

A Transversal Dialogue on Integral Education and Planetary Consciousness

Markus Molz speaks with Jennifer Gidley



Photo by Gary Hampson

Markus and Jenny walking and talking, September 2007 in Luxembourg

Markus Molz: Jenny, many thanks for offering your time and insight to the readers of Integral Review. I would suggest to have a couple of e-mail exchanges during the next two weeks or so, unfolding as it will want to go. Your multi-faceted experience and writings make you the perfect partner to get the broad picture of the potential and the challenges of integral education, today and in a historical perspective. Before going into some theoretical considerations, and later into practical questions, let me ask you first why, how and when, biographically, you became interested in connecting those outstanding figures of an integral worldview - Wilber, Gebser, Steiner, and Aurobindo - to each other, and to the concerns of education in our world in profound transformation. This is such a remarkable and demanding endeavour nobody has ever undertaken before, as far as I know.

Jennifer Gidley: Markus, first let me thank you and the journal *Integral Review* for inviting me to participate in a dialogue with you on integral education. You are interested in why, how and when I became interested in my current research project, which I call "integration of integral views". My first involvement with integral philosophies was around thirty years ago when I first encountered Rudolf Steiner's writings. The 1970s were exciting times intellectually and culturally as there was an influx of new ideas and cultural movement. As a young psychologist-educator I was influenced by humanist and transpersonal psychology and particularly by critical pedagogy theories, e.g., Paolo Freire (1970) and Ivan Illich (1975). I was also drawn to various postmodern and feminist philosophers, such as Nietzsche, Foucault and de Beauvoir. There was a powerful shift of consciousness beginning to break into the formal academic world from the periphery at this time. My professional work in educational psychology already focused on the marginal voices. I worked with teachers of young people who did not "fit into" mainstream education, and ran a women's community learning centre empowering "house-bound" women to re-enter employment or tertiary education. I was also beginning to study traditional Eastern spiritual philosophies as a balance to my background.

So when I came to *Steiner education*, in the 1980s, I was already *enacting* critical theory, though with limited conceptual framework for it. As a professional, I was aware of serious limitations of the factory-like model of mainstream education and, as a mother, did not consider it suitable for my children. I decided to found a Steiner school, but sought to transcend the conservative, cobweb-covered, 19th century version of Steiner education (Gidley, 2008a). The school I founded and pioneered for ten years was a contemporary, creative adaptation of Steiner's work (Steiner, 1894/1964, 1901/1973, 1904/1993, 1909/1965, 1932/1966, 1967, 1971, 1981, 1982, 1990) to late 20th century, sub-tropical rural Australia. I was aware intuitively and experientially of what a powerful and positive educational approach this was but was frustrated to realise that it was completely marginalised by the mainstream academy.

In the 1990s I decided to re-enter the academy, with the aim of both testing my intuitions and finding appropriate language to create dialogue between Steiner's integrative pedagogy and the academy. My Masters research indicated that Steiner-educated students, while holding similar fears and concerns about the future to other students, had a stronger sense of empowerment and capacity to envisage positive preferred futures (Gidley, 1998). Over the next ten years I continued to broaden and deepen my reading, researching and writing about educational and youth futures (Gidley & Hampson, 2008; Gidley & Inayatullah, 2002; Inayatullah & Gidley, 2000), post-colonial alternatives to the factory model of schooling (Gidley, 2001a), the impact of globalisation on young people (Gidley, 2001b, 2004), and the evolution of culture and consciousness (Gidley, 2006, 2007a, 2007b). My doctoral research, which I have just completed, is a culmination and maturing of three decades of research and practice in integral forms of education.

This is a rather long answer to your question, Markus, but around 2000, I rediscovered Wilber's writing (1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001) and found that it really resonated with my internalised Steiner philosophy. The more I read of Wilber the

more I was amazed about the similarity between Wilber's ideas and what Steiner was writing a century earlier. I was stunned that in spite of Wilber's claims to be creating an "integral theory of everything" he had pretty much ignored one of the most integral figures of the 20th century —Rudolf Steiner. I decided that I would start a doctoral research project on the relationships between their works. But as I began to follow-up on some of the sources that Wilber referred to, such as Gebser (1949/1985, 1956/1996, 1970/2005, 1972, 1996a, 1996b) and Sri Aurobindo (1909, 1914/2000, 1997), I became drawn into their original writings as well.

As I began to search the literature for others who may have brought these pioneers together academically, I realised that apart from Roland Benedikter's research on Steiner and Wilber (Benedikter, 2005) (most of which is in German) no one else seems to have undertaken any major research project that integrate Steiner's, Gebser's and Wilber's integral contributions. Although I do bring Sri Aurobindo's writing in to some degree, I have not studied his work as intensively as the others, so I am a little more cautious with claims about his work.

MM: *You are mentioning that you were amazed about the similarities you discovered between Wilber's and Steiner's approaches, and you dropped a lot of ink since then to make this evident, including Gebser in the comparison as well. Could you try to summarize where exactly the common ground between these three eminent figures of integral thought can be found according to your research?*

JG: The first thing I need to say as clarification is that the research I have undertaken on the relationship between Steiner's and Wilber's writings is primarily in relation to the evolution of consciousness, with an emphasis on the present and future emergence of a new type of consciousness. Although I started my research as an even broader comparison between them, because of the vastness of their works—especially Steiner's—I decided it was better to focus on this key issue, which I believe is of great relevance for our times and for education in particular. Although I see a lot of other similarities between their works, I have focused my intensive hermeneutic analysis on their evolutionary works. I have then drawn from this analysis to look at the educational imperatives of the evolution of consciousness. But let's put the educational issue aside for a moment until after I have explained my other findings.

My focus on the evolution of consciousness, and particularly the current emergence of a new movement of consciousness led me to a deeper focus on Gebser's work. For Steiner and Wilber, evolution of consciousness was one of several major themes they each wrote about. Gebser on the other hand was a cultural historian whose best known work *The Ever Present Origin* was primarily an elucidation of the unfolding throughout history of five structures of consciousness (archaic, mythic, magic, mental and integral). I felt that it would add to the objectivity and rigour of my research to use Gebser's five structures of consciousness as a third lens from which to view Steiner's and Wilber's narratives, since Gebser had spent almost two decades researching and substantiating his insights. Even though Wilber has compared Gebser's structures of consciousness with his own stages drawn from other literature, he has also misrepresented Gebser's work in

some of his later writing, by adding another stage (pluralism) between mental and integral, which Gebser did not use. Because of this and other anomalies in Wilber's work, I decided to go to Gebser's own text so that my "third lens" would be objectively drawn from Gebser's actual writing, not Wilber's interpretation of it.

I developed a long interwoven hermeneutic narrative from the writings of these three "eminent figures of integral thought" as you call them. I have worked very closely with their actual texts to try to arrive at their authentic messages. For those who are interested in more detail this has been published in the previous issue of *Integral Review* (Gidley, 2007b). I will try to briefly summarise here some of the key areas of common ground between the three.

Perhaps the most obvious similarity between their ideas on evolution of consciousness is that they have all put forward a more spiritually oriented view of evolution than the mainstream classical Darwinian view. In this regard all three use the term *involution* as well as *evolution*, which connects their ideas with those of Sri Aurobindo. There are some deep and complex philosophical issues underlying these different evolutionary positions, but the idea of involution—or emanation—goes back at least to Plotinus in the third century CE. From Sri Aurobindo's (1914/2000) perspective the notion of involution—that Spirit or consciousness is primary to matter—is as old as the ancient *Vedas*.

A second similarity between all three is that they all identify previous stages in the development of human consciousness up to the intellectual-mental-rational consciousness that is often regarded today as the highest form of thinking that humans are capable of. This can be equated with Piaget's "formal operations." There are strong convergences in the earlier stages they identify, although Gebser rejects words like "stages" and "levels" because of how they were abused in various hegemonic European grand narratives in his time. Significantly, all three refer to the emergence of a new movement of consciousness, which Steiner called "consciousness soul, or spiritual soul," Gebser called "integral-aperspectival," and Wilber calls by various names such as "integral" "vision-logic" and "centaur." Both Steiner and Gebser claimed that the new consciousness began to emerge in Europe in the 15th century and would continue to gather strength in the 20th century and beyond. This is in agreement with Edgar Morin's idea of the emergence of "planetary consciousness" in the 15th century. Wilber's focus is perhaps more strongly on the postformal and transpersonal psychological models of stage development and his cultural historical detail is less consistent.

MM: Jenny, can I stop you there for a moment to clarify what you mean that Wilber's "cultural historical detail is less consistent"?

JG: Yes, sure, Markus. Wilber's cultural historical detail is rather inconsistent if one compares his earlier writing with his later writing. Wilber's focus in his earlier writings (particularly "Wilber II": e.g., *Atman Project* (Wilber, 1996a) and *Up from Eden* (Wilber, 1996b), and some "Wilber IV", e.g., *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (Wilber, 2000c)) represents a balance between ontogenetic (individual developmental or Upper Left) and phylogenetic (cultural historical or Lower Left) perspectives. However, from *Integral*

Psychology (Wilber, 2000b) (late “Wilber IV”), he begins to focus more strongly on the postformal and transpersonal psychological models of stage development, drawing on numerous psychological theories which he then compares with the cultural-historical and sociological theories of Gebser, Habermas and others. Because most of the sociocultural evolution theorists he chooses to discuss do not theorise stages beyond formal/modernist or postformal/postmodernist (except for Duane Elgin) Wilber begins to draw more strongly on theories from transpersonal psychology and spiritual development to support his claims for higher cultural stages. Unfortunately because he did not research Steiner’s theories more fully he seems unaware that Steiner was also a socio-cultural macrohistorian who theorised higher/future cultural stages (see Galtung & Inayatullah, 1997). I intend to undertake further research on this area. In *Integral Psychology*, drawing more strongly on the postformal psychology literature, he begins to conflate the developmental psychology stages and Gebser’s cultural historical research. Wilber appears to associate both “pluralism (early vision-logic)” and “universal integralism (middle to late vision-logic)” with Gebser’s integral-aperspectival structure (Wilber 2000b, pp. 26-27, 167-168). However, in *Integral Spirituality* (Wilber, 2006) (his main “Wilber V” publication), he begins to apply the psychological stages to Gebser’s cultural worldviews, incorrectly attributing to Gebser an additional stage “pluralistic” between “rational” and “integral” (pp. 68-69). This is not correct and thus leads me to conclude that his cultural historical detail is less consistent than his psycho-developmental research. If you are interested, I have discussed these issues in more depth in my article *The Evolution of Consciousness as a Planetary Imperative* (Gidley, 2007b, pp. 100-101, 119-120).

There is so much that emerged from my research that it is difficult to summarise without glossing, which I do not want to do. Some of the common themes in their ideas about the emergent consciousness are that:

- 1) it integrates previous structures of consciousness;
- 2) it transcends the dualisms of spirit and matter (e.g. Steiner's spiritual-science), masculine and feminine (e.g., Gebser's integrum), logic and imagination (e.g., Wilber's vision-logic);
- 3) it has a component of awakening spiritual awareness;
- 4) it is self-reflective and conscious of its own language, though this is emphasised more strongly by Steiner and Gebser than Wilber.

But this is just a beginning, Markus. One of my interests in this research, as someone who has been working with Steiner's seminal ideas for decades, is why Steiner's major contributions to so many fields has been so ignored—not only in the mainstream academy, but also in much of integral theory. Some of the fascinating things that I have discovered about Steiner's contribution to this discourse are that he began to speak and write about the evolution of consciousness as early as 1904 (ten years before Sri Aurobindo, decades before Gebser and Teilhard de Chardin, and almost a century before Wilber). Steiner was also using the term integral in a similar way to Sri Aurobindo and Gebser long before the others. For example, he was writing about "integral evolution" compared with "Darwinian evolution" as early as 1906. Ironically, none of this

outstanding contribution appears in the integral canon developed by Wilber. By contrast, Steiner's significant contribution has been acknowledged in the theorising of integral philosophers from the California Institute of Integral Studies (McDermott, 1996, 2001; Tarnas, 1991). I have discussed these findings in more detail in my doctoral dissertation (Gidley, 2008b).

Finally, as I have no interest in taking a syncretic approach, which only synthesises the similarities between them in some kind of new universalising meta-narrative, I have also focused on their differences—the particularities in their views and approaches (Gidley, 2007b).

MM: *I wouldn't go deeper into the differences between Wilber, Steiner and Gebser in this dialogue, even if we agree that we should always consider similarities and differences together. It would take another dialogue to dive into this. Rather, I would like to turn now to educational practice and ask you whether you think that the cross-validation of the similarities between these authors gives a new impulse to educational reform engaged with what you call the factory model of mainstream education?*

JG: Markus, we have hit upon a very complex issue here. Yet to put it simply, my integration of integral research on the evolution of consciousness strengthened my intuition that education urgently needs to evolve. This would be in keeping with the emergent changes in consciousness that are generally referred to as postformal, integral and/or planetary.

There are a number of threads that play into the multifaceted tapestry that I have been identifying, if education as a whole is to become responsive to the significant implications of the evolution of consciousness. Factors that need to be considered include at least historical, geographic and developmental levels of education.

In terms of geographic, I have not studied in depth the history of education in non-western geographies, so my comments are primarily in reference to European developments, which have been picked up in the Anglo-speaking world. These developments have subsequently influenced the current globalising agenda to introduce what I call the "factory model of education" to the rest of the world, particularly via the World Bank's "Education for All" agenda (Gidley, 2001a). In relation to levels of education most of my research has been related to school education although the evolutionary imperative also applies to higher education as I have also indicated (Gidley, 2006). I will not discuss this here as it is particularly complex when one begins to take into account Indian, Chinese, Arab/Islamic and Israeli streams of higher education—all of which arguably preceded the European academies and universities.

In terms of historical perspectives on school education, I have identified three broad phases in my research: 1) "informal education" via family/tribal enculturation, elite tutoring, and private religious schooling, prior to the beginnings of mass public education approximately two hundred years ago; 2) "formal school education," from late 18th to 20th centuries in Europe, USA and increasingly in other parts of the world last century; and 3)

what I am referring to as "a diversity of postformal pedagogies," beginning in the late 20th century and—one would hope—flourishing throughout the 21st century and beyond.

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, which embedded modernist ideas into the socio-cultural fabric of Western society, education for children was not such a formal process, even in the Western world. Children were enculturated by their extended families and cultures and only the children of the wealthy—who could afford private tutors—or who wished to become clerics, had any 'formal' education (Holborn, 1964). Earlier integrally-inspired educational reform had been initiated in the 17th century by Moravian educational theorist Johann Ámos Komenský (more frequently called by his Latin name Comenius) who wrote the influential *Didactica Magna*, which proposed a three tier universal schooling system for all children (Dahlin, 2006). Subsequently in Germany, the notion of the evolution of consciousness, which was a major contribution of German idealists and romantics such as Goethe, Hegel, Schelling and Novalis, contributed to the initial impulse for mass public school education, which began in Germany in the late 18th century. This was carried forward particularly through Schiller's aesthetic educational principles (Schiller, 1954/1977), Herbart's integrative pedagogical system (Klein, 2006) and Humboldt's implementation of public education (Holborn, 1964). However, after the deaths of these leading German philosophers, by the middle of the 19th century the idealist-romantic educational project was largely hijacked in Western Europe by the gradual influence of the British Industrial Revolution, so that schools increasingly became training grounds to provide fodder for the factories. This factory model of school education was picked up in the USA around one hundred and fifty years ago (Dator, 2000).

MM: *This long-term historical contextualisation seems quite important to me because we often remain caught in our day-to-day business. It shows that the invention of the modern school is linked to complex interactions between certain philosophical worldviews, the formation of nation-states, industrialisation (and secularisation). The specific mix and phasing between these ingredients has actually been somehow different in different countries, but the result at latest in the 20th century was very much comparable all over the place: a public compulsory school system with different types of schools. It seemed to be useful to a certain degree and represent an adaptive advantage, in the framework of such an overall societal configuration. But today we have a pretty much different situation. We might come back to this question later.*

The educational systems grew and grew throughout the 20th century almost everywhere with regard to the allocated resources, the number of teachers, pupils and students, degrees delivered and so on. Illich's (1975) profound criticism back in the 1970's was basically that such a system will never deliver on its promises, that it will necessarily contribute to produce social exclusion and deepen the dependence on so-called educational experts. A decade ago or so the former French minister of education Claude Allègre claimed, much more pragmatically and without questioning schooling as such, that "it is necessary to trim the fat of the mammoth". This became a very famous, often repeated phrase in order to criticize the state bureaucracy built to manage and control the educational system.

Despite various kinds of partly divergent, partly convergent criticism the educational mammoths seem well and alive until today, viewed from the quantitative perspective. This holds true even after the neo-liberal fat reduction cures preceded here and there, even if they have caused upheavals among teachers, parents and students because of worsening conditions for teaching and learning in the era of mass education. At the same time and based on the same ideology the new public governance models floated into the educational systems conveying more autonomy to individual schools in a whole array of countries and regions. So, none of these unfolding steps can be painted in black and white alone. But despite such never ending waves of educational reforms, little qualitative, transformative change seems to occur in these educational systems as a whole, after all.

JG: I have begun to use the phrase "evolving education" as an alternative to "educational reform" or even "educational transformation." This is because I want to highlight the scope of the transition we, as humans in a planetary age, are undergoing. The notion of "educational reform" very often only tinkers at the surface of appearances—a bit like rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic. While the notion of "educational transformation" potentially goes further than "reform," it can be limited by the philosophical perspective—or even ideology—that it subscribes to. The meaning that I ascribe to my notion of "evolving education" is one that connects education more consciously with the evolution of new patterns of thinking that appear in so many disciplines and fields throughout the 20th century. These new patterns of thinking are often referred to collectively as the "evolution of consciousness" and can be observed in:

- the transition from Newtonian mechanical physics to Einstein's relativity and quantum physics;
- the transition from classical biology, including Darwin's theories of evolution to the new biology's, such as chaos and complexity theory, self-organisation and emergence;
- the philosophical transition from modernism to postmodernism and poststructuralism;
- the transition from disciplinary to multi-, inter-, post- and transdisciplinary;
- the emergence of new rational discourses on spirituality not limited by religious doctrines;
- the transition from studying the past to an awareness of the value of foresight and futures thinking, in parallel, paradoxically, with the deconstruction of the modernist, linear narrative of time.

The research in all of these areas has increased dramatically in the last 40 years, and more so in the last decade and has very significant implications for education. My research creates conceptual links between all these changes and the need for the transition from formal, factory-model schooling and university education to a plurality of postformal pedagogies (Gidley, submitted).

MM: *You just took great care to reframe my initial question, historically and terminologically. This is quite helpful. I agree completely with you that we should consider the current challenges to the late factory model of schooling and the upcoming*

horizons of integral education taken together, dialectically, as one of the very very few major transitions in the cultural evolution of education. The other day, however, I listened to a presentation of an educational researcher (Tröhler, 2007) based on his ongoing empirical research on school curricula in different European countries throughout the last two hundred years. One of Daniel's main claims was that the fundamental grammar of schooling (Tylack & Tobin, 1994) in the basically national educational systems, i.e. a curriculum based on small recurrent set of separate subject matters taught in uniform fixed time slots to age homogeneous groups, has proven to be almost completely resistant to change underneath the continuous cycles of surface reforms. According to these results, he told his audience as a conclusion, it is unwarranted to believe in the very possibility to change educational systems substantially and that there is some good to this. Do you think this claim is a realistic position or does it lack this long-term perspective of cultural evolution and evolution of consciousness with major leaps occurring across societal sectors once in a while?

JG: Yes Markus, the institution of mass public education has been pretty static since its inception two hundred years ago. But I think I am a bit more of an optimist than that. Firstly, I find it helpful to view education in its broader cultural context, as only one of the types of enculturation that cultures provide for their young people. I have recently begun to look at the evolution of education in the context of Foucault's archaeological concepts of *connaissance* in relation to the institution of education, and *savoir* for the broader cultural context or worldview (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2005). This gives me some hope as I believe it is inevitable that the institution of education (that is, schools, colleges and universities) will evolve as the cultural milieu evolves. This is why I have shifted the emphasis of my own thinking and research, from my earlier focus on the futures of education per se, to my current broader focus on evolution of consciousness. My understanding of the situation is that there will be no substantial change to the system and institution of education without a change to the way we think and view the world. That is why I have taken such an interest in creating conceptual bridges between the evolution of consciousness discourse, particularly the integral evolutionary views of Steiner, Gebser and Wilber, and the education discourse.

I have also discussed elsewhere that in addition to the various integral approaches, there is evidence to support the evolution of consciousness from the adult developmental psychology research on postformal reasoning (Bassett, 2005; M. Commons et al., 1990; M. L. Commons & Richards, 2002; Cowan & Todorovic, 2005; Kohlberg, 1990; Labouvie-Vief, 1992; Sinnott, 1998, 2005; Torbert, 2004), and also from the eco-philosophical literature on planetary consciousness (Benedikter, 2007; Earley, 1997; Elgin, 1997; Gangadean, 2006; László, 2006; Montuori, 1999; Morin & Kern, 1999; Nicolescu, 2002; Russell, 2000; Swimme & Tucker, 2006).

I have scanned the educational literature (NB: I am "language challenged" and limited to Anglophone literature) for signs of emerging pedagogies that are reflecting one or more of the features of postformal, integral or planetary consciousness. I have to say that there is a lot of encouraging material being written about new educational approaches in the last decade. There is also a very powerful neo-fundamentalist backlash in the Anglo

countries from government-backed educrats who seek to dominate the educational agenda with scientism, economism and technicism—through the "audit culture." On the other hand there are also several educational theorists and researchers who are attempting to expose and counter this reactionary neo-conservatism (Abbs, 2003; Coryn, Schröter, & Scriven, 2005; Denzin, 2005; MacLure, 2006).

MM: *Of course. But despite the fact that Daniel Tröhler agreed with me that alternative schools do co-exist with the mainstream system in many countries, he argued that these schools never spread enough, and their educational approaches never gained enough influence to challenge the hegemony of the traditional grammar of schooling. Factually this is true in most countries to date. How would you counter his argument keeping in mind that there are a great many children, youth and adults yearning for learning environments fundamentally different from the factory model?*

JG: I think we are experiencing what I would call a *third wave* of educational impulses to evolve education since the beginning of the 20th century. Although much of European and Anglo education did lose its initial idealist/romantic impulse during the 19th century, and succumbed to the weight of industrialism and secularism, new threads began to emerge in various parts of the world in the early 20th century. We had Montessori and Steiner in Europe, Whitehead in the UK, Dewey in the USA and Sri Aurobindo in India all pioneering more integral, organic educational approaches that provided a counterweight to the factory model. They emphasised imagination, aesthetics, organic thinking, practical engagement, creativity, spirituality, and other features that reflect the emergent integral consciousness. However, as you say these approaches have mostly remained marginalised, or in the case of Dewey's initiative, been appropriated in a reduced form by the mainstream system as so called "progressive education."

What I call the *second wave* was sparked by the dramatic consciousness changes that began in 1968 with the student protests in Paris, followed rapidly by the 1969 Woodstock Peace Festival in the USA, which laid foundations for a youth peace movement against the Vietnam War. These events arguably marked the beginning of various "new age" movements, including participatory politics, new forms of music, east-west spiritual-philosophical dialogues, new gender relations, post-nuclear family lifestyles and recreational use of drugs. These movements were taken up quite strongly in the Anglo countries, particularly in pockets of the US and, at least indirectly, began to shift ideas about formal education. The 1970s to 1990s saw a broadening of alternative educational modes, including home-schooling (Holt, 1970), holistic education (J. Miller, 1990; R. Miller, 1999, 2000), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Illich, 1975), futures education (Fien, 1998; Gough, 1989; Hicks, 1998; Rogers, 1998; Slaughter, 1989), and a raft of educational reforms within mainstream settings. All were critical of the formal, modernist 'factory-model' of mass education. Most sought to broaden education beyond the simple information-processing model based on a mechanistic view of the human being to a more holistic, creative, multifaceted, embodied and participatory approach. Yet not all honour the spiritual needs or the multi-layered nature of the developing child, as part of a consciously evolving human species. Furthermore, these approaches are still minor threads and unfortunately most approaches are also isolationist in relation to each other.

This brings us to what I would call the *third wave* approaches to evolving education reflected in the plethora of new "*postformal pedagogies*" which have emerged, particularly over the last decade. Some of these aim to—or at least claim to—integrate all previous approaches.

MM: *How then could integral and transdisciplinary ideas and practices for education have a greater impact on the grammar of schooling—Goliath as, historically, the alternative pedagogies and educational reform approaches have had? Which ones most probably?*

JG: There are several different approaches to integral theory—and thus to integral education—that I have identified and perhaps we need to identify those before we go any further. In my doctoral research I have proposed a new frame through which to view the complementary nature of several significant integral theorists (Gidley, 2008b). For the purposes of this delicate theorising I focused on five integral theorists: Gebser, László, Sri Aurobindo, Steiner and Wilber; and two transdisciplinary theorists: Edgar Morin and Basarab Nicolescu. My framing includes several metaphoric perspectives, introducing five—mostly new—terms to integral theory: *macro-integral*, *meso-integral*, *micro-integral*, *participatory-integral*, and *transversal-integral*. I can only briefly summarise them here.

By *macro-integral* I am referring to the extent to which the integral theorist includes all major fields of knowledge. I suggest that at this macro-layer of conceptual integration, Wilber's AQAL framework makes a highly significant contribution and this is where his strength lies (Wilber, 2000a, 2004). While Steiner and Gebser are also macro-integral theorists, their work has been seriously marginalised in this area.

By *meso-integral* I am referring to the extent to which the integral theorist contributes significantly to theory building within particular fields or theories. I propose that Ervin László's contribution is highly significant in this domain (László, 2007). Sri Aurobindo's integral approach could also be regarded as a significant contribution, albeit also a marginalised one, given that his philosophy provides a foundation for much of the later integral theory development.

By *micro-integral* I am referring to the extent to which the integral theorist makes detailed contributions to specific disciplines or fields through the *application* of their integral theory. In this domain of detailed application of integral theory to a wide range of disciplines and professional fields, Steiner's extraordinary contribution can no longer continue to be ignored by integral theorists.

The notion of *participatory-integral* is based on the integral transformative education theory of Jorge Ferrer (Ferrer, Romero, & Albareda, 2005) whose participatory approach is inspired by Sri Aurobindo's integration of the three yogas of *knowledge, love and action*, which is in turn aligned to Steiner's *thinking/head, feeling/heart and willing/hands*.

Finally, I propose a new concept via the term *transversal-integral* that refers to integral approaches that include and cut across these vertical and horizontal levels/dimensions. From my planetary scanning of the research it is apparent that the term *integral* is much more widely used in North America than in Europe. By contrast the term *transdisciplinary* appears to be used in Europe, particularly by Nicolescu and Morin, with similar integral intent (Morin, 2001; Morin & Kern, 1999; Nicolescu, 2002, n. d.). Morin and Nicolescu do not tend to use the term *integral*, nor are they cited as integral theorists in much of the integral literature. I suggest this is an unfortunate oversight based on semantic and cultural misunderstanding, rather than philosophical understanding. A special feature of both Nicolescu's and Morin's transdisciplinary, planetary philosophies is their attention to *transversal* relationships—hence my new term *transversal-integral*, which allows for their seminal writings to be included as part of a transnational, integral theory.

MM: *You are right: there are a lot of writings not self-categorizing as integral while being a manifestation of the “integral” wave of consciousness. I would add Roy Bhaskar here (Bhaskar 2002a, and 2002b with a chapter on “educating the educators - or empowering teachers”). The complex history of all those approaches has still to be written, but even if we are yet lacking a scholarly approach to this history it is up to us not to remain stuck in one of them, and to take care to find out about their specific strengths and weaknesses.*

I am pleased that you mention Morin and Nicolescu. I have been living in France for a couple of years, a place where Wilber is almost unknown because none of his recent books has been translated into French to date, whereas Morin is a kind of a national monument publishing books since 1946 straight ahead until now, and he is still appearing frequently on TV shows, in the radio and in newspapers. The influence of Morin spreads quite impressively across the Roman language countries in Europe and the Americas. Further research is likely to uncover preferential cultural-linguistic influence spheres of different integral and transdisciplinary authors.

Interestingly, like Steiner and Sri Aurobindo/The Mother, while promoting overarching and cross-cutting approaches, Morin and Nicolescu, have specifically talked and written about education (Morin, 2001, 2008; Nicolescu, 1997, 2005, 2008, n.d.). Their intention is precisely to trigger new educational structures and approaches and not only to contribute new content to be learnt in the old system. Two years ago the fully-fledged university intentionally called rather real life multiversity (precisely “La multiversidad Mundo Real Edgar Morin”) has been founded in Mexico with the help of a generous donor according to Morin’s educational imperatives. By the way, this university is hosting an international congress on complex thought and education later this year where Morin and Nicolescu will give the keynotes.

In Wilber’s work, however, as prolific a writer as he is and in spite of how many fields he is touching and connecting, education is one of the most neglected topics until today. Other authors have started to draw on the AQAL model to think more integrally about education, and some of them have their own gathering this summer in the United States, “exploring the leading edge of education theory and practice”. This is valuable, of

course, but I guess the leading edge can only truly be explored in its manifold forms and places of manifestation taken together.

*The existing parallel universes of these many self-declared leading edges appear as curious to me as they do to you. At least, I am not aware of any intentional cross-connection between them besides very first timid attempts here in *Integral Review*. And there are still many many other relevant strands out there never mentioned together while sharing much of their goals and values. In order to illustrate this claim just let me take me some arbitrary examples from my much more extensive list.*

There is the neo-humanist education tradition inspired by Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar (1998, Inayatullah et al, 2006) and their schools and training institutes all over the world, the global network developed by the Shapers of Education International Foundation based in the Netherlands and coordinated by Charlotte Korbee, the international UNIPAZ network inspired by Pierre Weil in Brazil deploying their holistic peace education programme in various places, or the shots of such singular figures as Steven Harrison (2002), co-founder of the Living School in Boulder as a real life example. By the way Steven has been literally a neighbour of Ken Wilber there for years. Did they ever meet? I don't know.

In the end, they all seem to have their very own publications, supporter's network, projects, trainings, meetings and conferences. This state of affairs is profoundly self-contradictory with regard to the integral and transdisciplinary programmatic stance to integrate knowledge and practices from all kind of sources regardless their cultural origins and paradigmatic traditions. It's even more self-contradictory because the movements I just mentioned, as those you have mentioned - Steiner's most strongly - have already developed at a global scale. As a summary we must state that we are witnessing today a major inconsistency in the deployment of integral and transdisciplinary educational thought and practice: geographically it seems to be already rather globalised (with some differential distribution though as mentioned before), and paradigmatically it seems to be rather fragmented - at the same time! If we finally decide to take the core role of education for the inevitable societal macroshift towards global sustainable development seriously then we simply cannot afford any longer this state of affairs.

JG: Well, Markus, I am enjoying this *dialogue* as I can see how aligned our passions are to try to develop a broader, more embracing approach to *integral education*. I am very interested to hear about Morin's multiversity in Mexico and the conference there. I have also, for your interest looked a little bit into the relationships among Sarker's neo-humanist education and Steiner's and Wilber's approaches for a conference presentation in Taiwan a couple of years ago (Gidley, 2005). That reminds me, there is an interesting integral education project in China also, initiated by Professor Fan Yihong, who previously studied in collaboration with David Scott's *Community for Integrative Learning and Action* (CILA) in Amherst, Massachusetts (Yihong, 2002, 2005). I also agree that *Integral Review* is playing a very significant role in providing a scholarly

forum for dialogue among the diverse integral and transdisciplinary philosophical and pedagogical streams.

There are two major approaches that are identified as "integral education" in North America—integral education based on Sri Aurobindo's early 20th century philosophy (for example, as reflected in the *California Institute of Integral Studies*) and integral education based on Ken Wilber's AQAL framework. There was a double special issue of *ReVision: The Journal of Consciousness and Change* on "integral education" in 2005 and 2006, which was quite strongly influenced by Sri Aurobindo's approach to integral (with some exceptions). It is worth following up for those interested. The following year, 2007, there was a special issue of Wilber's *AQAL: Journal of Integral Theory and Practice* on "integral education," which was primarily based on Wilber's theories. Although Wilber's theory espouses to "transcend and include" other approaches, I was disappointed in some of these articles for their lack of scholarly research on other neighbouring pedagogies, even other integral approaches (Crittendon, 2007; Zeitler, 2007). Such a technicist and uncritical approach to applying the AQAL model does not, in my opinion, reflect a fully integral approach nor does it forward the academic reception of integral education theory.

One of my concerns is that integral theory creation to date has been seriously hampered by internal rivalry, factionalism and, ironically, lack of integration of neighbouring perspectives. This also applies so far to the two major "integral education" approaches in North America: Sri Aurobindo's and Wilber's. In my research I identify a third major integral education approach: Steiner/Waldorf education. As part of my *integration* of integrals, I undertook an AQAL analysis of Steiner education and found that it fulfilled all the criteria of Wilber's Integral Operating System (quadrants, level, lines, states and types). This analysis can be found in *Educational Imperatives of the Evolution of Consciousness: The Integral Visions of Rudolf Steiner and Ken Wilber* (Gidley, 2007a). In the light of this analysis it is clearly important that Steiner pedagogy be given more serious consideration by AQAL-oriented integral education theorists, who so far have had little to say on school education. Furthermore, the emphasis in Steiner pedagogy on integrating *thinking/head, feeling/heart* and *willing/hands* is significantly aligned to Sri Aurobindo's integration of the three yogas of *knowledge, love and action*. It is important that integrally-minded educators give serious consideration to these and other existing approaches.

In my view, an authentically integral education would embrace the rich diversity of postformal and planetary pedagogical approaches that are out there, globally, in these urgent planetary times. It would also learn from pioneering integral approaches to education, such as Steiner pedagogy that has been operating globally, with a conscious intention towards the evolution of consciousness and higher order thinking for almost eighty years. It is ironic that integral educators such as Robert McDermott (2005) and Alfonso Montuori (1997, 2006), and holistic educators such as Ron Miller (2000, 2005, 2006) and Tobin Hart (2001a, 2001b) appear to have done more thorough research on the alternative approaches than have most of the educational writers in the AQAL Journal. Ron Miller's holistic educational philosophy seems the broadest and includes Steiner's, Montessori's and Sri Aurobindo's pedagogies as well as Wilber's integral as significant

integrative approaches to be considered (Miller, 1990, 1999). Current research is also underway to extend integral education theory through considering indigenous perspectives, the history of the university, the development of different sciences, and “integral education” in nineteenth century Europe (Hampson, Forthcoming).

To me the call for integral education theory is to contextualise itself academically in the long history of integral philosophies, east and west, and to contextualise itself geographically within transnational, transcultural, planetary discourses that go beyond the Anglo-American integral discourse.

MM: *As a European working in a multilingual country in two other languages besides English I can systematically state the lack of consideration and integration of material not translated into English on - what is somehow quickly called - the “international level”. Particularly in the field of educational research, because of the nation-state boundness of the public educational systems, the papers and books produced in the national languages represent still the major part of the overall research output in this field, at least in the larger countries. As far as my observation goes the upcoming field of integral education cannot claim to be an exception. Existing books and papers are generally not translated. If this holds true already between the Anglosaxon world and continental Europe, both being parts of the dominant “North Atlantic belt”, the one-way ignorance with regard to other parts of the world is necessarily even more pronounced. This structural imbalance is a major barrier to developing those transnational dialogues on integral education and planetary consciousness you are rightly putting on the agenda. In this context, and because you started with mentioning special issues, I would like to add the 2005 special issue on transdisciplinary education of the *Rencontres Transdisciplinaires*, which is the journal of Nicolescu’s International (!) Center for Transdisciplinary Research (the major part of the 17 contributions are in French, a few are in English).*

JG: Thanks Markus. It sounds like there is a great need for some funding for cross-lingual translation of emerging integral pedagogical literature. I think that the strengthening of multilingualism is crucial in the advancement of transnational dialogue to further the emergence of planetary consciousness.

In addition, I have identified over a dozen emerging pedagogical approaches that in some way, either directly or indirectly, facilitate the evolution of postformal-integral-planetary consciousness. I have begun the process of hermeneutic dialogue among them, but of course much more research needs to be done. These include: aesthetic and artistic education; complexity in education; critical and postcolonial pedagogies; environmental/ecological education; futures education; holistic education; imagination and creativity in education; integral education; planetary/global education; postformality in education; postmodern and poststructuralist pedagogies; spirituality in education; transformative education; wisdom in education. These are all part of what I am calling the *third wave* of educational evolution. It is too much detail for this interview to list all the many references that relate to these approaches, but I have explored this literature in detail elsewhere, including how these new pedagogies intersect with four themes that I

identified in the evolution of consciousness discourse (Gidley, submitted). As you can see this is a complex area and it is certainly not a simple matter of applying one brand of integral theory to education as some kind of "universal fix-it all."

MM: *In this field there is definitely enough work to do for dozens of Ph.D. students. And I completely agree with you that we cannot stress enough the importance to intentionally cross the boundaries of cultures, languages, conceptual frameworks and prototypes of educational practices. Planetary consciousness cannot reasonably be promoted as an educational goal, if educational theorists do not, themselves, enact practices of learning about and integrating third wave educational discourses worldwide. Besides these important scholarly issues, where precisely do you see fields for promising action and reflection for integrally minded educators without fighting like Don Quichotte and becoming exhausted and frustrated?*

JG: I think that we are really in the very early stages of integral consciousness being embodied in the world. Because of this, integral education is very much in its infancy. You ask how integrally minded educators may contribute to the bigger quest of transforming or even evolving education on a planetary scale, without becoming exhausted and frustrated. I was speaking recently to one of my futurist friends about how frustrating it is that even though there are all these amazing initiatives going on in the world that are trying to change things for the better, the weight of the status quo seems to resist it at every turn. His response was that the very pluralism of the change initiatives works against them, whereas among conservatives there is a unity of perspective: they all want the same thing—they don't want change! To me the only way that integrally minded educators can muster enough strength to enact the kind of meta-change that is required is to dialogue, dialogue, dialogue. Only by enacting conversations among the rich pluralism of postformal, integral, planetary pedagogies will we begin to have an adequate picture of the rich tapestry of evolutionary change that is already happening before our very eyes.

My research interest has been to identify and cohere what Nicolescu calls the "luxuriance of the plural" when it comes to educational approaches. By bringing them into relationship with each other we no longer have one "integral education brand"—whether it be Wilber's or Sri Aurobindo's or any other—but rather a *unitas multiplex* of postformal-integral-planetary approaches that can learn from each other, inspire each other and give strength to each other. This is what *evolving education* means to me.

MM: *We talked quite extensively now about the horizons of the third wave of educational approaches. You mentioned as well that seeds of this latest wave have been somehow present already inside the first wave and then partly forgotten or marginalized. If integral means to acknowledge and to value the positive and productive aspects of all unfolding waves, let me ask you, finally, which aspects of the traditional model of compulsory schooling are good, efficient and helpful and need to be preserved in a larger, integral embrace?*

JG: Markus, I think there is a danger in creating a polarising narrative between the traditional model of education and an integral approach, or even as Sean Esbjörn-Hargens

(2006) suggests a three-type model of traditional, alternative and integral/AQAL. There is no doubt that the model of mass public school education that developed during the industrial era has delivered many benefits in the past both for individuals and for society. There is no question that there have been enormous social benefits for multitudes of young people who would not have had access to any formal education in the pre-modern era where school education was only available to the elite. My intention in using the metaphor of “factory” in relation to schooling is to highlight the industrial era underpinning of the schooling model that has become the myth-of-the-given, in order to beg the question as to whether that still needs to be the dominant metaphor in a post-industrial, planetary era. In a post-Newtonian, post-mechanistic, post-industrial integral age what new metaphors may be more suitable? The garden model perhaps? Or the forest model? Or even the extended family model? We need to think very carefully and creatively about the deep metaphors that underlie how we think about education. But this would be the subject of another discussion perhaps.

On the other hand if by the traditional model we mean the original model of universal and free public education proposed by Comenius in the 17th century and initiated by Humboldt in Germany two hundred years ago, then I think there is a lot to be gained from a careful historical study of this early pedagogy. Gary Hampson’s research is relevant in this regard (Hampson, forthcoming). After all, this model was first inspired by the unitive spiritual humanism of Comenius and later by the German idealist and romantic philosophers who were far more integrally aware than many of the educrats who have been writing national curricula in the world for the past hundred years. Some of the original inspirations included the head, heart and hands approach of Pestalozzi, the integrative interdisciplinary pedagogy of Herbart, the aesthetic educational approach of Schiller and the future orientation of Novalis. Although I have talked quite a lot about the factory model of education myself, upon reflection, I think the more we forget about models altogether and create living approaches that breathe with their local/global environment the more quickly the *connaissance* of institutional education will become imbued with the evolving *savoir*.

MM: *Jenny, this seems to me a perfect remark for bracketing our stimulating discussion. I must say that I terribly enjoyed the cycle of learning throughout this interview ending up here with questioning and dissolving some conceptual distinctions we used initially to make our way through the complexity of the topic. I think this is a good example of how to practice a kind of awareness, which is absolutely crucial to learning. Each and every concept or model (as set of interrelated concepts) we might ever use is opening up and hiding away something at the same time.*

As synchronicity goes, while conducting this interview with you, I finally received the book of Johan Galtung and Sohail Inayatullah (1997) on macrohistory and macrohistorians I ordered a long time ago. In the domain of macrohistory Sohail - with whom you have published a book on the university in transformation – (Inayatullah & Gidley, 2000) and his co-authors (among them the presencing Otto Scharmer) pursue a similar attempt to the one you are pushing forward in the field of evolution of consciousness and education, i.e. stimulating cross-fertilization between vanguard

thinkers, for the sake of transversal-integral horizons of thought and practice. So, to wrap it all up, let me take some short quotes from the macrohistory-book, which are resonating pretty well, I think, with your approach to evolving education.

All these “metaphors create worlds: They fix stages, entrances and exits. Then we can ask if there are ways to transcend these worlds our words have created” (p. 160). All these models “will be seen as inspiring and important except when or if people really start believing in them ... From this point on they become dangerous ...” (p. 203). All these authors “have insights, but they are in no way infallible guides; certainly not singly, but not combined either. Eventually, we are to live in the future - only then will we know” (p. 243).

Thank you so much, Jenny, for having taken so much time for chewing rather than eschewing my questions, many of them difficult to answer, I admit! I am looking very much forward to pursuing and deepening this dialogue on other occasions.

JG: It has been my pleasure to engage in this dialogue with you, Markus.

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Jennifer Gidley is an integral educator, psychologist and futures researcher (Executive Board, World Futures Studies Federation) located at the Sunshine Coast/Australia - with over 25 years experience with Steiner, then Wilber and Gebser, including executive membership of the Integral Education Group (2005-2006). Her doctorate through Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW, Australia, is about evolving education through postformal, integral and planetary consciousness. Email: jgidley@scu.edu.au

Markus Molz is an educational and organizational psychologist and assistant researcher on diversity issues and quality development at the University of Luxembourg – with 20 years of integral and transdisciplinary studies based on Wilber, Nicolescu and many others, including the development and coordination of a Special Interest Group on integral education (2003-2008). His doctorate is about meta-theories on culture(s) and consciousness and their relevance for new approaches to learning and research. Email: presence@gmx.org