

Clare W. Graves – Inspirations Summary Box

Key concepts, claims and elements

- * Based on life-time **clinical work** on adult psychological development and **conceptions of maturity**
- * **Levels of being** as evolving systems of perceiving, thinking and behaving
- * **Methodology**: gathering conceptions of maturity from students over 15 years, empirical observation, field testing and double-blind definition of clusters and categories for sorting the material, leading to an evidence-based model of adult human development
- * Description of **eight consecutive levels of existence**, shifting between “express self” and “sacrifice self”, increasing in complexity and repeating at a higher order at every seventh level
- * **No end to development** as long as humans face new life challenges. Psychological development is an infinite, open-ended, hierarchical process of increasing one’s capability to manage complexity.
- * Graves’ 7th level largely corresponds to Gebser’s “**integral**” structure, seen **as the globally emerging new cultural force**.
- * **Overview of Graves’ levels of existence**:
 - **AN/automatic** (later: BEIGE): behavior is driven by physical needs and instincts as that of other animals. No excess energy or cognitive capacity for thinking; the individual is one with the world.
 - **BO/animistic** (later: PURPLE): tribal existence creates strong social bonds and vital communities, the world is made sense of in a magical way, tribal ways, rituals and taboos govern social life.
 - **CP/egocentric** (later: RED): totally self-centered, egocentric thinking, primarily concerned with “what’s in it for me?” Dominant-submissive mindset: might makes right, pursuit of power, no sense of abstract rules
 - **DQ/absolutistic** (later: BLUE): submits to a higher (often religious) authority that defines what is good and true, explains the order of things and provides safety & security, rules are followed strictly.
 - **ER/multiplistic** (later: ORANGE): self-empowerment and goal-orientation (accomplishing, getting and having more), rational thinking, scientific method, pragmatic experimentation, conquer nature, capitalism, entrepreneurship, secular power, individualism, rule of law (*my rights*), liberal democracy
 - **FS/relativistic** (later: GREEN): questioning the materialistic ER lifestyle, search for subjective happiness, inner peace, good relationships and harmony, overcome individualism through community, altruism, deep empathy and spirituality. Deliberation, participation and deep democracy
 - **A’N’/systemic** (later: YELLOW, integral): new order of conceptual thinking: global, systemic, flexible, differentiated and kaleidoscopic perspective, largely ego-free, coherence between thought and actions, free of fear, striving for self and societal development, best prepared to develop the coming mode of life through wisdom, quality and end-orientation, healing man’s misuse of his world
 - **B’O’/intuitive** (later: TURQUOISE): deep exploration of the meaning of human existence
- * Graves’ theory has gained widespread attention via Don Beck/Chris Cowan’s “**Spiral Dynamics**”.
- * **Practical socio-political benefits**: a much more adequate understanding of socio-political problems enabling decision-makers to come up with much more effective responses, solutions and cures.

Source: Graves, Clare W. (2005). *The Never Ending Quest*. ECLET Publishing.

Further reading: IO 1 chapter 3

