

# Spiral Dynamics Integral

"The Theory that Explains Everything"



## Sustainable Cultures, Sustainable Planet

### A Values System Perspective on Constructive Dialogue and Cooperative Action

Don Edward Beck, Ph. D.

*In the Beginning. . .*

*Still fresh in my mind is a story from my youth, one often told by both teachers and clerics to dramatize the importance of people in whatever kind of world we were able to imagine. A youngster was given a puzzle that had a picture of the earth on one side and was asked to put it together as quickly as possible. The teacher was astounded that the young child completed the task in a surprising short amount of time. "How did you get it done so quickly?" asked the teacher, still in the throes of amazement. "Well," said the young child with innocent eyes, "on the back of the puzzle was a portrait of a man and that was easy for me to put together. When I got him right, then the other side was right, too."*

I never forgot that simple story because it is just as true today for us, here and now. It explains the theme of this presentation: "Sustainable Cultures, Sustainable Planet." It simply suggests that until we understand the individual states of mind as well as the multiple webs of culture, our attempts at designing and preserving a "sustainable planet" will be virtually impossible.

I need to address the critical question that must be on your mind right now. Why is some character from America telling us anything about environmental protection? Even worse, should you pay any attention to a Texan, given the quality of air in the home state of BIG OIL and George W. Bush? I cannot answer those two questions for you, but all I ask is that you grant me an opportunity to put sustainability in a totally different framework, one that might make sense. One more thing: I firmly believe the once seafaring Dutch who ventured out into the North Sea and, ultimately, to all points on the human compass, must now become explorers once again. I have been around you for a number of years – looked at the results of my testing systems – listened to you talk about the world in many different cafes – and heard many of your government and private sectors project well into the future – and I can tell you that the most complex thinking on the planet is being done in the land of tulips, windmills, and wooden shoes. I am not just saying this to win over your favor long enough for me to get out of town before you bring the tar and feathers, because I believe it to be the truth, whatever "truth" means.

To whom much is given, of them much shall be required.

The Developmental Track

This will not be an exposition on environmental science nor will it list the growing threats to the

atmosphere from many different sources. These can be found in both countless scientific as well as popularized forms. Rather, I want to describe the deeper codes, maps, and equations that describe how societies themselves emerge, zigzag through complex conditions, and then construct solutions to problems that seemed impossible at earlier stages in our existence. My intent will be to focus on the human face on the other side of the sustainability puzzle. And, I will apologize ahead of time for bombarding you with more information than you ever thought you wanted or needed.

### **First, These Assumptions...**

Perhaps we should define terms before we launch even further into this exploration. What is it that makes a culture "sustainable?" What are the essential characteristics that display the full range of "sustainability" levels in various cultures? And, might it be possible to develop something of a S-Culture Index to measure various societies and cultures on these dimensions? Here is an initial list of such characteristics:

- Sustainable Cultures develop, propagate and update a compelling vision, a sense of transcendent purpose, and a series of superordinate goals to create common cause for a complex culture.
  - Sustainable Cultures focus on systemic health and well-being rather than on one-time initiatives or any magical "quick-fix."
  - Sustainable Cultures embrace the evolutionary dynamic and recognize that the center of gravity for the culture will shift as conditions of existence change in the milieu, either progressive or regressive.
  - Sustainable Cultures accept that dynamic tension is part of life itself and have learned how to differentiate between destructive and constructive conflict.
  - Sustainable Cultures disseminate self-reliance and responsible decision-making at every level, in every function, and on every issue.
  - Sustainable Cultures mesh the four bottom-lines – *purpose, profit, people, and planet* – and realize that to accomplish any one of the four they must also experience success in the other three.
  - Sustainable Cultures develop a sense of collective individuality in that the two are seen as cyclical blends and ratios rather than extremes or poles.
  - Sustainable Cultures respect the past-present-future timeline and think of each as an element in the seamless flow of nature.
  - Sustainable Cultures deal with causes and symptoms in a simultaneous, interdependent fashion.
  - Sustainable Cultures possess the capacity to renew themselves whenever the problems of existence create greater complexity than available solutions.
  - Sustainable Cultures integrate economic, political, social, environmental, spiritual and educational domains in an integral fashion.
  - Sustainable Cultures transmit their codes to the present generation while, at the same time, prepare the youth for different conditions in the near and far future.
  - Sustainable Cultures transcend but include previous ways of being while always anticipating what will be next, thus living in open systems.
- **Challenge to NIDO**

Here is a unique challenge and opportunity that you might want to contemplate. Consider turning NIDO into a creative laboratory, a generator and depository of knowledge regarding sustainability, a global resource center for learning how to mesh "clean" energy, human needs, technological sophistication and natural habitats that can be transported elsewhere. So, today – June 18, 2001 – while you are symbolizing the initiation of the renovated monumental NIDO office building – you will also show the same courage, vision, and commitment that so characterized your forebears four centuries ago... and venture out into "The North Sea" once again. And, by the way, this time as compass you might, instead, take along a GPS device.

To make all of the above possible, I wish to offer new insights and procedures within these two areas – Constructive Dialogue and Cooperative Action. I will gently suggest that many of our usual constructive dialogue sessions are limited whenever they drive us into unhealthy and nonproductive circles of consensus-making rather than focus specifically on the nature of problems and their unique solutions. Second, we continue to compromise our capacity to

mobilize (cooperative action) quickly and skillfully all of the resources necessary in a given situation, because our decision-making and implementation efforts are clogged by personal ambition, by rigid rule-makers who live in bureaucratic boxes, by cash-in mentalities that cannot see beyond a bank balance, or even by outside predators who bring dangerous viruses into your historic cultural canals and delicate and sensitive meshlands.

### **Now, the Main Act. .**

To create and sustain a S-Culture, one that has the capacity, resilience, and vision to survive and prosper in the 21st Century context, the following four actions should be taken:

- Understand the codes and dynamics that shape cultures and drive change.
- Monitor vital signs and tension zones to track levels of sustainability.
- Implement integral policies to promote cultural health and sustainability.
- Employ skillful means to enhance adaptive intelligences for today and tomorrow.

Since the presentation of these basic concepts will be supported by various media forms, this description will only illustrate the ideas and recommendations. And, since I only speak two languages – American and Texan – you will have to set these concepts into the Dutch culture, people of both the low and high sky.

### **Understand the codes that shape cultures and drive change**

Cultures, as well as countries, are formed by the emergence of value systems (social stages) in response to life conditions. Such complex adaptive intelligences form the glue that bonds a group together, defines who they are as a people, and reflects the place on the planet they inhabit. These cultural waves, much like the Russian dolls (a doll embedded within a doll embedded within a doll), have formed, over time, into unique mixtures and blends of instructional and survival codes, myths of origin, artistic forms, life styles, and senses of community. While they are all legitimate expressions of the human experience, they are not "equal" in their capacities to deal with complex problems in society.

Yet, the detectable social stages within cultures are not Calvinistic scripts that lock us into choices against our will. Nor are they inevitable steps on a predetermined staircase, or magically appearing like crop circle structures in our collective psyche. Cultures should not be seen as rigid types, having permanent traits. Instead, they are core adaptive intelligences that ebb and flow, progress and regress, with the capacity to lay on new levels of complexity (value systems) when conditions warrant. Much like an onion, they form layers on layers on layers. There is no final state, no ultimate destination, no utopian paradise. Each stage is but a prelude to the next, then the next, then the next.

Each emerging social stage or cultural wave contains a more expansive horizon, a more complex organizing principle, with newly calibrated priorities, mindsets, and specific bottom-lines. All of the previously acquired social stages remain in the composite value system to determine the unique texture of a given culture, country, or society. In author/ philosopher Ken Wilber's language, each new social stage transcends but includes" all of those which have come before. Societies with the capacity to change, swing between I:Me:Mine and We:Us:Our poles. Tilts in one direction create the need to self-correct, thus causing a shift toward the opposite pole. "Me" decades become "Us" epochs as we constantly spiral up, or spiral down in response to life conditions. Some social stages stress diversity generators that reward individual initiatives and value human rights. Other social stages impose conformity regulators and reward cooperative, collective actions. Societies will zigzag between these two poles, thus embracing different models at each tilt.

Once a new social stage appears in a culture, it will spread its instructional codes and life-priority messages throughout that culture's surface-level expressions: religion, economic and political arrangements, psychological and anthro-pological theories, and views of human nature, our future destiny, globalization, and even architectural patterns and sports preferences. We all live in flow states; there is always new wine, always old wineskins. We, indeed, find ourselves pursuing a neverending quest.

THE LIVING STRATA IN OUR PSYCHO-CULTURAL ARCHEOLOGY				
Stage/Wave	Color Code	Popular Name	Thinking	Cultural manifestations and personal displays
8	Turquoise	WholeView	Holistic	collective individualism; cosmic spirituality; earth changes
7	yellow	FlexFlow	Ecological	natural systems; self-principle; multiple realities; knowledge
6	Green	HumanBond	Consensus	egalitarian; feelings; authentic; sharing; caring; community
5	Orange	StriveDrive	Strategic	materialistic; consumerism; success; image; status; growth
4	Blue	TruthForce	Authority	meaning; discipline; traditions; morality; rules; lives for later
3	Red	PowerGods	Egocentric	gratification; glitz; conquest; action; impulsive; lives for now
2	Purple	KinSpirits	Animistic	rites; rituals; taboos; superstitions; tribes; folk ways & lore
1	Beige	SurvivalSense	Instinctive	food; water; procreation; warmth; protection; stays alive

Here's the key idea. Different societies, cultures and subcultures, as well as entire nations are at different levels of psycho-cultural emergence, as displayed within these evolutionary levels of complexity. Yet, and here is a critical concept, the previously awakened levels do not disappear. Rather, they stay active within the value system stacks, thus impacting the nature of the more complex systems. So, many of the

same issues we confront on the West Bank (red to blue) can be found in South Central Los Angeles. One can experience the animistic (purple) worldview on Bourbon Street as well as in Zaire. Matters brought before city council in Minneapolis (orange to green to yellow) are not unlike the debates in front of governing bodies in the Netherlands.

So-called Third World societies are dealing, for the most part, with issues within the beige to purple to red to blue zones, thus higher rates of violence and poverty. Staying alive, finding safety, and dealing with feudal age conditions matter most. Second World societies are characterized by authoritarian (blue) one-party states, whether from the right or the left. Makes no difference. So-called First World nations and groupings have achieved high levels of affluence, with lower birth rates, and more expansive use of technology. While centered in the strategic, free-market driven, and individual liberty focused perspective — all traits of the Stage 5 (orange) worldview — new value systems (green, yellow, and turquoise) are emerging in the "postmodern" age. Yet, we have no language for anything beyond First World, believing that is the final state, the "end of history." Further, there is a serious question as to whether the billions of people who are now exiting Second and Third World life styles can anticipate the same level of affluence as they see on First World television screens. And, what will happen to the environment if every Chinese family had a two-car garage?

The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the GTO, and most multinational corporations reflect the blue-orange worldview codes of cultural discipline, financial accountability, and individual responsibility. Attacks are launched from three directions:

- **Red zone** activists, anarchists, and spoilers who love a good fight, and believe the Big Orange Money Machines are easy targets from which to exact tributes in various forms;
- **Blue zone** ideologies who defend the sacred against the secular and resent the intrusive technology and destruction of the holy orders and extol the purity of the faith, noble cause, and divine calling; and
- **Green zone** humanists and environmentalists who level charges of exploitation, greed, and selfishness, noting the eradication of indigenous cultures and the poisoning of the "pristine" environment by Big Mac golden arches.

The WTO demonstrations were so confounding to so many because they combined these red, blue and green critiques into single anti-orange crusades. Capitalism and materialism were the twin villains; spirituality, sharing, and social equality, along with sustainability, were the noble virtues. There appeared to be no middle ground; no zone of rapprochement; no win:win alternative. Herein lies the global knot: the seemingly irreconcilable conflict between and among the haves, the have nots, the have a little but want more, and the have a lot but are never content. There must be a better way.

In addition to this Spiral Dynamic-based analysis of the shaping codes and changing priorities, author Howard Bloom describes a five process Pentad that encapsulates the "Prime Directive" in operation.

Finally, based on the All Quadrants/All Levels schematic designed by Ken Wilber, note how these core vMeme codes display their themes in the Individual (invisible/interior and visible/exterior) and Collective (invisible/interior and visible/exterior) Quadrants. Any successful sustainability project should constantly search for ways to inculcate the environmental message onto a much larger psychological footprint, one that spreads throughout the cultural "canals."

Monitor vital signs and tension zones to track sustainability indicators

Whenever one seeks after a complete medical check-up, you expect the doctor to construct a vital signs portrait of yourself – your chemical, electrical, psychological and biological indicators – in a search for abnormalities and early signs of serious trouble. Imagine a time in the near future when leaders in the Netherlands could come to a place such as NIDO and see displayed, on floor-to-ceiling video screens, the "vital signs" of the entire society, especially those that reveal the levels of sustainability.

This GIS (geographic information systems) process that overlays data and patterns

onto geographic places could be used to search for the relationships between and among these displays. We often see such maps of economic well-being, crime types and patterns, health-care indicators, living conditions, and other critical data flows that simply gather dust on some administrator's desk. Then add in the rich personal and neighborhood profiles based on mass customization marketing strategies. What if we could place these data streams and mosaics on top of each other to look for the early signs of environmental "trouble?" Moreover, we should be able to track issues and adaptive intelligences on the spiral "levels" and among the "quadrants" just as well.

Since GIS technology is very advanced in the Netherlands, and most of the information that we would want to display is already available, all we need to do is bring it together in such a form that we can "see" it all at once, displayed in a single place. And, since our thinking is impacted by chaos/order ratios and self-organizing principles, our task would be to create natural designs that implement these adaptive intelligences on the part of individuals and social groupings. Rather than create a regimented, social control monolith, the intent would be to inform the general public of these "vital signs" so that they can exercise their informed "self-reliance."

Then, after the Netherlands has taken the lead to create and field-test this powerful technology, just imagine what would happen if a similar effort were launched at the United Nations to design a Vital Signs Monitor for the entire planet. One can already find EarthPulse-type monitors of the physical universe, but what is lacking is the 4Q/8L perspective, especially since the left-handed invisible quadrants are seldom if ever recognized, much less revealed.

Implement integral policies to promote cultural sustainability

If we are able to read the deeper codes that shape cultures and trigger shifts in the underlying belief systems, and have made some progress in monitoring the vital signs, then we are in a much better position to design effective Constructive Dialogue processes. There are, of course, many different decision-making and problem resolution methods which are especially suited for different situations. To both design and maintain sustainable cultures, a specific technology will be required. I refer to this as a MeshWorks.

A MeshWorks is a form of Constructive Dialogue that deals specifically with the "Humpty Dumpty Effect," a condition created when a Tower of Babel of spokespeople, solution mongers and stakeholders end up making things worse, not better. Even though they are all doing the very best they know how to do, they are unable to deal with the complex problems that need resolution.

MeshWORKS thinking illustrates how to get all of the entities "on the same page" to focus their resources like laser beams on the inevitable steps and stages of development that form healthy cultures. A key component in this process has been described by Dr. Ichak Adizes ([www.adizes.com](http://www.adizes.com)) in what he calls CAPI – Coalescing Authority, Power, and Influence at the same time on the same problem. Authority refers to those who represent the system; Power indicates those who can support or sabotage; and Influence involves those with expert views or insights. Too often we only have one or two of these represented in the Constructive Dialogue. We have all seen this happen before, in spite of our very best intentions...

- The Authorities decide on policy and then drive it down the organization.
- The Wheeler-Dealers construct a win:win for themselves and leave others out in the cold.
- The Consensus-Feelers spend countless hours in dialogic circles insisting that everybody have a say and be included.
- The Majority-Rule Mandaters who believe that a 50% plus one vote should always rule the roost.

MeshWeavers are able to infuse into the Constructive Dialogue an understanding of the deeper value system codes so that efforts can be tailored for specific situations and different levels of thinking in the people involved. Such an effort can provide the cohesive principle that is missing in the age of fragmentation. This approach can

generate transpartisan approaches to policy formulation that is vastly superior to either partisan or bipartisan efforts.

The key technology, here, is to place competing values system codes on the ends of the paradox to demonstrate how both/and thinking is superior to either/or ultimatums. This would be a creative way for pro-growth (usually the orange vMeme), and pro-quality of life (combinations of green and yellow) can often find ways to accomplish both in a synergistic fashion.

Employ skillful means to enhance adaptive intelligences throughout

Since a Sustainable Culture has been able to disseminate, in a holistic fashion, the core intelligences throughout the entity rather than gather them all at the top or in elitist centers of influence, it must search for innovative ways and skillful means to convey information and knowledge far and wide.

Here is a case study in Cooperative Action. The issue will be the environment. The challenge is to find better ways – skillful means – to communicate to both the youth and society-at-large through a neutral, universal, and quite attractive set of characters. These characters, along with well written story lines, will be able to carry the message in both the printed word, through electronic transmission media, and in other forms as well. They will be able not only to deal with environmental content, but to couch their messages within the value system codes in order to penetrate more deeply into mass minds.

We will enlist Misty (purple), Breeze (red), Fauna (blue), Pulsar (orange) Geo (green), Synapse (yellow) and Bloom (turquoise) in this endeavor. In their original version, they are all communicating more or less in the deep ecological (green) band. Note how we can get each to express the importance of environmental sustainability – but in the language of the entire spectrum of vMeme codes. By doing so, our intent will be to retreat from vMeme warfare to get all of the codes embracing the commonly held superordinate goal.

#### A FINAL NOTE

I want to thank Bruce Galbraith and Paul Gerstenberger, owners and developers of the EcoPALS concept, for allowing us to use these seven wonderful spokespersons for Sustainable Cultures. As you might expect, Synapse is now in charge of the Vital Signs Center worldwide. You will find the parent Web site for the EcoPALS at **[www.theecoisp.com](http://www.theecoisp.com)**.