

Spiral dynamics: An expression of world views

by

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“Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being – like a worm”
(Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 1956, p. 21)

“...man is the being through whom nothingness comes into the world”
(Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 1956, p. 218)

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Spiral dynamics as a theory offers an explanation of human values. The historical development of this theory with the original theoretician, Graves, not having written a seminal work, opens up possibilities of different understandings or interpretations. In this thesis the contributions of either Graves or Beck and Cowan (1996) to Spiral dynamics is not disputed. One of the goals in this thesis is to identify specific differences between Graves's original descriptions and Beck and Cowan's contributions. The focus will be on two main areas. First the difference between Graves's original work and Beck and Cowan's theory of Spiral dynamics. Second, the intricate relationship between Spiral dynamics and Existentialism will be explained.

In the next chapter the theory of Spiral dynamics will be examined. This theory will be explained in terms of Graves's original research, as well as the subsequent contribution by Beck and Cowan. Because of the complicated nature of the development and content of this theory, Spiral dynamics will form the exclusive content of Chapter 1.

The theory of Existentialism will be dealt with on the following chapter. In order to understand Existentialism, it is necessary to highlight the context from which this theory developed. Therefore, the third chapter will briefly deal with the field of Phenomenology and how this field relates to Existentialism. The links between an understanding of the theory of Spiral dynamics and the theory of Existentialism will be discussed in Chapter 2.

A discussion of the results will be presented in Chapter 3. The Lens questionnaire was used to show the application of the theory, Relevant Lens profiles will be shown in the Results chapter. The Lens psychometric instrument was developed to measure world views according to Graves's original theory. In the development of this questionnaire, certain gaps in the understanding of the theory were identified. These shortcomings in the Spiral dynamics theory in terms of the precepts of the theory of Existentialism will also be addressed in this thesis.

In Chapter 4 the previous chapters will be summarised, and a Conclusion will be presented. For the sake of practicality, the detailed descriptions of the Spiral according to Beck and Cowan are presented in Appendix 1. The detailed description of the research into the Lens is included in Appendix 2.

For the sake of clarity the basic colours will be used to describe the different stages on the spiral. Graves described the stages as A-N, B-O, C-P, D-Q, E-R, F-S, G-T, H-U, but in this work the descriptions added by Beck and Cowan (1996) will be used. Therefore A-N will be referred to as Beige, B-O will be referred to as Purple, C-P will be referred to as Red, D-Q will be referred to as Blue, E-R will be referred to as Orange, F-S will be referred to as Green, G-T will be referred to as Yellow, and H-U will be referred to as Turquoise.