

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic

(This paper examines the MGM ("mean Green meme") construct which has been injected into the spiral model. It will introduce new data about this hypothesis and is geared towards those with some understanding of Gravesian theory.)

Many who pursue Spiral Dynamics products and services do so because it opens up new inner worlds on a planet where the geography has been largely explored. The tellurian odyssey beckons with tantalizing promise that the human essence might yet be discovered. The spiral's complex lens helps us wrestle with the perplexities of our basic nature while examining ourselves in relationship to fellow mortals in a polychromatic world.

One such exploration has resulted in the promulgation of the MGM construct, the main topic of this paper. What is the 'Mean Green Meme' (MGM) and where does this sort of concept come from?

The creators of MGM – and other "MXM" versions – seek to label 'meanness' or 'unhealthy' aspects of the various "MEMEs; hence, 'Mean X (SD color) Meme' or a similar acronym. The construct purports to describe pathologies in the various systems which give rise to 'meanness.' These 'unhealthy' expressions, painted as inherent within each of the systems, are labeled with three part names such as "Mean Green Meme" – MGM. MGM advocates claim to be seeking out, isolating, and helping to eliminate pathologies by disclosing them with use of this label. Some have claimed that by simply showing others this construct, holding it up as a mirror, dramatic change can be caused to occur; transformation through revelation.

Then, there is the blockage metaphor that has been applied to MXMs, likening the 'pathologies' to kidney stones. When present, the blockages supposedly prevent movement towards the next more complex system. (This sounds like Graves's state of closedness rather than a characteristic of any particular level.)

The primary target of the MXM discussion has been the Green "MEME" and its 'mean Green meme' variant. MGM is a focal point of Ken Wilber's *Boomeritis* where he claims 'Boomers got stuck at green' then this system 'began to go pathological.'¹ The idiom is an effort to

describe the 'negative' expression of the Green (F-S) Value System which is charged with causing difficulty around the globe. If this were true, we would applaud those brave warriors who fight on our behalf against Green's tyranny. However, we do not believe theirs is an accurate interpretation. Of course, we might have missed something.

A clearer view of what Green (F-S) actually is and isn't would be helpful here. Dr. Clare W. Graves described the emergence of the FS/Green system as one that:

"... brings into existence the sociocratic value system, in which emphasis is placed upon "getting along," accepting the authority of the group or the majority, and seeking status from others. This "other directed" individual believes he will find salvation in belonging and in participating with others in what they want him to do. While the individual has given up his dogmatism, he nevertheless rigidifies in a world of sociocentric thinking."²

This paper is written out of a deep concern for the future of this model and the direction of its intellectual life. Here we will examine the MGM hypothesis and consider whether it has basis in existing Gravesian or Spiral Dynamics data. While we agree that some of the traits attributed to MGM exist in human nature, we will explore whether they have been misattributed to the nodal Green system and assigned an oversimplistic label given Dr. Clare W. Graves's Levels of Existence Theory.

This is an objecting analysis seeking to disprove a claim we believe does a disservice to the theory, and to the emergence of the next levels of human existence.

diseased, disturbed and frankly sick – as it became the mean green meme."

²Cowan, Christopher C, & Todorovic, Natasha (eds). *The Never Ending Ques: Clare W. Graves Explores Human Nature*. ECLET Publishing (2005). Santa Barbara, CA. Many Gravesian sources are available for readers interested in learning more about the Green (FS) Value System and can be viewed at <http://www.clarewgraves.com>.

¹ Wilber, Ken. *Boomeritis*. Shambhala Publications, Inc. Boston, MA, 2002, pg. 102. He defines Boomeritis as "Green pluralism [which becomes] a magnet for red narcissism" where "green became

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic

GREEN CONTRAIT PATTERNS

In this section, we'll work toward understanding Green rejection patterns by looking at data acquired from over 600 profiles processed statistically using the Pearson product-moment coefficient of correlation, which measures the strength of relationships between variables.

The instrument used to track dominant vMEMEs (or Value Systems) operating in this group of individuals was the Psychological Map *FORM A*, combined with a Sentence Completion test to act as a 'check and balance' on the resulting data which we'll examine together here.

The Form A has an 'Accept' dimension - the system(s) the individual most identifies with - and a 'Reject' dimension - the system(s) the individual reports as least like themselves.

To complete the assessment, individuals select from a series of statement clusters those that are "most like me" and "least like me." The instrument is a forced choice format. The resulting profile indicates their dominant vMEME(s) on six scales, as measured by this instrument.

The presupposition in this section is that subjects with a high reject of Green will dislike or disidentify with statements from that system thereby selecting contrait statements designed to elicit Green as "least like me," more frequently than those who don't mind or who like the Green worldview – protrait choices.

In protrait cases, people who like the statements select them as 'most like me.' Where there is no reaction, nontrait respondents skip over the statement(s). Contrait cases occur when they dislike the statement or need to make a selection by choosing the one that is 'least like me.' The reject score sometimes means simply "not like me," and sometimes it is an expression of distaste for a system.

By examining Green vMEME contrait patterns we looked for clues as to the system(s) that might find 'mean' in Green. We hypothesized that those who resonate with 'mean Green' would have a higher than average³ rejection of the Green Value System (FS^R). The notion is simple: the systems most likely to see 'meanness' from the Green

Value System will, in all probability, select many of the Green vMEME centered statements on the instrument as 'not like me.'

In Chart #1, shown on the next page, the data are organized by: a) overall high Green reject scores defined as two times or more the mean reject⁴ (found in 26% of the profiles); b) the twenty highest Green vMEME rejection scores (those with five times the average reject score); and c) the forty highest Green vMEME reject scores, (those with four times the mean reject score on the Green (FS) Value System).

An elevated F-S contrait score on the test (as compared to the average) suggests an individual who sees the Green vMEME in a more negative light and/or might not yet understand it. If the individuals portrayed in Chart #1 find the values in FS/Green objectionable, then they might reject relativistic/sociocentric thinking and might, at the extreme, tend to demonize or dehumanize those who think in this way.

What systems tend to find Green statements "least like me?" The data in Chart #1 reveals that individuals centralized in Blue, Orange and the Blue/Orange pairing appear to have a stronger tendency than other systems to reject the Green vMEME.

YELLOW HAS LOW GREEN REJECT

One argument used by MGM proponents is that people centralized in the Yellow system will reject Green because they have recently emerged through it. The rationale follows the lines that individuals often reject the system they've just left because they can see its weaknesses. They have had enough of it. In this case, they would feel like they've shed the chains of the old (Green) way of thinking. Taken at face value, this appears to make sense. The data, however, show something quite different. Less than 7% of Green rejection comes from those with strong Yellow⁵.

³ High Rejection scores have been defined here as 2X or greater than the average scores for Rejection. The mean score, which we also refer to as the average, is 2.2.

⁴ The mean, compiled at the creation of the instrument in 1979, used 4500+ subjects – Hurlbut, Marilyn Anne. Clare W Graves', Levels of Psychological Existence: A Test Design. North Texas University, Diss. 1979. Little variation was found in subsequent years. Another compilation of data will occur later in 2003 to see if the original mean, used here, still holds. A validation study will occur simultaneously.

⁵ 7% is listed due to rounding of numbers- see Chart #1

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic

SYSTEMS REJECTING THE GREEN ^VMEME: LOOKING AT REJECT PATTERNS

Chart #1

GREEN ^V MEME CONTRAIT PATTERNS						
SYSTEMS HIGHLY REJECTING THE FS/GREEN ^V MEME						
2X – 7.6X mean reject (2.2 on FS ^R) (% of reject by system(s))						
PURPLE/ RED & RED (BO/CP – CP)	Blue (DQ)	Orange (ER)	BLUE/ORANGE (DQ/ER)	Green (er/FS – FS/gt)	GREEN/ YELLOW	Yellow (GT)
2%	17%	21%	46%	4%	1%	7%
TOP 20						
Extreme FS/Green ^V MEME Reject (FS ^R)						
5X ⁺ 'normal' reject (% breakdown per system)						
CP	DQ	ER	DQ/ER	FS	GT	GT False Positive
5	15	35	45	0	0	65
TOP 40						
Extreme FS/Green ^V MEME Reject (FS ^R)						
4X ⁺ 'normal' reject (% Breakdown per system)						
CP	DQ	ER	DQ/ER	FS	GT	GT False Positive
8	18	28	40	0	0	52.5

National Values Center Consulting, 26% of profiles showed an above average (2X or more) reject of the Green Value System (n = 148)

In fact, when those centralized in Yellow reject other systems⁶, the highest contrait scores fall in the Blue system. The negative

correlation of .621 at the .01 level reveals that those centralized in the Yellow system reject statements describing the D-Q (Blue) system most strongly - NOT Green⁷.

Instead, the data actually show that Yellow accepts Green more than any other system.

⁶Although much can be said about the relationships between the various systems and combinations of systems, we will narrow the field to only the matter at hand. A later document will outline these relationships more clearly and extensively while reporting the data from this study.

⁷ The Green reject is not statistically significant or notable.

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic

Whether you adhere to Dr. Graves' earlier belief of a "momentous leap" between Green and Yellow or his later view that the two levels were more alike than he realized, this provides evidence of Dr. Graves's belief⁸ that Yellow and Green are closer than the MGM notion might imply. Neither in theory or in fact is there any reason for Yellow to strongly dislike Green to the degree outlined in the MGM claims. And therein might lie our first and perhaps best clue as to what is really going on with the proponents of MGM, as we'll see shortly.

ORANGE REJECTS GREEN STRONGLY

Thus, according to these data, criticisms of the Green system are unlikely to come from 'Second Tier' or Yellow thinking. The data point, instead, towards the active rejection of this more complex system (Green) coming from the less complex (Blue, Orange and Blue/Orange) range.

In fact, it is those with high Orange scores who reject Green most strongly. When the relationship is examined and the Pearson's test applied, there is a negative correlation of .608, at the .01 confidence level, that someone with strong Orange will reject Green. Hence, it appears that Orange rejects Green, despite the MGM proponents' claim that the objection comes from Yellow and 'second tier' thinking.

THE BLUE/ORANGE PAIRING 'DISLIKES' GREEN MOST

The data in Chart #1 show that the highest rejection of the Green 'MEME' comes from three key areas: 1) nodal Blue, 2) the Blue/Orange pairing, and 3) the nodal Orange range.⁹ Fully 84% of the Green rejection (FS^R) comes from those zones.

Scores showing centralization in the Blue system often have a Green reject. Blue only rejects Yellow more strongly. The Blue system

shows a negative correlation of .366 with a .01 confidence level with Green; this means people finding Blue phrases most like them are unlikely to resonate with Green statements.

There were two ways to examine the data. The first looked at nodal systems, the second looked at combinations. This is how we found a pairing pattern. Of the nodal systems, Orange rejects Green the most strongly. The Blue/Orange pairing, however, rejects Green even more often and most strongly, as shown by Chart #1. Orange shows the highest Green reject at negative .608 with a .01 confidence level, which means those exhibiting Orange protraits are highly likely to also exhibit Green contraits.

SECOND TIER ELITISM: YELLOW FALSE POSITIVE?

While compiling and analyzing the data, an interesting dimension came to light – Yellow false positive. To explain this would require an extensive paper in and of itself. Essentially, the sentence completions, direct observation and knowledge of some of the subjects compared with the results of the Form A revealed a trend of false positive on Yellow. Selections of statements intended to elicit Yellow appear to be reflecting a more sophisticated form of Orange instead. Hence, we are seeing false positive protrait Yellow scoring.

The false positive information is revealing in many ways. The first indicates a weakness in the Psychological Map Form A instrument when it comes to sorting for Yellow. This was discovered upon examination of the sentence completions and comparing them with the profiles generated from the Form A.¹⁰

Those selecting phrases intended for the Yellow system were not actually thinking in the typical ways Yellow thinks. Rather, the dominant profile for those pegging falsely on Yellow came from the Blue/Orange pairing and from Nodal Orange. Individuals centralized in the combined Blue/Orange range tend to peg falsely on Yellow even more frequently than those centralized in Orange.

⁸ Graves, Clare W. Audio. *ECLET: Emergent Cyclical Levels of Existence Theory a Workshop with Dr. Clare W. Graves*. NVC Consulting, Santa Barbara, CA 2001.

⁹ Nodal means an individual has 50% or more of their score centered in a particular system

¹⁰ The old Values Test has the same problem among others. We've since replaced it with the *SPIRAL DYNAMICS*® Values Profile II.

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic

This might explain much of the 'second tier' elitism coming from MGM advocates. The Blue need to rank order combined with classism and right thinking minds at Orange, results in a drive to convince self, and others, of living at 'second tier' (if such a thing actually exists!). Many admit to a mission and desire to uplift and grow others – a notion very unlike those who are actually centralized in Green, Yellow and the Green/Yellow pairing.

The most important feedback for SD practitioners regarding Yellow false positive data is to watch for Blue/Orange masquerading as Yellow - and convinced that it is. Improvements must be made to the section designed to select for Yellow on the instrument.¹¹

WHAT KIND OF THINKING MIGHT CREATE A CONCEPT LIKE MGM (MEAN GREEN MEME?)

Although the data contradicts MGM, to some, this concept made sense. Since Spiral Dynamics is about how people think, let's ask: What is the thinking behind the thinking that created and sees MGM? What kind of a worldview must exist for a construct like the MGM to make sense? What system(s) must be operating for someone to see and need 'mean green'? Which minds are most likely to accept this construct as fact without question?

In this section we'll work toward understanding by delving into a sample case (Profile #1), which demonstrates a noteworthy pattern.

So far, we've examined Green ^vMEME contrait patterns for a clue as to the kind of thinking that would reject Green. We looked at elevated F-S rejection scores (as compared to the average) and examined which systems might see 'mean' in the Green ^vMEME. Here we look at a profile exhibiting this rejection pattern.

Profile #1, a sample chart on the next page, is laid out with the contrait scores to the left and the protrait scores to the right. The ^vMEMEs are

represented both by color and letter pairs listed vertically on the right. The clear and shadow bars beneath the colored bars represent the mean/average scores.

This profile was taken from an individual exhibiting a high Green rejection pattern with a heavy emphasis on the Blue and Orange systems, as appears to be typical. There is a slightly higher than average Red reject which makes this profile a useful example in the MGM debate. (Note the slight false positive scoring on Yellow.)

As we've seen earlier, 46% of those centralized in both Blue & Orange have a high Green reject (FS^R). Like this profile, 50% also have a higher than average Red reject (CP^R)¹². An interpretation of Profile #1 suggests why this individual might feel antipathy toward the Green and Red ^vMEMEs. It also suggests that a person, as a result of this bias, might have a distorted view of these two systems when confronted with one or the other. They might mistakenly believe that Red and Green pair to create a 'mean green meme.' More on this in the next section.

OTHER MGM 'TRAITS'

The MGM, according to Ken Wilber and Don Beck¹³, the construct's creators and leading proponents, consists of a combination of the Red and Green Systems which 'attack' Blue and Orange.

The presuppositions in MGM are:

- a) the Green and Red systems somehow have an affinity for one another;
- b) the Red and Green systems are both attack oriented; and
- c) they collaborate to 'prey' upon Blue and Orange for some reason.

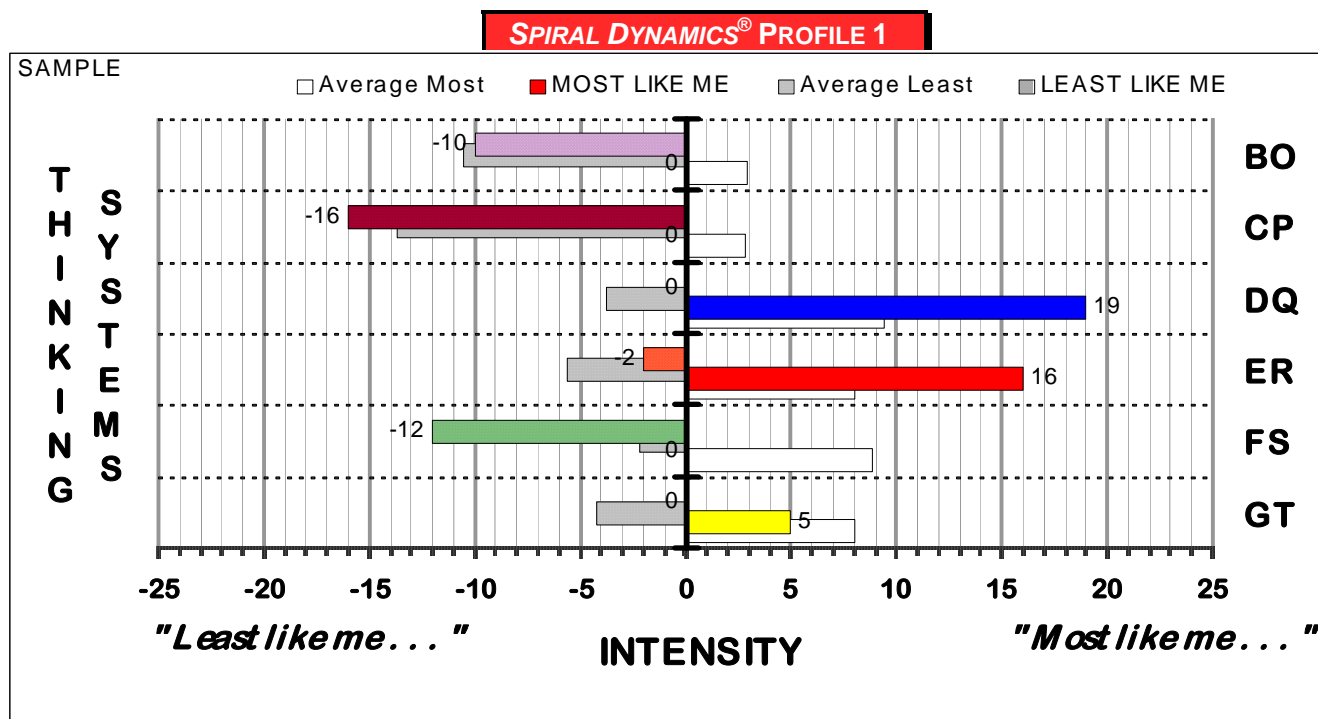
¹² Often variations of 10% in large group scores have a significant impact on the culture and are enough to show differences between groups. The data showed greater than 50% of those exhibiting Blue/Orange pairing had a 10% (or higher than the mean) rejection of Red. This might explain the perspective of MGM adherents as they collapse dislikes into a common category.

¹³ See Boomeritis by Ken Wilber and spiralodynamics@yahoo.com archives.

¹¹ One explanation for this might be that systems language has become such a part of everyday business jargon that it is easier for individuals to genuinely recognize these phrases as they are currently worded. We are working on an update and the data analysis phase will continue for some months.

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic



From a perspective dominated by Blue/Orange, which rejects both Green and Red, Green and Red might be misinterpreted as pairing. Blue/Orange tends to avoid ambiguity by simplifying interactions into narrow categories. Because Green and Red are both contraites, seen as 'not like me,' they could be collapsed into a single negative category. As a result, Red and Green might be mistaken as the same.

Based on the data there is almost no chance of Green and Red pairing. In fact, there is a negative .271 correlation at the .01 level of increased Red rejection when Green acceptance strengthens. It is through a strong Red reject and extreme Green Reject filter, as in Profile #1 that MGM could be created and might resonate for some.

Let's look at the idea that the Green and Red vMEMEs have a natural affinity for one another and that they pair up to 'attack'. In reviewing over 3000 cases, we have found no evidence to support this. Nowhere in our database do we see a profile that contains Red and Green combined in ways that would imply these two systems operate as an individual's dominant stack. On the contrary, the data shows that when Green increases so does the rejection of Red.

Graves said that an individual, centralized in a particular system would express about 50% from that system, 25% in the next and 25% in the previous system,¹⁴ similar to Diagram #1. A dominant Green worldview would result in a vMEME distribution that looks more like:

orange/GREEN/yellow (er/FS/gt)

The MGM claim, instead, gives us:

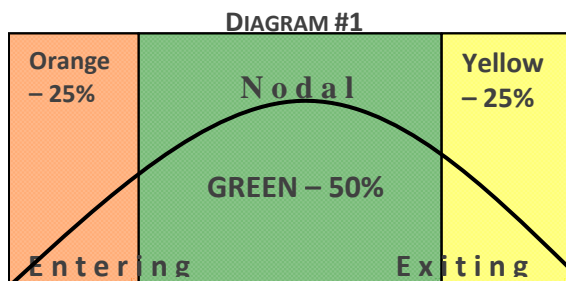
red/GREEN (cp/FS - MGM)

or

RED/GREEN (CP/FS - MGM)

or

RED/green (CP/fs - MGM)



¹⁴ Graves, Clare W. Audio. *ECLET: Emergent Cyclical Levels of Existence Theory a Workshop with Dr. Clare W. Graves*. NVC Consulting, Santa Barbara, CA 2001.

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic

Using Graves's logic, data and observations this RED/GREEN, red/GREEN, RED/green stack is improbable. Our data supports Graves's statements while fleshing them out a bit. None of the profiles in our database contain any indication of the defining Red/Green characteristics described by 'MGM'. More often, the profiles show:

- 1) GREEN strongly rejecting Red,
- 2) GREEN paired with Orange,
- 3) GREEN paired with Yellow,
- 4) GREEN rejecting Orange
- 5) GREEN coupled with both Orange and Yellow in the stack,
- 6) GREEN with Blue.

Despite the claim that Green and Red pair - a distinguishing MGM trait - neither the data, nor the theory, support it. Thus, there appears to be little evidence that an internal stacking exists. The MGM characteristics must be attributable to something else.

RED ACCEPT
A higher than average Red Accept score seems to come from:

- 1) Orange (28%),
- 2) Blue/Orange (26%)
- 3) Orange/Green (19%)
- 4) Yellow (19%)
- 5) Green (0%)

GREEN LIAISONS WITH RED?

What if MGM were taken as a pairing of individuals not systems within an individual? On that basis some people centralized in Green should show higher than average attraction or acceptance of Red. If we look at the data from people centralized in other systems with above average acceptance of Red we see that it comes from everywhere else but Green.

In fact, when the high Green protrait scores were grouped and compared, the data lacked the defining MGM characteristic – Red and Green pairing. In 85% of the profiles, those centralized in Green rejected Red more than any other system. In the other 15%, Orange had an

equal or higher rejection score than Red. When the top two reject scores were taken for individuals centralized in Green, Red was rejected 100% of the time.

Applying the Pearson's Correlation, there is a 99% probability that when Green is high Red acceptance will be low. As Green scores increase, so do Red contrait scores. In no instances did the data show an unusually high Red accept when Green was dominant. There is a 99% confidence that Green will reject both Red and Orange; therefore, the chance of a Green/Red pairing is remote at best.

Thus, a high Green acceptance score (FS^A) is accompanied by a high Red rejection score (CP^R). Contrary to the MGM claim, people centralized in Green actually have a Red reject ($FS^A = CP^R$).

Graves commented that individuals centralized in the Green system reject one thing most strongly - hurting other people¹⁵. Of all the systems, the Green worldview would most likely perceive Red as having the capacity to hurt others; hence, Green's high Red Reject scores (CP^R).

PREDATORY SYSTEMS?

Let's look at the claim that the Red and Green systems are, for some reason, motivated to 'prey' on Blue (DQ) and Orange (ER). Take inter-group conflict for instance. According to Dr. Graves, the Blue (DQ) system is "at once the most peaceful and the most warlike of the systems."¹⁶ In this example Graves reported on his studies of interactions between Blue centralized individuals belonging to two different groups in conflict:

"When and if conflict ensued, in the 'sacrifice now to get later' group [Blue] it was between hierarchical leaders or between the same level of subordinates in their own or other hierarchies. By and large, conflict just did not ensue between levels in a hierarchy. When it did arise between hierarchies, it became ultimately the most vicious of the conflicts in all sub-type groups [value systems/^vMEMEs]. It was not only unresolvable except by separation of the

¹⁵ Graves, Clare W. ECLET: Emergent Cyclical Levels of Existence Theory a Workshop with Dr. Clare W. Graves. NVC Consulting, Santa Barbara, CA 2001.

¹⁶ Graves, Clare W. Reflections. Audio, NVC Consulting, Santa Barbara, CA, 2001.

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic

hierarchies within the particular 'sacrifice now to get later' groups but it lingered in spiteful and revengeful form far longer than in any other sub-type."¹⁷

In essence, when Blue attacked Blue it was the most vicious, longest lasting and most intractable of interactions.

Could MGM creators be mistaking liberal Blue for a Green/Red combination? Confusing surface beliefs for underlying Value Systems is quite common. For instance, egalitarianism sometimes comes as a byproduct of the Green 'MEME'; but it is not unique to Green. Egalitarianism is a surface belief. It is how we think about egalitarianism that defines the system(s) active in the individual or group.

Suppose egalitarianism is adopted as a doctrine of a Blue centralized group. Another group, also centralized in Blue, happens to be anti-egalitarian. If both come into contact it could look like a 'mean' Green upon Blue attack when, in fact, it is really Blue internecine conflict holding different belief sets and both thinking about their surface values absolutistically.

In contrast to the rigid, dogmatic and absolutistic Blue worldview, Graves described the nodal Green 'MEME as a system which "denies self to prescriptions of secular valued other people in order to get approval and spiritual satisfaction now."¹⁸ What he noticed about Green is that individuals didn't want to admit to having negative feelings about others. This implies a system that is much less likely to 'attack' than Blue. So, how can the Green system be predatory and prone to attack Blue and Orange?

MGM creators might have confused temperament factors with Levels of Existence. Some findings from Dr. Graves's research on rigidity, aggressiveness, Machiavellianism, and kindness might clarify this confusion and shed some light on this idea of 'meanness.'

RIGIDITY

Could rigidity in individuals be seen as a cause or characteristic of 'meanness'? If so, then Green would have to have a higher degree of rigidity

than the other systems, according to the MGM construct.

In fact, Green, when compared to Blue and Orange, is the least rigid¹⁹. Therefore, the 'mean' in the MGM construct cannot be operationally defined as consisting of rigidity. If it were a factor, then Blue and Orange must be described as being 'meaner' than Green.

AGGRESSIVENESS

Could aggressiveness be seen as a factor of 'meanness' in the MGM construct? Graves described this temperament variable as having the following characteristics: to attack contrary points of view, to tell others what one thinks about them, to criticize others publicly, to make fun of others, to tell others off when disagreeing with them, to get revenge for insults, to become angry, to blame others when things go wrong, to read newspapers about accounts of violence.²⁰

If excessive aggressiveness is, indeed, a possible expression of meanness then we'd have to look at the research connecting higher levels of aggressiveness and the system(s) to which this personality aspect is most closely associated.

According to Graves's research, Blue, Green and Yellow all have low scores on 'aggressiveness.' It is interesting to note that Orange has the single high score among these four systems. Could the MGM creators have mistaken Orange in Green clothing, or Orange using Green contents?

MACHIAVELLIANISM

Could Machiavellianism be seen as a cause or characteristic of 'meanness'? This refers to "the doctrine that any means, however unscrupulous, may be justifiably employed by a ruler [individual] in order to maintain a strong central government [one's own self-interests]."²¹ If Machiavellianism is a characteristic of 'mean green', then it would follow that Green would have a higher Machiavellianism score than other systems.

Graves used the Machiavellianism scale described in *Studies in Machiavellianism* by Richard Christie. Dr. Graves found that Orange has

¹⁷ Graves, Clare W. Unpublished Manuscript to be released by ECLET Publishing. Santa Barbara, CA, Chapter IV pg. 99.

¹⁸ Ibid, Chapter IV pg. 76.

¹⁹ Graves, Clare W. Graves: Levels of Human Existence. ECLET Publishing, Santa Barbara, CA, 2002.

²⁰ Ibid. pg. 39.

²¹ Ibid pg. 40.

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic

the single high rank. In fact, Blue, Green and Yellow all rank low in this dimension. Could MGM creators be confusing Orange for Green?

KINDNESS

Along with the Blue ^vMEME, Green scores highest on kindness, according to the Scott's Values assessment which Graves used in cross-comparing the various dimensions of the different Levels of Existence.

Given this data, it seems unlikely that Green is prone to attack and to prey upon others. As a matter of fact, it appears that Green is less inclined to attack than MGM proponents might imply.

Surely, if there were any foundation to the MGM construct, the view of "mean" would include one of the traits that Graves measured. In light of the evidence, we must ask what kind of data points to exceptional "meanness" from the Green system?

CHART #2

BLUE (DQ^R) ^vMEME CONTRAIT PATTERNS %

Blue (DQ)	Orange (ER)	Blue/Orange (DQ/ER)	Orange/Green (ER/FS)	Green (FS)	Green/Yellow (FS/GT)	Yellow (GT)
0	13	1	10	6	45	25

ORANGE (ER^R) ^vMEME CONTRAIT PATTERNS %

DQ	ER	DQ/ER	ER/FS	FS	FS/GT	GT
0	6	21	9	15	36	6

The Reject patterns were taken from Reject scores of 1.5 up to 4 times higher than the average Reject score n=76; n=33

Lets get back to the claim that Red, with Green, attacks Blue. Chart #2 depicts the Blue and Orange contrait scoring pattern in this sample. The data reveals the system(s) most likely to reject Blue and Orange lie in the Green/Yellow pairing. In this chart we see that Yellow and Orange reject Blue. In comparison, Green is less likely to reject Blue. Green and, surprisingly, the Blue/Orange pairing are likely to reject Orange. Note that in a comparison of the three highest Orange reject patterns Green is lower than either Green/Yellow or Blue/Orange.

Has the MGM notion missed the dynamics entirely and confused the Blue/Orange pairing and its contents for Green? Have MGM creators personalized and exaggerated criticisms directed towards Blue/Orange by Green/Yellow? Could they have confused the Yellow in the Green/Yellow pairing for Red?

Profile #2 (on page 10) shows a possible dynamic where the Green/Yellow pairing rejects the Blue/Orange pairing. The previous sample, Profile #1, showed a Blue/Orange pairing

rejecting Red with an extreme rejection of Green, just as the Green/Yellow stack shown here has an extreme rejection of Blue/Orange. What would happen if these two individuals got together? This indicates an obvious incompatibility. Could this be the kind of interaction where one might attempt to pathologise the other?

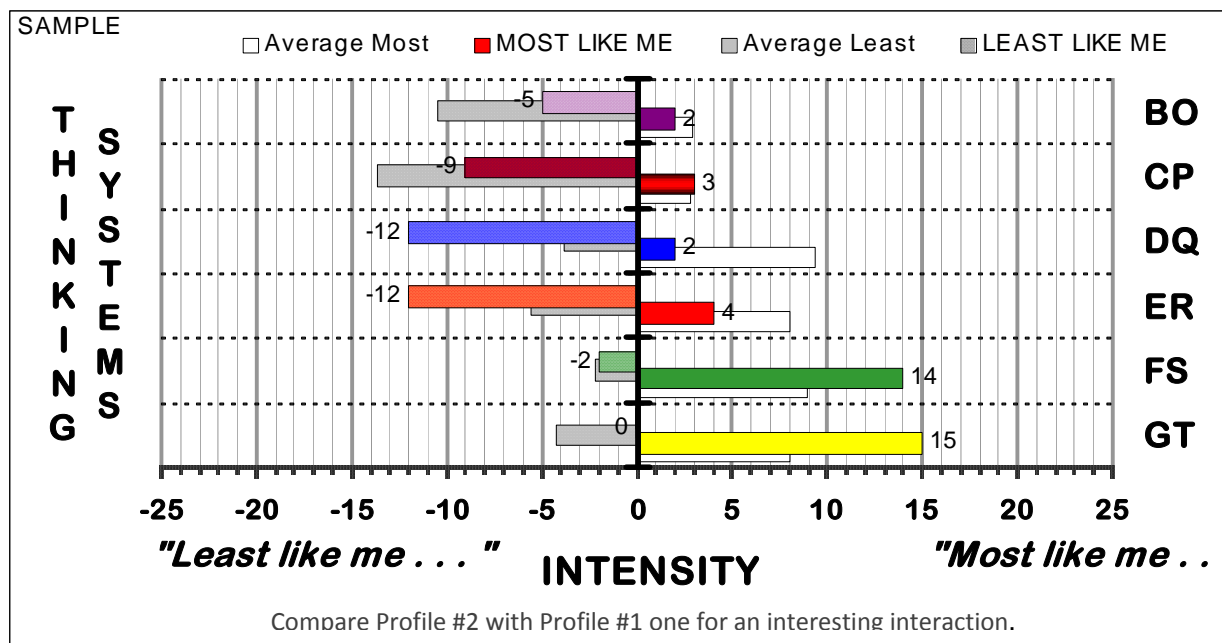
The idea that systems - a warm and cool colored worldview - 'pair' has been used throughout this paper. This is not a new notion given the idea that multiple systems operate in different contexts simultaneously. It is salient to the debate, given the idea of the Green and Red pairing in the MGM construct. Although these data do not support the MGM's Green/Red pairing, there is, on the contrary, evidence demonstrating a frequent pairing of adjacent systems, Blue/Orange and Green/Yellow.

O. J. Harvey, et al., briefly mention similar observations: "developmental stages can be viewed in terms of two phases (Bennis and Shepard, 1956): the first phase including stages I and II [Blue and Orange] and the second phase

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic

SPIRAL DYNAMICS® PROFILE 2



including stages III and IV [Green and Yellow].”²² Given the usual discussion about systems as if they exist in independent monolithic states – i.e. single colors - the Blue/Orange and the Green/Yellow pairing and their dynamics are noteworthy.

WEAPONIZING COLORS

The most objectionable example of the MGM label in action has been as a capricious stereotyping tool. It is used even when Green and Red have little relationship to the individual’s actual underlying MEMES. This results in intimidation and promotes a habit of labeling then dismissing detractors with negative words wrapped in spiral dressing.

MGM artificially closes doors to understanding. Inquisitors wield MGM as a coercive tool, forcing critics into defensive positions where they must either recant or be diminished through cheap name-calling. It diverts focus from the object or idea under investigation and shuts down important debate. It separates ‘us’ from ‘them.’

Ennobling oneself through the denigration of others is not second tier thinking. It illustrates the ugly side of human nature, particularly when adopted by the collective as a widely distributed urban legend.

Reliance on such tags encourages a wrongheaded approach to the entire model and uses the colors as weapons rather than the original intention – easily accessible and relatively neutral descriptors of behavior and emergent systems in human nature.

MEMEISM

When first introduced to SD, people often use the spiral colors as a simplistic categorization tool without malicious intent. They cannot be expected to know what they do not know. However, this is a trap for the novice, and the habit should be corrected quickly since it over-simplifies analysis and falsely colors understanding. As the Gravesian point of view takes root and becomes alive in the user’s mind, this tendency to find simplicity which is not there fades.

‘Meme-ism’ is a new form of spiral classism akin to racism. Users of MGM language even paint individuals as viruses and diseases indefinitely extending the novice’s ‘labeling

²² Harvey, O. J., Hunt, David E., and Schroder, Harold M. *Conceptual Systems and Personality Organization*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1961, pg. 199.

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic

period' by modeling a poor example. The blockage metaphor vilifies the target of these vague references and implies a need to 'eliminate the blockage.' The spread of terminology like MGM has weaponized the previously neutral SD colors and opened the door to prejudice, even hatreds – a consistent with the Blue/Orange and centralized Blue system.

"MGM" has been used as a rationalization and justification for isolating and deprecating individuals who disagree and dare to challenge pet ideas (as demonstrated repeatedly on various Spiral Dynamics online discussion groups). Criticism is tossed off as evidence of MGM. Intellectual violence begins by dehumanizing the other and sadly, the MGM tag can and has been used in this way.

It is ironic that a model, which can be such a powerful tool for mutual understanding, can also be used as a club to beat down and degrade others with the introduction of glib three word descriptors.

Consider the following quote:

"...the endnotes were a second-tier criticism of the first-tier green meme [sic], and they were meant to help differentiate readers along those lines--they were meant to allow readers to see very clearly which meme they were identified with: green or turquoise. And the responses I got made it clear where people were coming from: either a very angry green reaction, or a very sympathetic turquoise agreement. Green attacked me back, just as viciously as I had dished it out ... and turquoise wrote me with tons of praise and agreement. The book became very controversial for this reason, with massive green anger and equally large turquoise praise." Ken Wilber, *On Critics, Integral Institute, My Recent Writing, and Other Matters of Little Consequence: A Shambhala Interview with Ken Wilber, Part 1*.

Wilber concludes that "green" is reacting angrily and viciously to his work; whereas "turquoise" is sympathetic, agreeable and supportive of him. Evidently, Turquoise is superior to Green in his mind since, in this

quote, critics are crossed out with a big 'Green' X, thus minimizing anyone who doesn't agree with the writer's opinions. Wilber plays the labeling game and dubs those who praise him and his philosophy as Turquoise while relegating critics to a lower class, Green.

Furthermore, the reader is apparently expected to accept on faith the author's claim that his endnotes are "second tier" and that his writing will sort 'green meme' (Green ^vMEME?) readers from 'turquoise meme' (Turquoise ^vMEME?) readers. This is an interesting rhetorical gambit, but Wilber never explains the method he uses to evaluate the responses he received, nor has any evidence been provided other than passing mention of letters, some critical and others complimentary. Thus, it would appear that critics are lesser beings and the more evolved are fans. It is not the purpose of this paper to argue with Ken Wilber's self-assessment or his judgments of others, only to say that such use of the theory is neither helpful nor enlightening.

Let's address the implication that individuals centralized in the Green system are highly critical and prone to ad hominem attacks. In his efforts to help teach people to identify the systems, Graves said criticality is an indicator of persons predominantly in the warm colored systems (Red, Orange, Yellow). According to Dr. Graves, highly critical ad hominem attacks are most often rooted in a dominant nodal Orange system²³. (The MGM tag provides excellent ammunition for such attacks.)

Remember, Orange is the most aggressive system among Blue, Orange, Green and Yellow. In the Orange system, individuals are highly critical of others and can be caustic, particularly in the entering phases when the expression of the system is still raw. Hence, the proposition that those who are centralized in the Green ^vMEME are highly critical is spurious. It appears that Wilber and other MGM aficionados are actually confusing entering or nodal Orange with Green.

²³ Graves, Clare W.. Audio. The Psychological Map. NVC Consulting, Santa Barbara, CA, 2001.

THE MEAN GREEN HYPOTHESIS: FACT OR FICTION

By Natasha Todorovic

CONCLUSION

So, what do you do with a concept that few have thought to doubt, whose intention and impact few ever dared to question, whose mythology is strangely attractive to some and makes intuitive sense to others?

This paper emerged because of these questions. It should cast doubt on MGM and takes the position that it is a disservice to Spiral Dynamics. MGM illustrates misconceptions about SD and Dr. Graves's work transforming difference and dynamics into deviance. In essence it's a failure.

The MGM conjecture is a failure of analysis. MGM seems to come from an alarming misdiagnosis. Proponents appear to be²⁴:

- 1) confusing the warm, expressiveness of Orange and/or Yellow for Red (and Green!),
- 2) confusing dynamics in the change process, at either entering or exiting around Green,
- 3) confusing interpersonal conflicts resulting from the interaction of a) the Blue/Orange rejection of Green with b) the Green/Yellow rejection of Blue/Orange,
- 4) projecting personal prejudices onto the Green system,
- 5) erroneously interchanging temperament factors with Value Systems,
- 6) confusing contents (memes) and containers vMEMEs,
- 7) misattributing the characteristics of closedness to 'mean.'

MGM, an intellectual conjurer's smoke-and-mirrors trick, covers flawed or potentially compromising statements and puts off challenges using SD as a screen. Designed to

turn the tables and criticize the critic, MGM usurps arguments by undermining an individual before the debate has begun. Criticism is strategically silenced. This violates fundamental ethics on discourse, and precludes thoughtful debate.

Because of the complex and highly dynamic nature of Spiral Dynamics and Graves's ECLET, it is easier to accept simplistic labels and explanations than to lose oneself in the multilayered interactions and reactions. We caution against this and invite you to seek out Dr. Graves's original work, exercise the hermeneutics of suspicion and come to your own conclusions on the basis of facts and information rather than the say so of second and third hand interpreters.

As a meme in the way memeticists use the term, MGM has proven successful by its spread. It has generated debate, interest, a book and this research. MGM is a meme about a vMEME. As a way to understand the Green vMEME, however, it fails the test of theory; it is not supportable by the data; and the way MGM has been used distorts the intent of the SD model. It does far more harm than good. We would be well advised to avoid this form of spiral fundamentalism and, instead, to look at the more complex dynamics involved in human interactions.

²⁴ Ken Wilber's *Boomeritis*, while claiming to be a polemic of MGM, fits none of the errors listed here. He has made an entirely different mistake. He has confused Orange, Green and Yellow. Whereas he criticizes something he calls the 'mean green meme' he illogically uses Orange vMEME descriptors to make his case suggesting he's not clear on the differences between Green and Orange. Then, when it comes to Yellow, he uses Green Value System descriptors as a contrast, again confusing Green and Yellow. Wilber applies an inappropriate term to the behavior and thinking of those who cannot be described in those terms. Therefore, an eighth category needs to be added: 8) Category Error - fundamental misunderstanding of Green. For a detailed criticism of *Boomeritis* go to: www.spiraldynamics.org/documents/Boomeritis.html