

Dr. Don Beck Interview Notes

Dr. Don Beck is an integral leader who is making significant differences in the world in some of the most difficult places to work.

- The current crisis in Norway is on our agenda. Elza Maalouf and I spoke in Oslo, warning about what was happening in Norway in terms of the clash of value systems, the counter-response and blowback from the fear of Islamic penetration into the European cultures, that could be a flash-point in the future. It happened more quickly than we realized.*
- We've been engaged with this issue for a long time, e.g. in The Netherlands, where we ran a series of summits on the future of The Netherlands, with a focus on fundamentalism. We anticipated this problem, following the assassination of the Dutch film critic.*
- An example of the vibrancy of the work of Clare W. Graves; using the model he developed, can look deeply into causative forces that are working, rather than try to piece together issues on the surface, which tend to fall apart.*

- *This gets to the work of Muzafer Sherif, called "Assimilation-Contrast Effect." Basis of my PhD study of the American Civil War. How issues polarize, why the "Center" disappears, and why the extreme Left would see George W. Bush as a fascist, and the extreme Right would see President Clinton as a Communist. We've been able to detect the nature of that "push-pull" and therefore warn Norway and other countries to see the early signs.*
- *The fact that this terrorist was not on the police radar is a serious indictment of their inability to recognize weak signals. So we strongly recommend Vital Signs Monitors in order to detect these underlying dynamics of change before they erupt on the surface.*
- *What happened recently in Norway is yet another case study where the understanding of what we're doing might have been more preventative. But after the damage is done, to avoid "knee-jerk" responses and the needless stereotyping that occurs regarding Islamic thought systems, or Christian thought systems, as the enemy.*
- *Assimilation-Contrast Effect is very powerful, well-researched technology, working in the field to weaken the forces that lead to extreme violence. Because in our*

interdependent world, where all kinds of people can access the weaponry of the more complex [value] systems, that means we're at serious risk today, and we simply have to do better. So that's the hot issue for me now.

Violence can show up in many different forms and levels. I would assume the applications you're talking about, within crisis situations that are often national and international in scope, could apply at other system levels like networks and organizations. Is that right?

- Yes, most certainly. In this country, at the political level; occasional major violence around sporting events, where "Us vs. Them" stereotypes occur... at town council meetings, Boards of Education, and other kinds of conflicts. It's a constant problem at all levels, not just geopolitical.*
- We can escape that bipolarity that freezes our solutions. Understanding the functional flows, and how to facilitate impasses before they fester into violence. The combination of Clare W. Graves and Muzafer Sherif on Assimilation-Contrast Effect produce a powerful model for moving into almost any particular context.*

So there's lots of different levels of applicability, and there are critical concepts. How do you see them connecting to integrally-informed leadership?

- Our particular context asks: "How should who, lead whom, to do what, with which people, living where?" A Spiral context works with multiple layers and levels of complexity; dangerous to impose a single definition of leadership onto a context that reflects one's own preferences and culture. E.g. Norway's the inability to detect under the surface certain threatening dynamics, because the mindset/worldview in Norway, with its Peace Prize and so forth, just doesn't see them.*
- Also applied to The Netherlands - Spoke to Dutch police leaders who were told that they may have to start wearing guns again. Great resistance to that, because they pride themselves on community policing. But the kinds of threats they have today in The Netherlands and all over Europe are going to require different concepts of law enforcement. I regret that that's the case, but because we're so interconnected, with destructive weapons available to very dangerous people, we may have to rethink that whole strategy.*

- *A large component in Graves' theory has to do with Change. Changing the symbolic systems and so forth won't win the day. If there's a deep crisis going on, you have to do things "down-Spiral," which are antithetical to the prevailing politically-correct value systems.*

It's difficult for some people, maybe it's folks centered in Green, or one of the other worldviews, to see the Spiral Dynamics Integral approach for what it is... dealing with "what is," rather than dealing with what we want it to be. As a consequence, they think of it as conservative, or radical, or something. How do you explain the approach you take, in terms of some of the historical Left-Right divisions that exist in most societies?

- *The problem is that some people who talk about Spiral Dynamics don't have a clue what it is. They haven't come to our Certified Training programs, they haven't looked at the huge body of literature on change, and the study of probably 250,000 people worldwide, in multiple languages, that have used our assessment systems.*
- *The whole concept is not a rigid, "back to basics" at all. It's functional system. It has the freedom to go back to the basics if necessary. E.g. in Iceland, our*

colleague Bjarni has done wonderful work with the National Assembly that have gone back to the past to recover what's necessary to jump into the future.

- Like the Russian dolls, with dolls within dolls within dolls, it realizes the critical importance of bringing the whole Spiral with us. It means to respect tribal origins, as well as traditional belief structures and the modern entities, if we're going to deal with the premodern-modern-postmodern-integral transition.*
- Spiral Dynamics touches that flow at all the particular levels. It's dangerous to reject the technologies for moving out of premodern through modern; it can and does make things worse.*
- In our book this is explained in detail. We describe eight different kinds of change. So we can utilize context; rather than naively saying "you have to change," we ask, "Change From What, To What? And How?" Based on the technologies of change, up and down the Spiral. That's a large part of the technology.*

That's a critical term, "up and down the Spiral." Because so many change efforts tend to ignore that phenomenon. Any last comments?

- *Yes. It's important to keep an open mind and be willing to look at the scientific evidence. Just completed mind/brain research project in Cologne using PET scan and fMRI, locating these value systems in our neurology. Just as Clare Graves, in his "bio-psycho-social" model, said we'd find them. Ultimate validation of Spiral Dynamics, moreso than any other evolutionary model can produce. I'm a student of Spiral, so embrace all steps, stages and models, and tend not to be critical of any... all are worthy. Yet in real-world issues, I find Graves' work to be the most powerful.*
- *Having a portfolio that engages all the integral models, with wisdom that each produces, is the challenge.*
- *"Quest of the Master Code" - Graves looked at why what is next, is next. He was looking for the master code that explains why all theories emerge. Why are there different evolutionary models? His model predicts and explains that. It gets to core issue of how human nature responds to life conditions. Rather than pre-determined, Calvinistic script, or crop circles in the human psyche, it looks at the dynamic of the human organism and its interaction with life conditions. All the different models, from different cultures, come out of*

that interaction. So rather than debating among them, pick the ones that are most relevant to the particular context you find yourself in.

- *We've amassed a tremendous body of knowledge about the nature of change; how to read weak signals, how to construct unique solutions, and the architecture that matches the movement of people through different stages, like the Russian dolls. Emerging through differences, bringing with them the richness of their past. That's key. If we become judgmental and cut off the Spiral from their past, then we're missing a huge opportunity.*
- *Barrett Brown did outstanding work in applying this to the HIV problem. We were able to correlate the different "solutions" to the HIV problem in Africa to the different memetic colors. It's an example of how one can activate all the value structures. We call this a "meshwork." (To view Barrett's article, see <http://www.integralworld.net/pdf/Brown.pdf>).*

Dr. Don Beck

Don Beck has been developing, implementing, and teaching the evolutionary theory of Spiral Dynamics for more than three decades. Beck has elaborated upon the work of his mentor, Clare W. Graves, to develop a multidimensional model for understanding the evolutionary transformation of human values and cultures. As cofounder of the National Values Center in Denton, Texas, and CEO of the Spiral Dynamics Group, Inc., Beck is employing the Spiral Dynamics model to effect large-scale systems change in and among various sectors and societies of the world. Recent projects and distinctions include: working in Palestine-Israel with Elza Maalouf (www.buildpalestine.org), being invited by Deepak Chopra as one of 40 Evolutionary Leaders; and being dubbed “philosopher-activist” by EnlightenNext magazine. He is the author of *Spiral Dynamics: Mastering Values, Leadership & Change*, written with Christopher Cowan in 1996. Beck's long consulting career has taken him to such diverse settings as 10 Downing Street to consult with Tony Blair's Policy Unit; the south side of Chicago to address the problems faced by inner-city schools; the World Bank to consider the future of Afghanistan; and the boardrooms of major banks, energy companies, airlines, and government agencies. In his 63 trips to South Africa between 1981 and 1988, he had significant impact on political leaders, the business sector, religious leadership, and the general public in order to help bring about the peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy. Out of his experiences there, Beck wrote *The Crucible: Forging South Africa's Future* (1991) with Graham Linscott. Before his work in South Africa, Beck taught for twenty years at the University of North Texas. There he was named Outstanding Professor in 1978, named Honor Professor in 1979, and listed as an “Outstanding Educator in America” in 1980. Beck has also been the team psychologist for The South African Springboks, winners of the 1995 Rugby World Cup, and has been associated with the Dallas Cowboys, New Orleans Saints, the Texas Rangers (baseball), and the U.S. Olympic Committee for Men's Track and Field.



Russ Volckmann

Russ Volckmann, Ph.D., has worked for over thirty years as an organization development consultant and executive coach. He is the publisher and editor of *The Integral Leadership Review* and *LeadingDigest* and the founder of *Integral Publishers* (having published nine books by integral authors). As an educator he has taught at U.C., Berkeley; the University of Arizona; the United States Army Intelligence School at Ft. Juachuca, Arizona; Sonoma State University; Golden Gate University; John F. Kennedy University; Leadership University; and the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology. He has served on dissertation committees for the Fielding Graduate Institute and the Institute for Transpersonal Psychology and mentor for Antioch University. As a writer and editor, he was the founding editor of a professional journal, *Vision/Action*, for five years. He is currently on the Editorial Board of *Integral Review* which is published by ARINA, Inc. He has authored two books and is currently working on his third with co-author Brett Thomas on the topic of Integral Leadership.

