

Spiral Dynamics

A map of the evolution of human consciousness

As we take responsibility for ourselves, our happiness and our development, it begins to become clear that there are others who view the world in radically different ways to the way that we do.

Why do our parents find it so difficult to understand the journey we are on? Or why does our boss not see that sustainability is inevitable - that it is just a question of how painful it is for us to become sustainable?

In the 1960's a psychologist Dr Clare W. Graves did some pioneering research studying thousands of people and came to the conclusion that there were eight clearly distinct world views held by people. This research formed the basis of the work of Dr Don Beck and Chris Cowan who found a clear and simple way to articulate these different world views as part of a spiral of consciousness.

The spiral puts the world views in an order and gives them colours, it also identifies two distinct tiers within the eight world views where there is a distinct jump between two of them. The fundamental difference between the two tiers, first and second tier consciousness, is that all of

the world views in the first tier are characterised by fear while all of the world views in the second tier are based in love.

Put another way the prime motivator at first tier consciousness is fear - while in the second tier the prime motivator is love. Given that the vast majority of the global population - perhaps 98% - live mainly in the first tier it becomes easier to understand why so often our reaction to events is aggressive.

The other big difference between first and second tier consciousness is that each of the levels in the first tier find it difficult to understand or value the others, as a result they also find it difficult to communicate with each other. At second tier consciousness people find it far easier to understand and value the other levels.

The order of the world views is chronological and maps both our own individual life development as well as the development of human culture as a whole. As individuals we are born into the bottom of the spiral and progress as far up the spiral as we progress, no one jumps a level or comes in at a higher level to start with. We also all have access to all of the levels we have experienced. It is important to understand that Spiral Dynamics is chronological and not hierarchical, here is how Don Beck expressed this in an interview with "What is Enlightenment?" -

"This is very important—I want you to see the interconnection. Memes are not free-floating entities. RED is not better than PURPLE. It's different. So you have to ask, first and foremost, what are the Life Conditions? If the Life Conditions require you to be strong and self-assertive, or to fight your way out of a horrible situation, then the RED meme is the way to be. RED is not an aberration, but a normal part of the human meme repertoire."

This perspective is fundamental to Spiral Dynamics: you accept that the memes do not represent a hierarchy of "better," but rather that each can be expressed in a positive and negative way, and that the whole spiral with its assortment of meme codes is inside the person and may be called upon in response to the demands of their changing Life Conditions."

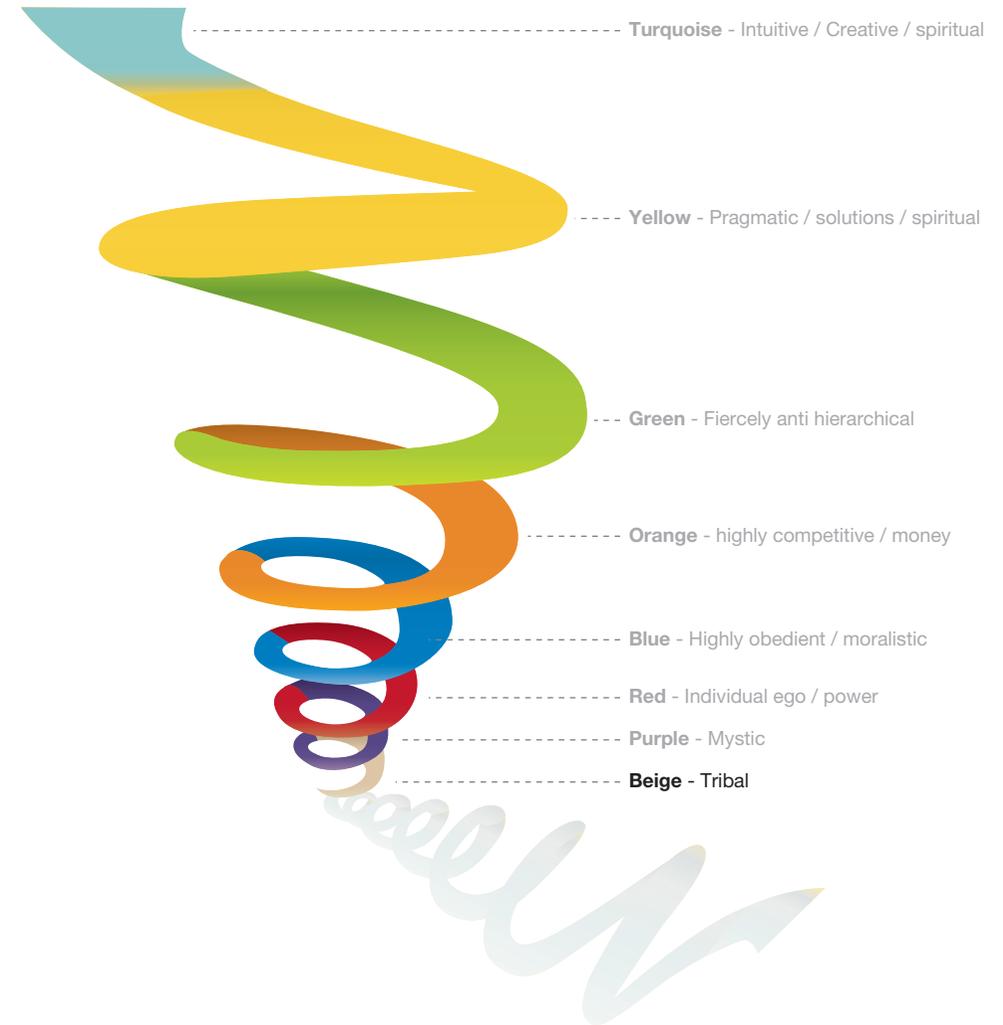
Human society as a whole has journeyed up the spiral with some cultures reaching higher than others. A society that was predominantly in the second tier would be sustainable.

Beige

We are born into beige at this level we are entirely instinctive and are driven by our most basic needs. 100,000 years ago our ancestors did not move beyond this level focussing on food, water, shelter, sex and safety. Today, apart from new born babies, we are likely to see beige only in untouched tribes people, some street people, mentally ill and some in senile old age. We also have the potential to regress to beige under extreme stress.

Beige is highly instinctive and those tribal people who remain untouched by the complexities of higher levels are able to see, hear and smell better, they are able to sense changes in the weather. Survival is a pressing daily issue so at beige people have to be totally in touch with what it takes otherwise they won't. If our society fails to heed the warnings climate change and there is a catastrophic collapse, it is possible that the survivors will be those who are best able to remember and access their beige instincts. We have already seen this in the wake of 'natural' disasters such as the Asian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005, where some people were accessing beige in order to survive.

Today Beige represents about 0.1% of the adult population and have no influence on the way our society is run.



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Beige are entirely instinctive
and are driven by our most
basic needs.**

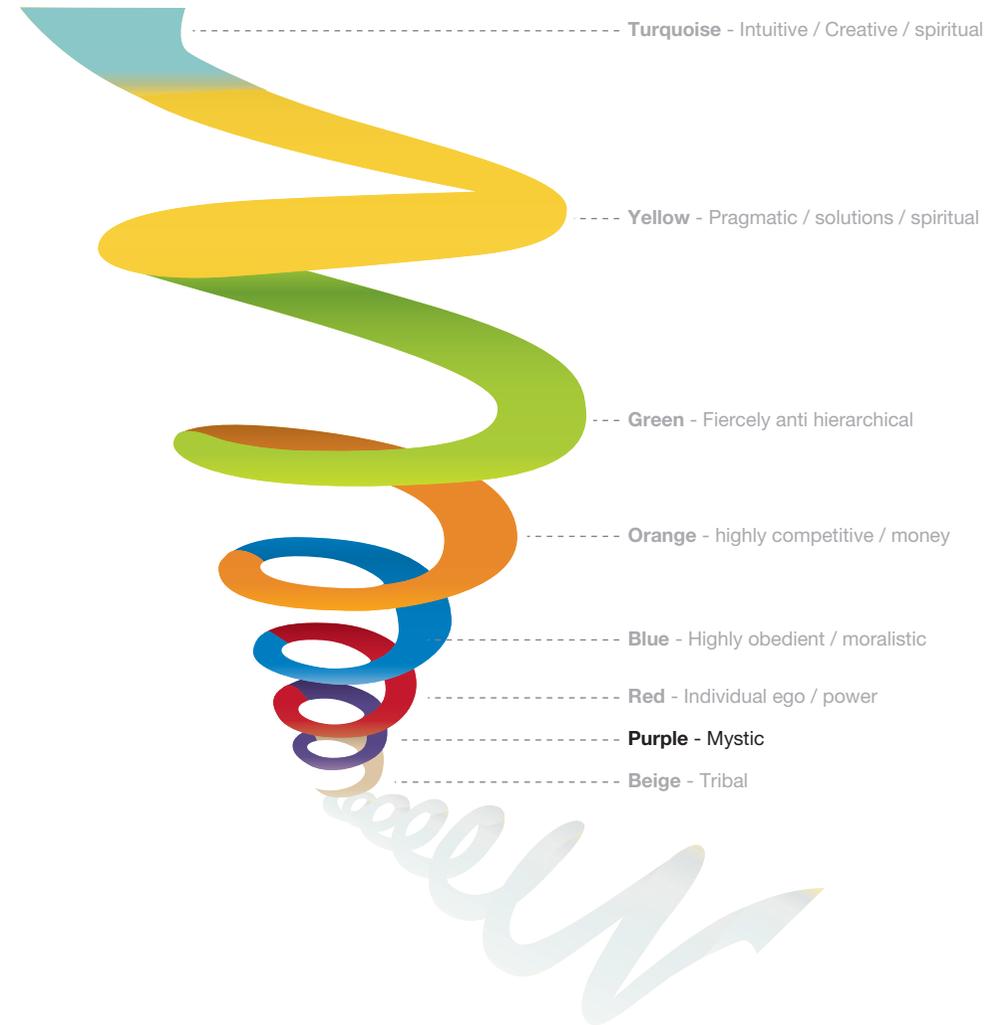


Purple

As the ice age reduced the available space for humans to live so it became a survival issue for the small clan groupings of beige to form tribes. During this period an evolutionary shift took place that enabled people to experience and attribute cause and effect to more abstract events, in contrast to the more direct beige experience where things are either perceived as random or are clearly visible. This gave rise to mystical beliefs linking significant events to each other and the beginnings of spirituality through attributing spirits to all things, including ancestors.

Today we see purple people in cultures where ritualistic and superstitious beliefs predominate. We also see purple behaviour in gangs and other groupings bonded by their own mystic rites.

Today Purple represents about 10% of the adult population and 1% of the influence.



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Red

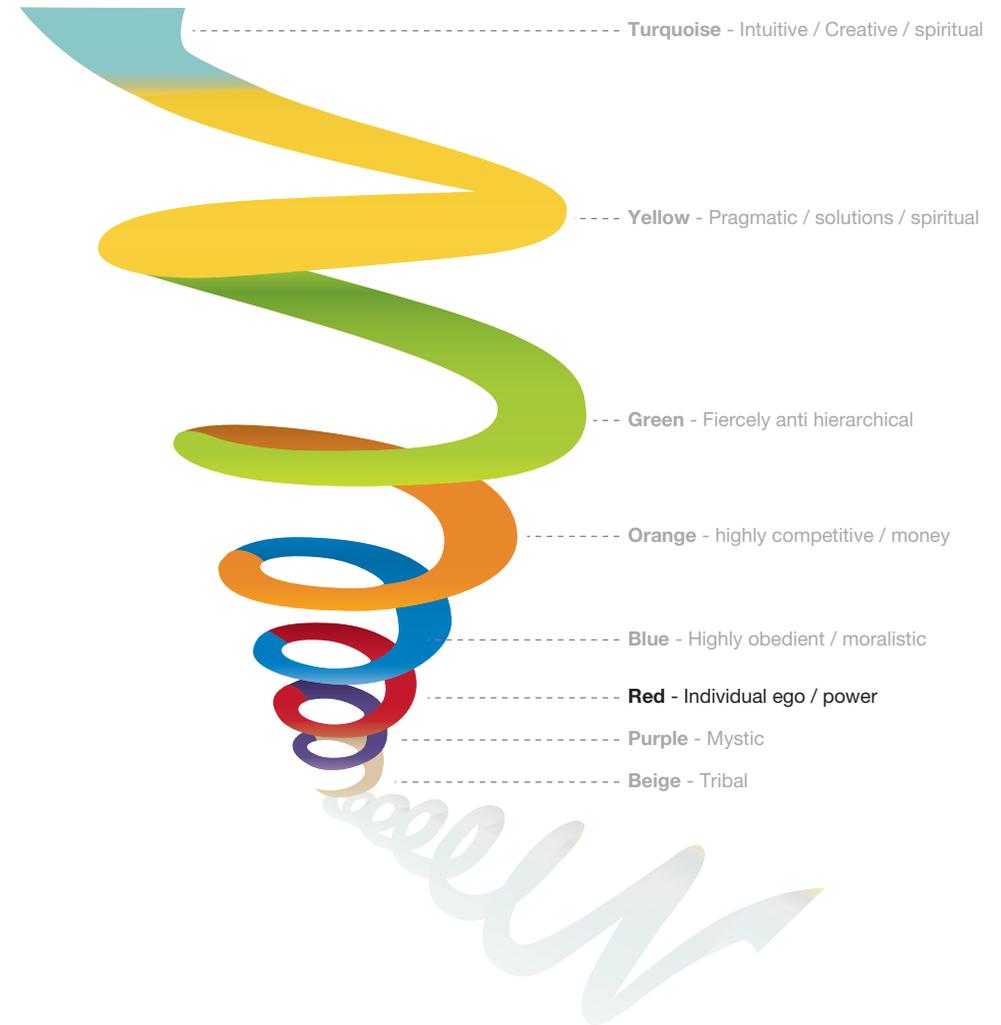
Red emerged in response to the order and security that was created by Purple, it was the first showing of the individual ego, distinct from the collective identity of the tribe. These individuals stood out both positively and negatively being heroic and rebellious, impulsive and risk taking, hedonistic and exploring. Red believes very much in the law of the jungle, it is dangerous out there and we need the strong Red individuals to protect us. This leads to feudalism where peasantry exchange their labour for protection.

The Red leader might even get to the stage where they begin to deify themselves, Red Roman, Chinese and Japanese emperors all saw themselves as Gods - even English Kings saw themselves touched by divinity until relatively recently. The saying that power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely could have been written for Reds who often wield their power mercilessly and can become irrational megalomaniacs. The Red leader often works through a dependent administrative elite to enforce their orders.

At an individual level we will experience Red as “toddler tantrums” and teenage rebellion, we may also have access to Red when we need to use aggression to

protect our patch. Red is hedonistic maximizing the immediate pleasure with little thought of the personal or wider consequences. Binge drinkers and the Ruthless hierarchy such as in Maoist China or Gangsterism are Red. Red is another response to disaster, as social norms break down, there are those who take the opportunity to create a new ‘Red’ order, a Blue government is well placed to crack down on an outburst of Red, which an Orange or Green government might find more difficult.

Today Red represents about 20% of the adult population and about 5% of the influence.



Red is hedonistic maximizing the immediate pleasure with little thought of the personal or wider consequences. ↖

Blue

Eventually people found that life under Red warlords was neither safe nor comfortable and Blue evolved as a way of containing and dealing with Red, essentially by appealing to a higher order. The administrative elite, particularly struggled and suffered with the random and brutal nature of Red. The relatively straight forward evolution was to invent or adopt a mythical deity to take on the power of the Red leader and for the administrative elite to shift to intermediating between the new God and the people rather than the Red leader and the people.

Blue invokes an ultimate authority figure, sometimes all powerful and vengeful God who controls his creation as ruthlessly as Red, through an administrative elite or strong central enforcement regime, such as the inquisition. All the great world religions were created in Blue as a popular response to Red.

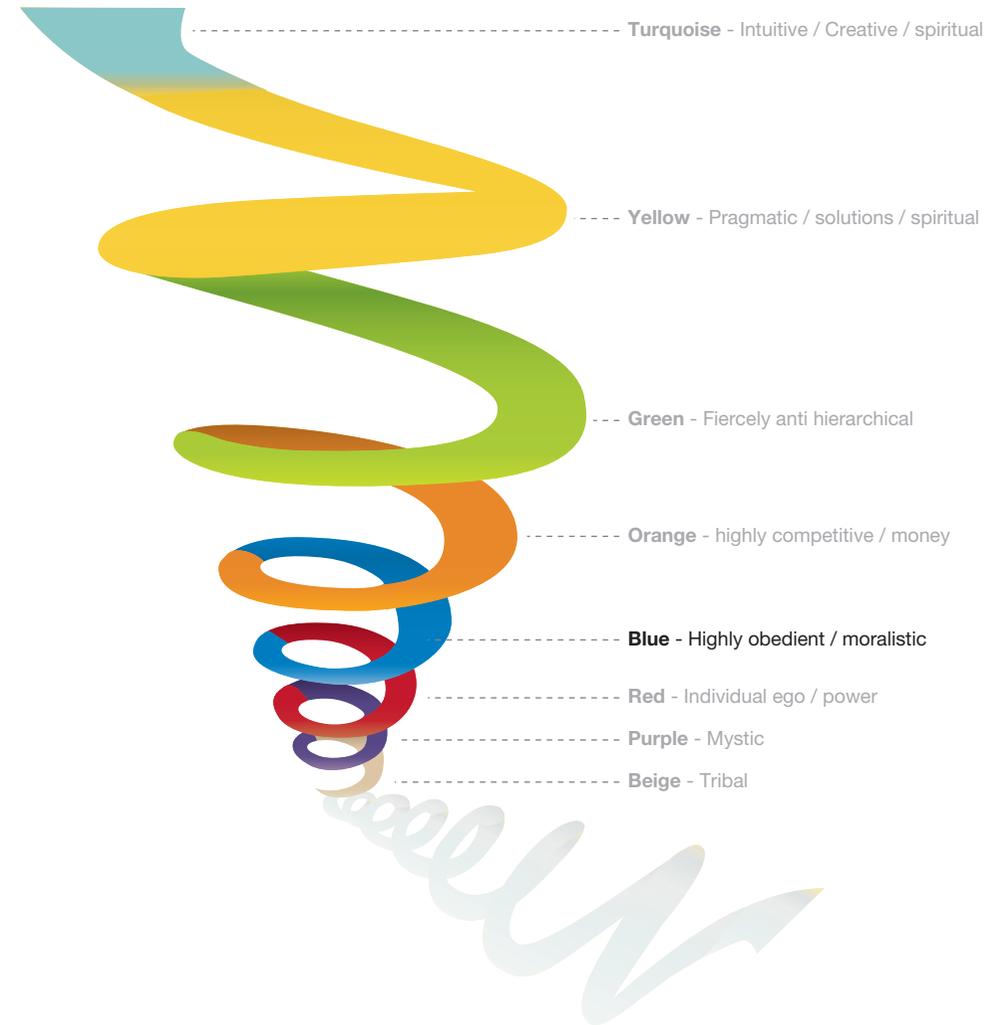
Absolute ideas of “right” and “wrong” enforced by God and carried out by his vicarious representatives on Earth are Blue ways of thinking.

Blue is highly obedient, moralistic (with morals imposed from outside) and is the first level to use guilt as a method of control (Red knows no sense of guilt). Conformity is the way to be in the rigid blue so-cial hierarchies. Blue sees

foreigners, animals and plants as being lower down the hierarchy than they and therefore existing largely to serve Blue. Blue is excellent for building empires and not so well adapted to the challenges of sustainability.

In the corporate world we can often see “Orange” management slipping into Blue at times of stress and taking control. Puritan America, The Inquisition, Victorian England and religious fundamentalism are all Blue in nature.

Today 40% of the worlds population are Blue and they hold 30% of the influence on society.



Blue is excellent for building empires, but not so well adapted to the challenges of sustainability.

Orange

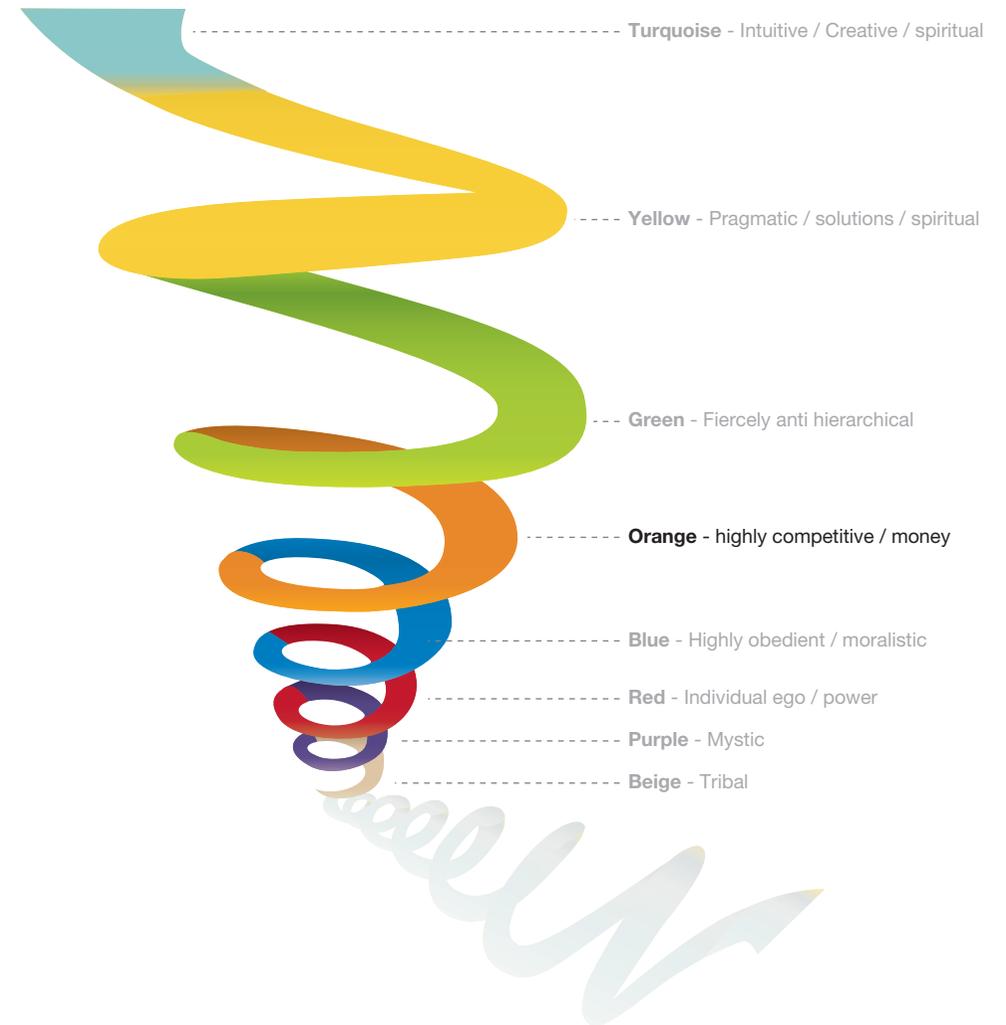
Orange evolved out of Blue when the oppressive and restrictive nature of Blue grew too extreme. The result was the Enlightenment where Orange self determination, ambition and individuality broke free from the Blue order. It was Orange thinking that enabled scientific discovery, the development of rational thinking and a move away from the mythic control of Blue.

Orange is highly competitive and sees individuals as being responsible for their own welfare and security. Orange is highly rational and can lump religion, spirituality, superstition and mysticism together as irrational and out dated.

Today society is dominated by Orange. Orange corporations, science and politics dominate the lives of the majority of the people in the world, whether they are Orange themselves or whether they live in an Orange country. Orange is brilliant at the go getting, build it up, greed is good mentality. Orange has built much of the affluent post war world that we in the West know. Orange's 'win at all costs' competitiveness makes it less good at either compassion or considering the wider implications of it's success.

Orange is at home in corporate culture, materialism, humanism and liberal economic thinking. WTO and the World Bank are the missionaries of Orange often imposing Orange thinking on Blue and even Red cultures with often disastrous results. Orange of course blames the cultures for their failure to make the most of the opportunity that was presented to them.

Today Orange represents around 30% of the world adult population and enjoys 50% of the influence exerted through business, science and politics.



Orange is brilliant at go-getting and is at home in the corporate culture, materialism, humanism and liberal thinking.

Green

After a while we may start to realise, both individually and collectively that the material success of Orange “winning” lacks meaning and fails to feed the human spirit. Green is our response to this realisation and begins to be represented as stage 2 of the Seven Stages of Authenticity.

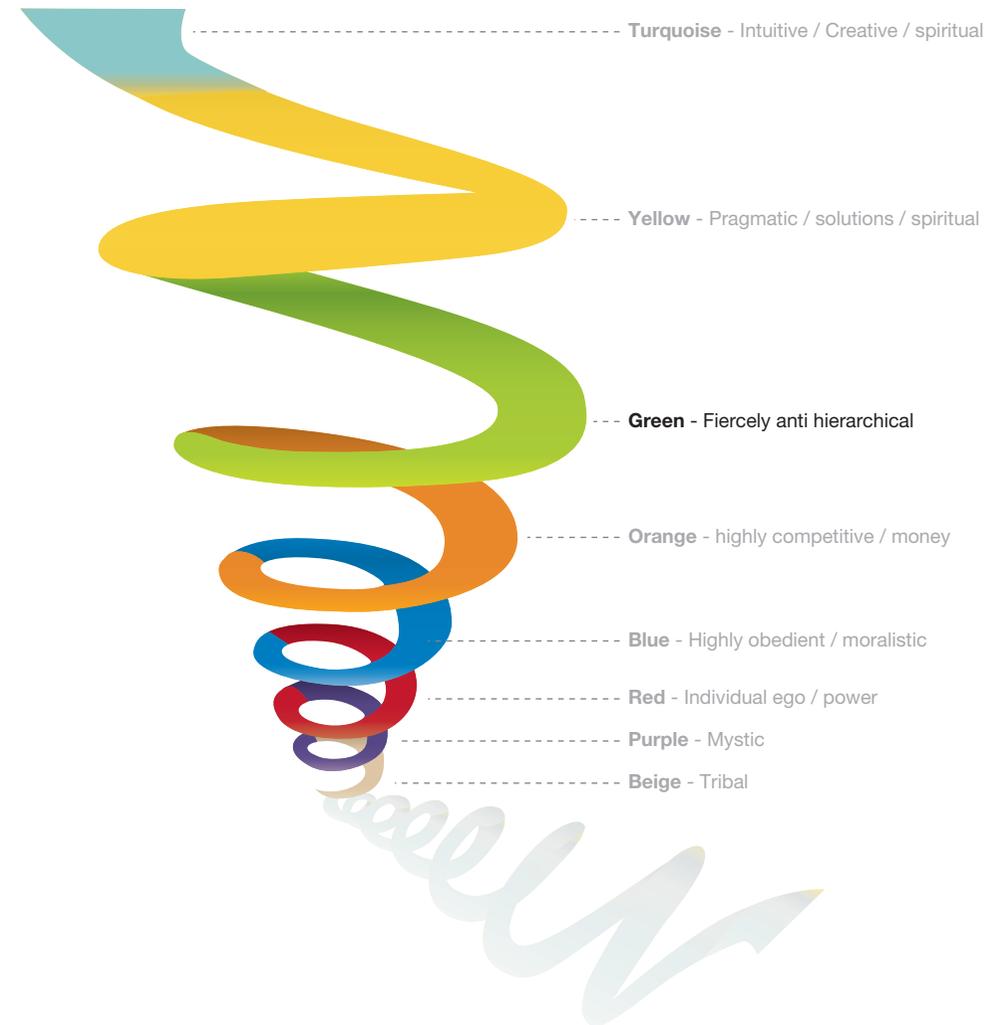
Green is fiercely anti hierarchical and has a very live and let live attitude. Green wants to bring the peoples of the world together placing equal value on all from Purple to Orange and for everyone to work out a way to peacefully coexist. When this hope is frustrated it can lead Greens to quite extreme “ends justifies the means” “anti” actions - such as the Animal Liberation Front and Critical Mass road protests.

Green sees the consequences of Orange and Blue abuse of the Earth and wants to find a way to sustainability. Greens are keen cyclers and recyclers. Green can get lost in the search for egalitarian consensus and find it impossible to be decisive or action oriented.

Green is the first level to see spirituality in non sectarian, not religious terms, the first level to understand that spirituality is about the sense of personal meaning that we can all derive from every aspect of life and nature.

Green is found in charities, environmental organisations and increasingly in the public sector. Greenpeace is probably the principal global emissary for Green thinking.

Today Green represent 10% of the global adult population, although this is higher in the USA and higher still in Western Europe at perhaps 30%. Greens represent about 15% of the influence largely through NGOs such as Greenpeace and through Green politics.



Green is found in charities, environmental organisations and increasingly in the public sector.



Second Tier Consciousness

Although Green is very worthy and caring it is ultimately a fear driven response, it tends to focus on a mixture of negativity and an unattainable level of idealism. Whilst Green is providing a critical role in awakening Orange and Blue to the crisis, it seldom actually offers solutions that might be acceptable to either, and so we have Orange business leaders and politicians wringing their hands and saying that “sustainability is too expensive”.

The two key limitations of the first tier are that they are largely fear driven (Green fears climate chaos and species loss) and their views are limited. Red - is limited to the individual, Blue - to the group of ‘true believers’, Orange - to those they can do business with in the next quarter, Green - to the environment, sometimes globally more usually a component of it and to the future, to some extent. In the first tier each of the levels find it difficult to comprehend or truly value any of the other levels.

The different approaches to war of these three levels is illustrative of their character: Red sees war as an exciting end in itself almost like a sport to be relished. Blue sees war as a necessary route to controlling and possibly converting the unbelievers. Orange sees war as a strictly commercial enterprise to be entered into on the basis of a cost/benefit analysis. To Green war is anathema, although extreme Greens are not above strong arm tactics to achieve their aims.

The key shifts that take place in the evolution to second tier consciousness are:

- 1: that fear is replaced by love as the key motivator. At the second tier we want to work with love, we exhibit love in our communications and the solutions to both personal and global issues.
- 2: That our perspective is massively wider and deeper, we are able to see everything in perspective in an interdependent web of time, space and spirituality. ↘

Yellow

Yellow is the first level of second tier consciousness and is partly a reaction to frustration at Green's unwillingness to come up with solutions. Yellow sees all of the challenges that Green sees and sees them in a grand multi-dimensional time - space - spiritual perspective and then rather than protesting about them simply sets about creating and implementing solutions.

Yellow is pragmatic and flexible enough to embrace solutions and engage with conversations at which ever level of the spiral will get things done. Yellow does not wait to be asked or for permission, Yellow identifies and understands the issues and challenges and simply takes responsibility for resolving them and turning them into opportunities, with love and compassion.

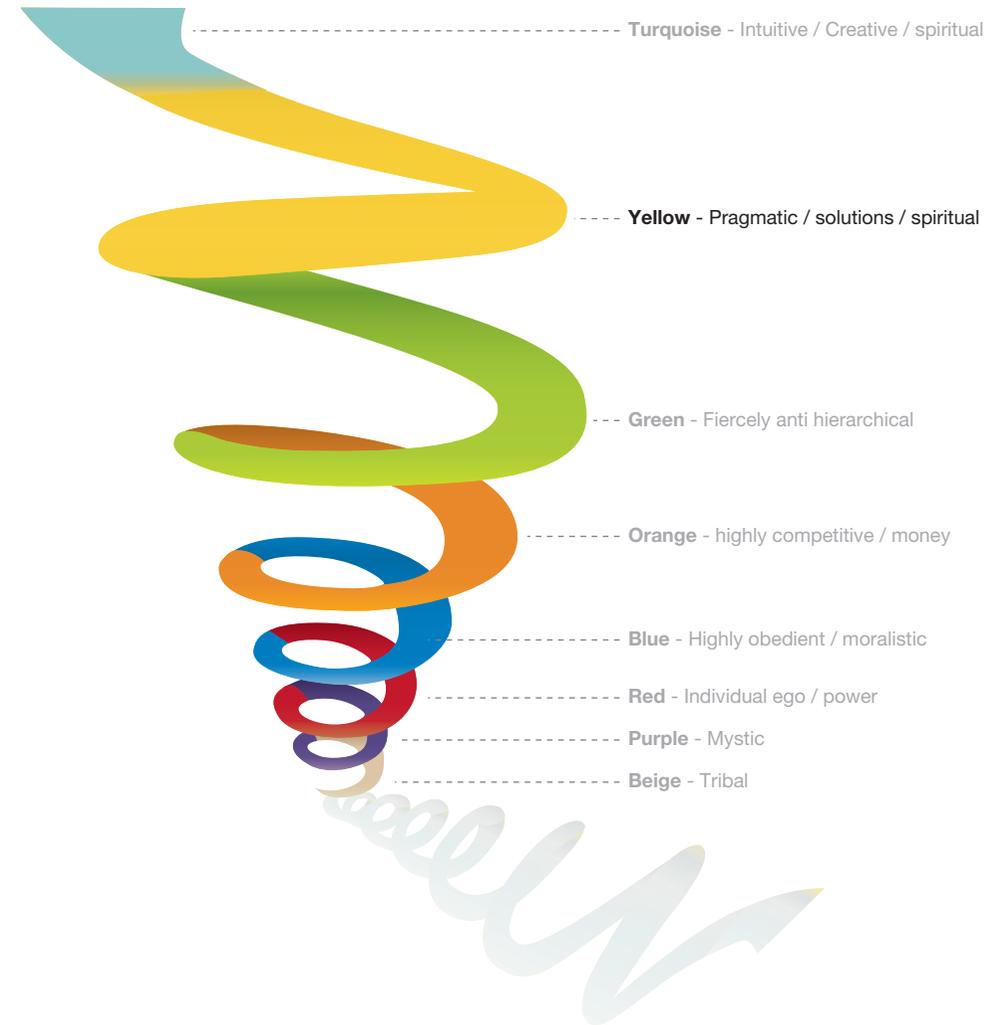
Yellow is not bound by the fear of the first tier and is driven by purpose and guided by strong humanistic and inclusive values. In Yellow we understand our spiritual role both in the development of our own consciousness and in supporting the growth of consciousness in around us.

Yellow is not interested in recognition except in so far as it might facilitate their task, Yellow is not concerned with status or comparisons, does not get involved in criticism or controlling behaviour but sees every experience as an opportunity to learn and to further the central task of expanding human consciousness.

Yellow is the first tier to have the cognitive capacity to comprehend the complexity of the issues that we face in creating a sustainable society. This does not mean that a Yellow individual is capable of understanding all of the issues or even any of the issues, but they are capable of understanding just how complex the issues are. Fortunately Yellow is committed to deep collaboration and their low ego approach facilitates rapid progress.

Yellow sees that there is actually only one game left to play and that game is called sustainability and Yellow understands that sustainability is first and foremost a people centered challenge. Yellow sees that there are two ways for our society to become sustainable one involves catastrophic downsizing and starting again, the other involves a balancing of all of the levels of the spiral in consensual global governance.

Today 1% of the population are Yellow and they represent 5% of the influence on society.



Yellow sees all the challenges that Green sees and then instead of protesting about it offers long-term solutions. ↙

Turquoise

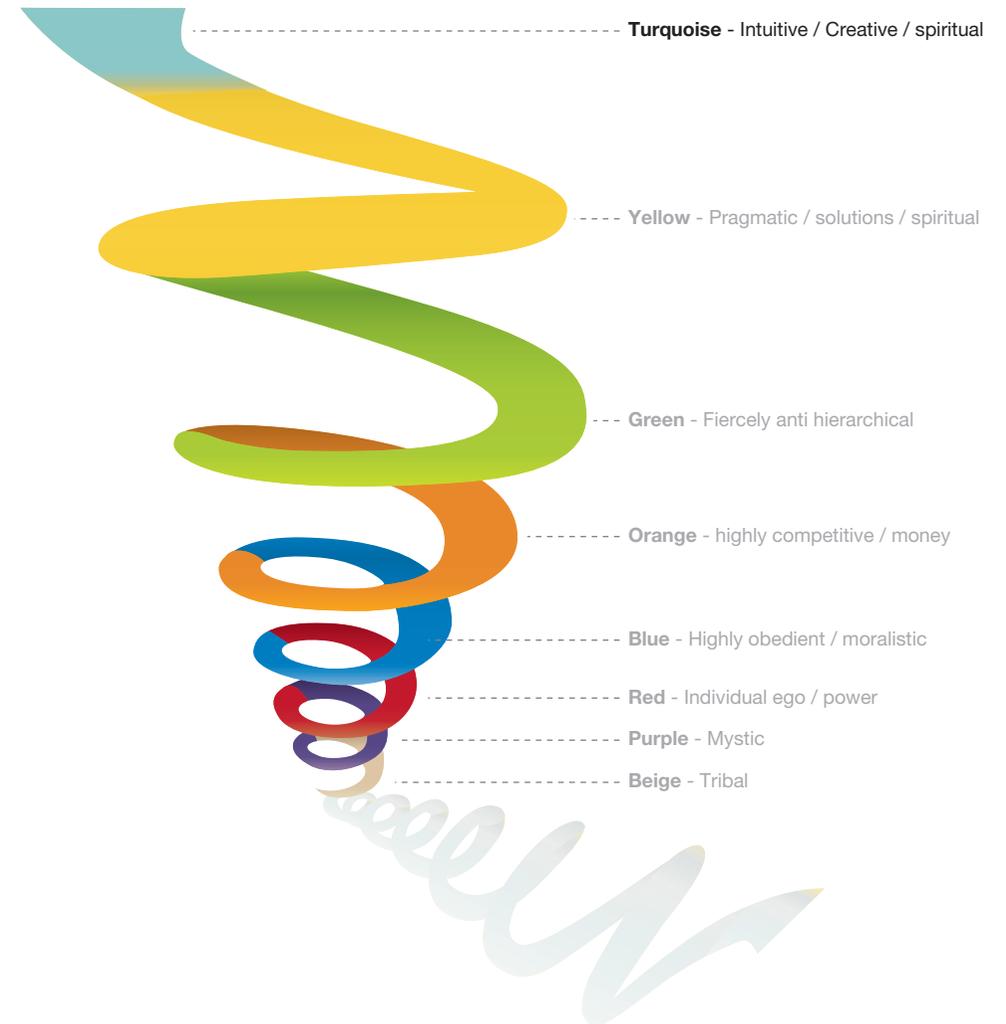
Turquoise is very much a compliment to Yellow and is emerging alongside Yellow. Where Yellow leads on practicality while understanding creativity, Turquoise leads on creativity and understands the practical issues. Or as Don Beck puts it: You could think of Yellow as "left brain with feelings" and Turquoise as "right brain with data."

Turquoise sees every experience as a personal message to learn from. Turquoise feels a deep sense of empathy and connection with all life this connections gives Turquoise a powerful sense of intuition. Indeed Turquoise has such a strong sense of intuition that it might be mistaken for what Purple would refer to as being psychic.

Turquoise is very concerned with energy and optimising positive energies and passions both within themselves and within others. Turquoise will often prefer to think, plan and communicate visually or musically rather than verbally, which might be the preference of Yellow.

Turquoise also sees that there is actually only one game left to play and that game is called sustainability and Turquoise understands that sustainability is first and foremost a spiritual challenge.

Today Turquoise represents perhaps .01% of the population and 1% of the influence.



Turquoise sees there is only one game left to play and that game is called sustainability. They see it as a spiritual challenge. ↖

All Quadrants - All Levels: Ken Wilber

Ken Wilber is arguably the leading philosopher living today. His research has lead him to design a model for thinking about consciousness that he calls AQAL or All Quadrants, All Levels. Below is a quote from an article by Wilber.

Most people find the four quadrants a little difficult to grasp at first, then very simple to use. The quadrants refer to the fact that anything can be looked at from four perspectives, so to speak: we can look at something from the inside or from the outside, and in the singular or the plural. For example, my own consciousness in this moment. I can look at it from the inside, in which case I see all my various feelings, hopes, fears, sensations, and perceptions that I might have in any given moment. This is the first-person or phenomenal view, described in "I" language. But consciousness can also be looked at in an objective, "scientific" fashion, in which case I might conclude that my consciousness is the product of objective brain mechanisms and neurophysiological systems. This is the third-person or objective view, described in "it" language. Those are the inside and the outside views of my own consciousness.

But my consciousness or self does not exist in a vacuum; it exists in a community of other selves. So in addition to a singular view of consciousness, we can look at how consciousness exists in the plural (as part of a group, a community, a collective). And just as we can look at the inside and the outside of the individual, we can look at the inside and the outside of the

collective. We can try to understand any group of people from the inside, in a sympathetic resonance of mutual understanding; or we can try to look at them from the outside, in a detached and objective manner (both views can be useful, as long as we honor each).

On the inside of the collective, we see all of the various shared worldviews (archaic, magic, mythic, rational, etc.), ethics, customs, values, and intersubjective structures held in common by those in the collective (whether that be family, peers, corporation, organization, tribe, town, nation, globe). The insides of the collective are described in "we" language and include all of those intersubjective items that you might experience if you were truly a member of that culture. From the outside, we see all of the objective structures and social institutions of the collective, such as the physical buildings, the infrastructures, the techno-economic base (foraging, horticultural, agrarian, industrial, informational), the quantitative aspects of the society (the birth and death rates, the monetary exchanges, the objective data), modes of communication (written words, telegraph, telephone, internet), and so on. Those are all "its" or patterns of interobjective social systems.

So we have four major perspectives (the inside and the outside of the singular and the plural): I, it, we, and its. Since the objective dimensions (the outside of the individual and the outside of the collective) are both described in third-person it-language, we can reduce the four quadrants to just three: I, we, and it. Or first-person, second-person, and third-person accounts. Or art, morals, and science. Or the beautiful, the good, and the true.

The major point is that each of the levels, lines, and states of consciousness has these four quadrants (or simply the three major dimensions of I, we, and it) (Wilber, 1995, 1996d, 1997a, 2000b). This model (shown opposite) therefore explicitly integrates first-, second-, and third-person accounts of consciousness at each of the levels, lines, and states. This gives what I believe is a more comprehensive and integral model of consciousness. This "all-quadrants, all-levels, all-lines, all-states" model is sometimes referred to simply as "all-quadrant, all-level," or AQAL for short. I have explored this model at length in several books, such as *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality; A Brief History of Everything;* and *Integral Psychology*. If we systematically investigate the implications of this

AQAL model, we might also find that it opens up the possibility of a more integral approach to education, politics, business, art, feminism, ecology, and so on (see, e.g., Crittenden, 2001; Wilber, 2000c).

It should be emphasized that this article has dealt almost exclusively with only one quadrant, namely, the interior of the individual (which is called the "Upper-Left quadrant"). But in other works I have dealt extensively with the other quadrants, and my point is certainly that all of the quadrants need to be included in any balanced account of consciousness."

