

# The vMememes & the Structure of Spiral Dynamics an Evolving Journey of Group Consciousness

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Goodwill is the focus of our meditation for the next two months. Yet we find it harder to implement than we would wish. Removing inner and outer obstacles is vital, as is the conscious development of empathy, the recognition of the divine in everyone and offering ourselves as channels through which spiritual love can flow effectively. Goodwill is latent everywhere, yet easily lost sight of, as we are seeing in widespread blame and anger during the current financial crisis.

In the words of the Tibetan, 'the power of intelligent goodwill to adjust difficulties in every department of human affairs is unbelievably potent.'

Everyone is doing the best they can, all the time. Even if that looks stupid or wrong to observers: anger, violence, blaming others, running away, taking refuge in illness, may be the only way a person can cope. The only way they know how to cope at their level of evolution.

Spiral Dynamics Integral teaches that human nature changes as the conditions of existence change. We have the in-built capacity, when our life circumstances change, to develop more complex thinking to handle new problems. We can observe this as children grow, but it also applies to whole societies. First we must solve the problems at our current level. Crawl before we can walk. By focusing our love and goodwill on those in despair - whatever they are doing - we can help them to solve their existing problems themselves and move on.

The descriptions below are of vMememes at their peak; we will look at entering and leaving phases in a future article. Meanwhile it is important to remember that we transcend and *include* each level as we evolve, building our personal 'meme stack' that we can, and do, call on in different areas of our lives. Perhaps orange at work, green voluntary work and at weekends red for sport.

The first level of human existence is **BEIGE**, basic unemotional personal survival. The level of primitive man, an intelligent animal with finely developed instincts that have atrophied in us. Also of a new baby, street people, refugees, the elderly with Alzheimer's. We can all regress to Beige when faced with catastrophe or illness.

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As survival needs are met, new brain connections form. We shift into emotional **PURPLE** and form tribal groupings for safety. Blood bonds are strong. We obey the chieftain and share food. We deify forces of nature over which we have no control - and the shaman intervenes for us. Rituals appease ancestral spirits. Storytellers keep inherited wisdom alive. We live in fear and superstition, where the lines between reality and fantasy are blurred. This is the end of infancy when the magic word 'Mama' brings what you need. Scream if she disappears, don't walk on the cracks and never go to bed without your teddy bear. Parental bonding is crucial to the healthy development and self esteem of children. (10% of world population, 1% of power).

When we feel safe and secure, we start to question our leaders and seek personal autonomy. The strongest battle for the top places. Audacious spirits challenge the gods. Losers are expelled from the herd. We are into **RED**. And the terrible twos! Instant gratification, no sense of guilt, no thought of consequences. We grab what makes us feel good without regard for others. Anything that goes wrong is somebody else's fault. If we are thwarted our rage is excessive, our reactions violent. Our greatest fear is losing face, being shamed. This is the world of slavery, feudalism, heroes and conquest, James Bond villains. Of mercenaries, sports teams, sales teams and street gangs in deprived inner cities. Those living at this level do so because that is what their life conditions demand. However RED is also extremely creative. It gives us courage and the strength to defend ourselves. It gets things done, inspires heroic acts, breaks with limiting traditions and opens up new pathways. (20% of world population and 5% of power)

The move to **BLUE** occurs when we become desperate to find order and a purpose in life that explains all our suffering. The movement may be political, cultural, nationalistic or religious. It lays down absolute rules and laws, discipline is strict but fair and often public. Blue allots places for everyone in its pyramidal hierarchy, and inculcates guilt in those who don't conform. We are expected to sacrifice for the common good. There is only one right way to think and the virtuous are rewarded (in this life or the next). This vMeme has been around for at least 5000 years. It works well in industrial economies: Taiwan, Malaysia, Mexico. It is the world of guides and scouts, the Salvation Army, Confucian China, Puritan America, and Islamic fundamentalism.

The child goes to school, learns about fair and unfair, right and wrong, and the consequences of disobedience. Also that other people have rights and that it sometimes pays to defer gratification. There are many contented Blues in our society, which would not function well without them. (40% of world population and 30% of power)

Others start to question the rules, find new and better ways of doing things, or simply rebel against the constraints. 'What about me?' they cry, echoing Red rebelling against Purple. **ORANGE**

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appeared in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and is now the predominant vMeme in our society. Achievement, competitiveness, technology and the good life. Success is highly rewarded. The new brain connections we have developed enable us to be rational, keep track of multiple

interests and shift attention between them. We are mobile, pragmatic, opportunistic, independent and in control of most areas of our lives. We stand or fall by our own efforts and talents. When we are no longer useful, we are scrapped like obsolete technology. Orange usually results in a free market economy and multi-party democracy. (30% of world population and 50% of power)

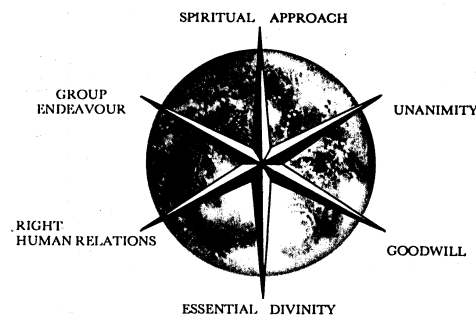
Eventually we see the downside of Orange, the numbers of have-nots, the disastrous effect of 'progress' on our planet. We begin to think in a new way and adjust our priorities. Material success and possessions do not create happiness. There has to be more to life! And so we come to the top of the first tier of vMememes: **GREEN**, which began to spread in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. We cultivate our inner child and seek a purpose in life. We try to bring peace to society by resolving inequalities. We realise that individual actions do matter. This is the world of GreenPeace, academia, public education, anti-discrimination legislation and animal rights. Egalitarian and humanitarian, we campaign for the rain forests and against GM foods, feel guilty about things our country has done in the past, boycott multinationals who abuse third world employees, buy Free Trade goods, grow organic food, join groups and accept their thinking to make ourselves acceptable, decide (eventually) by consensus when everyone has had their say, meditate for peace, care for each other and enthuse about the wonderful new age we are creating. Until we realise that enforced egalitarianism leads to inefficiency and stagnation, and can be very hard on those who don't conform. (10% of world population and 15% of power)

When our consciousness is locked in to one of the above first tier vMememes, it is impossible to understand the thinking of any of the others, however hard we try to manifest goodwill. If there are people in our lives we can never agree with, their consciousness is probably in a different vMeme. Red thinks Blue is repressive. Blue thinks Orange is pushy. Orange thinks Green is barmy. Many Greens who believe themselves highly spiritual are in fact regressing to the pre-rational comfort of Purple. Worse still, Green, thinking it has all the answers, scorns Orange that produced the wealth that Green generously

wants to share out. Green cannot see that the drive and expertise of Orange can be harnessed to resolve the problems that Green has identified.

The shift to second tier **YELLOW** is momentous (and only a minute percentage of the world population has made it so far). Yellow began after WW1, spurred on by the beat generation of the 1950s. Our ability to cope with complexity becomes greater than the sum of all the earlier six stages put together. We no longer perceive the world only from the human angle. We now see it from a universal perspective - a radically different viewpoint. We live fully, tread lightly on the earth, treasure the wonders of life above material possessions, rate knowledge and competence above power and status, do more in less time. We can see the whole picture, how each vMeme builds on the preceding one and how everything fits together in one enormous never-ending spiral of life. We can at last begin to see what each individual, organisation or country needs to help it evolve to the next level. (1% of world population and 5% of power)

Beyond Yellow is **TURQUOISE**, which appeared in the 1960s and is about global synthesis and renewal, then **CORAL** which is just beginning to appear. According to Dr Graves, this second tier also consists of six levels of complexity and there are further tiers beyond that our brains cannot yet begin to encompass.



“Through the experience of the will we perceive that we are living subjects endowed with the power to chose, to relate, to bring about changes in our own personality, in others, in circumstances.”

Dr. Roberto Assagioli – *‘father of psychosynthesis’*  
& cofounder of The Group for Creative Meditation & co-worker of Alice A. Bailey

