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## Big history – big chance. Foreseeing qualities for an integral global society

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**Biographical notes:** Gilbert Ahamer is inclined to analyse fundamentals of philosophy for the target of designing new paradigms driven by foresight when it comes to develop policies for mastering globalisation. As a physicist, environmentalist, economist, technologist, and geographer, he suggests that radically new concepts might beneficially contribute to solving the pressing problems of global change. He co-founded the Global Studies curriculum at Graz University, Austria, studied and established global long-term scenarios when affiliated to the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis IIASA, and is active in institutionalised dialogue-building with Central Asia since his affiliation to the Austrian Academy of Sciences.

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### 1 Introduction

This is *part two* of the second *IJFIP* special issue on Global Studies entitled ‘Paradigms, policies and developmental studies for migration and global society’, after *part one*, published as *IJFIP* Vol. 13, Nos. 3/4, 2018.

Again, the breadth spanned by this issue’s articles is more than wide. They all fit into our global society’s aspirations for civil rights implementation, equity of opportunities for personal development and dignity secured for all. Naturally, ‘scientific’ theories covering this entire bundle of targets for the further humanisation of our global societies are sparse (Capra, 1975; Maturana and Varela, 1980; Küstenmacher et al., 2018). Thus, several approaches by leading personalities of our time deserve to be highlighted.

- 1 The Australian historian *David Christian* co-founded the ‘Big History’ Project that moulds together historic and other scientific views of humanity’s development into one grand picture. Bill Gates acts as a philanthropic supporter of this Big History Project, offering a well-designed web appearance that makes this unique ‘university course’ accessible and rewarding for everyone. Within his grand view of a series of consecutive thresholds during systemic planetary evolution, ‘Threshold Nine’ within the Big History narrative (Christian, 2017, 2018) will bring about a future characterised by higher communication density, humanistic value-orientation and presumably a higher attainment of sustainability.

2 The American author of integral theory, *Ken Wilber*, creates a planetary ‘theory of everything’ encompassing psychology, systems analysis and history, including a spiritual view (Wilber, 2001). He additionally takes all current meta-theories of global societal and psychological development into account and is most apt to place them in the appropriate order [Wilber, (1996), p.194, (1979), p.27]. The most appropriate condensation of his synopsis I was able to retrieve is translated from German into English and reproduced as Figure 1. I found it astonishing to see such large amount of accordance and only relatively few incidences of varying allocation of systemic evolutionary characteristics to individual phases. Even if the overall concept of perceiving a directed general pattern for developments that fits into all highly diverse human cultures may be questioned (Ahamer, 2019) and replaced by a less teleological view, Wilber’s synopsis maintains its highly inspiring value.

**Figure 1** Stages of development of global society in synopsis, according to various authors

Self-transcendence	Integral	Transcendent (coral)	(Transpersonal common good)	(Polyvalent logic – systems of systems)	7. Universally spiritual	
Self-actualisation		Global view (turquoise)	Universal common good		(Transition)	6. Universally ethical
		Flexibility and flow (yellow)				
Self-esteem	Mental	Human bond (green)	Connected, pluralistic	Formal-operational	5. Legalistic/ social contract	
		Strive and seek (orange)	Individually reflexive		4/5. Transition	
Belonging	Mythical	Power of truth (blue)	Conventional	Concrete-operational	4. Law and order	
			Mythic-literal		3. Approval by others	
Safety	Magical	Power gods (red)	Projective-magical	Intuitive (conceptual)	2. Naïve hedonism	
		Ancestral spirits (purple)		Preconceptual	1. Punishment and obedience	
Physical needs	Archaic	Will to survive (beige)	Pre-verbal	Sensorimotor	0. Magical desire	
<b>Maslow Needs</b>	<b>Gebser Worldviews</b>	<b>Spiral dynamics Values</b>	<b>Fowler Spiritual Intelligence</b>	<b>Piaget Cognitive development</b>	<b>Kohlberg Moral development</b>	

Source: Wilber (2018), own translation

Under Wilber’s auspices, Figure 1 combines classical authors’ contributions and compares their models of a phased evolution pertaining to both individuals and society:

- Maslow’s (1964) hierarchy of human needs culminating in his theory of self-actualisation
- Jean Gebser, the German-Swiss philosopher who established a history of structural growth in consciousness, including a shift to an ‘a-perspectivistic epoch’ through ‘de-projection’ (Ahamer and Jekel, 2010; Ahamer and Kumpfmüller, 2013) – a noteworthy shift of levels of consciousness from the all-too-often term ‘deconstruction’

- *Spiral Dynamics* (Beck and Cowan, 1996) can be considered the most classical theory of this topic and was in the focus of the last foreword, including an illustration
- Fowler's (1981) succession of belief systems – while he transcends personal evolution into collective evolution
- the Swiss biologist and developmental psychologist Piaget's (1931) epistemology and study of cognitive development starting with early childhood
- Kohlberg's (1981) understanding of stepwise evolution of morality of the individual.

As is visible in this synopsis of planetary co-evolution, Ken Wilber is concerned with bringing together philosophy, science and religion, including experiences of mystics and meditators. He sees himself as a protagonist of integral thinking and as a representative of a post-postmodern, post-metaphysical and post-rational spirituality while being oriented towards Far Eastern wisdom traditions of *non-dualism*. Wilber wants to show the strengths and weaknesses of various ideological and philosophical directions and to develop a theoretical framework in which different traditions have their place. Therefore, this mindset is called 'integral theory' – being a true meta-theory considering systems of systems.

In this sense, the present special issue contains the following reflections of stages within global evolution and thus also supports non-mainstream thought:

- 'The divided Venezuela' as a result of Graz-based 'global studies'
- 'The European refugee crisis in Europe and multicultural integration' triggered by recent migration events near the site of 'global studies' Graz
- 'A centre of excellence for infrastructure project preparation and PPP to fight climate change' stemming from ongoing international EU projects
- 'The Soviet nationalities policies and their contribution to conflicts: law, legacies and ideology' taking into account paradigms within the area of the former Soviet Union
- 'The Thabarwa centres – a mindful foresight strategy', presenting a most solid case study of globalised responsibility.

In brief, 'new qualities' within 'global studies' and other integrative curricula are of key interest for this special issue – together with criteria for their academic 'quality control' (Ahamer, 2013).

Whatever theory of *development of global society* readers may choose for themselves, *learning* in its original sense always means reaching a higher state of consciousness – whatever single perspective on society may be used as an ever transitory stadium in a person's current life epoch.

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