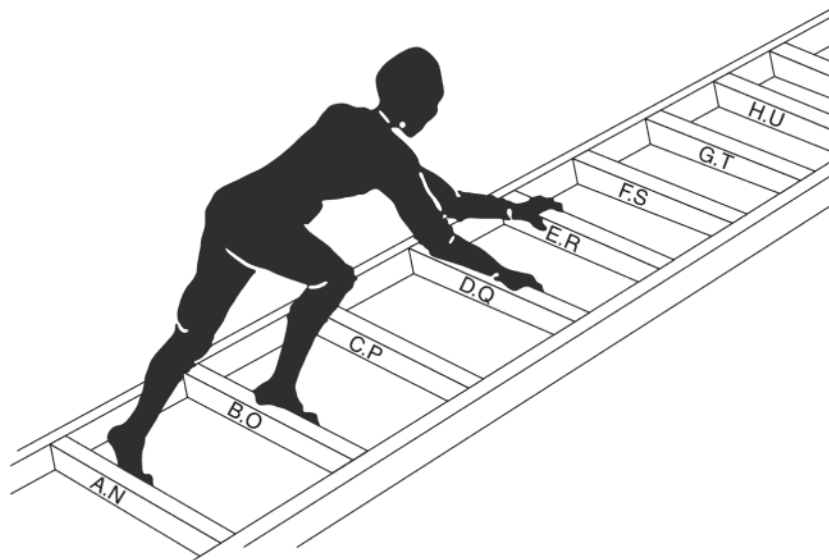


Figure 2.2 The Existential Staircase. Graves (1974, n.p.)

- Social systems (individual, groups, societies) can respond positively only to the principles, appeals, formulas and legal or ethical codes that are congruent with our current level of human existence.

Graves's theory of human emergence, change and transformation is still acknowledged today. It offers a unique ability to deal with differences of behavior on an individual, but also on a global, level. The overall intent of the model is to unify and integrate.

In his article "The Deterioration in Work Standards," published in the *Harvard Business Review* of November 1967, Graves applied his thinking to total quality and re-engineering. Beck and Cowan (1996, p. 30) highlight that the Gravesian framework "maps out how to transform a company or a culture to make it healthy and receptive for the introduction of complex technologies and rapid change." In Figure 2.2, the Existential Staircase, as initially described by Graves in *The Futurist* of 1974, is presented.<sup>1</sup>

### Beyond Maslow and Other Development Minds

Abraham Maslow is widely known for his attempt to describe motivational theory. His popular hierarchy of needs starts with basic needs, and as these needs are satisfied, ultimately people strive for self-actualization. As an adult development

<sup>1</sup> Graves (1974). *Human Nature Prepares for a Momentous Leap*. Available at [www.spiraldynamics.com](http://www.spiraldynamics.com). In this book this article is referred to numerous times as the Graves (1974) article.



Early in 1975 a 39-year-old Beck visited Graves. Beck fondly remembers meeting a tall, angular and impressive figure wearing a Russian fur cap waiting for him at the airport. He was invited to fly to Rexford, New York to visit Graves in an exploration of working together. Little did both professors know that this would be the beginning of what was to become much more than a following of their philosophy and approach. This was to be a living, exponential understanding of the ways in which humanity makes sense, develops or shifts back, given certain *life conditions*.

Beck met Graves’s family, and for the next 11 years they worked closely together. Owing to ill health, Graves was not able to complete the book he was working on. Although at the time Beck was a full professor with children in college, he contacted Graves, and passionately offered to dedicate the next ten years of his life to an in-depth study of Gravesian thinking. In a private conversation Beck shared that he insisted on continuing with his thought leadership, while he (Beck) provided financial and emotional support to ensure vibrant, engaging and thought-provoking conversations.

They referred to the “emergent, cyclical, double-helix, bio-psycho-social model” as Spiral Dynamics. The eight different systems that emerged from data can be seen in Figure 2.5. In this Figure, the eight categories that emerged from

BOTTOM LINES FOR THE SYSTEMS		
INDIVIDUAL / ELITE		(Inner-Control, Expressive)
AN	SurvivalSense – <i>Beige</i> Staying Alive	AN
CP	PowerGods – <i>Red</i> Power and Action	CP
ER	StriveDrive – <i>Orange</i> Success and Autonomy	ER
GT	FlexFlow – <i>Yellow</i> Qualities / Responsibilities of Being	GT
COMMUNAL / COLLECTIVE		(Outer-Control, Sacrificial)
BO	KinSpirits – <i>Purple</i> Safety and Security	BO
DQ	TruthForce – <i>Blue</i> Stability and Purposeful Life	DQ
FS	HumanBond – <i>Green</i> Community Harmony and Equality	FS
HU	GlobalView – <i>Turquoise</i> Global Order and Renewal	HU

Figure 2.5 Bottom lines for the value systems.

## THE ARCHITECT OF THE EXISTENTIAL STAIRCASE 17

the 32 years of Gravesian research are displayed. After Graves coded the themes that emerged, the categories AN, BO, CP, DQ, ER, FS, GT and HU were assigned to the different value systems. Each of the value systems had a very specific bottom line that described the question of existence of that system. He later uniquely started to refer to the different value systems as codes. In the next chapter, Beck's unique contribution to the foundation laid by Graves is illustrated.

Beck compared Gravesian thinking with 42 other systems that described behavior. He found the integrated, complex and ever-emerging Gravesian approach to adult human development and existential questions much more systemic and integral than previous attempts at describing human nature. Beck began to speak of the dance of the double helix – a lifelong inquiry into the ways in which humans and societies emerge. The different value systems or codes and their bottom lines are presented in Figure 2.5.

Graves and Beck often spent time at Graves's ranch (see Figure 2.6). They devoted ample time to discussing the world and the human dynamics of it. Before Graves passed away in 1986, they discussed the case of South Africa, where a combination of all the thinking systems in their prime were at play. Beck promised to go and immerse himself in the cauldron of differences in the country that was then plagued by Apartheid and all its side effects. Graves shared with Beck that he too would love to share in the opportunity to go to South Africa, and explore the interplay of these systems together in real life.



Figure 2.6 Graves and Beck at Graves's ranch.



Figure 2.7 Beck and Graves at a university event.

In Figure 2.7 Beck and Graves can be seen attending a university event together.

Beck promised Graves that he would always anchor his work in the deep, theoretical, construct-based system that emerged over so many years of academic research. Even today, Beck still gives credit to his mentor and friend when he lectures, teaches and writes. Beck also instilled this discipline in his associates. The prominent acknowledgement of Graves in this book also confirms this stance.

### Clare Graves on the Future

In the Graves (1974) article, he declared that a part of humanity was ready to move to a different level of existence, a distinctly human level. He predicted that we would likely then see a dramatic transformation of human institutions. Graves warned that the consciousness of humans would be moving forward at an exponentially accelerating speed, with a resulting set of thinking systems that would emerge. These thinking systems would consist of a radical reversal of the entire historical progression of systems that have brought humanity to the present point.

Different letter pairs (AN, BO, CP) were initially used, and Graves and Beck were told that this was too confusing. They then used numerical levels – One, Two, Three – and were told that that created the impression that the higher numbers were better than the lower levels, as Charles Darwin would claim. Then they used names such as Tribalistic, Egocentric, Absolutistic – and were criticized for being too simplistic, as though each of these complex systems could be described in a single word. Pairs of words were an option – KinSpirits, PowerGods, TruthForce – but again were semantic traps. Then Beck started to use colors

## THE ARCHITECT OF THE EXISTENTIAL STAIRCASE 19

since they were neutral, made possible the graphic design of blends and hues, and were graphically attractive. Warm colors were assigned to the expressive individual systems – therefore AN became BEIGE, CP – RED, ER – ORANGE and GT – YELLOW. The collective systems were assigned the following cooler colors: BO – PURPLE; DQ – BLUE, FS – GREEN and HU for TURQUOISE.

Graves called the old values “subsistence levels” and the new values “being levels.” He further viewed the latter as a “higher-grade reversal” of the former. In effect, he was arguing that humanity would start again from a new beginning with the YELLOW generation taking over the world, and enabling a new humanity with them in the transcendence to the next level. Laubscher (2013) highlighted that Graves said YELLOW was BEIGE to the square. Again, we are faced with questions of survival, but now at a different level of complexity, where we look at survival of self and others, and thus humanity at large.

Graves (1974) identified the following three basic scenarios:

1. The chance that we might fail to stabilize our world, and regress through successive catastrophes, as far back as when humanity started.
2. Another option could be that there will be a fixation on the BLUE/ORANGE/GREEN social complex. For Graves, this combination would promise a tyrannical, manipulative government with a glossy veneer of humanitarian thought and moralistic rationalizations.
3. The last possibility was that we could emerge into the Second-Tier YELLOW level, and proceed toward stabilizing our world so that all life could continue.

The first two options are indeed frightening. This book could not have come at a more important time. Unless leaders in social systems, whether these are in the individual, group, organizational, national or geo-political domain, understand the different thinking structures or codes, as Beck refers to the deep underlying organizing principles of humanity, and start doing things in a very different way, the future will probably be doomed. It is critical to understand natural design principles, or we may contribute to being in a diabolical loop of civilization.

If, however, we succeed in the last scenario, a different world from that which is currently known to us will evolve. New *life conditions* will stimulate new thinking structures. We will no longer be living in a world of excessive self-expression and self-indulgence. YELLOW (GT) determines functionality not by applying dogma, religion and fundamentalism, but systemic flow. This thinking will lead to a world where everyone can survive, and that involves learning to act within the limits inherent in the balance of life.

GT is free from fear, guilt and shame. It is egoless, and focused on the greater good. It is transpersonal, existential and assertive, but cautious, practical and never superfluous. It is conscious of living in a complex, paradoxical universe. As social uprisings increase internationally, fundamentalist groups polarize across religion, land and beliefs, current economic and political structures will crumble. The divide between the haves and have-nots will increase and the forces in the

collective ecology may become so opposing that the whole world may regress to more primitive levels of existence. Graves described the ecological crisis, energy crisis, population crisis and limits to growth as T-problems. The individualistic nature of GT thinking, and the flexibility thereof, may enable it to deal with systemic issues from within the thinking that created it in the first place. For Graves, a person with YELLOW coding views rules, money, achievement and philanthropy as artificial substitutes for unconditional love.

It has become important to transcend the old divisions, to join forces and to work together to achieve a shared superordinate goal, so that we can miraculously leap forward, as predicted by Graves.

The history and research of Clare Graves were published in a work by Krumm, Parstoffer and Fayyad. It stated that Graves did not get much credit for his research, deep insight and theory while he was alive and that all the interest and knowledge about the theory is due to Beck and Chris Cowan. Although the book is in German, it also includes many English passages.

Beck promised Graves that he would continue with his work, and spent the next 50 years of his life doing just that. Graves is remembered fondly by the community, and acknowledged for his foundational contribution to the field of study. In Figure 2.8 a photo can be seen of a Spiral Dynamics expert who made a presentation at the 2nd Integral European Conference (IEC) in Siofok, Hungary, in 2016.

The photo provides evidence that the work of Beck is still anchored in Gravesian thinking – even 30 years later.

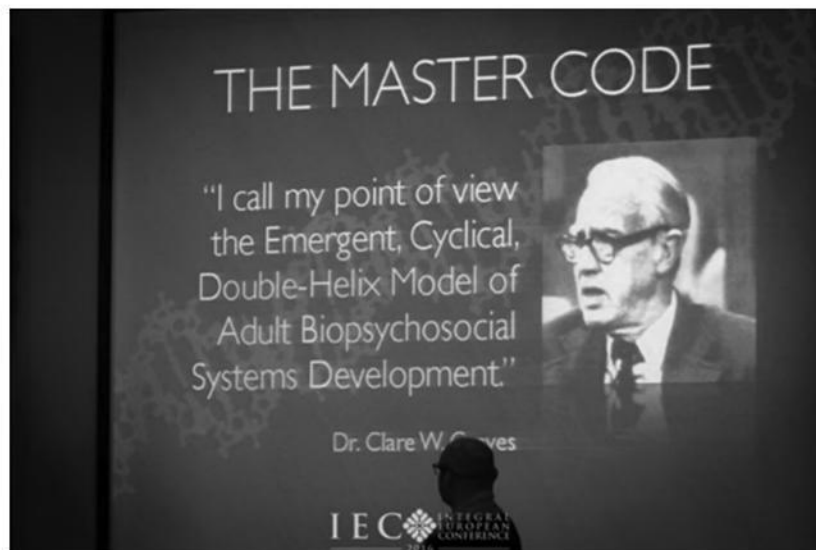


Figure 2.8 Presentation that acknowledges the contribution of Graves in 2016 at the IEC in Siofok, Hungary.

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# 3

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## The Code Book

*“There are not types of people, but there surely are systems in people and different ways of thinking about things.”*

Beck, 2017

### Introduction

In this book so far, the emphasis has been on the original theory on adult human development as conceptualized mainly by Professor Clare Graves. It was emphasized that the societal dynamics, which form the containing system, should always be considered in any attempt to understand the systemic dynamics, as the values and ways of living which were good for humanity at one time in its development may no longer be optimal due to changing conditions of its existence (Graves 1974).

In this chapter, the emphasis shifts to the contribution made by Beck, lifelong scholar and friend of Graves. If the assumptions studied here are applied at individual, group, and organizational level, there is no deductive reason why these insights cannot be applied to large-scale national and geo-political transformation. In fact, in Part 2 of the book, large-scale transformational applications are illustrated.

The last part of the chapter focuses on the dynamics of large-scale transformation. Bit by bit we can heal the planet. Often difficult roads lead to beautiful destinations. If we can, like a puppet master, construct our geo-political and global strategies, with the intent to optimize all, we might unleash the dormant goodwill in social systems in emerging and developed economies alike.

### The Eight Codes

A code embodies a number of things. Originally, a code meant a book of statutes, and one of the first known codes was the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, a legal code from the twentieth century BC that dealt with civil and criminal matters.

From the existing recorded laws of a country, the meaning morphed into a more nuanced definition. A code became any system of rules and regulations, such as a gentleman's code of behavior. Many of these societal rules were unwritten but woe to anyone in polite company who didn't know the code. We see the word "code" used frequently in today's world – the Morse code, the Da Vinci code, the warrior's code, the evolutionary code, zip code and source code. Codes span all disciplines. Perhaps the simplest definition for a code today is "unlocking the secret of."

Unlocking the secret of cultural codes is what we intend to do. Currently, only a few people deeply involved in human development really understand the cultural codes that inform the ways we think and the values we live by. But that is changing. It is time for all of us to gain entry to understanding our own humanity.

Simply put for our purposes, a code is a framework for *how* people think about things, not the things they think about. For example, we may both be concerned citizens thinking about the war. But if I tell you I am patriotic, that may mean something different to me than to you. The code we are operating from determines *how* we define patriotism. For me, being called patriotic may mean volunteering to serve in the army and fight if called upon to do so to protect my country and its way of life. For you, being patriotic may mean protesting against an unjust war and being willing to go to jail to save your country from a costly mistake. Which one of us is patriotic? Both of us. We just think differently about what is best for the country. And the reason we think differently is because each of us is operating under a different framework, a different code.

A code represents the containers that shape world views, not the contents that fill them. Each code container is filled with beliefs, ideals, morals, principles and goals. We know of eight codes operating on the Earth today. In fact, every code that has ever existed in the history of humanity still exists.

Various authors examine each of these codes in the following chapters, but to get us started, here's a brief rundown of the eight. I need to explain that the colors used for the codes have no significance. I picked them in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when I was working peacefully to dismantle Apartheid in South Africa. Skin pigmentation was of paramount significance in the crucible of fiery emotions. At the time, the people of South Africa were classified based on race and skin color. They were given a number to determine where they could live, where they could go to school, whom they could marry, what job they could have and whether they could leave the country or not.

So, I used the neutrality of colors to escape racial profiling. I wanted the leaders working for peaceful solutions to Apartheid to be aware of the different codes existing in people, even of the same race. Only then could we get a realistic picture of what was happening.

Zulus<sup>1</sup> tended to be stereotyped as a tribal ethnic group. Yet millions of Zulus lived in urban South African settings with Westernized urban values. The

<sup>1</sup> One of the ten tribes in South Africa.

Afrikaner of European ancestry was stereotyped as a highly traditional and religious farmer, operating from a value based on the “one true way.” That code, though, might be transmuted into a strong capitalist orientation by his urbanized son. The urbanized Zulu and Afrikaner might have more in common with each other than their fathers.

If I used neutral colors, the leaders involved in planning South Africa’s future could design systems that worked with the codes rather than the systems based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality or any other means we have for labeling each other. These are surface-level characteristics. Underneath are the swirling currents of world views and value systems. These world views and value systems are what we must decode in order to find solutions. This color-coded view, like a psychological Rosetta Stone, reveals the values by which we live.

So, the colors are purely arbitrary, except for one distinction. The warm colors – BEIGE, RED, ORANGE, YELLOW – represent codes that focus on how the individual can master his or her environment. Warm colors are about “I, me, mine.” Cool colors – PURPLE, BLUE, GREEN, TURQUOISE – represent codes that focus on how the group or society can come to peace with our environment. Cool colors are about “us, we, our.” As the new codes emerge, they zigzag between these two orientations because the problems created by placing too much emphasis on “I, me, mine” is corrected by zigzagging to focus on the group’s “us, we, our” needs. Then, when too much togetherness stifles individualism, the code zags back to “I, me, mine.” With each zig and zag, the problems created and solved are more complex, so we are not just moving back and forth like a pendulum. We are spiraling up into ever greater abilities.

The codes are split into two categories. The first six, which emerged over hundreds of thousands of years, are the First-Tier “subsistence” codes. Most of us will find these familiar. The last two codes, namely YELLOW and TURQUOISE, are a glimpse into our near future – the emergence of the Second-Tier “being” codes that first began only 50 years ago and represent a giant leap into a new way of thinking.

### First-Tier “Subsistence” Codes

**Code BEIGE** began 100 000 years ago and is about basic survival. Food, water, warmth, sex and safety are the priorities for people living off the land in small clans and using their instincts just to survive. These are the cavemen and cave-women of our early history. Internationally, the effort is currently made by the Spiral community to revisit Being BEIGE dynamics.

**Code PURPLE** started about 50 000 years ago as the clans evolved into groups dedicated to the tribe and its chiefs, elders, ancestors, rites, rituals and sacred observances. Native Americans, the Australian aborigines, the African Zulus and Irish Clans are but a few examples of the proliferation of these groupings throughout the world.



**Code RED** impulsive and ego-centric, broke free of the tribe about 10 000 years ago to conquer, out-fox and dominate others in a world perceived as a jungle filled with predators. Attila the Hun, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar and Napoleon were among the successful empire builders in a world that still today has its share of “strong men.”

**Code BLUE** began about 5 000 years ago as people discovered purpose in a transcendent cause, truth or righteous pathway. BLUE believes that enforcing community order to a code of conduct based on eternal, absolute principles brings stability now and guarantees future rewards. Judaism, Christianity and Islam sprang up during this period. BLUE is a basic building code for law and order.

**Code ORANGE** began around 300 years ago as science and the European-based Enlightenment took off. Self-reliant and risk-taking individuals believed that change and advancement were inherent in the scheme of things. Under Code ORANGE, the individual achieves status and affluence through competition and seeking best solutions. Free markets, the rise of industrialization and corporations, democracy and empirical scientific research flowed from this new code.

**Code GREEN** appeared 150 years ago, seeking peace within the inner self and exploring with others the caring dimensions of community, a change from the status-seeking ORANGE to an egalitarian and humanistic code. This code believes we must rescue those left behind in the march toward progress and restore Earth’s balance of resources. The environmental movement and civil rights begin with the emergence of GREEN.

### Second-Tier “Being” Codes

**Code YELLOW** emerged just 50 years ago, understanding that chaos and change are natural and integrating the kaleidoscope of natural hierarchies, systems and forms into interdependent, natural flows is a must. YELLOW values the magnificence of existence over material possessions and seeks to live fully and responsibly as an individual true to himself or herself. We can find YELLOW thinking emerging in a few political leaders who are able to incorporate First-Tier values from the spectrum of colors into a message that all in their jurisdiction can embrace.

**Code TURQUOISE** first appeared 30 years ago, viewing the self as both distinct and a blended part of a larger, compassionate whole in which holistic, intuitive thinking and cooperative actions are to be expected in order to sustain all life. To a TURQUOISE thinker, the world is a single, dynamic organism and everything connects to everything else in ecological alignment.

**Code CORAL** is not yet discernible, but will emerge as humanity continues to evolve. Even more newer, higher-order systems may follow. The *life conditions* for CORAL are not yet challenging humans to adapt to it. In this book TURQUOISE and CORAL are underrepresented – just as they are in real life.

Figure 3.1 displays different priority codes as described by Beck. It is critical for leadership to understand these codes to unlock the human potential captured in systems.

### The Double Helix of Code Change

There are two forces at work in this evolutionary spiral: *life conditions* and a person's way of thinking. When *life conditions* change, humans, who are complex adaptive intelligences, adapt to these new *life conditions*. Similar to the structural arrangement of DNA, these two factors form a double helix (Figure 3.2). Complex adaptive intelligences arise in response to *life conditions*, and as these two forces of *life conditions* and an adaptive intelligence interact, they push each other and evolution forward.

Bacteria, for example, are living organisms with adaptive intelligences. Medical scientists come up with an antibiotic to thwart these life-threatening organisms, changing their *life conditions*. The bacteria which are not immune die, but others, even if only a few, survive and develop new immunities to the change. They reproduce rapidly, outsmarting our antibiotics. So we have to come up with a new antibiotic for a new strain of these microscopic change artists.

Humans do the same thing. We recalibrate when *life conditions* bombard us. Our minds change. That is right. Because our *life conditions* are so strewn with unsolvable problems that we literally change our minds, awakening neurological pathways that propel us to new and higher-order thinking abilities. We find new codes that handle the problems created by the current code within which we are living. Inevitably, the new code is more complex than the previous one.

*Life conditions* for an individual are influenced by four factors:

- **Time.** We live in different eras at the same time. A physicist in Geneva, Switzerland is living in a different time than the Afghan farmer without access to education, phones or the internet. One lives in the culture of constant change and new discoveries. The other lives in *life conditions* that haven't changed much for generations.
- **Place.** Geography also impacts our social values and interactions. An isolated island race produces different collective behaviors than migratory desert dwellers or farmers evolving in a warm, fertile valley. The easy living of the Polynesians with their abundant access to the ocean's bounty was reflected in their friendly and welcoming societies, while in the hard scrabble life of the desert-dwelling Bedouins harsh rules and war-like behavior to protect limited resources was the norm. In today's world, place also includes our man-made environments – our workplaces and communities.
- **Human Problems.** Our *life conditions* can be unique to a culture, such as famine in a particular region, or unique to an individual, such as disease. A universal challenge, such as global warming, can confront all humanity.