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Editorial

Jonathan Reams¹

Welcome to this issue of Integral Review (IR)! We are pleased to welcome you to a new regular issue, which brings together a number of interesting articles, essays and a number of reviews.

It has been two years since our last regular issue of Integral Review in August of 2018. While we have been pleased to be engaged with and publish two special issues since then, (one on post metaphysical spirituality (link here) and another on the STAGES model (link here)) we are always excited when we are able to pull together a new regular issue. These issues are a long journey, through many different kinds of processes for the authors, reviewers and editors involved. Despite these differences, all of the contributions in this issue can be perceived as forms of advancing our understanding of an integral view of the world and our participation in it. There is a nice mix of themes explored, from adult development in many forms and uses through various forms of engagement with the world to leadership.

I find myself in a privileged position as editor-in-chief, in that I am able to not only enjoy the final products of the authors, but am also able to learn things between the lines as I observe and engage with the journey they go through as critical perspectives come from reviewers, ideas get refined and clarifications emerge. The enrichment that comes from this process has been invaluable to me over the past 15 years in this position and I am grateful for the learning that comes with the role and work. It is my wish that you can extract as much of the depths of knowledge and experience our authors share as I have.

Our peer reviewed section for this issue contains three articles. We begin with Thomas Jordan’s Scaffolding Developmental Transformation Among Immigrants in Order to Facilitate Self-Directed Integration: Practices and Theories of Change, which presents research from a study of six Swedish programs designed to help immigrants in their process of integrating into Swedish society. Jordan focuses on understanding what implicit and or explicit theories of change are behind the design of these programs and analyzes these through the lenses of various adult development frameworks. In addition, he examines the practices used in these programs to produce and inventory of such resources that can be utilized by other practitioners. This research provides clear ideas about how development can be scaffolded in this particular context based on these examples of current practice. Jordan does not attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the practices used, but can point to a set of “promising practices” that, along with his analysis of the theories behind them, can help researchers and practitioners further develop this field.

¹ Jonathan Reams is Editor-in-Chief of Integral Review, holds a position at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, is co-founder of the Center for Transformative Leadership and the European Center for Leadership Practice, and does consulting and leadership development work for a variety of clients around the world.
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Tom Bohinc, Jonathan Reams and Richard Claydon follow with *The Prometheus Leadership Commons: A Meta-Framework for Leadership and Leadership Development*. This article is the result of an initiative to address key emerging issues in the field of leadership development; professionalizing leadership and helping leaders, leadership development specialists, researchers and others navigate the plethora of ideas and approaches around how to lead. Through a grounded theory inspired process, a group of researchers and practitioners developed a meta-framework aimed at addressing these issues. The authors describe this process, along with a selection of conceptual contexts used, and then present the resulting framework (the meta becomes burdensome eventually so is dropped) with layers of illustrations and examples to show how it can be used. The discussion addresses key issues involved in a project of this scope and helps to position the framework in relation to various aspects of related discourse. A set of recommendations for ongoing work based on the foundation this framework provides are also presented.

Ben Bjorgaard takes us on a deep dive into *Stage Models of Adult Development: A Critical Introduction to Concepts, Debates, and Future Directions*. Bjorgaard provides an overview of concepts related to the evaluation of stage models, goes into key distinctions, looks at issues related to models and metrics as well as the constructs themselves. He also examines the move beyond developmental psychology into relational developmental science. Bjorgaard lays all this out in relation to his perception of a need to evolve the hard science around generalizable measurement and related philosophical advances related to ongoing synthesis and contextual application.

Our editorially reviewed section contains a rich collection of articles touching on a diverse range of topics. We begin with John E. Thomas, Thomas P. Seager, Thomas J. Murray and Scott Cloutier’s *Being Prepared to be Unprepared: Meaning Making is Critical for the Resilience of Critical Infrastructure Systems*. The article dives into the importance of applying growth in complexity of meaning making to the field of infrastructure systems. We all rely on infrastructure systems in everyday life and enabling resilience in such systems has come more into focus recently. The authors examine the intersection of human and technological systems and bring to the foreground that these highly complex systems require adequately complex meaning making from decision makers.

Amiel Handelsman brings together two worlds of discourse and practice that seldom meet; Immunity to Change and the Enneagram. In *Nine Paths of Growth: Integrating Immunity to Change with the Enneagram* he brings together his many years of practice in both fields and how he sees practical advantages in making more explicit links between them. This article provides us not only introductions into both fields, but Handelsman’s lovely touch to the process of showing us three different ways we can mesh these two models and processes to gain greater effectiveness in our work helping people uncover and address underlying beliefs.

Bill Torbert and Aftab Erfan have written up a piece that began with some online conversations, *Possible Mistakes of Late Action-Logic Actors in a Polarized World*. In this playful exploration of the topic, they help us reflect on the lesser focused on side of development. While there is plenty of research and reports on the benefits of moving into late or post conventional stages, there is much less on the potential shadow sides, or types of mistakes that can emerge at these later stages. Their exploration covers a dozen ways in which we can fall prey to the hubris of development.
Mark Shraga brings us a combination of subtle sensitivity with very embodied practice in *Aikido and the Pursuit of a Better Life*. He uses firsthand experience of how engaging in Aikido as a practice has enabled him to live a better life. He links the practice with theories or mind and then shows us how the very physical practices of Aikido have very subtle and powerful foundations and implications. From the simplicity of how to fall, to deepening our understanding of working with flows of energy and related concepts, Shraga illuminates a number of aspects of not only Aikido, but also of how we engage the world in general.

Frank Visser has engaged in laying out a clear and thorough set of critiques related to *Ken Wilber’s Problematic Relationship to Science*. He examines Wilber’s approach to evolution, carefully laying our Wilber’s stance and claims for this. He then examines how various scientists describe evolution and uses this to as a lens to evaluate Wilber’s approach to, claims and stance in this topic. He finds a number of places where Wilber presents what Visser shows as problematic claims for how science has failed and where Wilber claims support from, as well as superiority to, scientists’ own approach to evolution.

Turning to how evolution is viewed from an empirical scientist, Marilyn Monk builds on her long and distinguished career of research in molecular biology to present *A Hierarchy of Consciousness from Atom to Cosmos*. In this essay, she lays out how, independent from the various philosophical or consciousness studies related approaches to evolution and based on her decades of empirical work, a clearly hierarchical model of consciousness became clear to her. While many are familiar with such models from Wilber or others, Monk describes how we can make the same claims without resorting to philosophical or other types of presuppositions.

We are pleased to be able to publish Jonathan Rowson’s account of his encounter with Jordan Peterson, *An Epistemic Thunderstorm: What We Learned and Failed to Learn from Jordan Peterson’s Rise to Fame*. This piece, originally written two years go as a way of processing his encounter with Peterson, re-engages this topic to not only help give us well elaborated points to consider as ways of sorting our own perceptions and possible impact from Jordan Peterson, but also helps lift the debate Peterson has stirred to a broader level about how we engage, respond to and most importantly, learn from such characters as they inevitably arise in popular society.

The final offering in the editorially reviewed section comes from Wendelin Küpers, who offers us a delightful and playful philosophical, even theatrical meta journey through time and perspective, with *Daring of Be(com)ing Wise: Perspectives on Embodied ‘Sapere Aude’ Enlightened for Today*. He sets the stage (literally) by contextualizing the Enlightenment urge for wisdom contained in all times and cultures and uses the admonition to ‘dare to think’ as a reference point. Once this stage is set, he introduces the scene containing a rich mix of those who have dared to think, starting with ancient Greeks and moving all the way to current times, giving voice to these thinkers in a dialogue format. This rich feast of conversation leaves us with an even richer set of questions to ponder going forward.

Finally, we have a rich set of book reviews in this issue. Elke Fein provides us with an extensive review of Hanzi Freinacht’s *The Listening Society. A Metamodern Guide to Politics* to open this section. She begins with a comprehensive description of the contents of the book, enabling us to get a reasonably good understanding of the intent, scope and approach to Freinacht’s ideas. Fein
then delves deeper into some appreciative and critical perspectives on this work. This includes some stylistic or attitudinal components as well as questioning some of the more specific content claims being made especially in relation to the model Freinacht puts forward. In the end, we see that while Fein is not convinced that the idea of metamodern has been sufficiently distinguished from integral, it might still serve as a rallying point for a new generation of people eager to have a better foundation for their activism.

Verna DeLauer reviews *Loving water across religions: Contributions to an integral water ethic*. She introduces earlier work on a ‘land ethic’ that is now being applied to the topic of water and described how the author McAnally presents water as a social issue and invites us into considering our subjective experience of it rather than just the commodification or it as a natural resource. For this, DeLauer describes how McAnally explores how major religions have used water in their traditions and closes showing how contemplative practices can be used to deepen our appreciation for and relationship to water.

Marilyn Hamilton reviews *The Future Has Other Plans: Planning Holistically to Conserve Natural and Cultural Heritage*. She provides us with an extensive overview of the contents of the book, mixed with her own comments related to how the authors present the themes they explore. The extra time and work it takes to do this kind of holistic planning is seen to be more than worth the effort when it comes to the outcomes possible.

Shameeka Smalling reviews *The Body is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love*, providing us with a window into an application of transformational reframing of issues, in this case, how our relationship with our own bodies can be transformed through the vehicle of radical self-love. TBINAA is not only a book but also a popular movement. Smalling provides us a succinct overview and commentary on the book and links it to her own experience and contemporary movements like transnational Black feminism.

We close with my own indulgence in the field of mysticism with a review of two books by IR author Doug Marmon: *The Hidden Teachings of Rumi* and *It Is What It Is. The Personal Discourses of Rumi*. Marmon has shown his ability to dig deep and go behind the prevailing views in his work on understanding quantum physics. In these two books, Marmon and colleagues apply the same principle to the works of Persian mystical poet and Sufi, Rumi. My interest in presenting this work to a broader audience stems from the impact it has had for me, deepening my appreciation for Rumi, but also deepening subtle aspects of my own practice.

It has been my and our pleasure as editors of Integral Review to bring together this collection of articles for your enjoyment, enrichment and even evolution of understanding. Hope you enjoy it!
Scaffolding Developmental Transformation Among Immigrants in Order to Facilitate Self-Directed Integration: Practices and Theories of Change

Thomas Jordan¹

Abstract: This article reports findings from an empirical study of six Swedish programs using dialogue-based approaches to bridge gaps in views and norms, support relevant knowledge acquisition and support empowerment of immigrants who are still living on the margin of the Swedish society. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the program theories of the programs included in the study, with particular emphasis on their theories of change and practices used to scaffold developmental transformation of the meaning-making systems of immigrants. Several adult development frameworks and program theory provided the analytical framework for the study.

The analysis of the program theories of the six programs included in the study yielded an inventory of 72 practices used by all, most or some of the interviewed program leaders. A large share of these practices were regarded as very important in all or almost all of the six programs we studied. The inventory of practices can be regarded as a framework that can be used both by researchers in further investigations and by practitioners who want to reflect on and develop their skills and practices.

Keywords: Developmental transformation, dialogue, empowerment, immigrants, integration, refugees, scaffolding.

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¹ Thomas Jordan is the sole author of this article, but the article is based on a research project conducted by three researchers, the others being Pia Andersson and Björn Andersson both at Gothenburg university. For this reason the text sometimes uses "I" and sometimes "we". See further the section below on study design and implementation. The author also wants to thank the reviewers for very thoughtful, constructive and detailed comments.

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Introduction

This article reports findings from an empirical study of six Swedish programs using dialogue-based approaches to bridge gaps between immigrants and the majority society. The main purpose of the study was to investigate the program theories of the programs included in the study, with particular emphasis on their theories of change and practices in relation to developmental transformation of immigrants from non-Western societies. The motivation for conducting the study was a belief that experienced program leaders have developed considerable skills in creating social processes that scaffold developmental transformations that are highly desirable for a number of reasons. However, most practitioners focus on doing, rather than theorizing about doing. Their know-how is therefore seldom articulated in ways that can be communicated to others. The lack of articulation of their program theories also means that it may be difficult to review, critically reflect on and develop the strategies, as the practitioners are embedded in certain patterns of meaning-making and may not look for potential alternatives.

The article is primarily devoted to presenting the practices and theories of change identified in the course of the analysis. It was not possible in the context of this relatively small research project to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs in terms of measuring the extent to which developmental transformations really happened among the participants in the programs. This is a significant and regrettable limitation of the study we made, but a range of methodological difficulties in measuring outcomes in these types of programs set restrictions to what could be done.

Framing

A significant share of immigrants (in particular refugees) to Western European countries grew up in societies with what the World Value Survey researchers call traditional and survival values (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Such value systems emphasize the roles of religion and family ties, deference to external authority, loyalty towards the own ethnic and faith community and distrust in relation to outgroups. In terms of Geert Hofstede's dimensions for cultural differences (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010), these cultures would be characterized as collectivist. The receiving societies are, according to the same researchers, in cultural terms very different: they emphasize secular-rational and individualistic values. Of course, "immigrants" are an extremely diverse category of people, even if delimited to certain nationalities, ethnic identities or religious beliefs. In focus here are immigrants who are to a large degree influenced by "traditional" norms and values and who lack experience with individualistic societies. "Traditional" societies do not provide scaffolding for development of the skills and values that are expected and often required in individualistic Western democracies. On the contrary, there may be a strong social pressure to conform to a rather restrictive set of norms, beliefs and roles, and strong discouragement of the development of independent meaning-making that diverges from the prevailing value system. In the terms of Western ego development theory, this could be interpreted as favoring early conventional meaning-making (however, see the critical objections to this interpretation discussed.

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2 This term is explained in a later section.
An early conventional meaning-making system can enable a person to lead a productive and successful life as long as the received knowledge imparted during early life is fully adapted to the (stable) life conditions in the local society. However, migrating to a society with radically different ways of functioning, both regarding values, beliefs and norms, and regarding how social life operates (labor market, social insurance, educational system, other public institutions, etc.) means encountering a situation one has not been equipped to deal with.

The subtitle of Robert Kegan's book *In Over Our Heads* is *The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Kegan, 1994). The book title refers to the challenges involved when a society expects and requires its members to function in ways that individuals may not have been developmentally prepared for. Kegan's premise is that the "modern" society makes more advanced "mental demands", in terms of his ego development theory, on individuals than earlier societies did. Kegan's perspective concerns, like other frameworks in the adult development field, *vertical* development, referring to a hierarchical conception of human development where more advanced skills and self constructions build upon earlier levels. It is common in the adult development field (see e.g. Kegan et al., 2001; Cook-Greuter, 2013) to distinguish between vertical and horizontal development, where the latter refers to learning and skill acquisition that does not involve developmental transformation of deeper-lying cognitive and self structures.

Immigrants have a lot of horizontal learning to do when starting to navigate life in the new country. They have to learn a new language and understand and interact with a range of societal institutions, such as authorities, social services, preschools, schools, health care and workplaces. The immigrant may encounter norms for appropriate social interaction that are quite different from the ones that were taken for granted in the home culture. However, immigrants may also meet challenges that require vertical development. One reason for this is that the task of navigating life in a new culture cannot be performed by just relying on conventional patterns of behavior learned in the originating culture, but requires an active process of making judgments about how to navigate in the tensions between different cultural norm systems. Another reason may be that the host society has "higher" mental demands than the society the immigrant grew up in, e.g. expects late conventional or even postconventional meaning-making in various domains (such as in worklife or parenting). Our many conversations with leaders of programs working with immigrants in Sweden indicate that the following challenges are relatively common:

- Your learned way of raising your children may not work in the new situation, because your children experience different attitudes and norms when going to preschool and school in the new country and you are not allowed to use corporal punishment with your children.

- Individuals have far-reaching rights in Western democracies, such as the right to make their own choices about education, work, partner and lifestyle. When children, youth, women and

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3 The critical objections concern to what extent Western ego development frameworks are universally valid across different cultures and whether people can be said to be at a particular *general* developmental stage, or if levels of development are dependent on varying situational factors, such as domain, task and degrees of scaffolding.

4 Again, see the objections to this line of reasoning outlined in Appendix 1.

5 We have not tried to collect quantitative data on how common these challenges are. Obviously the range of variation is very wide and many immigrants are not significantly affected by the difficulties listed here.
men (e.g. homosexual men) want to take advantage of these rights, serious conflicts can arise within families, clans and ethnic and religious communities.

– Your family structure might be seriously challenged, partly because the children learn the language and practices of the new society more quickly than their parents and therefore often have to guide their parents in contacts with institutions, and partly because women learn that they have rights and could get societal support if they get a divorce.

– You will have to interact with people who do not believe in God or who have a different religion from your own, which might be very challenging if you have a conformist mindset.

– You encounter a culture with different norms and values around gender roles and sexuality. The society you live in provides less collective social control, which means that youth get more opportunities to experiment with alcohol, substances and sex, and might more easily get involved in a criminal lifestyle.

– You may not have access to the social support that in your home society was provided by your extended family/clan and may therefore become dependent on social services and other societal institutions.

– It might be necessary for women to get training and get a paid job, in order to earn enough income to support the family, in a context where there are no cultural precedents for women working outside of the household.

– In worklife in an individualistic society with a small power distance, you are expected to use your own judgment, speak up for yourselves and take responsibility for problem-solving to a far larger extent than in a collectivist society with a large power distance.6

The larger the gap between the society the immigrant grew up in and the host society is, in terms of culture and socio-economic institutions and practices, the greater the likelihood that the immigrant will be facing some or all of these challenges. It may not be possible to successfully establish oneself in the new environment without a considerable ability to make independent judgments and develop new action strategies. This requires awareness, insight, reflection and active grappling with one's path forward in life. The "mental demands" of being an immigrant to a different type of society are high.

Research Questions

As described in more detail in the section on study design below, this article is based on case studies of six programs that in somewhat different ways use dialogue-based approaches to scaffold self-directed integration of people with immigrant background in Sweden. The aim of the study was to elucidate six interwoven research questions:

6 Individualistic/collectivistic and small vs. large power distance refer to the conceptualizations in Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov (2010).
What specific challenges do program leaders encounter when using dialogue groups as a path to bridge gaps between immigrants and the Swedish majority society and empower participants to self-directed integration?

What practices do program leaders use in order to scaffold transformative development for the participants?

What theories of changes, i.e. beliefs about mechanisms for scaffolding desirable change, underlie the approaches used in the programs?

Is there a common core of theories of change and practices among programs using dialogue as a strategy to support immigrants in the tasks involved in integrating themselves in the Swedish society?

Are there significant differences in practices that can be explained by differences in the program conditions, such as differences in target groups, organizational forms or properties of the surrounding community?

Are there significant differences in practices that can be explained by differences in the meaning-making systems of the program leaders, such as problem framing and theories of change?

In the following section several of the terms used above will be discussed further: scaffolding, empowerment, theories of change and practices.

Elements of a Conceptual Framework

Scaffolding

Recognizing that a society might require citizens to live up to certain expectations in terms of competencies and adherence to norms for behaviors, leads to the question of how the development of those norms and competencies is supported. In discourses about learning and skill development, scaffolding is a key concept (Wood et al., 1976). The term scaffolding refers to different types of support offered to an individual (or a collective) enabling the individual to develop and master new skills. There are many different forms of scaffolding, such as showing someone how to perform a particular task, giving constructive feedback, facilitated dialogue, written instructions, checklists to follow and facilitated group processes (Jordan, 2014).

Societies offer a lot of scaffolding for most (but not all) of its native children, youth and adults to develop the skills and forms of awareness necessary for becoming reasonably competent citizens. However, there is a not much scaffolding available for immigrants coming from a very different socio-economic and cultural background. The six Swedish programs studied in our research aim at facilitating self-directed integration, using dialogue as a core practice for

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7 For critical discussions of the concept, see e.g. Stone, 1993 and Mascolo, 2005.
scaffolding the development of insights, understanding and skills needed for navigating the Swedish society in successful ways.

**Empowerment**

While all of the six programs we included in our study were designed to contribute to transformation of meaning-making and development of competencies needed for self-directed integration of participants with an immigrant background, there are some significant differences in framings. In particular, there is a certain tension relating to the extent to which program leaders want to influence participants in a specific, according to the program leaders, desirable direction. Two of the programs we included (see below) started based on the ambition to prevent honor-related violence. It is clear in these programs that the program leaders want to influence participants to reevaluate what they perceive as problematic norms, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors (if at all present) and identify with forms of meaning-making based on recognition of each individual's right to make his or her own decisions about how to live life. Other programs are more strongly influenced by the idea of scaffolding empowerment on the participants' own terms, i.e. supporting people to build more action competence to establish satisfying life paths for themselves and their families according to their own needs and wishes.

There is a large and differentiated literature on the concept of empowerment (for overviews and critical examination, see e.g. Adams, 2008; Herriger 2014; Cruikshank, 1999; Pease, 2002). Paths to empowering individuals and collectives can be sought in individual development, shifts in social constructions of identities and values, transfer of resources and transformation of societal structures (e.g. discriminatory practices, educational system, barriers to employment, etc.). In this article, the most relevant form of empowerment is related to transformation of meaning-making and individual competencies. While there is a comprehensive literature on empowerment in the field of social work, relatively little has been written about the very concrete practices that might be effective in scaffolding empowerment (outside of psychotherapeutic settings). In the following section, adult development theory will be used to compile a more differentiated understanding of empowerment as related to individual development.

**Dimensions of Adult Development Relevant to Scaffolding Empowerment of Immigrants**

Table 1 below gives some details about what kinds of developmental change might be involved in empowerment processes. Most of the elements listed involve vertical transformation, but a few could be construed as horizontal learning. The list was compiled by the author through reviewing

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8 Readers familiar with Ken Wilber's quadrant framework (see e.g. Wilber, 1995) might think of this as focusing the upper left quadrant, while a more comprehensive approach to empowerment would also consider conditions and processes in the other three quadrants.

9 See, however, the literature on MI, motivational interviewing, which offers a comprehensive set of practices relevant to scaffolding empowerment of individuals (Miller & Rollnick, 2012; Hohman, 2015). However, MI as an approach evolved in a social work setting, presupposing a counsellor–client relationship where there is a recognized problem that clients need to manage. A core concern in MI is how to support the clients to become motivated to find ways to resolve certain problems, such as substance abuse, obesity or abusive behavior.
the patterns and challenges reported by the program leaders in our case studies and through selecting seemingly relevant aspects of development as conceptualized in key theoretical frameworks in the adult development field. Most of the theoretical frameworks describing adult development take the form of stage models, such as stages of ego development (Loevinger, 1976; Cook-Greuter, 1999; 2013; Torbert, 2004; Kegan, 1994), levels of hierarchical complexity (Commons, 2008; Fischer, 1980; Dawson, 2004), stages of interpersonal understanding (Selman, 1980) and stages in the development of reflective judgment (King & Kitchener, 1994). However, to the extent that stage models represent how adult development actually unfolds\(^{10}\), they are only in a limited way useful in representing the rather gradual and piecemeal shifts and insights that might be expected to occur in the kind of programs we have been studying. I do not expect programs like these, even if they are very effective, to lead to comprehensive developmental transitions such as those described between stages of ego development. Still, I believe that the developmental shifts described in different stage frameworks are highly relevant for understanding the direction of small developmental changes that contribute to empowerment and desirable transformations of meaning-making patterns.

The programs we have studied do not overtly frame their efforts in terms of scaffolding developmental transformation as described in adult development theory, even though their motivation is to contribute to more insights, more self-confidence, development of life skills and, in some cases, identification with values and norms respecting individual rights and democratic principles. It is more common among programs like those we studied to frame the approach in terms of "empowerment", and of course there is a considerable overlap between frameworks centered on the empowerment concept and adult development frameworks. One argument in this article is, in fact, that adult development theory can offer a far more differentiated and penetrating understanding of what empowerment actually entails, than can be found in the academic literature about empowerment in the field of social work (see e.g. Adams, 2008; Herriger, 2014).

**Table 1. Dimensions of developmental transformation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If a person ...</th>
<th>... then developmental transformation means ...</th>
<th>Theoretical references</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... has a weak sense of self-esteem ...</td>
<td>... a strengthened conviction of being worth to be taken seriously by others.</td>
<td>Transition from Silence/ Received knowledge towards Subjective/ Procedural knowledge (Belenky et al., 1997). Transition from Socialized towards Self-authoring mind (Kegan, 1994).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... feels powerless and dejected ...</td>
<td>... a strengthened sense of hope, belief in own capacity for action and more clarity about own goals for the future.</td>
<td>Transition from Silence/ Received knowledge towards Subjective/ Procedural knowledge (Belenky et al., 1997). Transition from Socialized towards Self-authoring mind (Kegan, 1994).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{10}\) See Appendix 1.
... is subject to conventional expectations and norms ...  
... less dependence on the opinions, beliefs and expectations of others, and development of a self-authored set of values and convictions that enables the person to make independent evaluations of what he or she values.  
Transition from Socialized towards Self-authoring mind (Kegan, 1994). Transition from early conventional towards late conventional or post-conventional meaning-making (Loevinger, 1976; Cook-Greuter, 2013). Transition from Silence/ Received knowledge towards Subjective/ Procedural knowledge (Belenky et al., 1997).

... lacks a language for articulating feelings ...  
... increased clarity about own feelings and ability to communicate them to others.  

... has a weak ability to take own reactions, thoughts, action impulses and interpretations as objects of reflection ...  
... increased ability and propensity to become aware of, reflect upon and regulate own internal processes.  
Increased self-awareness (Jordan, 2001).

... has categorical, rigid and intolerant opinions, beliefs and attitudes towards outgroups ...  
... development of and identification with prosocial norms, such as tolerance, respect, nonviolence and empathy.  
Transition from conformist/socio-centric towards conscientious/ worldcentric meaning-making (Loevinger, 1976; Cook-Greuter, 2013; Wilber, 1995)

... has a weak propensity to notice and reflect on psychological and relational causality ...  
... increased propensity to notice and reflect on psychological and relational causality and thereby increased ability to play a constructive role in different kinds of social relationships, e.g. in parenting.  
Transition from Concrete and Abstract towards Formal and Systematical levels of hierarchical complexity in the domain of psychological and relational reasoning (Commons, 2008).

... lacks reflective awareness of the norms, values and social conventions in the host country ...  
... increased reflective awareness of social conventions and an increased ability to manage different types of encounters in the host society: contact with authorities, teachers, colleagues, neighbors, etc.  
Transition from pre-reflective towards reflective thinking (King & Kitchener, 1994). Transition from Silence/ Received knowledge towards Subjective/ Procedural knowledge (Belenky et al., 1997).

... is strongly and exclusively identified with a particular system ...  
... greater tolerance in encounters with people who follow other norms, beliefs and lifestyles than Transition from conformist/ sociocentric towards conscientious/ worldcentric meaning-making
of beliefs, norms and attitudes, and therefore negatively disposed towards outgroups ...  

his or her own, as well as greater openness to reflect on different meaning-making systems.  

(Loevinger, 1976; Cook-Greuter, 2013; Wilber, 1995)

... limited communication skills, such as open-ended listening and respectful forms of advocating own views ...

... increased skills in listening actively and with respect for others' views, and in expressing own views and convictions constructively and respectfully.  

Strengthened skills in listening and advocating (Selman, 1981).

... weak propensity to notice and try to understand how other people feel and think, and understand their needs and desires ...

... increased capacity for role-taking and increased propensity to develop insight into other people's reactions and needs.  

Increased capacity for interpersonal understanding (Selman, 1980).

**Program Theory and Theories of Change**

In order to lay bare the underlying logic of the programs included in the study, concepts from program theory (Blamey & MacKenzie, 2007; Funnell & Rogers, 2011; Pawson & Tilley, 1997) have been used as analytical tools. Program theory evolved within the field of evaluation studies, in order to enable more stringent evaluations of initiatives, often projects, created in order to solve some social problem, improve conditions or realize visions. Key analytical elements in program theory are the notions of *theories of change* and *theories of action*. Theories of change are the conceptions, sometimes poorly articulated, actors have about the causal mechanisms that might be activated in order to achieve a desirable change. Theories of action are the conceptions about what specific and concrete activities might be used in order to allow the change mechanisms to get to work. Program theory also include consideration of problem framing and goals.

Since program leaders often do not have an explicit, considered and detailed discourse about their theories of change, a study such as ours sometimes has to reconstruct underlying theories of change by focusing on what program workers actually do and through probing questions and logical inference work backward to understand and articulate the theories of change that apparently guided their program.\(^{11}\)

In our study, the main purpose was to make an inventory of theories of change and concrete practices in six Swedish programs that all used dialogue as a means for facilitating integration of

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\(^{11}\) Argyris & Schön (1974) used the distinction between "espoused theories" and "theories-in-use" to point to the possibility that people might say and believe that they operate according to certain principles, but their actual practice might not reflect those principles, but may follow a different logic. It is therefore advisable to focus on what program workers actually do. However, we have not been in a position to conduct participatory observation to any significant extent. The interviews, however, focused on inviting program leaders to describe their actions, rather than their philosophies.
immigrants. Next section describes the design of the study, the empirical data collected and the analytical procedure followed.

**Study Design and Implementation**

This article reports on results from a research study carried out in 2017-2019 by three researchers, Thomas Jordan (project leader and author of this article), Pia Andersson and Björn Andersson, all three researchers at Gothenburg university, Sweden. The purpose of the project was to develop knowledge about the theories of change that explicitly or implicitly form the basis of programs that use a dialogue-based approach in order to bridge gaps in views and norms, support relevant knowledge acquisition and support empowerment of immigrants who are still living on the margin of the Swedish society. The study was based on the premise that experienced program leaders probably have developed a considerable amount of know-how about how to make it possible to create a group environment where dialogue, reflection and empowerment can happen. A broader question is how experienced facilitators concretely go about scaffolding developmental transformation when working with this particular group, immigrants from traditional societies. As mentioned in the introduction, the study was limited to making an inventory of theories of change and practices in the programs, leaving analyses of whether these practices actually produced desired outcomes for later studies.

The study comprised detailed case studies of six programs, focusing on the program leaders' narratives, goals, practices and theories of change. In the initial phase of the study, we formulated criteria for selecting programs to study. We wanted the programs to:

- have aims relating to facilitating empowerment and/or integration of immigrants;
- be intending to support transformative change of the meaning-making systems of participants in order to bridge intercultural gaps, and/or reduce problematic differences in norms and/or strengthen the participants' competences in actively integrating themselves in the Swedish society;
- have operated for at least two years and on a scale that warrants the expectation that there is a considerable amount of practical experience and build-up of know-how;
- be led by persons who have been driving forces in developing and leading the programs and who are willing to take part in rather comprehensive interviews.

We also wanted a certain variety of types of principals and target groups. The experience in looking for eligible programs was that rather few programs fulfilled our criteria. Quite a few programs existed only in project form and were discontinued when the project funds ran out. The six programs we finally studied were:

- **Källan**, an interreligious open house center, including conversation groups, situated in Fisksätra, a suburb to Stockholm with a large share of immigrant inhabitants.
Att vara förälder i Sverige [Being a parent in Sweden], a parent support program for immigrant parents, in the city council district Hässelby-Vällingby in Stockholm.

Elektra Gothenburg, offering a leadership development program for suburban youth.

Mixgården, a youth centre in the Gothenburg suburb Hammarkullen.

Bygga Broar in Hörby, a municipality in the south of Sweden. Bygga Broar in Hörby is a branch of a project that aims at preventing honor-related threats and violence, but in Hörby it has been made an integral part of Swedish language courses for immigrants.

ENIG [Establishment program for newly arrived in groups], a program used in several municipalities in the south of Sweden on contract with the Swedish Public Employment Service. The participants were immigrants who have had particular difficulties to enter the labor market and/or learn Swedish through the regular Swedish courses for immigrants.12

For each of the programs, we collected available documentation, such as grant applications, reports, plans of operation and manuals and sifted through them for information about the narratives, goals, theories of change and activities. The main basis for the study, however, was the interviews we made with program leaders. We interviewed the program leaders comprehensively about the background of the program, their problem formulation, goals, assumptions, activities, practices and theories of change. The interviews were transcribed and analysed, leading to the construction of comprehensive tables of the program theories of the six cases. The tables have for columns: Narrative (problem formulation, assumptions and values), Theories of change, Practices and Goals. The tables comprised between 2 and 6 pages for each program. The process of identifying and summarizing key elements of the narratives, practices and goals was rather straightforward. The underlying theories of change, however, were only sometimes explicitly formulated by the respondents, and had to be inferred by the researcher. We presented the program theory tables to the program leaders and asked them to comment on formulations that ought to be revised or complemented. This meant that the researcher's interpretations of theories of change were reviewed and confirmed as valid by the program leaders. A further step was to make an inventory of different types of practices mentioned in the interviews and written documentation. A list of 72 practices was compiled (see appendix 2). This list was then presented to the program leaders and they were asked to rate to what extent each practice played a role in their program. This allowed us to gain an overview of which practices were common to all or most of the programs, and which practices were dependent on program-specific conditions or (in a few cases) on differences in theories of change. I also used the program theory tables to identify which practices contributed to which of the three general tasks of establishing relationships and trust, creating an open dialogue climate and scaffolding developmental transformation.

12 After the conclusion of the data collection phase of our study, the two last programs listed have been discontinued for reasons unrelated to their effectiveness.
Tasks and Challenges Facing Program Leaders Working with Integration

Based on the interviews and conversations, as well as document analysis, it seems reasonable to conclude that program leaders who want to create favourable conditions for developmental transformations have three major tasks to handle. The first task is to establish contact and relationships between leaders and the participants, so that participants have enough trust in the leaders to be prepared to engage and open up in the group process. The second task is to create an open and mutually respectful dialogue climate in the group, so participants feel they can express themselves freely, without risking being put down or attacked when they voice what they really feel and think. These two tasks must be minimally achieved before the third and main task can be engaged in earnest: scaffolding developmental transformation among the participants.

It was obvious from the case studies that none of these three tasks is trivial. On the contrary, it may require considerable efforts and skills in order to accomplish the tasks in this particular setting. I have, again based on our case studies, made an inventory of the challenges program leaders may encounter (see the overview in Table 2). Groups and individuals are, of course, very different. In some cases groups present a large number of the challenges listed in Table 2, in other cases conditions are favourable, and the tasks are relatively easily accomplished. In the main section of this article, detailing the different practices found in the analysis or the program theories, the strategies used by program leaders to manage the challenges described here will be discussed.

Table 2. Potential challenges when addressing three tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges program leaders might face</th>
<th>Trustful relationships</th>
<th>Open dialogue climate</th>
<th>Developmental transformations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distrust towards representatives of the majority society</td>
<td>Expectation of hierarchical leadership</td>
<td>Traumatization leading to reduced openness due to strong affects and defense mechanisms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of social services</td>
<td>Group dynamics affected by collectivist norms</td>
<td>Lack of language for articulating own feelings and reactions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration and anger</td>
<td>Status hierarchies between different immigrant groups</td>
<td>Lack of experience in reflecting on psychological and relational causality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative preconceptions of the host society</td>
<td>Intolerant attitudes and behaviors toward others' belief and value systems</td>
<td>Lack of experience of being expected to form and express individual views</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge about how the host society functions</td>
<td>Strong affect in encounters with views that differ significantly from own beliefs, values and norms</td>
<td>Low self-esteem and shame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensive attitude due to low-status position</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strong and rigid norms, attitudes and reactions, e.g. in relation to gender norms, sexuality and parenting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recourse to traditional norms and identities due to marginalized status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Foundational Theories of Change

I reconstructed a large number, more than 60, of theories of change from the narratives of the program leaders. Some of these are very general and foundational for the approaches developed in the programs, while others are quite delimited to achieving very specific outcomes (e.g. increased ability for parents to really listen to their children's experiences). I have selected the eight theories of change that seemed to be both foundational and also shared by all the six programs we analysed (see Table 3). In later sections further significant theories of change found in the six programs will be presented.

### Table 3. Eight theories of change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theories of Change</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Building relationships with trust and respect makes openness and developmental transformation possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>Relating to people with positive interest and a non-judgmental and accepting attitude is crucial for building trustful relationships, an open dialogue climate and for enabling developmental transformation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical activities</td>
<td>Doing practical activities together, both rather unstructured as well as more organized activities, facilitates contact, communication and the building of relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>Establishing guidelines and rules for group conversations and interventions to stop dominating, disparaging and aggressive behaviour among participants, facilitates the emergence of a group climate of mutual tolerance, respect and openness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal stories</td>
<td>Sharing and listening to personal stories invites reflection, e.g. about alternative possible views and courses of action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Skillful use of questions can lead to contact, increased trust, reflection, insight into psychological and social causality and development of more mature values, norms and behaviours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-judgmental response</td>
<td>If adversarial opinions and conflicts are received and responded to in a non-judgmental and inquiring way, they can be fruitful starting-points for reflection and developmental transformation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge about host society culture</td>
<td>Transfer of knowledge and understanding of how the &quot;new&quot; society functions, both regarding institutions and culture, empowers immigrants to develop action competence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Articulating theories of change in this way is a first necessary step in a process of developing more well-grounded knowledge about effective ways of scaffolding developmental transformation under different conditions (in this case relating to immigrants with significant elements of early conventional forms of meaning-making). Having articulations of the core theories of change makes
possible a critical analysis of their credibility, and eventually empirical testing of the extent to which they are actually effective.

Practices

Overview

In the literature on program theory (see e.g. Funnell & Rogers, 2011), attention is focused on what kinds of activities a program comprises. In this study, I found that a more fine-grained approach is needed, as the active ingredients in the programs are less well captured by describing certain types of activities, but are rather found in the ongoing practices of the program leaders. Practices refer here to recurring attitudes and behaviors program leaders believe to be helpful in their work, particularly in group dialogue situations. I believe that a concrete description of such practices is a valuable source of insight into productive ways of scaffolding developmental transformation of such competencies and forms of meaning-making that are necessary in order to handle the mental demands facing immigrants from traditional societies in a modern/postmodern society.

The analysis lead to the identification of 72 practices (some of them overlapping somewhat) that program leaders described as contributing to accomplishing the three tasks of creating trustful relationships, establishing an open dialogue climate and scaffolding developmental transformations. The 72 practices are listed in appendix 2, which also shows to what extent each practice was regarded as important by the program leaders of the six programs. The practices can be subsumed in 12 categories (see Figure 1, with a further "Miscellaneous" category for some practices that were deemed significant but were not as widely used as the others).

Figure 1. Overview of 12 + 1 categories of practices
Figures 2 - 4 give overviews of the most important practices and how they are explicitly or implicitly thought to contribute to accomplishing the three basic tasks outlined earlier. The underlying theories of change are discussed in later sections.

Figure 2. Practices contributing to establishment of contact, relationship and trust

Figure 3. Practices contributing to establishment of an open dialogue climate
Figure 4. Practices contributing to developmental transformation

In the following sections each of the categories of practices are described and their functions in relation to the three main tasks facing program leaders are discussed. Also included in the respective section is a textbox listing theories of change articulated by the program leaders in the interviews we made. The items in the textboxes are not straight quotes, but keep close to the formulations used by the respondents.

1. Friendly and Welcoming Climate

The conditions for hosting are very different depending on whether the program has its own premises and an open-house component or if it is a closed group of recruited participants who meet for a series of meetings, possibly in premises belonging to a different organization. In open-house programs people come for different reasons, sometimes simply to meet other people to socialize with, sometimes because they need help with a specific problem they are facing. For casual visitors to an open-house program, the character of the initial contact with the program leaders is a decisive factor for the likelihood that the visitor gets interested and motivated in participating in a more regular and committed way, e.g. to become a member of a conversation group.

The program leaders working in such programs stressed the importance of greeting each and every visitor in a friendly and welcoming way and show that one is happy to meet the person. Asking open-ended and skillful questions (see the section on questions below) is probably the most
important practice for initiating contact and building relationship and trust. The program leader needs to be aware of and sensitive to the fact that visitors may not at all know what to expect from the program leaders, who they are and what role they play (see the section on tasks and challenges above). There may even be a considerable level of mistrust, if the visitor has had negative experiences with representatives of the host society and authorities. All the program leaders agreed that it is very important to have a lot of patience, it may take quite a long time, for very understandable reasons, until visitors or group participants feel ready to open up about their experiences and views.

Again, regarding open-house programs, program leaders stress the importance of quickly learning names of visitors and maybe also learn about their social networks: who they are friends with, family members and other connections. This is particularly important for visitors coming from a collectivistic background, where membership in collectives may be of great importance.

In closed groups, where participants have signed up or been assigned to the group from elsewhere, a friendly and personal hosting is of course also very important in order to build relationship, trust and openness, but the commitment to participate has already been made.

Three of the programs we studied owned or had exclusive use of their premises and were thus free to furnish and decorate the premises according to their own wishes. Program leaders at one of the programs, the youth center Mixgården, strongly stressed the importance of creating a cosy, clean and beautiful environment visitors can feel at home in, identify with and eventually feel proud of. Mixgården also takes care to use symbols in the form of pictures, photos and artifacts from different cultures, in order to create a visibly multicultural environment.

One practice where program leaders had quite different views was the use of physical touch with visitors. Mixgården, the youth center, regard this as a very important practice. They have a massage chair they invite visitors they know well to use. Giving a shoulder massage (with clothes on, of course) creates an opportunity to ask questions about how life is going, build connection and trust that may open up for quite personal conversations. Some of the other programs reported that physical contact is a relatively or very important part of connecting to participants, but then in very mild forms, such as touching an arm or shoulder. But there was also one program leader who avoids any form of physical contact, as it can be inappropriate in some cultures, in particular between men and women. Obviously physical touch can be a powerful means of building rapport, but it has to be used in a very sensitive and prudent way. It is probably far easier for a female program worker to use touch with participants than for a male leader, because of cultural norms about the appropriateness of physical contact between males and females.


2. Practical Support

Some of the program leaders stressed the importance of having been in a position to help visitors/participants in problematic situations, such as handling contacts with authorities, filling out forms and applications, giving advice in difficult family situations or helping people get clothing, dental care or getting other types of basic needs met. The programs we studied have very different circumstances influencing this practice. In the case of Källan, the interreligious center, many of the visitors sought out the center precisely because they had very concrete difficulties: poverty, ignorance of how to deal with authorities or social isolation. At Källan they could talk to people who can give advice, explain letters from authorities, help filling out forms and get warm second-hand clothes for the winter. At Mixgården, the youth center, teenagers can get help with school homework, someone to talk to about family conflicts and other difficulties. In a third program, Bygga Broar, refugees coming to the municipality were received and helped by the same persons who also lead the conversation program that was integrated with the Swedish courses. Also in the other programs, practical assistance was mentioned as a very important factor in establishing contact and building trust, which lowered the thresholds to further engagement.

3. Collective Activities

Several program leaders regard collective activities, doing practical things together, as an easy and effective way of creating trust, building rapport and creating low thresholds for starting conversations about personally significant issues. In the simplest forms this might be offering coffee or tea without having a specific purpose or agenda. Several of the programs also included more organized activities, such as cooking together, making excursions, having story-telling events or dancing.
One of the good things with arranging collective activities is that doing practical things together without having a more specific goal, such as bridging cultural differences or talking about values, is a very natural and easy way to get to know each other. Conversations start in an unforced way, relationships start to form, trust grows and often people gradually open up and spontaneously start talking about the issues that are important to them. Sometimes this might lead to committing to participate in a more structured program, such as a course or a conversation circle.

For open-house type programs, visitors can come and participate in different activities, which might also offer opportunities to develop social skills. Again, at Mixgården, the youth centre, engaging the youth in working in a music studio or in arranging different kinds of events requires them to take responsibility, collaborate, solve problems and develop discipline and patience.

**Theories of Change**

- If you do practical things together, you create natural opportunities for people to get to know each other, build relationships and start having conversations.
- If you offer visitors coffee and snacks without a particular agenda, it might be possible to reach people who are not enticed by invitations to participate in a program.
- If you do fun things together, the atmosphere becomes less reserved and more open and relaxed.
- If you arrange activities with low thresholds for participation and if the program leaders are continually available, it becomes easier to get in contact with people and build rapport.
- If participants with different ethnic backgrounds get involved in shared creative activities, xenophobia is counteracted.

**4. Creation and Maintaining of Rules**

All of the six programs use some set of rules for participation in the program, mostly just a few and rather simple ones. Having a set of rules creates an opportunity to talk about norms for communication and mutual treatment and what behaviors are not acceptable in the context of the program. In the cases where there are structured programs with fixed groups, rules are generally introduced in the introduction to the program. Establishing and upholding rules is, of course, especially called for when working with youth, where adults more or less automatically get the role of conveying norms and enforcing compliance with them. When working with adult participants, there is no mandate to be a moral leader in the same way, but having introduced a couple of rules can be an important form of support in situations where a participants gets upset and acts in an aggressive or disrespectful way. In more serious situations, having an established set of rules can make it easier to temporarily ban a participant (mostly applying to youth) and thereby sending a strong signal about what norms apply.
5. Active Leadership

All the programs, in somewhat different ways, include a mandate that the programs leaders are in charge of the group. This role can be used in a number of active ways in order to serve the three tasks described above: create relationships, create an open dialogue climate and scaffold transformation of meaning-making. Being a leader in a group offers the opportunity to lead conversations in ways that ensure that all participants are invited to become active and be open about their experiences and views. The leader may use rounds, where every participant can share what they think, or direct open-ended questions to participants who are shy, reserved or feel unsafe. If the leader notices that there are tendencies for the formation of informal groups that exclude some participants or if there is someone who takes a dominant role or acts in a way that hinders an open and mutually respectful climate, the leader can counteract such patterns by raising the issue with the group, mix up participants in smaller sub-groups for conversations or other activities, or have separate conversations with individuals.

The leadership role is particularly important if someone gets very upset and aggressive, criticize others for their views or in some other way restricts other participants freedom to participate on their own terms. I will return to this issue further below.

### Theories of Change

- If the leader actively ensures that everyone can participate actively and be respected, an open climate can develop in the group.
- If a leader intervenes when participants are dominant or disrespectful, an open and mutually respectful climate can emerge.

6. Positively Interested, Non-Judgmental Approach

The program leaders in all six cases we studied stress, in slightly different ways, the fundamental role of meeting the participants with an attitude of genuine interest, acceptance and non-judgment. This is seen as particularly important when the participant is cautious, suspicious, frustrated or preoccupied by other negative feelings, or advocates views that run counter to the program leader's own values. Instead of entering into argumentation, the basic practice is to listen, trying to understand and asking open-ended questions.
There is a striking similarity between the approach voiced by the program leaders and Carl Rogers (1957) conclusions about what enables a positive transformation in psychotherapeutic processes. Rogers' view can be summarized in this way: *If the therapist is congruent (authentic, sincere), shows unconditional positive regard and experiences empathic understanding of the client's internal frame of reference and endeavors to communicate this experience to the client, constructive change will follow.* This is a very clearly articulated theory of change, even if it only maintains that a certain approach works, but doesn't explain the mechanisms by which it works. All the programs leaders we interviewed expressed variants of this theory of change.

### Theories of Change

- If you meet participants with a non-judgmental and interested attitude, you can create psychological safety, and the safer you feel, the more you dare to share.
- If there is a genuine mutuality in the communication, trustful relationships can evolve.
- If program leaders can create a sense of safety in the group, developmental processes become possible.
- If an open and non-judgmental conversation climate is created, participants can articulate their questions and prejudices about Swedes and the Swedish society, e.g. regarding parenting and teen sexuality.
- If prejudice and condemnations are met with openness and genuinely inquiring questions, prejudice can be weakened or transformed.
- If one feels that one is free to say anything without self-censorship, it becomes possible to inquire into the background of certain views and formulate and reflect on alternative views.
- If program leaders listen to parents in a respectful way, the likelihood increases that the parents will listen to their own children in a respectful way.

### 7. Recognition/Validation

Various ways of supporting participants through validation is a common practice in the programs we have studied. The foregoing practice of acceptance and non-judgment in the ways program leaders react, respond and ask questions can be seen as a way to show that one understands and accepts the participant's experience and views. An individual in difficult circumstances might feel incompetent and have low self-esteem. This might evoke defense mechanisms in the form of anger, aggressiveness and a disparaging attitude. Validation in the form of someone else showing understanding for one's feelings, reactions and past actions might normalize the reactions, leading to a greater sense of self-acceptance and a weaker need for upholding defense mechanisms.

Validation can be difficult to practice when a program leader is faced with a participant who states problematic views (see also section below). Validation might here entail showing appreciation for the participant's willingness to be open with opinions and feelings, without agreeing or disagreeing with the content of the statement. One step further is to show one's understanding of the fact that the person has the views he or she has, still without agreeing or disagreeing with the contents. Such an approach might be of great importance in order to create a dialogue climate, where participants feel welcome to be open with their feelings, opinions and thoughts, even regarding issues where there are very diverging views.
A different form of validation, also common in the programs, is to show appreciation and approval of actions participants have taken, for example in their roles as parents. Leaders might also invite other participants to offer positive feedback to each other.

### Theories of Change

- If participants get validation from other participants and/or from leaders for good things they do, their social skills are strengthened.
- If participants' actions are validated, a positive self-image and hope for the future can be strengthened.
- If participants' difficulties are normalized, their prospects for handling crises are improved.

### 8. Sharing of Personal Stories

For programs where groups meet over an extended period of time, the sharing of stories about personal background, experiences and other personal issues is an important activity. The sharing of stories, among participants, but also by leaders, may have several functions. It creates rapport and is a way to initiate conversations about personal experiences and views. The telling of personal stories, and in particular the listening to others' stories, creates relationship, understanding and respect. By listening to others' stories about their experiences, participants have the opportunity to reflect on similarities and differences in relation to their own stories. People deal with and think about situations in different ways, which offers the individual a broader range of alternative ways of interpreting and feeling about significant matters. A particularly important effect can be when someone has an acute challenging situation and by listening to stories of how others dealt with similar situations might get hope and motivation about his or her own challenges.

Several program leaders mention how they, often with some caution and reservations, share stories from their own personal lives with participants. Sometimes leaders share something about how their personal (but not too private) situation is at the moment, in order to set a more personal tone in the conversation. Some leaders also tell participants about their own backgrounds, events they were part of, or experiences that illustrate existential human dilemmas and consequences of different courses of actions. Being more personal creates rapport and contributes to open up the informal norms regarding what is spoken of and how one can talk about personal matters.

It might be difficult for program leaders to know how to act when participants want to know the leader's personal opinions in, for example, political issues, religious beliefs or attitudes to controversial phenomena. Most program leaders have roles in which they feel that they should be restrained in voicing personal opinions regarding contested issues. However, there are situations where it feels appropriate to share personal views, in particular when it might lead to a genuine dialogue about themes that might involve divergent opinions.
9. Asking Questions

Asking questions is one of the most important tools of a program leader. Different types of questions can be used in order to scaffold the attainment of all the three goals mentioned earlier: establish trustful relationships, create a respectful dialogue climate and transformation of meaning-making in order to empower participants. Simple, ordinary questions are a natural way of making contact and start conversations with people. The way questions are asked can convey that you are benevolent, interested and genuinely open to listen to the other person. This creates rapport and trust and is the start of building a relationship that allows conversations about personal and significant issues, including sensitive and controversial themes.

However, questions are also a powerful means of influencing other people in potentially profound ways. A program leader often asks questions not in order to get certain information, but rather to offer the participant an opportunity to reflect on matters that have not been objects of reflection before, at least not from the particular angle the question invites to. Since questions might influence people to think and feel in new ways, asking questions does mean that there is a power dimension in the relationship: the program leader wants and can influence the participant in certain directions without the participant being fully aware of the intention behind the questions asked.

The analysis of the interviews we made led to the identification of nine categories of questions used by program leaders (see appendix 2).

The two first types are used for initiating contact and conversation and for creating a relaxed and respectful conversation climate. Program leaders use open-ended questions about how different daily life themes are handled in the participants' home countries, such as: What did your family and closer relatives network look like at home? Who took care of your children when they were small? What kind of school did the children attend? How did you support the family? What was it like to be a teenager? Some questions are rather innocuous, while other questions might lead to more sensitive themes requiring more of a safe group space, such as questions about differences in parenting styles or questions about how the participants came to leave their homes and travel to Sweden. A particular way of using the same type of questions is when a program leader notices that one or several participants are very reserved and silent, maybe due to insecurity or lack of practice with talking in front of people they don't know very well. In such cases, a program leader can direct innocuous questions to these participants in order to get them to participate in the conversation, such as what they usually had for breakfast, or what kind of home they lived in.
The other categories of questions found were all used for supporting reflection, clarification and insights. Some types of questions are used at occasions when a participant voices views or emotions that need to be handled in order to maintain an open and respectful dialogue climate, such as when someone makes strongly disparaging comments or is very upset. As already mentioned, in all six programs we studied, program leaders mostly do not start arguing against problematic views, but remain anchored in an attitude of acceptance, curiosity and respect. Exceptions to this basic approach were reported in the two programs working with young participants, where program leaders sometimes feel called upon to challenge participants about problematic speech. Open-ended questions about the participants' personal experiences or other background to opinions and emotional reactions mostly leads to a calming down of the situation and it becomes possible to explore different possibilities for how one can think and feel about different themes. Several of the program leaders reported that they often handle situations when one participant voice problematic views by asking other participants how they think and feel about the issue in order to get a more reflective conversation going.

A particular category of questions are intended to support a person to direct his or her attention towards own emotions, reactions and thoughts, in order to gain more clarity about how one feels, the underlying reasons for one's reactions and not least in order to support the person to find words for describing what is going on in one's interior.

In German literature on conflict management (see e.g. Thomann, 2002), there is a pertinent word for this: Selbstklärung, self-clarification. The word points to the process of developing clarity about how one feels and thinks about a particular issue or experience. Assisting the conflict parties to gain clarity about their feelings, needs, values, thoughts, priorities and what outcome they want can be a crucial element in a conflict management process, and is also highly relevant in this context. Some of the questions asked in order to scaffold such self-clarification are rather simple: How do you feel about this? What thoughts do such situations trigger in you? What is most important to you when such things happen? How would you like it to be? Is there something specific you are worried about?

### Theories of Change

If a program leader skillfully uses questions, outcomes can be:

- increased rapport and trust;
- that participants feel seen and therefore also welcome to participate actively;
- that conversations get started and participants increasingly open up;
- that participants who are upset calm down, talk in a more open-ended manner, start reflecting and make decisions in a more considered way;
- that participants by articulating their feelings, reactions and views gain more clarity about themselves and what is important to them;
- that participants become more aware of other people's reactions, feelings and views;
- that participants gain new insights into causal connections in interpersonal relationships, such as how different parenting styles affect children;
- that participants start reflecting on taken-for-granted views, beliefs and attitudes, and maybe reevaluate them;
- that participants reflect more concretely and realistically about their own and their families future and what they would like to accomplish.
10. Handling Strong Reactions, Disparaging Attitudes and Conflict

Significant differences in norms, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and behaviors among participants and between immigrants and the Swedish society are an integral aspect of the programs we have studied, and for some of them the very reason that they exist. These differences can, when they surface, elicit strong reactions and conflict. The encounter with norms and beliefs that are very different from the ones participants have taken for granted and may be strongly identified with can be felt as strongly provoking. In addition, many refugees and other recent immigrants have had frustrating experience with authorities and in other situations in the new society, and may carry along negative and strong emotions and/or have developed a considerable degree of distrust in relation to representatives of the host country. Some participants may also be traumatized by experiences in war-torn regions when fleeing and by loss of relatives or friends. Conversations in a group may activate strong painful emotions, like anxiety, despair and fear for the safety of relatives.

A program leader must be prepared to deal with situations where participants react with painful emotions or tell stories with horrible and traumatic ingredients. However, in situations when participants express hostile and disparaging views towards other participants in the group, towards the Swedish society or towards specific groups, e.g. homosexuals, the leader's skillfulness in upholding an open and respectful dialogue climate is really put to the test. Some views expressed by participants may feel provoking in relation to the leader's own values, e.g. when someone maintains that it is a good thing to use corporal punishment with their children, or condemns certain categories of people. But even if the leader does not have their own reactions to deal with, there is still a need to handle the group dynamics in order to create and maintain an open and respectful climate.

When emotionally charged situations happen, in particular when a participant expresses problematic views, the program leader will have to choose to what extent these statements should be received with a non-judgmental and inquiring attitude, and to what extent it is called for to challenge the views or even stop a participant from hurting other participants.

Theories of Change

- If strong emotional expressions and disparaging attitudes are met with a non-judgmental and inquiring approach, shared reflection and reevaluation may become possible.
- If participants get support to reflect on conflicts, misunderstandings may be reduced, insight into causes and consequences in social relationships may increase and stereotypical conceptions may be dissolved.

11. Inform and Educate

All of the programs regard sharing of information and knowledge in order to make the new host-society intelligible as an important component of their work. Understanding of causes and consequences in relation to contested issues, such as parenting styles, sexuality and differences in norms and lifestyles, is likewise regarded as a central task. Several of the program leaders stress that it is important and helpful to take care to refer to research results and verifiable facts in order
to gain credibility and legitimacy, as well as providing a good starting point for reflection and dialogue.

Immigrants need knowledge about Swedish laws, rights, institutions and regulations in order to be able to advocate their interests and handle different situations they may find themselves in. Some recurring topics is to explain the taxation system, the roles and principles of the social service authorities, laws, the judicial system, the compulsory school system, etc. Understanding how these systems work can reduce misunderstandings and strengthen action competences.

There is also often a need for understanding a range of phenomena in the Swedish society that are not part of the societal structure, but rather cultural phenomena, such as pervasive norms, attitudes and behavioral patterns, e.g. regarding parenting, sexuality, gender roles and equality, leadership styles, the weak role of religion and widespread patterns of social interaction that may be very different from what participants are used to.

The programs that aim at preventing honor-related violence and promote respect for individual rights include further forms of knowledge dissemination. Specific themes that are part of some programs are knowledge about children's needs, consequences of different types of parenting, risks related to cousin marriages, facts about the hymen and risks related to circumcision.

**Theories of Change**

- If the program conveys knowledge about laws, rights, regulations and about how Swedish institutions function, misunderstandings and anxiousness can be reduced, and participants can better advocate for their interests in the Swedish society.
- If leaders share knowledge relating to potentially controversial themes, such as parenting, the hymen and family violence, it becomes easier involve participants in reflection and possibly also reevaluation of problematic attitudes, norms and beliefs.
- If participants get support in understanding psychological causality (e.g. the mechanisms of shame), the amygdala can be calmed down, the frontal lobe can be strengthened and it becomes easier to mobilize hope and motivation to develop new behaviors.
- If participants gain greater understanding of the challenges one faces when one migrates from a traditional society to a secular and modern society, reorientation is facilitated.

**12. Support for Reflection on Causal Links**

A large share of the participants in the studied programs grew up in social environments that lacked scaffolding for reflection on psychological and social causality. Several of the programs use activities that actively invite to such reflection. One example, used in Elektra and Bygga Broar, is to ask participants to draw "life lines", a line symbolizing high and low points in the biography with marks for specific life events. The line can be used for reflecting on how different events and circumstances in one's biography has contributed to forming one's personality and attitudes. Another example is when program leaders talk about how family structures may be impacted by migration, differences in living in a society in war and a society in peace, and how the difficulties facing immigrants in a society that is very different can lead to shame and avoidance. Here sharing
of concepts and theories are combined with invitations to reflect on causal links in the participants' own lives and predicaments.

A further variation is to invite participants to tell each other how it feels and what other consequences follow in particular situations. One example is how leaders at Elektra have invited girls to tell boys how it feels for them when the boys look at porn. In programs for parents, program leaders may invite participants to imagine how it feels for their children in certain situations and when they are treated in certain ways.

The practice of scaffolding reflection on psychological and social causal links is, of course, a key element in promoting transformation from pre-formal to formal cognition, i.e. from early conventional to late conventional meaning-making.

**Theories of Change**

- If participants are supported to articulate their feelings and reactions, they feel seen and validated and it gets easier to reflect on own experiences and their consequences.
- If parents are invited to reflect on their children's situation and experiences, the likelihood increases of functional parenting adapted to the situation of being an immigrant in the Swedish society.

**Miscellaneous Themes**

In addition to the themes discussed above, there were seven practices that were deemed potentially significant, but were only mentioned in some programs. Some of them are only relevant under specific conditions, such as in programs targeting youth.

*Images.* All six programs reported that they use images for supporting conversations and knowledge transmission, but there were significant differences in how this was done. In Bygga Broar the use of images is central to the whole program. In Bygga Broar a lot of time and effort has been invested in developing a series of 40+ drawings intended to facilitate starting conversation with immigrant parents about a broad range of themes, mostly relating to the situation of their children. Many of the drawings show children in different situations, inviting conversations about children's feelings, parenting, gender roles, family violence, circumcision, etc. The experience in the program Bygga Broar is that the images make it much easier to initiate constructive conversations about potentially charged issues. The other programs often use images as a support when talking about various themes, but not in the systematic way characteristic of Bygga Broar.

*Individual feedback.* Offering individual feedback to participants is a practice that played a role in only a few of the programs, in particular Elektra. Since Elektra essentially is a leadership development program for suburban youth, leaders have a natural mandate to take initiative to have an individual conversation with a participant and offering observations and suggestions regarding behavior in different situations and sharing own experiences and learning about leadership. In other types of programs, the mandate for giving individual feedback is weaker, but may be called for in specific situations.
Training skills. Participation in a group led by someone who is skillful in creating an open and respectful dialogue climate implies in itself training in listening and talking skills, in particular for participants who have little experience with such forms of communication. However, there were not many examples in our case programs of activities that were specifically intended to train particular skills. In the ENIG program, one session is devoted to understand and train validation, i.e. giving and receiving positive feedback, including a homework assignment for training with family members and other people. The program that could be said to offer most opportunities for development of social skills is Mixgården, the youth center. Mixgården offers a range of activities, including, as mentioned above, giving participants responsibility for certain tasks, but also participating in activities that require sustained learning and training, such as dance, recording music or planning and carrying out various types of events. Such activities offer opportunities to develop social skills, such as collaboration, problem-solving, taking responsibility, develop more patience and work discipline, planning and tolerating differences.

Responsibility. A couple of the program leaders pointed out the importance of assigning real responsibility to participants for various tasks, as a way of mobilizing engagement, commitment and development of social skills. This is a very significant part of the youth centre Mixgården's approach. Teenagers in different constellations are invited to assume responsibility for roles like operating the café or the music studio. They also have the practice of picking a number of participants each year to form a group that is given a set of responsibilities over the whole year. In the program Bygga Broar (not so much in the part we included in our study, but elsewhere), immigrant women were invited to take on the role of being cultural interpreters and speak in front of groups of Swedish preschool and school teachers. The program leaders reported that this element of the program had a large impact in generating engagement and commitment, as well as increasing self-esteem and a sense of personal agency. Using the practice of assigning responsibility for real tasks and roles is much easier in programs having a variety of activities going on. It is less easy in programs comprising a series of conversation meetings. However, even in such groups the practice of assigning responsibility can be used to some extent, for example by giving participants homework assignments and ask them to report back on these.

Role models. Some of the programs, in particular Mixgården and Elektra which work with youth, regard working with role models as an important practice. They may, for example, invite guests, such as former participants who have managed to establish themselves in a particular role in the wider society. By meeting people like themselves who have succeeded at getting a meaningful job or becoming an artist, for example, participants get living proof of the possibilities that exist for themselves and their own future.

Referring to religious norms. In two of the programs leaders sometimes referred to religious norms in relation to participants for whom religion has a personal significance. In the cases this was mentioned as a practice, the leaders themselves had a background in Muslim societies and were familiar with the Koran and could therefore with some credibility use relevant quotes. For example, a program leader could say "Only God can judge" when a participant expressed him- or herself in a disparaging way about other people. However, some program leaders also expressed a certain ambivalence about using religious authority as a strategy.

Working with oneself. Practices explicitly emphasising the need for program leaders to work on themselves were not often mentioned in our interviews. Some program leaders, however, did refer
to the importance of working on being aware of one's own state of mind and actively taking care of, for example, strong emotions or particular moods, as well as continuously training on being able to maintain an empathic attitude towards participants.

**Similarities and Differences Among the Six Programs**

Of the 72 practices identified in this study, a large share, about 32, were reported as very important by all or most of the six programs (see details in appendix 2). This means that there seems to be a rather large set of practices that are common to practitioners in this field, even though they have built their programs independently and don't have a background in a particular methodology. However, there were about 40 practices not used by all programs in a regular way. The reasons for this were different. For about 14 of the practices, it was apparent that their relevance was dependent on specific program conditions. Some practices are only relevant for programs owning or having exclusive use of their premises. Other practices are only relevant or important when working with youth. A third type of differences in conditions are between open-house programs and programs in the form of a series of group meetings with a more or less structured agenda. In the former case, different types of activities can be offered, in the latter case teaching about different topics is a common ingredient in the programs.

Surprisingly few differences in what practices are used (about 16) can be related to differences in theories of change, i.e. beliefs about what is helpful. None of these represent strongly diverging philosophies. The most significant differences concern to what extent program leaders should try to influence participants in particular directions, such as challenging views perceived as problematic or actively inviting participants to reflect on certain issues. Most differences, however, can be interpreted as differences in emphasis, i.e. what is regarded as more or less important to do.

The remaining about 10 practices, where there were differences between the programs, did not seem to have particular explanations. The respondents simply could not report that a particular practice had been called for, or they had never considered that it might be useful.

Quite a few of these practices may sound very ordinary, almost trivial, but in the programs we studied it was clear that they were practiced mindfully and methodically, as elements in an cohesive "method" or approach.

**Conclusions**

In this paper I argue that it is important to provide scaffolding for immigrants faced with the challenge of acquiring knowledge, skills and meaning-making patterns necessary for self-directed integration in individualistic societies expecting citizens to be self-authoring. Failing to provide such scaffolding increases the risks of growing marginalized groups, forming enclaves with much worse living conditions than the majority population. This might lead to increasing tensions in the

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13 We asked the respondents if they had participated in courses in any particular methodology. Some of them are familiar with MI, motivational interviewing, and have attended shorter trainings in the methodology. However, it was apparent from the interviews that none of them regarded this as a major and formative influence in their approach, but rather a complementary input.
society and increased appeal for young immigrants to join criminal networks, thus not only affecting the immigrants themselves, but also to the stability and dignity of the society at large.

The study reported here aspires to contribute to our knowledge about how developmental transformation can be scaffolded, with particular reference to immigrants from traditional societies. Leaders of the six programs we studied share the foundational theory of change that building trustful relationships is a crucial precondition for creating an environment conducive to empowerment. Establishing trustful relationships and an open, respectful dialogue climate under these conditions may require more of program workers than in settings were participants have a similar cultural background.

The analysis of the program theories of the six programs included in our study yielded an inventory of 72 practices used by all, most or some of the interviewed program leaders. A large share of these practices were regarded as very important in all or almost all of the six programs we studied. Some practices are only relevant under certain program conditions (such as having own premises, or working with youth). One might have expected that some differences in what practices were used in the different programs would reflect different profiles of the program leaders' theories of change. However, few such differences could be discerned in this study.

The study did not aspire to measure to what extent the identified practices actually contributed to the empowerment of program participants. We therefore cannot assess if the theories of change shared by the program leaders are effective. However, it can be argued that the practices identified constitute a comprehensive set of "promising practices," worth further exploration, and development. They are the result of the accumulation over time of know-how among program leaders with a considerable experience in meeting and working with people with an immigrant background, primarily in group settings. Anecdotal evidence suggests that practices such as a positive and non-judgmental approach, skillful use of different types of questions, sharing personal stories and support to reflect on psychological and social causality can be powerful forms of developmental scaffolding.

The inventory of practices (see appendix 2) can be regarded as a framework that can be used both by researchers in further investigations and by practitioners who want to reflect on and develop their skills and practices. The identification of a comprehensive set of practices and their underlying theories of change is a first step in an investigation into effective ways of scaffolding empowerment of individuals to increased ability to navigate life in society that expects and requires meaning-making and action patterns corresponding to late conventional stages of ego development.

References


Appendix 1. Theoretical Controversies in the Application of Adult Development Perspectives in Migration and Integration Studies

The writing of this article and the reactions the first version evoked among those who read it (researcher colleagues and reviewers) opened a can of theoretical worms. The contents of the can seem to involve deep-seated differences in perspectives within the adult development field that would deserve to be thoroughly explored. However, the issues involved are too complex to be satisfyingly resolved within the context of this article, which was meant to focus on rather concrete results of a case-based study of scaffolding practices. The feedback I received gave me reason to rewrite the problem framing section of the article to accommodate the critical objections. I am not fully satisfied with the result, though, and I think it is relevant to outline some of the interesting theoretical tensions involved.

My personal problem framing that lead me to design the research project reported in the article were based on assumptions that might be described something like this:

- Adult development theories offer a unique (but partial) interpretative approach to understand and manage important aspects of complex societal problems, such as the integration of refugees and other immigrants from low-income and war-torn countries to high-income, democratic societies.

- Adult development theories describe significant and hierarchically ordered levels of cognitive skills, social awareness, self-awareness and self constructions (e.g. Kegan's subject-object balances).

- Different societies scaffold its members' development up to, but not beyond, a certain expected level. This expected level is different in different societies.

- Some societies actively discourage its members (or some of its members, e.g. girls and women) to develop beyond the wanted level.

- Some societies, or rather social milieus, in the world function according to an early conventional, or conformist, mindset. An early conventional, conformist, society is one where:
  - members are expected to believe in and adhere to a quite narrow and rigid set of norms and beliefs;
  - there is a lack of tolerance towards deviations from these norms;
  - there is a considerable tendency to divide people into Us and Them;
  - narratives about who is good and who is bad are prominent aspects of the worldview;
  - the cognitive world is rather undifferentiated, dominated by black-and-white, either-or thinking; and
  - authority is perceived to be external rather than internal.

Often, but not necessarily, the social order of the society, organizations and families is hierarchical and patriarchal.
– Immigrants originating in early conventional societies are a very diverse group, but some have not had the chance to develop beyond the early conventional ego stages. When people embedded in an early conventional (conformist) stage of meaning-making migrate to a society that expects its members to function at late conventional levels (for example be self-authoring and having principled, world-centric values about tolerance for diversity), they are faced with challenges they have not been equipped for. These challenges may for some be very difficult to handle and thereby become obstacles to integration.

– If immigrants from conformist social milieus do not adapt to the host society's norms and practices, there is a considerable risk that they will remain outsiders in relation to the majority society, economically (support oneself and one's family), socially (segregated lifestyle) and culturally (rejecting the host society's values and norms, and, possibly, acting out norms that are in breach of the host society's laws and prevalent norms).

– Social exclusion of whole groups of immigrants may lead to several social ills, such as widespread long-term unemployment, dependence on social security benefits, increased propensity for young men to be attracted to criminal networks, suppression of in particular girls' and women's rights (according to the host societies legislation) to make their own choices and ethnic conflict. Some of these phenomena may also reinforce tendencies to xenophobia and ethnic discrimination.

– It is, for these reasons, a crucial task for the receiving societies to provide effective scaffolding for the immigrants, to facilitate their empowerment and enable self-directed and constructive integration.

The problem framing in the first version of the article was not spelled out in the detail given above, but enough of the underlying assumptions were present to evoke objections from colleagues and reviewers. The most fundamental objections are, according to my interpretation, related to differences in convictions about the nature of adult development.

One objection is based on the conviction that it is fundamentally misleading to describe adult development in terms of individuals developing through a sequence of general stages, as the ego development framework do. According to the view behind this objection, development is localized, i.e. domain-specific and highly dependent on situational factors, such as what particular task the individual is engaged with, what scaffolding is provided in the actual situation and the properties of the social setting the individual is embedded in. Individuals are not "at" a certain stage, but operate on different levels of complexity on different occasions. There is research (e.g. by Kurt Fischer, Theo Dawson and their colleagues) that shows that individuals' performance and developmental trajectories in terms of complexity levels are domain-specific. In the light of this view, it is highly misleading to make generalizations about what stage a person is at.

A second objection is related to the concern that the stages and levels frameworks developed in the adult development field reflect what is valued and regarded as mature in North American and Western European societies. The cultures in these societies are strongly individualistic, whereas large parts of the world have collectivist value systems. However, the theoretical frameworks developed in the Western environment, in particular the ego development frameworks, claim to represent universal developmental patterns. This is deeply problematical and risk portraying
meaning-making systems based on other cultural values and norms as less developed, thereby also contributing to a deeply misleading "deficit" stereotype of immigrants as a collective. Serious consideration of the variability in forms of social organization, cultural patterns and value systems raises the question if it is at all possible and meaningful to create universally valid theoretical frameworks for adult development.

Two reviewers recommended that I, in the light of these objections, should remove the references to needs for vertical development among (some) immigrants, and frame the challenges involved in terms of a need for horizontal learning about cultural differences. This could still be thought of in terms of developmental transformation, but not in relation to a universally valid hierarchical model of adult development.

Even though I recognize the validity of the objections sketched above, I have been quite reluctant to completely abandon the vertical development angle. I do believe it is relevant and meaningful to apply concepts like early and late conventional meaning-making to collectives that to a considerable degree are communities of shared values, norms and assumptions. However, I have only anecdotal rather than systematically documented evidence to go by regarding the presence of early conventional systems of meaning-making among (some of) the participants in the programs we have studied. There is also, as far as I know, no stringent theoretical framework that would allow us to define the properties of early and late conventional and postconventional societies and "score" particular societies. The objections concerning the potential incommensurability of different cultures of course also call into question if it is at all defensible to develop and use such frameworks. I believe these issues deserve to be explored in depth and with intellectual rigor. That, however, is a task far beyond the scope of the present article.
Appendix 2. Practices: Compilation of Responses from Six Programs

The table below shows how program leaders rated the use of each of the 72 practices found in the analysis.

Explanation of symbols used:
- Not used by us
* Used to some extent
** Relatively important
*** Very important, central for my/our approach

K: Källan; A: Att vara förälder i Sverige; El: Elektra; M: Mixgården; EN: ENIG; BB: Bygga Broar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Practices</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>El</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>EN</th>
<th>BB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic attitude</strong></td>
<td>1. Being anchored in a curious, positively interested and non-judgmental attitude in the lifeworlds of participants. Listening with an open-ended attitude, rather than advocating or teaching.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friendly and welcoming attitude and environment</strong></td>
<td>2. Having a friendly, welcoming and inviting way of hosting.</td>
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<td>3. Taking care to greet each person, learning everyone's name, learning the social networks of participants.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. With sensitivity for boundaries using physical touch: shake hands, touching visitor's arm or shoulder, hugs.</td>
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<td>5. Creating a cosy ambience in the premises.</td>
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<td>6. Creating a multicultural ambience by having symbols of different cultures, and learning and using words from different languages.</td>
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<td>7. Being patient that it may take some time before participants are prepared to be open with their experiences.</td>
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<td><strong>Practical support</strong></td>
<td>8. Assist individuals in problematic situations, such as contacts with authorities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collective activities</td>
<td>9. Create relaxed and unpretentious opportunities for talking, establish contact and building relationships by offering coffee or tea, eating together, being available for spontaneous contact.</td>
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<td>10. Arranging activities that create opportunities for contact, conversations, creating rapport, such as cooking together, arranging events, making excursions.</td>
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<td>11. Arranging and/or creating conditions for creative activities, such as working with art, making music, dance courses.</td>
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<td>12. Taking care to have fun together, joking with participants.</td>
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<td>13. Organizing solidarity activities, such as collecting money for aid projects.</td>
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<td>Create and maintain rules</td>
<td>14. Present rules for participation in the program, such as respect for other participants' views.</td>
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<td>15. Require compliance with rules, making sure that violation of rules have distinct consequences, and following up and reintegrate those who have transgressed rules.</td>
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<td>Leading</td>
<td>16. Distribute talking time in order to activate everyone or giving everyone opportunity to speak.</td>
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<td>17. Actively discourage the emergence of informal groupings and informal leaders.</td>
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<td>18. Raise the issue with the group if someone is marginalized.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>19. Taking care to uphold a leadership role - not becoming a friend.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>20. Intervene when a participant inhibits other participants. Request that participants respects others' views. Refer to rules, negotiate contracts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognize/Validate</td>
<td>21. Welcome when participants express problematic views by conveying that it is *** ** *** *** *** ***</td>
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**Collective activities**

9. Create relaxed and unpretentious opportunities for talking, establish contact and building relationships by offering coffee or tea, eating together, being available for spontaneous contact.

10. Arranging activities that create opportunities for contact, conversations, creating rapport, such as cooking together, arranging events, making excursions.

11. Arranging and/or creating conditions for creative activities, such as working with art, making music, dance courses.

12. Taking care to have fun together, joking with participants.

13. Organizing solidarity activities, such as collecting money for aid projects.

**Create and maintain rules**

14. Present rules for participation in the program, such as respect for other participants' views.

15. Require compliance with rules, making sure that violation of rules have distinct consequences, and following up and reintegrate those who have transgressed rules.

**Leading**

16. Distribute talking time in order to activate everyone or giving everyone opportunity to speak.

17. Actively discourage the emergence of informal groupings and informal leaders.

18. Raise the issue with the group if someone is marginalized.

19. Taking care to uphold a leadership role - not becoming a friend.

20. Intervene when a participant inhibits other participants. Request that participants respects others' views. Refer to rules, negotiate contracts.

**Recognize/Validate**

21. Welcome when participants express problematic views by conveying that it is *** ** *** *** *** ***
good that they are open, rather than entering into polemics.

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<td><strong>22.</strong> Show understanding and acceptance (without agreeing) in relation to participants' attitudes, opinions, feelings and judgments, even when they are problematic (e.g. racist opinions, authoritarian convictions).</td>
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<td><strong>23.</strong> Show understanding for the challenges and difficulties facing immigrants to a different type of society.</td>
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<td><strong>24.</strong> Offering validation to participants for the constructive and good things they do, and inviting other participants to offer validation.</td>
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<td><strong>25.</strong> Conveying that it is OK to be wrong and not knowing everything.</td>
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**Being personal in the leader role**

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<td><strong>26.</strong> To some extent share personal information, in order to model what can be talked about.</td>
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<td><strong>27.</strong> Sharing aspects of own life story and own experiences.</td>
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<td><strong>28.</strong> Stating own opinions regarding different issues.</td>
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<td><strong>29.</strong> Sharing own experiences of coming to Sweden as a foreigner.</td>
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**Asking questions**

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<td><strong>30.</strong> Asking open-ended questions about how different issues are handled in the home countries of participants, such as childcare, parenting, freedom and control.</td>
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<td><strong>31.</strong> Asking questions, e.g. about the home country, directed to participants who are reserved, in order to activate and include them.</td>
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<td><strong>32.</strong> Asking non-judgmental questions that invite to reflection on the background to problematic attitudes (e.g. racism, disparaging judgments of others or moralizing about others).</td>
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33. Asking questions in order to explore the background of strong emotional outbursts, in order to deescalate the situation and/or to support the participant's own insights into the reasons for his or her own emotional reactions. ** *** *** *** *** *

34. Asking reformulating questions in order to support insight into own feelings and needs (e.g. "When you say bloody idiot, do you mean that you are disappointed?"). ** *** * *** *** *

35. Asking questions that support awareness and clarification of participants' own feelings and needs. ** *** *** *** *** *

36. Asking questions that invite participants to reflect on psychological causality, e.g. emotional consequences of certain behaviors (e.g. "How do you think your children feel when ...?"). * *** *** ? *** ***

37. Asking challenging questions about a participant's opinions and behavior (when there is a relationship that allows for challenging). * * *** *** *** ***

38. Asking open-ended questions about possible future scenarios, such as "what would you do if your daughter don't want to marry the man you parents find suitable?". * *** *** *** *** ***

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<tr>
<th>Managing strong reactions, disparaging attitudes and conflict.</th>
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<tr>
<td>39. Being unafraid, open and non-judgmental when participants' have strong emotional outbursts, such as aggressiveness or despair. *** *** *** *** ** ***</td>
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40. Support participants in letting other participants feel and express emotions without trying to distract them. *** *** *** *** *** ***

41. When someone expresses categorical and disparaging views invite other participants to talk about their experiences and life stories. * *** *** *** *** ***

42. Return to and clarify conflict incidents: what happened? *** *** *** *** *** ***
43. Using mediation situations for supporting awareness of underlying feelings and needs.  

44. Consistently protect and convey values.  

45. Making time for talking through or return to charged issues until the participants have arrived at a natural conclusion.  

46. Inquiring into underlying reasons when some has a negative attitude.  

47. Calling into question and challenging a participant with problematic views, attitudes or behaviors.  

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<tr>
<th><strong>Informing</strong></th>
<th>48. Conveying research based knowledge about relevant topics, such as the effects of different types of parenting, facts about the hymen, or homosexuality.</th>
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<tr>
<td>49. Inform about Swedish laws and about how authorities and other Swedish institutions function.</td>
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<td>50. Inform about and explain citizen obligations and rights, such as paying taxes, notify the social insurance agency, housing allowances.</td>
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<td>51. Inform about widespread views, values and norms in the Swedish society and explain their background.</td>
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<td>52. Explaining aspects of Swedish political conditions (e.g. about the Sweden democrat party's views on immigration and their influence on policies).</td>
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<td>53. Using own experiences and own competence to explain possible consequences of different actions (e.g. regarding parenting or interactions with authorities).</td>
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<td>54. Inviting external speakers, arranging study visits in order to elucidate relevant topics.</td>
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55. Repeating issues that have been treated at earlier meetings and control for understanding.

56. Informing about how to apply for grants for certain initiatives and about how one might influence political decision-making.

57. Pointing out emotional or other consequences triggered for other participants when someone expresses condemning or disparaging views.

58. Teaching about models that describe different types of societies: traditional, modern.

59. Teaching about levels of validation: how to give validation to others.

60. Teach about how feelings of shame arise and what consequences they have (e.g. avoidance of exposure to situations that might trigger shame).

61. Offering individual feedback and advice about personal patterns observed, perceived needs for training and suggestions of strategies and effective behaviors.

62. Individual sharing and explanation of the leader’s own strategies in different types of situations, in order to clarify leadership in concrete situations.

63. In due time and scope assigning real responsibilities to participants for various tasks.

64. Training validation and invalidation.

65. Being in touch with own state of mind. Noticing own reactions in the present moment in order to be able to take responsibility for managing one's reactions, e.g. by sharing with others what is going on for oneself.
66. Being aware of and sensitive in relation to power differentials between leader and participants: the leaders are established in the Swedish society, the participants are not.  

67. Train own ability to remain empathetic.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Other themes</th>
<th>68. Being transparent: taking care to inform concerned individuals about contacts taken with authorities or other actors.</th>
<th>69. Using specifically designed and selected images as support for conversations about charged issues.</th>
<th>70. Using established relationships in order to get in touch with new participants.</th>
<th>71. Introducing realistic role models, e.g. by inviting former participants to the program.</th>
<th>72. Referring to religious norms: e.g. using quotes from the Koran or Bible in order to reinforce desirable norms and behaviors (e.g. &quot;Only God can pass judgment.&quot; )</th>
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<tr>
<td>66. Being aware of and sensitive in relation to power differentials between leader and participants: the leaders are established in the Swedish society, the participants are not.</td>
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The Prometheus Leadership Commons: 
A Meta-Framework for Leadership and Leadership Development

Tom Bohinc, Jonathan Reams, Richard Claydon

Abstract: Leadership development suffers a plethora of problems: complexity, competitiveness, pressured stakeholders and unmet needs only start to express the challenges. These issues are suitably summarized by this meta-problem for the subject of leadership: How to navigate the territory? How can a student of leadership, a middle manager, an L&D specialist or a CLO plot a pathway through such a confusing landscape? The Prometheus Project initiated a cross-disciplinary research team to conceptualize a framework that addresses this meta-problem. This paper introduces and discusses the resulting framework, describes our method, and asserts recommendations for expanding the circle of consent for a clear framework for developing the capacities and skills of leadership.

Keywords: Adaptive change, coaching, development, executive, framework, leadership, leadership industry, organization development, performance, personal development, training.

Introduction

Barbra Kellerman summarizes the state of leadership research and practice in direct language; “there is a lot of stuff out there that is less than wonderful” (in Volkmann, 2012, n.p.).

She is not alone in her opinion. Pfeffer (2015) talks about “Leadership BS.” Gurdjian, Halbeisen, & Lane, (2014) outlined four key points driving failure in leadership development programs. Beer, Finnström and Schrader (2016) went as far as calling it the “great training

1 Tom Bohinc, MBA, is a business executive and consultant turned leadership coach and independent researcher. Tom’s experiences leading business transformation in global organizations and close work with product and operational teams crystalized his focus on human factors, leadership and leadership development practices to which he has been focused over the last 15 years. Tom’s observations from the Conscious Capitalism Conference in Barcelona, 2018 sparked The Prometheus Project.

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robbery” (p. 3) with global training and education spending reaching $356 billion in 2015 with very little return on investment.

It is our view that the persistence of these issues, despite intense intellectual, emotional and financial investment, suggest that we need a structural shift in leadership development, treating it as an adaptive problem rather than a technical one (Heifetz, 1994, Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009; Fritz, 1989). Continuing to invest time and effort to address the issue with more of the same type of resources will not adequately address these issues and may in fact exacerbate the problem. Rather, a structural shift and alternative approach is necessary to see systematically different results.

It was to the purpose of these structural adaptive changes that the concept of The Prometheus Project was conceived on a sunny July day in Barcelona, 2018.

One of the structural issues underpinning the general failures in the leadership development industry is perceived to come understanding of the phenomenon itself. A CEC² report (2017) noted a profound confusion about leadership and leadership development. Veldsman and Johnson (2016) wrote: “To the best of our knowledge, no overall, systemic, integrated and holistic view of leadership exists, and few organizations adopt a systemic, integrated approach to leadership” (p. 2). Likewise, Reiche, Bird, Mendenhall, and Osland (2017) summarize that the research literature in this field has lacked a coherent and agreed upon classification scheme that helps scholars to clearly describe their research samples, compare and contrast their research contexts and findings with other studies and contribute towards a cumulative and growing body of knowledge about the predictors, correlates and outcomes of global leadership. (p. 564)

Moldoveanu and Narayandas (2019) identify the underpinnings as related to conflicting motivations, a gap between leadership skills, the actual needs of organizations and incomplete learning cycles, in that the skills taught are not transferred or applied.

In our zeal to explore and clarify the essence and features of leadership, we define more and more distinctions and conditional situations for leadership. These are reasonable paths for constructivist learning and both theoretical and applied research, but are not sufficiently realistic for creating a useful body of knowledge for leaders. We cannot express enough our support and appreciation for these explorations. We only counter them with the need for pragmatic effect and the collective responsibility of our profession to be the ones accountable for creating useful constructs, as well as valid ones.

Therefore, it was logical that the first initiative of The Prometheus Project would be to address a framework that could open collective consent across a diverse range of stakeholders around what capacities and skills make up the subject of leading. It sought to create a framework that was simple, valid and generalizable, and useful for any stakeholders, contributors or

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² CEC is an association representing about one million European managers. https://www.cec-managers.org/
sponsors of leadership development. From that point-of-consent, the collective influence and ambitions of structural change could advance.

For this, we formed a diverse team of researchers and practitioners to undertake responding to this question:

*What would a usable proof of concept for such a framework look like?*

This article has two goals:

- To introduce this framework as a simple and digestible tool for a complex group of subjects, like leading, development and the human individual and social identity, and

- To provide the more systemic background of the professional roots of this framework.

Therefore, the article outlines the theoretical and conceptual context that bounded our framework design, describes our method, introduces and discusses the resulting framework, and offers observations and recommendations for expanding the circle of consent for a clear framework for developing the capacities and skills of leadership.

**Theoretical/Conceptual Context**

Our research draws from several areas that shape the resulting framework. This section covers the theories and concepts we considered most relevant.

The objective of the Prometheus Leadership Commons™ framework is to define elements of leadership that are generalizable and accurate. In other words, they could be usefully applied by every stakeholder in any context, including; an organization defining its own development strategies, any individual self-determining their own leadership path, by researchers shifting the blocks and constructs of knowledge and by any of the helping professions who have individual and organizational leadership transformation goals.

We³ aimed for something that would enable leaders, organizations, consultants or coaches to orient themselves and then to navigate all corners of the capacities and skills of leadership. But also, to open comparisons, contrasts and socialization to enrich the learning process, expand the scope of what is learned and align and influence collaborators as a force for a wide set of use-cases. In simple terms: the framework had to include diverse perspectives, or lenses, so that the result held-up as useful for all of those perspectives.

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³ The ‘we’ here is the research team for this project, (including the article’s three authors), which was intentionally assembled to meet these criteria; global footprint, depth in multiple disciplines, diversity of experience/roles that simulate a design-thinking team. The structure of the team included a primary work group and secondary reference and supplemental group. The primary workgroup included experience in qualitative research, including dissertation chair and dissertation committee experience.
Therefore, we had to consider which concepts we would want to test-for-fit and include those in our research. While our considerations went far beyond what is presented here, we chose these four broad themes as necessary contexts for satisfying the goals for the framework.

**Personal Capabilities of the Leader**

We are still surprised to find how persistently the idea of leadership as solely an executive function holds in day-to-day discourse and thinking, and ultimately shapes the services and business models of the industry. We want to make it explicit that we have framed our exploration with the lens of leadership as an attribute of the person/leader, not as a role or a position in the hierarchy and that the demands of leading may be applicable to any person given a fit to their context. Some leadership demands may be simple, to fit simple contexts. More complex contexts require more complex capacities and skills.

When you read sources on the topic of leadership development, it is easy to notice that there is an assumption that development strategies include strategies for developing the internal capacities of leaders as well as their skills.

Day, Harrison and Halpin’s (2009) approach integrates adult cognitive development theory with the areas of leadership identity and expertise that “appl[ies] to leader development across a wide spectrum of organizations” (p. 4). They note that leadership development implies growth, or change, over time and “includes topics such as personal trajectories, growth modeling, lag times, end states, and a whole host of other related topics. ... [that have] to be as much about development as leadership” (p. 5). Finally, they highlight the need for supporting structures that enable; competency acquisition, leader identity formation, and the process of identity formation that is supported by adult development.

This is further illustrated in Day and Dragoni’s (2015) review of leadership development research. They identify four key indicators necessary for leadership development; leadership self-efficacy, self-awareness, leader identity and leadership knowledge, skills and competencies.

Finally, leaders need to have a high degree of personal wellbeing, focusing strengths of their personal capabilities on their leadership context. For this, we draw on positive psychologists’ focus on wellness, including Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (2006), Seligman (2002), and Ryan and Deci’s (2017) fundamental motivations.

This framing provided us with key ideas related to attributes for including in our framework.

**Leadership as a Contextualized Process**

Leadership can happen in any context. Therefore, the framework design would need to show capacities and skills suitable for the agency of leading in any context. Further, a leader would have to assess that context and design their leadership agency accordingly.

The combination of both work and relationship as a context is seen in a number of places. Reiche, et al. (2017), Adams and Anderson (2016, 2019) as well as Warren (2017) all identify
capacities for leading work as well as leading relationships. Kotter (1999) defines the practices of leading change to include work and achievement as well as influence and motivation. Kockelman (2007) identifies the elements of agency from a cultural anthropological perspective as both relationship and a process. This is not an exhaustive list.

Other perspectives frame leadership as a process or function, (e.g. Drath, McCauley, Van Velsor, O’Connor, & McGuire, 2008). To illustrate such processes, we utilized Drath et al. (2008), who argue for moving away from an ontological orientation of a leader, followers and a common goal (Bennis, 2007) and towards a process orientation. This means that any activity that contributes to direction, alignment and commitment can be viewed as an act of leadership. Similar sets of distinctions for leadership can be found in Heifetz’s (1994) model of adaptive leadership and Grint’s (2005, 2010) approach to matching leadership to context.

We also see leaders in a collective creative learning context, as illustrated in contemporary product design practices including design-thinking (Kelly & Kelly, 2013) and dynamic product learning activities such as lean startup (Ries, 2011), leadership in organization crisis (Goldberg & James, 2017) and also in deep traditions of lean and agile transformations where goal, action, reflection, change and iteration learning cycles are a central leadership process (Deming, 2018). Situated with these creative processes are collective leadership constructs that emphasize networks and connectivity across collaborator leaders (Western, 2019).

Finally, a leader can prepare their capabilities but must apply the type of leadership that is required in-the-moment. Their choices of leading must be made based on an assessment of their context.

An illustration of contextualization can be found in Snowden’s (2007) model of decision-making. His Cynefin model describes a heuristic for helping identify the type of context one is in. On one hand, there are more predictable contexts, either clear or complicated, but on the other hand, there are less predictable contexts, either complex or chaotic. As well, we often begin in a place of confusion, which triggers a process of identifying what type of context we are in. So, a leader’s capacities and skills must be suited to predictable challenges, but also dynamic uncertain extremes.

The framework design considers that leaders (and the participants in the development of leaders) require the capabilities to assess the context that they are leading in and respond by employing a variety of collaborative modes and resources as aids to navigate their decision-making, capability development and deployment and interventions.

**Learning as a Leadership Capacity**

One of the aims of the framework is to enable learning experiences that develop leadership both individually and collectively. The framework’s organization, levels and distinctions are constructs to support finding salient and relevant learning objectives for individuals, sponsors, program designers, and experience designers.
The framework is not only a learning and development tool, but also includes learning as an element of leadership capacities and skills. The processes of learning and the processes of leading are seen to be inseparable.

Learning theory and learning models weighed heavily in our design. The resulting framework had to address several learning-related challenges. These include; the personal capacity to learn as a capability of leaders, the process of leading includes learning as an intentional outcome and leadership development is a complex process inclusive of short-term acquisition, short-medium term integration, and long-term development and integration.

Meeting this list of criteria became an important element of the Prometheus Framework.

We approached learning based on Fischer’s (1980; Fischer and Bidell, 2006; Mascolo and Fischer, 2010) dynamic skill theory and Dawson’s (2020; Dawson and Stein, 2011a, b) virtuous cycles of learning (VCoL) model. Learning is understood as incrementally making connections with existing knowledge and skills by setting appropriately challenging goals, gathering relevant information, applying it to real world challenges and reflecting on outcomes to build new skills.

Motivation for learning can be seen in terms of the dopamine opioid cycle, where goal setting stimulates dopamine production which stimulates incentive salience (Berridge, 2007), motivating one to meet a challenge. Achievement of the goal releases opioids, our reward for the effort that makes it easy to reset the goal and to go around the cycle again (think of an infant learning to walk). Applied to learning and leadership in adulthood, the cycle enables us to reconnect to our natural learning experience and becomes the engine of leadership development.

Development Strategies

The framework has to be useful in the process of setting leadership development strategies with both short-term and long-term trajectories.

Building a leader’s capabilities is a continuing journey, which can start at a young age. Navigation through development is unceasing, as outlined in Vaill’s (1996) discussion about learning to navigate modern leadership challenges. Leadership development includes psychological development, which is masterfully synthesized by Basseches and Mascolo (2009).

Roux (2020) identified life-long learning as a key theme for leadership. She concludes that leadership adequate for the 21st century is;

- integrative, complex and multi-layered. There is a need for lifelong horizontal and vertical development journeys using adult development theory, virtuous cycles and neuroplasticity as core theories of continuous growth. Leadership needs to be scaled to enable work in new contexts of digital, virtual and flexible environments that are in constant flux with wicked problems that can only be solved collectively. (p. 30)

- Stage-based interpretations of leadership (e.g. Kegan and Lahey, 2016; Torbert & Associates, 2004; Joiner and Josephys, 2007; Kuhnert and Lewis, 2006) spotlight a significant practical
problem. These models all note that very few people, perhaps no more than 2-5% of the population, ever achieve the highest levels of adult development, which correlate with leadership having the capacity to best address the most complex challenges. Collins (2007) writes that only 12 of the 14,000 leaders he observed reached his criteria for a Level Five leader.

This premise spotlights a number of issues related to leadership development strategies.

- First, development processes to these higher levels take a long time, are too costly and too risky for many companies experiencing the war for talent and retention.

- Secondly, organizations must be able to map the leadership competencies of job-hoppers, new members and joint-venture members, so they can rapidly deploy and use them.

- Thirdly, with a limited supply of high-functioning members, rigid traditional deployment practices, there is likely to be ever more frequent capability mismatch conditions between individual leaders and their contexts.

- Therefore, you almost certainly need to engage in real-world challenges with the leaders that you have, not the leaders that you want.

In summary, the framework should allow for flexibility in development and maintain utility for these real-world complex challenges where development may be likely across the lifetime of the leader, but at the same time they are called to lead in the moment, ready-or-not.

**Methodology**

Mortimer Adler was faced with a similar dilemma to ours in the field of western philosophy, which spurred a lifetime of scholarship. When faced with the problem of existing terms being irreconcilable, Adler (1967) took on a necessary re-synthesis of topics in a process he called “syntopical analysis” and “coming to terms.” Literally, the process of choosing the best unifying terms across complex seemingly disconnected diversity.

**Constructivist Grounded Theory**

Our research was designed as constructivist grounded theory (CGT) (Bryant, 2017 & 2009; Charmaz, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Mills, et.al., 2006; Thornburg & Charmaz, 2010). Bryant (2017) asserted that insightful research adopts one or more methods that are complementary to their specific project context. Our CGT adopts contemporary deliberative practices of Collective Intelligence (Engle, et al., 2014), lateral thinking (De Bono & Zimbalist, 1970) and creative problem solving (Treffinger, 2005).4

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4 Much of our method included leadership and development theory and to that extent our methodology also followed the steps of meta-theory as a method (Edwards 2010) and certainly shares the intentions of that school of theoretical research.
Bryant also asserts that while CGT can vary in its details, it should be consistent to its core elements. In an interview late in his life, Strauss, one of the founders of the grounded theory methods, identified three elements necessary to meet grounded theory requirements (Legewie & Schervier-Legewie, 2004). Our research addressed each of these:

- Theoretical sensitive coding. This means that there is a strong instinct and capacity to ‘listen’ to the essential stories underlying the ground, and to construct useful parts to be used in sense-making and organization of the ground (data).

- Theoretical sampling. This means choices of data are well considered to advance the learning and creative formation spiral.

- Comparison. Choices for what to compare are fearless so as to stretch the theories, test them, sharpen thinking, and cull bias.

The mechanics of CGT have been described as a spiral (Mills et al., 2006) of learning and discovery that materialize with many variants. Our spiral is expressed as:

- Green-field. Theorizing (as much as feasible) without bias or pre-condition of existing structures.

- Sample. Data which can be any kind of source that informs the theoretical process.

- Conceptualize. Building the linguistic labels, from which an overall theory will be constructed, technically referred to as ‘coding.’

- Frame. Positing exploratory and partial concepts and segments of theory, technically referred to as ‘memoing.’

- Form. Expanding or synthesizing a more integrated theory or model.

- Test and Compare. Constant comparing and lateral thinking to cull out bias, pre-conception and refine thinking and articulation of the theory.

While inductive and deductive reasoning are prevalent as part of the creative process (Treffinger, 2006), CGT especially emphasizes the essential process of *abductive reasoning* in which the theorist creates the simplest and most likely explanation for making sense of the grounded observations. This result is “plausible and useful” (Bryant, 2009, np) but is qualified as uncertain or provisional pending experience and confirmation in use.

How do you know how flexible your process mechanics should be? CGT practitioners consistently remind us that the *principles* of the process are primary to the *mechanics*. Balancing orthodoxy with the pragmatic, if your sources are reams of paper, emails or physical evidence, then meticulous tagging and organization are a pragmatic requirement to make sense of the data. In our methods, we adjusted to the age of virtual communication and collaboration and leverage the practices and technical tools to conceptualize and frame our primary, secondary and tacit
knowledge into discrete parts. We were intentional, conscious and methodical, but also agile and pragmatic.

How do you know when you are done with spiraling? Following Eisenhardt (1989), our perspective is that you are sufficiently done when you have consistent experience as you test and compare. In other words, “we have seen this before” or “this fits well.” Interdisciplinary comparisons led us to conclude sufficient consistency to warrant a release of the framework, opening further experience and confirmation in practice and research.

Data Choice and Theoretical Sampling

Our data and theoretical sampling included three classes of sources. First, the intentionally diverse experience of the research team, second, a selected extended reference group to provide feedback for bias and critical thinking, and lastly, published and unpublished scholarly work, selected based on preliminary rounds of analysis (see below).

The analytical team members hold two PhDs and three Masters, have decades of practice in leadership development, education, business transformation, coaching, training. Members have engaged in thousands of leadership development interactions from the role of coach, organization sponsor, executive, development professional, researcher, and educator. They have depth of knowledge across disciplines and roles in the leadership development context and have methodology experience with dissertation chair and committee experience. Members were located from Asia, Europe and North America. All were English speakers.

The extended reference group included some who were not available sufficiently to the process, so became ancillary resources. In other cases, these resources represented specializations that we targeted for exploration.

Cross-disciplinary theoretical comparisons included; learning objectives and processes in learning theory, from Bloom (1956) through Gagné (1985) to Dawson and Stein (2011a, b), psycho-therapeutic development objectives synthesized across the major psycho-therapeutic disciplines by Basseches & Mascolo (2009), leadership development practice from the US Army, (e.g. (Day et al., 2009)) whose programs range from the ranks to top echelons (Gavin & Watson, 2019), executive leadership education from Moldoveanu & Narayandas (2019) and finally, leadership assessment models of Anderson & Adams (2016, 2019) and Warren (2017) which infer leadership attributes and developmental factors from observed traits.

Pedagogical Considerations

Pedagogical learning objectives and pedagogical sequence were weighed to support the clustering phases and the cohesiveness of the framework groupings. The framework is intended to facilitate setting and sequencing learning goals and objectives from general to detail/micro-learning and from fundamental to advanced development objectives. Here, we also weighed usability as part of strategy and design of leadership development programs.
Theory Finalization

Comparisons and refinement are a key part of meta-framework finalization. To this end, each team member applied the framework in small field-tests or reviewed the framework with peer advisors and experts to gauge any indications of change or refinements. In addition to the peer/expert feedback, the frameworks’ systems and subsystems were cross-referenced to a sample of independently defined inventories of leadership development and curriculum subjects from public and private executive development programs. Notably, we leveraged the extensive anthologies of leadership knowledge from Bass (2008) and Nohria & Khurana (2010) to confirm the grounded field of our consideration and inform design choices.

In finalizing the framework, the structure evolved from an initial three to five and then six meta-categories identified as leadership systems and spanning the whole of the leadership phenomenon (figure 1 below). The same process was used to further divide these system categories into a second level of detail sub-systems (figure 2 below). We held a constraint of no more than five of these subsystems in each of the six level meta-categories. This constraint was not easily fulfilled, but ultimately led to satisfying abstractions that can have resonance across the stakeholder spectrum, from academic, to clinical to popular consumption.

This research did consider many samples to form a hypothesis of the nature and composition of a third level of detail in the framework. However, we did not attempt an inventory and organization of the large number of leadership topics that fit into level 3 and defer this to further research. However, we did define this level in the framework.

It is our view that the framework meets its goal of providing simple, valid and generalizable (useful) meaning-making that can open communication and hold focus on these complex topics which are otherwise often deflected or bogged-down. Our goal is a semi-stable standard reference that is usable by all stakeholders and that allows orderly evolution. We invite engagement and refinement as we expand the circle of contributors and the complexities of the level 2 and 3 domains, what Kockelman (2007) refers to as flexibility and accountability.

Results

We express the research results as the Prometheus Leadership Commons™ framework (PLC):

- “Prometheus” because it represents “forethought,” the Greek archetypal meaning.
- “Leadership” because this is the concept that we wish to unchain and maintain.
- “Commons” because, even as it is facilitated and governed by a central organizing group, it is framed to become the shared open-source framework for all stakeholders’ uses.

The PLC framework is structured in ‘levels’ with the first level showing 6 meta-categories, grouped between inner capacities and adaptive behaviors. Categories A, B, and C are personal
capacities of leadership. Categories X and Y are skills adaptive to engaging in contexts of leading relationship or task. Category Z are the skills adaptive to the action of leading.

Level 1 is useful in application and should not be seen as only a way to organize lower-level details. Its simplicity belays its approachability and easy navigation power which opens conversation, comparison, deconstruction and exploration (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Prometheus framework level 1.

That simple and easy navigation is even more valuable because it supports confident exploration into additional details found in level 2 and level 3. This layering allows explorations with more granularities for each area while keeping confidence in the relationship to a whole system of a leader’s capacities and skills.

Level 2

Level 2 shows twenty-nine sub-categories (or subjects) nested within the level 1 meta-categories (see figure 2). For each of the level 1 systems, there are 4 or 5 subsystems (or subjects). Examples of the subsystems include one-to-one engagement skillsets vs. the skills to engage in groups.

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5 The most unique category (relative to comparative frameworks) is the Capacity to LOVE (to be gracious or serving) and is the ‘object’ of our self-consciousness in contrast to the Capacity to BE as ‘subject.’

6 We observe that many resources on leadership express differences in practice or types of leaders, but not as frequently express the act of leading. In the PLC LEAD RESULTS domain frames this. The primary sources for the LEAD RESULTS domain is a synthesis of the essential practice of leading from well-researched models including Adaptive Leadership (Heifetz, 1994), Change Leadership (Kotter, 1999), social anthropology concepts of agency (Kockelman, 2007), and learning cycles of Dawson and Stein (2011a, b).

7 There are some PLC sub-systems that may stand out against convention and are invitations to mainstream as well as fringe ideas if they are substantiated and rationally articulated. These include a category for collective transpersonal identity which may include spiritual traditions, physical capacity that
Figure 2. Prometheus framework levels 1 and 2.

The X Y Zs

There is a daily deluge of posts, promoted content and publications on leadership and leadership development on our sites and in our inbox. We easily find discussions across the rainbow of leader models (authentic leaders, transformational leaders, adaptive leaders, vertical leaders, situational leaders, etc.). It is also easy to hear exhortations to discover our purpose, center our being, to explore either our strengths or our innermost fears.

It is rare to find a simple description of what we are doing when we lead. Yet, this is the basic focus that any of us must hold as we engage in the agency of leading – or as we orient ourselves for learning and development.

We include that description of what leading is in the PPLC as level 1 domain of (Z) LEAD RESULTS (figure 3 below). Even though the authors normally eschew clever acronyms, we did articulate FICRA as the mnemonic for this domain (and it is hardly clever!).

But, we like it because a mnemonic is good for quick recall.

We hope that supplying this mnemonic will help anyone maintain clarity in the heat-of-the-moment, when all of the leader’s faculties may be challenged by the heat or complexity of the work and people at-hand.

includes connection to the idea of personal energy fields, instinct and intuition as a component of intelligence, inclusion of business or technical domain knowledge as a leadership attribute, the reality of people, culture and power as a context, and the identification of love as a leadership capacity.
Two further domains in the X Y Zs grouping are (X) Engage PEOPLE and (Y) Engage CHALLENGES (see figure 4.). They represent skills for relationships and for work, respectively. Considering development sequencing, some of these are markedly cumulative. For example, engaging one to one (commonly referred to as ‘people skills’) includes skills as diverse as listening, feedback, feedforward, coaching and the less intellectual practices of touch, presence or even eye-reading. Yet, these skills are also foundations to more complex engagement, in a group or team and potentially across more globally diverse and complex relationships.

The Engage PEOPLE domain includes two higher-order subjects.

*Humans* includes the skills to assess and adapt to the human context for leading, including your individual constituents, and the constraints (or enablers) of power, politics and culture. The framework sees them as realistic contexts that leaders-on-the-ground struggle with every day. In our thousands of leadership development interactions, we find that members of the profession prefer the soft subjects such as inner discovery and affirmative relationships, while our clients – from the front line to the boardroom – are living in the rougher reality of teams, organizations and communities. The framework asserts both of these perspectives as necessary for effective action.

*Collective* includes the skills to learn, decide, act, reflect and lead *collectively* in order to be effective in the moment and in real-world contexts. These collective skills may be the most important emphasis in the framework and least in-focus across leadership programs.

Taken as a whole, these five Level 2 domains create a very rich and robust span of skills related to the engagement of PEOPLE in the dynamics of leading.

The Engage CHALLENGES domain, (figure 5) identifies skills for four archetypal patterns readily found in teams, organizations, industries, networks, or communities regardless if they are for commercial, altruistic, civic, political or social purposes.
In addition to these basic four patterns, there is a fifth subject in the CHALLENGES domain that focuses on skills for leading work in contexts that are more complex than the norm; such as combinations or parallels of the four basic patterns, which are often mixed in real-world complex settings. For example, crisis, operations and innovations may be simultaneous challenges.

Of all of the domains of the PLC, this set most reflects executive business thinking and skills which we place in the realm of positional leadership across a wide range of contexts.

The A B Cs

The level 1 A B C capacities of BE, KNOW and LOVE, (figure 6) are about personal development, versus skills and behaviors, or versus simply holding knowledge about those capacities.

The A B C domains support what Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia (1962) would identify as affective learning objectives as contrast to cognitive or operational. The strategies for developing these leadership capacities do include supporting objectives of learning about these concepts, and putting them into practice, but in support of the primary objectives of internalizing these capacities.

The framework also considers the combination of these three domains as how the leader constructs their identity-as-a-leader, beyond their self-identity as a being. So, the self, (BE) is also component of the leader’s identity, which includes the components of their relationship to knowledge (KNOW) and the outside (LOVE).

Capacity to LOVE is the leader’s relationship to “the outside.” This part of the framework includes the concepts of dedication to purpose and learning, selflessness in relation to the other, but also their openness and being affected by the other. This progression is consistent with adult maturity stages that are conventional and post-conventional, where the leader’s consciousness extends from themselves to things and others-beyond-themselves.

Capacity to BE is very much the range and balance of self-experience of the leader, as is richly expressed in psychological lenses. In addition, it provides two areas that are not often emphasized in leadership development. The first is Physical dimensions of leader self-experience. The second is the Collective dimensions of self-experience, or trans-personal consciousness.
Finally, the Capacity to KNOW is the leader’s capacity to have a relationship with knowledge, with truth and bias, polarity and paradox, and with the continuing experience of learning. There two subjects that stand out from the conventional leadership content: the challenges of complex knowledge and the place of domain knowledge as an attribute of a leader.8

Ultimately, the framework wants to lead the learner to a place of harmony and integration across all three of these domains, as what we experience in ourselves and bring from ourselves to the process of leading.

Sequencing and Complexity

The level 2 sub-systems are defined with sequence and hierarchical complexity in mind, where earlier subjects can be prioritized differently from more advanced or complex development subjects. For example, in the skill domain of Engage PEOPLE, there are two early subsystems (one: one and group) that easily illustrate a sequence relationship, where mastery of the former is a substantial prerequisite for the later.

Level 3

The PLC framework acknowledges the vast number of topics in the knowledge-sphere of leadership and provisionally created the construct of level 3 for them. We classify the elements for level 3 as topics or composites; topics being made up of single subjects that are seen as first-order constructs used for higher-level abstractions as well as for assembly into composite elements and composites made up of compound and complex attributes that may even span the level 1 categories and level 2 subjects.9

These topics and composites were part of the research ground used to conceptualize the meta-structures of the PLC framework. The sheer numbers, and the absence of an aligning or comparative framework, make these difficult to adopt and integrate – so the PLC framework is a way to organize as well as open a more integrated view.

The framework, in its current version 1.1 does not attempt to fully inventory all possible level three topics or composites. However, some of the level 2 subject descriptions do provide a good set of examples of what they might be. The subject of Exploring, within the Capacity to Know includes the specific topics of; instinct, intuition, semiotics and somatics, which make a very suitable inventory of what would be level 3 topics in this sub-domain.

8 We had some discussions about if bundling the Capacity to Know with Be and Love was the right framing and noted that many in the industry see intellectual and cognitive capacities as skills or see them as distinct from personality, emotion and relationships. It became clear to us that this combination in the internalized domains was one of the biggest values in including cognition, truth and knowledge as intimately human and internalized experiences.

9 An example of a composite element may be the popular concept of “grit,” which may be composed of topical elements such as emotional maturity, persistence, goals setting and holding dedication to principles.
It may be valuable to organize or catalogue these further, articulating explicit relationships and sorting the more valuable from the questionable. Some of this may be explored in further research and in The Prometheus Projects’ structured communities and initiatives.

We do not see this kind of complex analysis as a pre-requisite to the framework’s value, and it may be unrealistic and unnecessary. There is evident value in being able to traverse between a given topic or construct and contextualize them. This traversing and contextualizing is a valuable learning and communication practice.

**Walkabouts**

This framework with two simple divisions, six major domains and twenty-nine sub-domains (or subjects) is both simple and complicated. As you test and digest it, you likely will need to adjust your incumbent thinking and make new comparisons and contrasts. Some areas of the framework will be familiar, others highlight new connections and still others unrecognized gaps. This kind of opening awareness, contextualization and re-combination is exactly the navigation that the framework is looking to serve.

We also assume that the PLC framework is new content for anyone reading this article, so some illustrations (in lieu of conversation) would help move it from strange to familiar. We offer just a few of these (reference figures 3-6).

You can read figure 1 from upper left to lower right, as if it were a shipping manifest. However, we recommend reading top-to-bottom from top layers to lower detail, and from the lower right (starting with Z).

Top-to-bottom simply means that you consider the inner capacities and adaptive skills as useful navigational constructs to explore and to explain. Try thinking or conversing just with those. You might ask: “What part of this leadership subject is about inner capacities and what part is about adaptive skills?” We have found that this question and the simple discussion it invites are helpful.

Then, try the ABCs and the XYZs. As a group, how many examples can we find for each of these domains?

Starting from lower right, LEAD RESULT, offers the perspective of observation of the leader in action, and the development needs that might illuminate. Try asking questions such as:

- What inner capacities (or adaptive skills) do you draw from when you (insert one of the FICRA subjects)?
- How do your adaptive skills and inner capacities serve or derail the action of leading?
- Where are your strengths and which areas may be under-explored?
- What areas might you co-lead as a ‘spiky’ strategy?

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10 See elaboration of this concept below.
From here, you can naturally walk back through the framework for exploration as development goals or co-leadership strategies. This walk back might be facilitated by developmental assessment techniques, coaches or mentors.

Another illustration of applying the PLC framework is our conversations around the immunity to change (ITC) process for leadership development with Minds at Work.\textsuperscript{11}

The ITC process includes a first step to set personal commitments or improvement goals. The insights for setting these goals often come from self-reflection, strengths and weaknesses feedback, psychometric and 360 assessment results. However, these also always need the subject to make some kind of self-assessment and to make a choice; and this can be difficult without a context of what a leader and leadership means.

For example, an assessment of ‘low on big-5 openness’ is a useful fact, but abstract in terms of what behaviors one may want to change. The PLC framework points to skilled adaptive behaviors in leading. For example, how do I ‘attend’ to the participants in the action of leading? What ‘attending’ behaviors do I see (or not see) that I want to change? Then, further along the ITC process, the explorations of the framework’s inner capacities can also aide the exploration of immunities and hidden assumptions about that specific area, such as exploring intuition or devotion to others or principles.

A third illustration addresses the hypothesis that the framework might help to better sort the good from the not-so-good from the leadership echo-sphere.

I recently watched a presentation from a high-profile practitioner on ‘centering practices,’ that was part of a new leadership development product from an established consultancy. It introduced some popular thoughts about neuroscience (cortisol, testosterone, oxytocin), asserted that leaders should build a habit of ‘centering,’ and spoke about (more than demonstrated) techniques “so that cortisol can be reduced and (‘not too much’) testosterone and oxytocin can be released” and finally included a fair amount of asserting that ‘centering’ should be more prevalent.

Anyone watching might experience a range of satisfaction or tension from the presentation, but few would be able to understand what they did not already know or believe about why it was included in a session on leading, or to understand or repeat the techniques so they can be transferred to behaviors and internalized. Of course, I have re-watched this segment a half-dozen times, wearing my best humble learner hat. Still, I find it wanting as a communication or a development experience.

How might walking through the framework help navigate this?

The simple answer is that having a persistent shared mental framework gives you a context to understand and evaluate some bit of content that may come your way. I can better understand criteria for quality. I can better think critically (logically) about what I am presented. I can better engage and ask questions. I can more quickly determine: Is this worth my time? Is this going to

\textsuperscript{11} Unpublished conversations with Deb Helsing Ed, Co-director, Minds at Work. Minds at Work are the authors of the ITC process and providers of certifications and consulting services using the ITC model.
hold up politically and experientially in my organization if I spread this content? Can I bring this to a better place? If not, I can feel good about walking away.

Finally, with the framework as a context, I can ask: How does the concept of ‘centering’ or ‘mindfulness’ fit in to this PLC framework?

Here is a quick summary of how we might ‘connect the dots’ with the PLC (with the strongest connections first):

(Z) LEAD RESULTS includes the skill of framing. A leader may choose to apply the ‘centering’ skills to prepare themselves or the group to be attentive to the dynamics at hand.

Capacities to BE, KNOW and LOVE are about what you (the leader) bring to (the action of) leading. ‘Centering’ practices (mindfulness, clearing) are leader-capacity practices. There is a direct relationship, with PLC subjects like self-experience, physical capacities, exploring, and presence.

(X) Engaging PEOPLE and (Y) Engage CHALLENGES are leader-member exchange skills and process leadership skills categories. This is a fine point of communication about traversing the framework. Yes, you bring your inner capacities as a leader to the action. So, yes, you may bring personal mindfulness capacities to this action. Yes, skills of mindfulness may be part of your affective development. But, these parts of the PLC highlight skills-based engagement. They are compartmentalized in the framework but exist as a whole in actual experience and practice. They are distinct in the PLC so that you can (remember to) (better) make the distinctions and can design learning and development at incremental (micro) levels.

Do these walkabouts illustrate that the framework has value for navigating?

We think that they do and that it does. A framework does not eliminate the complexities, paradoxes or subtleties of these subjects, nor does it eliminate the flaws that many encounters may include, but does help you walk-through them, make distinctions and contrasts, expose your learning edges and bound the scope of your collaborations.

Finally, consider the value of the framework with a group of like-minded peers. You may find some rise in enthusiasm and a new sense of alignment as you explore perspectives with this new framework. But also consider a group of participants from diverse backgrounds, and little common ground. Without the framework, this group could be quickly lost.

Discussion

Language

The framework is intended to help navigate the complexity of leadership and leadership development. It helps to answer these kinds of questions:
What part of leading are we talking about?
What part of leading are we observing?
What part of leading does this program address or not address?
What do executive leaders and front-line leaders have in common and what distinguishes their leadership capacity?

The language used for the framework has to be pragmatic in a few ways; first, to be sufficient for consent by a wide spectrum of stakeholders; second, to allow for sensible use in everyday language in any context; third, to allow for flexibility and its evolution.

We have tirelessly worked to choose terms that can be used in conversation. In some cases, we found a great fit and in other cases learned that no single term is perfect. So, we think using these terms is important, but that there is room for alternatives, aliases and evolution. To borrow from Waterman and Peters (1982), the language of leading and development requires ‘simultaneous loose-tight properties.’ The right terms should fit the context, but without losing the rich meaning in the minds of the stakeholders.

An illustration of language differences that might be opportunities for opening communication is one practitioner we observed using the terms ‘emotion and cognition’ in a similar way that we speak about BE KNOW and LOVE. Our perspective is that, for a comprehensive framework that covers all the corners but also all the levels of maturity, we have correctly positioned the concept of emotion less prominently than this practitioner has. Emotional awareness and processing our emotional self-experiences are important capabilities, but they are only a part of what we see as the self-experience of the leader.

Terms Across Disciplines

We chose terms from the education profession that we realize may be confusing to some readers, as a central organizing criterion for the level 1 domains. We think this is worth addressing.

We recognize that many conflate the terms ‘affect’ and ‘affective.’ Affect is a term in psychology that aligns with the term ‘emotion,’ which is also part of the common dictionary use of the term. In the PLC framework, when we talk about the sub-domain of ‘self-experience,’ we are including what the psychologist would speak of as ‘affect.’

Affective is a term from learning theory (Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia, 1962) to describe a specific class of learning outcomes. Affective learning outcomes are not emotions, per se. They

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12 Affect is also a verb with two meanings. We use neither in the PLC. First is taking on a false persona or emotion, and we do not use the term in that sense. Second, as the pair to ‘effect.’ In the simple case ‘affect’ is the object in the sentence and ‘effect’ is the verb and would be the fair synonym of creating an outcome or result.
are internalized experiences of any content. A Jungian may talk about ‘individuation’ of experience or knowledge.13

So, the ABCs of the framework are grouped as such, because they all have affective learning objectives for leader development. Even commonly thought of cognitive subjects such as ‘domain knowledge’ define primary developmental outcomes for these areas of the PLC framework and as such are affective, in Bloom’s sense of the word. In the case of domain knowledge, it is awareness of the capacity and commitment to building it, vs the gathering of specific knowledge content.

**The Work of a Framework**

To examine why leaders are failing to engage with the more rigorous leadership models, or why practitioners and consultancies continuously re-invent and reduce leadership into consumable bits, it is useful to turn to an older idea that is still true.

In Weick’s (1979) observations of organization studies, he argued that there were three types of organizational texts.

1. Simple and generalizable, but not accurate (reductionist)
2. Simple and accurate, but not generalizable (narrow, un-contextualized)
3. Accurate and generalizable, but not simple

Any text that tried to be all three (simple, accurate and generalizable) tended to contain little useful advice and lots of regurgitated clichés. We suggest that leadership industry content in 2020 is in much the same state.

Leaders in 2020 are drowning in the complexity. In such situations, humans are biased towards reaching for simple stories that feel right and protect their sense of self, shutting out and closing down information coming from challenging or critical sources. Consequently, the aspiring leader of 2020 tends to be drawn towards simple stories that are inspiring, but either not accurate (e.g. Simon Sinek’s (2009) *Start with Why*)14 or not generalizable (e.g. leadership biographies). Cognitively and emotionally overwhelmed, they reject the more complex, accurate and generalizable texts and theories, and can regard those suggesting and producing them as threats or fools.

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13 In contrast, knowledge/skill are in described by Bloom as ‘cognitive’ outcomes; where high-functioning outcomes might be described as ‘evaluation’ or ‘synthesis.’ Similarly, this concept is confused with the notion of ‘cognition’ in psychology and learning theory.
14 Sinek’s focus on purpose is appealing yet can leave many feeling unfulfilled. As well, balancing inspiration with access for implementation and worthiness of purpose is more complex than Sinek makes it out to be. Further, Sinek’s approach has been critiqued as oversimplifying complex topics such as neurobiology and being overly selective in choosing evidence to support his claims, (such as the Wright brothers vs. Langley first to flight race, where Sinek focuses on the Wright brothers having a *why* while Langley is characterized as being after fame and riches. Yet evidence shows institutional constraints as well as a lack of sharing information from the Wright brothers were among the many factors involved).
This state of affairs is not helped by business schools tending to employ simple and accurate case studies that leave students with little access to the deeper more complex meta-frameworks that do provide accurate and generalizable models of leadership. Leadership development providers tend to be locked into simple and generalizable theories of leadership that, while perhaps contextually appropriate to the time they were written (e.g. transformational leadership in the 1970s and 1980s), fail to accurately address the challenges of the real world. Finally, the “business guru” publishing phenomenon, initiated by Tom Peters' solo career after *In Search of Excellence*, has resulted in a completely deregulated market of simplistic, silver bullet “solutions” that do more harm than good.

We hope our framework will allow the aspiring leader, the humble practitioner and the researcher, to develop the capacity to critically determine the value of a leadership text or development program, and appropriately categorize it, while simultaneously being able to extract valuable ideas that are contextually relevant to their specific leadership situation and developmental state.

**Collective, or Spiky Leadership**

To be effective, universal and adaptive, leadership strategies will maintain three complementary but distinct practices: long-term and just-in-time *development* and a flexible leadership *deployment* strategy.

Short-term *development* strategies will focus on more easily adopted and integrated subjects, which pragmatically means they focus on the XYZ skills domains, on leveraging individual strengths in the ABC domains and set those development experiences in a context where they can be real-world applied and socialized.

Long-term *development* involves the life-long navigation of individuals with the potential goal of reaching the higher levels of leadership outlined in stage-based models. For this to be useful, three things need to happen.

- The locus of long-term development cannot only be with the organization.
- Members must be able to plan their own developmental journey and take it with them as they change organizations.
- Lastly, objectives for development need to encompass an assumption of flexibility and agility about leadership itself.

A just-in-time *deployment strategy* relates to the possibility of being able to select and rapidly deploy contextually appropriate co-leadership teams to emerging leadership challenges. Implementing these co-leadership teams requires a change in the concept of leadership (that we have dubbed *spiky leadership*) where a much greater emphasis is given to collective leadership capacity realized through the aggregation of individual ‘spikes’ of talent or competency into co-leadership alliances that are creatively selected, deployed and dissolved as and when needed, a variation on the idea of lead-with-the-leaders-that-you-have – co-lead-as-you-need.
The notion of spiky leadership is already visible at a popular consciousness level. From children’s cartoons, such as Paw Patrol and Teen Titans, to the deeply drawn fantasy of the Game of Thrones books and TV show and the comic-inspired Marvel Cinematic Universe and The Walking Dead, we see exceptionally talented but flawed people come together in teams to solve problems beyond the capacity of any single one of them. Within the long narrative arcs, we also see significant character development as individuals wrestle with their flaws, such as Tyrion Lannister’s poor sense of self-worth and deep cynicism in Game of Thrones to Tony Stark’s ego, self-interest and hubris in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

This notion of flawed leaders is not a new concept, being a core element of ancient Greek tragedies (as explored in, for example, Knox, 1998; Engle, 2008). Unfortunately, in recent times, we have had a tendency to forget such ancient insights thanks to the dominance of what Western (2019) terms The Leader as Messiah, with models such as transformational and authentic leadership, and the gushing profiles of leaders in business media, having the tendency to paint rosy pictures of great people with special talents that pay no attention to any darker, shadow sides.

Flawed leaders have received some attention in the realms of psychoanalysis and clinical psychology. Manfred Kets de Vries has spent decades analysing the darker side of leadership (e.g. in de Vries, & Miller, 1985; de Vries, & Balazs, 2010; de Vries, 2010). The awareness of derailers in one’s psychological make-up plays a significant part of Ron Warren’s 360-degree leadership personality model (Warren, 2017) as well as Anderson and Adams’ (2016, 2019) mapping of creative competencies in opposition to self-limiting tendencies such as complying, protecting and coercive control.

Spiky leadership occurs when tragic flaws are overcome by a group of leaders undertaking mature teamwork that enables their collective intelligence (Wooley et al., 2010), capacities and talents cover for their weaknesses, biases and blind spots in an environment of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999).

Utilizing the PLC framework to unpack this, at the inner capacity level, this will involve:

- A deep understanding of their drivers and derailers, or light and shadow sides.

- Awareness of their level of understanding of a subject or situation, and where their gaps and biases might lie, and the appropriate way they can contribute to further exploration.

- An understanding of their motivational styles, and the situations in which they will and will not be appropriate.

At the skilled adaptive capacity level, this will involve:

- An awareness of how many people their leadership decisions will impact and the degree to which they can or cannot frame and communicate those decisions in culturally and situationally appropriate and engaging ways.
- Understanding the degree to which they can or cannot frame complex challenges in a manner that enables comprehension, ideation and effectiveness in others.

- An awareness of how well they can or cannot drive results without sacrificing opportunities to explore and experiment with other potential methods and practices, or to appropriately reward contributors.

We feel that this concept of spikey leadership captures something essential about this emergent phenomenon captured in popular media of a more realistically human, complex and even deliberately developmental understanding of the need for collective leadership in facing complex adaptive challenges.

**Assessment and Orientation**

The usefulness of a framework to develop leadership raises the topics of assessment and the following questions: How can a person find their location within the framework? How can they use it to determine how to further their learning journey?

The framework is a real-world example of Piaget’s (1970) concepts of epistemological and cognitive structures and of the hierarchical complexity of task accomplishment (Commons, Trudeau, Stein, Richards, & Krause, 1998). In other words, the framework serves as the mental structure, enabling and enabled by resources such as coaching, feedback, psychometrics or 360s, to navigate your leadership objectives and to navigate the steps of learning-cycle paths:

a) Orient oneself in terms of the skill levels and capacities across the framework.
b) Prioritize specific learning goals or development intentions.
c) Gain relevant information, explore and observe.
d) Experiment through practice in context.
e) Reflect on experience to connect new knowledge gained.
f) Iteratively reset goals and repeat the cycle.

This type of learning is exemplified by the learning cycle model of Dawson and Stein (2011a, b), where this action-reflection process generates micro adjustments enabling a robust and agile acquisition of the new level of capacity or skill.

**Recommendations**

**Additional Research**

In our design, we did include sources and feedback from the leadership traditions of social-justice, political and community development, as well as business anthropology traditions. However, we see potential in a more comprehensive exploration and integration with the PLC framework. For example, social activists’ distinction between community organizing and community leading is something where we see common ground with the PLC, but different language. We are curious to learn if these are only language differences or if exploration would illuminate more substantial distinctions.
The discipline of *business anthropology* has been focused on technology and innovation and we would extend this lens to explore the subjects of leadership and leadership development more with the anthropologists’ eye.

We also see the subject of humor as under-appreciated as a leadership capacity and a skill that can reduce tension, open relationships, create safety and is rooted in lateral thinking and consciousness of mindsets and culture.

There is room for a stronger integration of the disciplines around lean and agile practices and leadership. The business community wants more agility but often does not understand the technologists’ practices and principles. The leadership development community wants to appeal to the business sponsors so they adopt, co-opt and corrupt the idea of agile, and the lean and agile communities have been overly focused on the processes and practices while working to formulate how leadership skills are important and what they are. Empirically, there are lean and agile contexts, but not something unique that is lean or agile leadership.

Finally, some research can focus on the further delineation and exploration of the detail topics that we frame as level 3. As more of this detail is exposed and organized, there will be constructs for pedagogical sequencing and more resources for practitioners.

**Community Engagement**

Once there is a published PLC framework, that framework has to be discovered, understood, welcomed and applied to be useful and to affect the change it is meant to support. An adequate strategy will require substantive relationships with all classes of associations, institutions, commercial and benevolent organizations. Engagement should be through relationships across stakeholders in the process of leading and developing leaders, as well as across disciplines. With regard to this, we have initiated a broader set of engagement programs.15

**Reciprocal Sensitivity**

The PLC framework is sensitive to the inevitable diversity of knowledge in the globalized world. We are respectful of contemporary ideas and the depth of work using theories and models that pre-existed today's discourse. Unrecognized differences, personal tendencies to fix positions, familiarity or past contexts cannot and should not be discounted, even if they seem challenging, clumsy or outdated. Consequently, the evolution of the framework must strike an elegant balance between useful theories of the past and multi-cultural sensitivities and new knowledge of the present. From this, it is our recommendation (and a principle of operation for us) that the framework is not meant to dominate or over-take other constructs but align with them and increase approachability for them across the whole of the range of stakeholders.

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15 For this we have opened a way to engage in stakeholders’ collaboration through additional Prometheus Project initiatives of We Lead Global and The Clear Council, For more information please go to www.theprometheusproject.info
Governance

Deft choices of governance will be critical to establishing and attending to a common accessible leadership framework that serves its mission to open access and align quality across all stakeholders. The efficacy of the framework will be achieved as a collective ambition, and through collective influence. It has to be a part of the identity of a wide constituency. It cannot be dominated by one community, discipline, profession, economic class or culture.

We have an intention in our agency. We intend to establish a governance function that represents the best aspects of a purpose driven community, using collective intelligence, collective influence, and collective ambitions (spikey leadership) in the practices of framework innovation and the continued application of design-thinking principles and practices.

Cultural Assumptions

As in any substantive change initiative, there will be continuing attention to cultural adaptive change. These are a few of the changes that have more than a small immunity.

We have repeated experience speaking to executives who are impatient with program recommendations from mainstream leadership sources, yet they do not have an alternative frame of reference, advisors have investments in the status quo, executives hold personal immunities to changing accountabilities for leading. Many of those in the system are sustainers of the status quo.

Practitioners and experts are invested in their business and branding models, as well as in their identities and cultural assumptions around achievement, intellectual property rights, influence and dominance in the market.

The capabilities required to be an individual leader are idealized by both individual perfectionism and social norms.

The cultural component of leadership patriarchy is persistent and language is both a reflection and influencer of culture. Reserving the terms ‘leadership’ for the capacities of any role or position, ‘executive’ as the strategic authority of an organization and ‘follower’ as one of an array of choices that leaders may take would be progress.\textsuperscript{16}

We assert that these and other, cultural assumptions are severely limiting as cause, not only evidence of effect.

\textsuperscript{16} We find some vestiges of patriarchy is actually preserved in the popular distinction of leader vs follower. This is one of the reasons we explicitly included ‘followership’ as part of the engagement level 3 details. Leading includes situationally following, versus an alternative to following.
Conclusion

Speaking about the demands of leading in today’s complex contexts, John S. Kem, (Major General, U.S. Army War College, who led the US Army officer leadership development programs) says it well; “the environment rewards clarity and punishes those who wait for certainty” (in the forward, Gavin & Watson, 2019, np).

This quote epitomizes the imperative for leading change in complexity. It is the imperative of our profession, not of our constituencies, to create clarity in the real world. Therefore, our priority must be to create and invite consent to a clear framework of the very capacities that we want to develop.

At the same time, even as the framework has immediate value, we expect to collectively learn as a stakeholder community. Naturally, some are disposed to wait for more or gather more. Reiche (2019) writes of the phenomena of the Fear of Better Options (FOBO) that applies to leadership, where consent and action are withheld in deference to diffusion of efforts or paralyzing detail. But often, there is sufficient knowledge consent for action and attention to learning.

To reach the point of our collective ambition, where leadership is understood, accessible, normalized and even professionalized, then we must engage in adaptive work that is fueled from collective knowledge and collective influence.

This is why we are initiating two continuing structures, the engagement of a larger circle of stakeholders through We Lead Global, and the open, diverse, independent governance for framework, aptly named The Clear Council.

We foresee a day when leadership development sponsors and practitioners readily find a flexible and cohesive field of resources, committed executives and self-determining learners at all levels of leading and effective organization and community-wide intentional development.

We invite you to join us on this adventure!

17 Contributing to Kellerman’s (2018) call for professionalizing leadership is part of the longer-term aspirations of The Prometheus Project.
18 The Prometheus Project has a series of initiatives, including the Prometheus community forum of We Lead Global, The Prometheus Leadership Commons and its governance board, the Clear Council, and public events series related to all areas of The Prometheus Project mission. Learn more at www.theprometheusproject.info
References


Stage Models of Adult Development: 
A Critical Introduction to Concepts, Debates, and 
Future Directions

Ben Bjorgaard

Abstract: Diverse approaches have modeled and characterized a number of trajectories of adult psychological development that originate in stage models of developmental psychology. The number of these approaches has increased significantly in recent decades as stage models have become more popular and been applied outside of the academe, along with innovations occurring within the academe. Additionally, multiple stakeholders have sought knowledge about the types of thinking and psychological development suited for contemporary contexts and needed by individuals and communities to adequately respond to present and anticipated circumstances; this has gone hand-in-hand with psychological developmental models being increasingly applied across disciplines. The challenges involved in this research area have led to novel critical debates and developments. However, details about the theoretical and methodological foundations of these approaches are often underexamined, which can lead to misinterpretation and misapplication. This article sets out to survey some of these theoretical and methodological issues. Surveyed concepts and issues include functional, soft, and hard stages; metrics, models, constructs, and domains; and the relationship of stage models to the broader field of developmental science. Finally, suggestions about the study of adult development beyond stage models are provided including the need for interdisciplinary research and frameworks.

Keywords: Adult psychological development, applied developmental science, postconventional development, postformal development, problem-focused methodological pluralism, relational developmental systems.

Introduction

Many terms refer to trajectories and stages of psychological development that occur throughout adulthood. Postformal and postconventional, named in relation to Jean Piaget’s (Inhelder & Piaget 1958) formal operational and Lawrence Kohlberg’s (1984) conventional stages, may be the most common. Other suggested terms include, but are not limited to, integrative, relativistic, and dialectical (e.g., Kallio, 2011). Simply referring to these trajectories as adult development is another alternative. However, in most populations studied, individuals exhibiting characteristics of the most advanced stages are rarely found (e.g., Cook-Greuter, 2011); therefore, exceptional adult development can be a useful descriptor. Corresponding to these terms, a wide range of frameworks include a focus on adult development. This wide range lends itself – upon a close

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examination – to overlap, isomorphism, synonymity, parallelism, as well as differences (both nuanced and radical), bifurcations, contentions, and misunderstandings. By and large, these adult development frameworks stem from a tradition of developmental psychology with a primary heuristic of stages going back to James Mark Baldwin (1895) and Piaget in the early 1900s with many approaches branching along the avenues paved by other historical and contemporary researchers (e.g., Basseches, 1984; Case, 1985; Erikson, 1982; Fischer, 1980; Gilligan, 1982; Kegan, 1982; Labouvie-Vief, 1982; Loevinger, 1976; O’Fallon, 2020; Pascual-Leone, 1970; Sinnott, 1998; Wade, 1996). Because a grasp of developmental stage models in general is needed to understand contemporary stage models of adult development, this article spans stage models at large while focusing on exceptional adult development; postformal and adult development are sometimes used as catch-all terms, although others are used when referring to specific frameworks.

This article presents a selective literature review in order to introduce concepts and distinctions relevant to evaluate and compare adult development frameworks – and particularly to provide an understanding of stage models that can support integrative and applied projects related to adult development. The study of adult development beckons integrative and synthetic frameworks from diverse fields. I set out to weave a condensed narrative that can introduce readers to important considerations of stage models and their context within developmental science. I use broad brushstrokes in an attempt to provide an overarching orientation to components of stage models of adult development and select examples in order to flesh out implications of how these components interact – although in many cases alternative examples could have been used. As a brief overview and introduction to a diverse territory, this article does not do justice to any particular model. It also omits concepts important to more detailed comparisons of some models, as well as alternative directions of future development. It is hoped that it provides a general orientation to debates and future directions of stage models of adult psychological development and their relevance to integrative developmental theory. It may be of most benefit to readers who have some familiarity with a developmental stage model.

An overarching conclusion is that continued work is needed addressing integrative visions of adult development that move beyond developmental psychology, and beyond stage models in particular – and that assessing how stage models of adult development function within broader cross-disciplinary integrations will be crucial to their future development. Due to the philosophy of science, methodologies, and evidentiary basis undergirding stage models of adult development, cross-disciplinary comparisons can be vital for their evaluation and interpretation. Relatedly, these considerations can help to hone their pragmatic and ecological validity – how developmental constructs fair when applied in open systems in the real world, and how stage models can and should be used.

First, Cook-Greuter’s (1999) expansion of Jane Loevinger’s (1976) model, a widely used framework of adult development, is briefly summarized as a case study in order to contextualize and provide a foil with which to compare further distinctions, in addition to introducing contemporary trends. Next, distinctions between functional, soft, and hard stage models are introduced, followed by debates about metrics, models, constructs, and domains. Then, an underdiscussed relationship of stage models of adult development to a recent paradigm shift (termed Relational Developmental Systems) in the broader field of developmental science is considered. Last, a discussion about what these findings regarding stage models mean for broader,
potentially transdisciplinary, approaches to adult development is provided, including suggestions about future directions. Interested readers can see Gidley (2016) for a wide-ranging overview and comparison of descriptive characterizations of postformal models.

Loevinger and Cook-Greuter

In her doctoral dissertation, Cook-Greuter (1999) built on Loevinger’s (1976) Ego Development Theory and measuring instrument, The Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT) to research hypothesized further stages of postconventional development. Cook-Greuter accomplished this goal by comparing postconventional development categories in Loevinger’s model to a number of other developmental theories. This project was motivated by rare outlier WUSCT results from previous studies that could not be meaningfully interpreted within Loevinger’s model. In addition, Cook-Greuter tested her new conceptualization of stages by analyzing 145 postconventional WUSCTs to refine theoretical categories and 60 WUSCT protocols to assess for statistical validity and reliability.

An ego stage according to Loevinger’s theory can be described as a particular cohesive view of reality – of self, external circumstances, and existential situation – that is part and parcel of one’s sense-making (Cook-Greuter, 1999). Development is posited to occur through hierarchically complex and differentiated stages as an individual matures, as it is conceptualized in most stage theories. The WUSCT tests for ego stage by asking an individual to freely complete sentence stems (usually 36), which are then assessed by a researcher using a manual that categorizes elements of language corresponding with the various stages. According to Cook-Greuter, the WUSCT was thoroughly tested for reliability and validity at the time of its development; it has also continued to be tested and critiqued (Manners & Durkin, 2001).

In 2011, Pfaffenberger, Marko, and Combs published an edited volume that focused on Cook-Greuter’s work and legacy, The Postconventional Personality. In this volume, Cook-Greuter (2011) described several developments that occurred since the publication of her dissertation. The WUSCT database continued to grow, which led to further nuanced findings that were important in refining the measurements of postconventional stages, since protocols scoring at these stages are rare. Protocols scoring at stage 10 (the highest stage) were found in an average of only .06% of sample populations. Cook-Greuter reflected on the relationship between a growing database and the models and methods used to assess it:

The question is whether and to what degree to tailor the psychometrics to best reflect the findings or whether to honor a method now seemingly suboptimal in light of the data. How to do this in a valid psychometric fashion without employing Bayes’ theorem is the challenge. As a developmental measure, based on empirical evidence, the SCT requires new theory and new measurement approaches when the data changes. Another pertinent and practical question is at what point in time does one introduce radical changes to an established measure including new metrics and recalculate, readjust older samples in light of the new evidence? (p. 61)

This quotation describes the interdependent relationship between research, theoretical models, and metrics, in addition to touching on several points that are discussed in greater detail below. Cook-
Greuter further stated that Loevinger’s measure continued to be applied in new contexts, including longitudinally and across cultures. Several doctoral dissertations tested and applied Cook-Greuter’s post-conventional stages (e.g., Boyer, 2005; Hewlett, 2004). Cook-Greuter (2011) considered additional differentiated stages and recently hypothesized a new substage (Ego-aware) that would help to explain certain discontinuities between the highest stages she originally proposed. New sentence stems and their scoring manuals were introduced in order to better fit contemporary contexts. Cook-Greuter developed a training program for scoring the tests and utilizing developmental perspectives for researchers and “coaches, consultants, and change agents” (p. 67). Cook-Greuter also discussed how Ken Wilber’s (2000) integral theory and the integral community helped to popularize her work, and how this moved her away from research and toward applications in professional development. Relatedly, the WUSCT was increasingly adapted for applied versus research settings. Last, Cook-Greuter discussed how the WUSCT’s growing popularity in applied settings had in turn led to a greater demand for trained individuals capable of scoring tests in the post-conventional stages and differentiating between new patterns in test results from high achievers knowledgeable about developmental theories versus the genuine stages indicated by them.

The foundations and developments Cook-Greuter (1999, 2011) described in many ways parallel those of other approaches to adult development. To summarize, Loevinger (1976) developed a theory of development rooted in the psychoanalytic theories of Henry Stack Sullivan (1968) and Erik Erikson (1982), and then refined several constructs of that theory, which remarkably could be validated and tested for using a relatively simple test that takes about a half hour to complete. Similarly, Cook-Greuter called upon additional theories that seemed to imply further stages of adult development, and continued to refine ego development theory and its operationalization through the WUSCT. Loevinger’s and Cook-Greuter’s process is representative of approaches to stage models of adult development in that particular theories of development rooted in broader psychological models, revolving around a certain aspect and construct of a given approach, are validated and tested through traditional psychometric methods, statistical analyses, and instruments.

The qualifications and grains of salt that go along with these processes, and powerful but limited methods, are often left in the background. However, these models have led to a variety of useful ways to conceptualize, research, and apply adult development. These include different takes on domains (what develops) and stages (with what structure), as well as how and why development occurs. They also include similarities and isomorphisms that lend themselves to the common practice of creating a diagram that aligns alternative models’ conceptualizations of stages with one’s own. This is commonly used to support the coherence and theoretical development of a given model; however, there is also a danger of conflation – the variety of viewpoints contained leads to a challenge of appropriately considering the gamut of theoretical and methodological variables in a synthetical or organizational project. The image of a kaleidoscope with shifting, interacting shapes and angles surfacing as one gazes at adult development goes some way to describe the state of the field and the difficulty of interpreting what one actually sees.
Functional, Soft, and Hard Stages

Many of the continued debates within the field of adult development relate to general debates and theoretical distinctions pertinent to the field of developmental psychology at large. They have been ongoing since the foundations of the developmental field and are best understood within that context. For example, Lerner’s (2018) overview of the history of developmental theory included an explication of distinctions between continuous versus discontinuous change, nomothetic versus idiographic models, and elementarism versus holism. Lerner stated,

The point of these examples is that, despite a relatively high degree of consensus about development being a theoretical concept that, at the least, connotes systematic and successive change in an organization, there is a good deal of disagreement among developmental scientists about what particular ideas need to be added in order to define the term adequately. These differences in definitions are associated with philosophical and theoretical differences which also divide scientists. (p. 11)

Although it is outside the scope of this article, a thorough comparison of approaches to postformal development would necessarily call upon these foundational distinctions and an examination of how they are employed in other areas of developmental psychology. For instance, stage models are largely nomothetic, generalizable across individuals, and omit idiographic considerations unique to each individual’s development; however, this distinction also plays out differently within various stage models, and there are possible routes of synthesis as will be outlined below.

Perhaps the most foundational distinctions between postformal approaches are those between functional, soft, and hard stage models. Reams (2014) outlined four criteria attributed to Piaget that are used to make these distinctions: (a) stage models display a qualitative difference in the structures of stages, (b) stages develop in an invariant sequence, (c) there is an underlying organizational structure of the stages as a whole, and (d) later stages include and integrate previous stages while also displaying progressive differentiation of their contents. Functional stage models meet the fewest of these criteria, hard stage models meet all, and soft stage models fall in between. Erik Erikson’s (1982) widely known model is an example of a functional model in that it is culturally relative, organized around responses to common life experiences particular to a society, and not structurally hierarchical in a strict sense (Reams, 2014). Functional stage models may be relevant and valuable to a specific community, but lack evidence supporting them as a veritable model of universal developmental structures.

Loevinger (1976) and Cook-Greuter’s (1999) models, on the other hand, are examples of soft stage models. Their structures are derived hypothetically from the measurement of a construct inferred from categories of content on the WUSCT. Those categories are mixtures of content and structure thought to indicate a stable set of personality and ego functions. In this way, Loevinger’s stages are “ideal type[s] based on [a] theoretical representation” (Reams, 2014, p. 129). While they have structural qualities, such as qualitatively different hierarchical organizations that meet much of the above criteria, they fall short of hard stage models in the following ways: The method and evidence by which the model is arrived at are more indirect and speculative; stages are defined by functions of a holistic self and its motives, as well as by linguistic content, rather than strict
structures. This leeway enables soft stage models to formulate their characteristic broad, far-reaching theories, for instance, constructs that delimit universal patterns of meaning-making, yet may also tend to lose the trees in the forest, not be as rigorously defensible as harder stage models, or prove with further research to be as coherent and cohesive as their theories claim.

Hard stage models involve the delimitation of structures within discrete domains (Reams, 2014). For instance, in contrast to an ego developmental model, hard stage models would examine the specific acquired skills that the self experiences as unified (e.g., physical, emotional, and cognitive tasks) that relate to “empirically observable and measurable actions in direct ways” (p. 129), and by doing so, according to Reams, perhaps articulate more defensible, and universal, developmental logics that would continue to be applicable with the advancement of psychological knowledge. Lourenço (2016) offered a similar characterization of hard and soft stages of development and further qualifies that hard structural stages are

necessary rather than optional tracks of development…, embody operative reasoning which represents interiorized and reversible forms of action…, distinguish content from the form or structure of thought…, can be formalized within a rational, normative model…, [and] appeal to an epistemic, or rational, general subject as opposed to a psychological, individual subject. (p. 124)

It is notable that characterizations of postformal development tend to blossom from soft stage models. The greater flexibility of soft stage models may serve in formulations of exceptional adult development. Postformal stages tend to highlight reflexivity; awareness of constructs; relativity; and a grasping of multiple points of view, systems, and paradigms. Perhaps structures explanatory of these functions are challenging to operationalize within the strict criteria of hard stage models. Along these lines, Stein (2008) suggested that developmental evaluations can be considered as “rational reconstructions of a kind of deep-seated intuitive knowledge that is always already a part of the network of practices and beliefs that constitute the lifeworld” (p. 3). In other words, there may be a tacit knowledge and “groking” of developmental trajectories, at least those of thought and language, at large in human interactions that are brought to consciousness in various ways by different developmental models and evaluations. Stein conducted an exploratory study to research this hypothesis by asking 181 non-specialist participants to rate the developmental levels of interview transcripts. In support of the hypothesis, Stein found general agreement between raters with each other, as well as between raters and the Lectical Assessment System’s formalized metric of development. Soft stages’ more speculative and holistic models may allow a greater operationalization of this intuition. However, particularly in soft models developing outside of academia, there are challenges in formulating defensible academic knowledge. There have also been major strides in hard stage approaches to postformal development in recent decades. These developments have led to current debates on properly differentiating and utilizing models, metrics, and constructs.

Models, Metrics, and Constructs

What does it really mean when an individual scores at Cook-Greuter’s (1999) Autonomous stage on the WUSCT, or at another stage on an alternative developmental system? How should those scores be interpreted? What are the standards and quality control procedures of
developmental systems? Ross (2008) traced how information about developmental systems can become increasingly distorted when that information is distanced from the academic research contexts where it originates. For instance, qualifications of developmental systems that are implicitly obvious to researchers—who are trained in the specific psychometrics used to arrive at them—can be lost as that research is consumed, reinterpreted, and communicated by others. Ross used the metaphor of telephone games and outlined the particular example of how figures in Wilber’s (2006) *Integral Spirituality* promulgated distortions and errors both in the discourse of academics specializing in other areas and especially outside of the academe.

Psychometric models, metrics, and measures are the lifeblood of postformal developmental systems and commonly underlie the misinterpretation of those systems (Stein & Heikkinen, 2009). Stein and Heikkinen set out to demystify these facets of psychometrics in order to offer a quality control framework. This framework is particularly valuable for users of developmental stage models who do not specialize in them. In addition, Stein and Heikkinen provided a “limited, exploratory” review assessing metrics currently in use by various developmental approaches, and found a “conspicuous lack of psychometric rigor on the part of some developmental approaches” (p. 5). Supporting the keystone quality of metrics, Stein and Heikkinen outlined that in developmental psychology, metrics are calibrated via psychometrics (in contrast to measuring methodologies of other fields such as biometrics or sociometrics). These metrics inform the discipline’s discourse about models, which in turn inform applied technologies, such as testing in education.

Metrics and models can both be considered the development discipline’s representational devices: symbol systems, methods, and propositions claimed to refer to actual developmental processes (Stein & Heikkinen, 2009). Metrics are used to determine the quantity or degree of a psychological attribute that is found in a set of performances. Metrics can take the form of calibrated measures or soft measures (not to be confused with soft stages). Calibrated measures rely more-so on quantitative protocols in their development, whereas soft measures rely more-so on qualitative protocols. Models account for and characterize—explain and describe—the presence of psychological attributes. Furthermore, Stein and Heikkinen distinguished different quality control devices for metrics and models. Metrics are controlled via psychometric tests of validity (reasonableness of inferences and claims) and reliability (quality of performance and error proneness). Models are controlled via disciplinary discourse, a community’s critical interchange of arguments and evidence, both theoretical—targeting the “truth, coherence, and reasonableness of models”—and practical—targeting their “ethics, efficacy, and implications” (p. 7).

In developmental psychology, metrics are essentially “inter-subjectively codified modes of systematic differential classification” (Stein & Heikkinen, 2009, p. 10) that are proclaimed to be indexes of development. The degree and type of calibration a metric has undergone determines its status as a soft or calibrated measure. Stein and Heikkinen pointed out that the history of cognitive developmental research has been “a history of techniques for the classification of various performances and behaviors” (p. 11). Additionally, although there are some outliers such as Piagetian balance beam tasks, nearly all developmental metrics interpret linguistic performances. However, the modes and analyses of linguistic performances can vary subtly and substantially. For instance, Kohlberg’s (1984) moral stage model relied on analyzing the content of interviews, Loevinger’s (1976) model relied on the analysis of projected sentence completions, and other
metrics such as hierarchical complexity (discussed below) analyze deep structures of linguistic performances rather than their content. Stein and Heikkinen summarized the general procedure used to develop a metric:

the codification of a metric begins with a research team issuing relatively informal judgments about how the various performances in a dataset should be organized developmentally. That is, they argue about why one performance is more developed than another, suggesting various properties of the performances that should function as indexes of development. Then through iterative procedures for garnering intersubjective agreement, an explicit hierarchical taxonomy emerges and specific properties of the linguistic performances are promoted to the status of being indexes of development. That is, developmental metrics are built to function as representational devices; they are created to help us see development by privileging specific properties of linguistic performances that have proven useful for the purpose of reliable differential developmental classification. (p. 11)

When codification results predominantly from researchers iteratively surveying large longitudinal data sets until reaching an intersubjective agreement about their “inventory of level-specific conceptual content” (p. 12), it is a soft measure. Calibrated measures go through further quantitative analysis to refine the metric and ensure the validity and reliability of fine-grained individual distinctions. The soft/calibrated categories are relative to a degree. Metrics can be more specifically described in relation to the variety of types of validity and reliability, the claims of the model they correspond to, and the context in which they are used. Additionally, soft measures can become calibrated, and calibrated can become soft, depending on the quantitative evidence available at a given time. However, in general, metrics that are noisy (vary from rater to rater) within a reasonable range of error are soft measures. These differences can make soft measures unsuitable for applied settings, especially when purporting to draw conclusions about individuals. However, they are suitable for research purposes, especially when searching for patterns across sample populations. On the contrary, calibrated measures are more suited for applied settings and making distinctions at the individual level in addition to research. For instance, although Loevinger’s metric was better calibrated than many soft measures, Stein and Heikkinen claimed that Loevinger explicitly stated “it was not [Stein and Heikkinen’s emphasis] to be used for rendering measurements of individuals” (p. 9). Stein and Heikkinen also found that the Hierarchical Complexity Scoring System and Lectical Assessment System were the only truly calibrated metrics at the time, “using quantitative indexes of internal consistency” (p. 19).

As for the quality control of models, Stein and Heikkinen (2009) proposed that multiple frameworks of evaluation can be useful in determining a model’s value. As an example, they suggested Charles Sanders Peirce’s (1998) distinctions between utility, security, and uberty. Utility refers to a model’s fitness as a means to an end. Security refers to what types of evidence a model is based on and how coherent is the model and this evidence. Uberty refers to the magnitude of a model’s “world-disclosing power” (p. 14) and suggestiveness. A model may, for instance, have a low security value, lacking evidence, but a high uberty value, being comprehensive and shining a light on a variety of disparate situations. Thus, distinctions between soft and calibrated metrics (as well as soft, hard, and functional stages) do not imply value judgments in themselves, and should not motivate a homogenization or marginalization of metric and model types. Furthermore, Stein and Heikkinen suggested an “integral and problem focused metrological pluralism” (p. 20), a
pragmatic ideal involving reflections on developmental metrics and their uses, including detailed validity and reliability profiles, to inform decisions about which metrics are suited for which purposes. This ideal can also be extended to other aspects of developmental approaches.

Soft, hard, and functional stages interact intimately with soft and calibrated metrics (e.g. functional stage models tending to use no metrics, soft models tending to use soft metrics, and hard models tending to use calibrated metrics), as well as with further distinctions outside of the scope of this article, resulting in advantages and disadvantages, including potential misapplication (e.g., soft measures inaccurately assessing individuals in applied settings, such as at work or school, and leading to negative outcomes for those individuals). In this way, there are a host of qualifications that should be brought to light about any developmental approach before it is put to use, perhaps the most important being qualifications about its metric and the metric’s relationship to its model.

Additionally, there is a further layer that can be brought into the discussion of metrics and models: addressing construct validity theory itself. The categories of content, structure, and performance attributed to stages in developmental models are notably abstract constructs, especially those of later adult developmental stages. While metrics are designed to measure psychological attributes, they do so through constructs. For instance, Slaney (2017) stated, “Loevinger contended that while traits exist in people, constructs ‘exist in the minds and magazines of psychologists…Construct connotes construction and artifice’” (p. 3). Therefore, more accurately stated, metrics measure the amount of a construct reflected in test performances assumed to refer to actual attributes based on limited statistical evidence. Some of these statistical limitations are further discussed in a following section. Statistical methods and criteria related to construct validity have continued to develop since their formulation. Current arguments go as far as to question the validity of the overarching paradigm of these statistical methods in certain contexts, particularly their relationship to environmental validity and applications in developmental psychology (Diehl, Wahl, & Freund, 2017; Lerner & Callina, 2013).

Of course, it is precisely the function of testing theories and studying hypothesized attributes with characteristics that are to a large extent unknown that necessitates the use of constructs. However, the potential conflation with their referents; the false ontology attributed to constructs (and thereby metrics, models, and whole approaches to development); the lack of qualifying their limitations, including their openness to further tests of validation and invalidation; and a potential blending of confirmatory and exploratory objectives and implicit circular reasoning (Slaney, 2017), can lead to an additional false security of developmental approaches. Furthermore, the reliance on psychometrics and relatively brief linguistic performances limit the developmental stage approach as a whole. In light of these considerations, it may be worth musing on how the oft-quoted Bronfenbrenner (1979) statement referring to methodological limitations in developmental psychology might apply to developmental stage approaches: “developmental psychology…is the science of strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 19).
Domains

Perhaps the most discussed distinction within developmental stage discourse is between domain general and specific models. Domains refer to the particular area that stages apply to. Do stages apply to the total structure of an individual’s psychology, to specific skills and capacities, or is the structure of development somehow separate from any content, being able to be applied to any domain, general or specific? Are there primary domains necessary to develop before others? Are there particular domains that interact in patterned ways, following a more or less universal path across a lifespan? Or is the concept of domain itself simplistic, obscuring the complex, contingent, ever-shifting, individual webs of skills and capacities interdependent with one’s environment that one can perceive more generally or specifically within different contexts, frameworks, and objectives? These are some of the questions scholarly discourse has examined. As it may be clear, conceptions of domains are interdependent with other aspects of developmental structures. Because of this, a brief account of stages themselves is called for.

As mentioned, that development occurs in discontinuous stages or through continuous change has been a dichotomy motivating reoccurring debate throughout the history of developmental psychology. Some continue to question the relevancy of stages (e.g., Truhon, 2012); others argue that there cannot be a developmental psychology without some concept of stages, whether going by stages or another term, such as “periods, levels, phases, cycles, seasons, [or] layers” (Lourenço, 2016, p. 126). Lourenço explicited several additional questions relevant to this controversy: Do stages exist? Where are they? What features define a sequence of developmental stages? What factors and processes underlie change, be it either continuous or discontinuous? Dawson-Tunik, Fischer, and Stein (2004) argued that stages should not be at the center of developmental theory, even of stage theories, nor did Piaget intend them to be. On the contrary, the psychological processes of equilibration and reflective abstraction were the centerpiece of Piaget’s theory, and stages are a heuristic tool to aid the description and understanding of behavior developing from these and similar processes.

These are potentially muddy waters with different avenues for seeking clarity. Different domains and their conceptualizations can align to different sets and numbers of stages; relatedly, different domains can highlight different conceptions of change and stability, process and stage. Additionally, approaches focused more on content or structure attempt to integrate one another, with structural models being more apt and likely to do so. It is a diverse and shifting kaleidoscope indeed. For instance, Dawson-Tunik, Commons, Wilson, and Fischer (2005) pointed out that research has supported both continuous and discontinuous models of development and variations of them, and that development can appear continuous or discontinuous depending on the conditions.

To further research the contested “shape of development” using a domain-general approach – specifically Dawson-Tunik’s Lectical Assessment System, which is based upon Commons’ Model of Hierarchical Complexity (Commons, Trudeau, Stein, Richards, & Krause, 1998) and Fischer’s Skill Theory (Fischer, 1980) – Dawson-Tunik, Commons, Wilson, and Fischer (2005) analyzed 747 moral judgement interviews for broad changes in conceptual development. A domain-general approach uses criteria that are independent of particular content and can therefore be used across domains of specific content (Dawson, Xie, & Wilson, 2003). Dawson-Tunik’s system, Commons’
model, and Fischer’s theory have developed somewhat in parallel, spearheading contemporary versions of the domain-general approach. Dawson-Tunik et al. (2005) suggested that while most researchers acknowledge that different domains may develop at different rates, and different processes and structures may correspond to different domains, there may still be a more general developmental process and structure that applies across domains, which they termed *hierarchical integration* and/or complexity. They concluded that their results suggest “development [across the lifespan] proceeds in a series of spurts and plateaus across six complexity levels” (pp. 26-27). This, in addition to other examples of their research comparing the Hierarchical Complexity Scoring System with other domains and metrics further supports their domain-general approach (e.g., Dawson, 2001, 2002). Dawson-Tunik et al. (2005) provided the caveat that while hierarchical complexity explains a great deal about a performance (e.g., its form and order of abstraction), it makes no claim about explaining its content. Rather, its content must be assessed independently and then integrated with information about hierarchical complexity. It should be noted that this broad-brushed survey, in its attempt to introduce a variety of ways to conceptualize domains, is liable to leave a number of details unpacked that are vital for assessing an individual approach; for instance, important distinctions between the Lectical Assessment System, Fischer’s Skill Theory, the Model of Hierarchical Complexity, and the Hierarchical Complexity Scoring System (e.g., see Commons, 2009). These details would require digging into a particular model and its supporting research.

It may be helpful to distinguish between general or specific domains (referring to the breadth of their content) and domain-general or specific approaches (referring to whether the developmental approach as a whole applies only to a particular content). For instance, Loevinger’s (1976) model is general at a content level, encompassing the totality of a personality, while not addressing specific, individual skills. On the other hand, the Model of Hierarchical Complexity can be applied to any content domain, broad or specific. However, it does not necessarily imply a more general content domain. For instance, Mascolo (2008) stated that

> Individuals do not operate “at a stage of development.” They operate at a range of different levels of hierarchical complexity depending on skill area, task, context, degree of support, and other variables. It is thus necessary to postulate the concept of *domain* to refer to the particular conceptual, behavioral, or affective area within which activity operates. (p. 330)

Yet, the Model of Hierarchical Complexity can also apply to general content domains. Wolfsont, Ross, Miller, Commons, and Chernoff (2008) described how it can account for the evolution of general intelligence:

> the evolution of humans required performing increasingly hierarchically complex tasks within multiple domains. Hierarchical complexity increases task by task. Tasks occur within, and differ by, determinable domains, their stages of performance measurable using the Model of Hierarchical Complexity. How well one performs within single and multiple domains is considered to indicate intelligence. (p. 416)

Murray (2009) questioned whether the Lectical Assessment System and Hierarchical Complexity can really apply across domains as coherently as their theorists suggest. Are certain metrics, even certain paradigms informing the development of assessments, limited to certain types
of domains? Murray took what can be considered a softer stage approach and argued that some formal models, particularly ones that are cognitively-and-linguistically-oriented may be limited to a “cognitive line,” which he partially characterized as the information processing and logical-rational functions of thought. Further, he suggested that these models might overlook an umbrella of “wisdom skills,” functions he characterized as letting go, emptying, opening, un-learning, as well as “ego awareness, construct awareness, socio-emotional-relational skills, dialectical intelligence, negative capability, empathy, and compassion” (p. 353). He also suggested that perhaps the term cognitive line is more-so a term used to contrast with the host of functions overlooked by some formal models, and that other models such as Loevinger’s (1976) might encompass some of these left-out wisdom skills.

Heikkinen (2009) countered Murray’s argument. Heikkinen suggested that while many important changes in “body/mind/soul” (p. 369) such as Murray described, and other important human trajectories, may occur according to different logics than underlie a model like hierarchical complexity, arguing that those changes are equivalent to development rests upon one’s definition of development and more-so on the evidence for that definition; otherwise, any sort of change could potentially be confused with development. Trickier still is operationalizing and measuring a concept of development to further test it, for instance, to differentiate it from confounding variables and assessing the validity and reliability of such a concept. When done so, alternative concepts of development may in fact be found to not follow a developmental pathway, or they might be found to be attributed to another underlying developmental logic, such as hierarchical complexity. Heikkinen argued that Murray’s fundamental questions are empirical. She then provided an example of how hierarchical complexity could be controlled for in studies to differentiate it from ego development theory, or Kegan’s (1982) constructive-developmental model, to explain how much of the variance of scores are explained by hierarchical complexity versus other systems, and to effectively see whether those alternative systems tap into hierarchical complexity or other truly different aspects of development.

To conclude this section, it is hoped that this brief overview of perspectives about domains has provided a sketch of their relationship with other aspects of developmental approaches, some contemporary avenues of debate and research, and the stakes of conceptualizing and operationalizing domains in the overall meaning of a developmental approach. Furthermore, it is hoped that the overarching review of functional, soft, and hard stages; and models, metrics, constructs, and domains, has been evocative of the complexity of interpreting and applying developmental stage models – to arrive more at open questions and possibilities of interpretation rather than a set of fixed conclusions.

Relational Developmental Systems

To open further beyond stage models: The stage model tradition of developmental psychology is a relatively distinct branch. This distinctness is emphasized by the particularity of constructs, models, and metrics of specific approaches. Once a specific model is formulated it can become an isolated tradition in and of itself, revolving around its own constructs and metric. While there has been continued refinement of methods and theories particular to stage traditions, there has been a paradigm shift within the broader field of developmental psychology that few stage models have grappled with.
Nearing the turn of the millennium the term *developmental psychology* began to be eclipsed by the term *developmental science* (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000), including the renaming of journals and handbooks tied to the field. This rebranding went along with a heightened interdisciplinary focus, as well as reflection and debate about the fundamental assumptions, paradigms, theories, and methods of the field, which finally resulted in what has widely been heralded as a paradigm shift termed the Relational Developmental Systems Paradigm (Lerner, Overton, & Molenaar, 2015). This paradigm is characterized only very briefly and partially here. It is predicated upon a process-relational philosophical perspective thought to transcend Cartesian dualism, atomism, and positivist reductionism. It rejects “all splits between components of the ecology of human development (e.g., between nature- and nurture-based variables, between continuity and discontinuity, and between stability and instability)” (p. xviii.). It replaces these dichotomies with holistic syntheses using an “integration of three relational moments of analysis: the identity of opposites, the opposites of identity, and the syntheses of wholes” (p. xviii), which can have a profound impact on the methodology and interpretation of research traditions – in part by processually integrating dichotomies that the field of developmental psychology has struggled with at large. It emphasizes that “all levels of organization with the ecology of human development are integrated or fused” (p. xviii), that basic units of analysis are individual-context relations and co-actions of these, and that organisms are “inherently active, self-creating, self-organizing, and self-regulating nonlinear complex adaptive systems,” which develop through embodied activities (p. xviii). Development is inherently context-sensitive, plastic, subject-specific, and stochastic (probabilistic or random) (p. 3). Interested readers can see Overton (2015) for a succinct overview of the Relational Developmental Systems Paradigm and its corresponding metatheory, and Dick and Müller (2017) for further exploration of the Relational Developmental Systems Paradigm and its application in different areas of developmental science.

Describing the paradigm in depth and unpacking the particular implications of this paradigm shift for stage models of adult development is largely outside of the scope of this paper due to its complexity and the number of possibilities of stepping down the paradigm into specific theories and approaches. While unpacking the implications of the paradigm for stage models of psychological development is needed – should stages explicitly be conceptualized as abstracted, partial moments embedded into a vision of an integrated, processual whole? – each individual stage model might also grapple with this paradigm in unique ways. However, the implication of the Relational Developmental Systems Paradigm for the integration of basic and applied research should be noted:

in contemporary developmental science any splits between basic and applied research are regarded as anachronistic representations of the reductionist, Cartesian approaches of earlier eras. In short, the application of developmental science (optimization) is a co-equal partner with description and explanation within developmental science as it now exists. (Lerner, Overton, & Molenaar, 2015, pp. xvii-xviii)

The more distanced basic research and theorizing about stage models are from ecologically valid, applied contexts, the more suspect.

Furthermore, human development – the subject of developmental science – is now thought to be predominantly nonergodic. Ergodicity describes mathematical and statistical qualities of
systems that must apply for standard statistical analyses to be accurate: “In developmental research, almost all functions of natural development and intervention processes are nonergodic. Therefore, standard statistical analysis of aggregate-level data is bound to result in descriptions of developmental structures that fail to describe the individual” (Lerner, Overton, & Molenaar, 2015, p. 803). This has led to a surge of methodological innovation and borrowing, as well as critique focused on the fundamental limitations and errors of traditional statistical methods applied in developmental psychology (Little, Gorrall, Panko, & Curtis, 2017). Two specific emphases are on the individual as a unit of analysis and the ecological validity of experimental designs (Diehl, Wahl, & Freund, 2017; Nesselroade, 2017). The outcomes of this paradigm shift have yet to reverberate throughout the kaleidoscopes of stage models and conceptions of postformal development, and that their evidence, methods, and models may look profoundly different in coming years. The Relational Developmental Systems Paradigm can also provide a new context from which to qualify, interpret, and apply stage models of development – and to scaffold the integration of stage models of adult development with other domains of developmental science and allied projects from other fields.

Discussion and Conclusions

Adult development can be seen through the kaleidoscope of diverse models and metrics, as well as their triangulations. It can be approached in versions of hard, soft, and functional stages; soft and calibrated metrics; and general and specific domains. While arguments can be made that certain stage models measure aspects of bona fide psychological development, we have seen that delimiting processes of development and its measurement within stage model discourse also requires contextualization, debate, and interpretation. Relatedly, the relative insularity of stage model discourse can tend to reify notions of adult development, as constructed within stage model discourse, as more comprehensive or substantive than they would appear with a more open and cross-disciplinary discourse about adult development. Different approaches and models have different uses, which an analysis of their components can help to identify. Many of these qualifications also apply to approaches to adult development stemming from other branches of psychology and other disciplines – although potentially requiring alternative criteria for making evaluations. Notably, many diverse models closer to or within the realm of psychotherapy can be thought to include their own theories of adult development (e.g., Maslow, 1971; Rogers, 1961; Jung, 1964). Furthermore, literatures within fields such as wisdom research, spirituality, self-development, health and wellness, contemplative studies, education, leadership, and epistemology, among many others, contain threads that closely relate to adult development. These examples are primarily intended to evoke the potential for more integrative models of adult development, and secondarily for more pragmatic, contextual models to suit certain purposes – that knowledge provided by stage models can be used to inform customized, integrative conceptualizations of adult development, which paradigms like Relational Developmental Systems can help to support. Stein’s (2008) notion of how developmental evaluations relate to “rational reconstructions of a kind of deep-seated intuitive knowledge” (p. 3) can again be applicable here. The potential to abductively infer conceptualizations of adult development best suited to a given context could be promoted via broader integrative frameworks and specialized customizations.

From this broader perspective, stage models of adult development can largely be characterized, as Stein and Heikkinen (2009) suggested, as the branch of adult development that specializes in
psychometrics and construct validation. We have overviewed some of the methods and forms of evidence this entails. Of particular relevance here is Murray’s (2009) and Heikkinen’s (2009) debate regarding forms of development that stage models might leave out – or from the alternative view, perhaps should leave out. Furthermore, constructs such as learning, growth, self-actualization, individuation, change, wisdom, and transformation overlap closely with development. However, are there underlying logics, processes, and structures that are more defensible to claim as bona fide development? Are methods of construct validation, and even psychometrics at large, the best ways to certify that bona fide development? While there continue to be strides in psychometric methodology, there have also been challenges to some of its core assumptions. Walking the tightrope that these questions entail requires applying broader frameworks of assessment, akin to those Stein and Heikkinen (2009) suggested. This might include making criteria of hard stage models explicit in each case. It might also include applying metatheoretical distinctions such as Charles Sanders Peirce’s (1998) utility, security, and uberty, or those from Relational Developmental Systems, or an alternative to the overarching scope of stage models itself.

Yet, from other disciplinary perspectives and paradigms, the assessment of security, utility, and uberty can shift. This includes when other methods and forms of evidence are incorporated into current stage models. It was suggested how the Relational Developmental Systems Paradigm may serve the integration of these points of view within developmental science. Other paradigms and disciplinary approaches may be relevant as well. With so many perspectives currently available, further work on adult development will likely entail comparing, integrating, and evaluating theories at a metatheoretical level (e.g., Edwards, 2010; Wallis, 2016); as well as the development of applied interdisciplinary specialists and frameworks of assessment (e.g., Bammer, 2013; Hvidtfeldt, 2018).

An important related consideration is that as scholars attempt to describe some overarching characterization of adult development at more abstract, synthetic orders, they can quickly enter the realm of philosophy and speculation – with its own set of strengths and limitations. Much of the work on adult development at this time is motivated by a search to grasp the types of thinking, and ways of being, needed for our particularly complex world and its related crises. The philosophizing that attempts to characterize this mode of thought is both inherent to many of the models and constructs in the study of adult development, as well as separate speculative work inspired by it. Basseches (2009) discussed the relationship between philosophical argument, systematic measurement, and forms of empirical data in these endeavors. He suggested that no “amount or form of empirical data can substitute for philosophical argument” (p. 312), and that the study of development is inherently philosophical. For example, he stated “Piaget’s contribution was to offer observations of ontogenesis as a novel way of addressing existing epistemological questions, ontogenetic data were used in the service of philosophical argument and demonstration, rather than offered as a substitute” (312). Philosophical approaches are essential and inevitable; appropriately delimiting them and their relationship to empirical data are vital to their success.

This predicament – having multiple disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches and paradigms relevant to the study of adult development, a need to understand the modes of thought most useful in contemporary contexts, and a need to evaluate these projects – emphasizes both the continued need for more typically hard science advances (for instance, generalizable
measurement), and softer, functional, philosophical advances related to synthesis and contextual application – and greater coordination between the two. One side of this is bound to be greater incorporation of mainstream advances in developmental science. Another is likely to include applied problem-focused methodological pluralism, action research, and equivalent endeavors. One example along these lines is developmental maieutics (Dawson & Stein, 2011), which operationalizes a stage model of development in cycles of research and practice to produce usable knowledge in the context of educational assessment and in crafting effective learning sequences. Another is Collaborative Developmental Action Inquiry (Torbert, 2013), which although referring to a meta-paradigm of social science and social action, can in part be understood to operationalize stage models of development in the context of organizational change.

There are many paths forward for the study of adult development. This article primarily overviewed concepts necessary to evaluate stage models in general; thereby making suggestions about their continued refinement. Secondary functions of the overview were to set up a comparison to other paradigms – both in and outside of the developmental science discipline – and to emphasize a need for metatheory, metascience, and interdisciplinarity in the study of adult development. Hand-in-hand with this was an emphasis on problem-focused methodological pluralism – as humans are increasingly understood as embodied, context-ridden, becomings-in-process, many signs point to a need for interactive, ecologically-embedded, applied methods to develop an effective understanding of development, and to appropriately apply that understanding. As the popular interest in stage models of adult development is likely to continue, as well as their translation to academic and public discourses further afield, it is particularly important to delimit and qualify them – including the potential unknowns involved in the current most validated models.

References


Being Prepared to be Unprepared: 
Meaning Making is Critical for the Resilience of 
Critical Infrastructure Systems

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Abstract: Infrastructure is essential to provision of public health, safety, and well-being. Yet, even critical infrastructure systems cannot be designed, constructed, and operated to be robust to the myriad of surprising hazards they are likely to be subject to. As such, there has been increasing emphasis in Federal policy on enhancing infrastructure resilience. Nonetheless, existing research on infrastructure systems often overlooks the role of individual decision-making and team dynamics under the conditions of high

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ambiguity and uncertainty typically associated with surprise. Although evidence suggests that human factors correlating with resilience and adaptive capacity emerge in later stages of psychological development, there is an acute need for new knowledge about the human capacity to comprehend increasing levels of complexity in the context of rapidly evolving technological, ecological, and social stress conditions. Sometimes, it is this developmental capacity for meaning-making that is the difference between adaptive and maladaptive response. Thus, without a better understanding of the human capacity to develop and assign meaning to complex systems, unquestioned misconceptions about the human role may prevail. In this work, we examine the dynamic relationships between human and technological systems from a developmental perspective. We argue that knowledge of resilient human development can improve system resilience by aligning roles and responsibilities with the developmental capacities of individuals and groups responsible for the design, operation, and management of critical infrastructures. Taking a holistic approach that draws on both psychology and resilience engineering literature facilitates construction of an integrated model that lends itself to empirical verification of future research.

**Keywords:** Human development, human resilience, infrastructure, resilience, resilience engineering.

**Introduction**

National policies and guidelines for critical infrastructure resilience effectively acknowledge the complex, multi-organizational, and sociotechnical integration of people and technical systems (DHS, 2013; The White House, 2013). These policies support the concept of critical infrastructure resilience as a function of coupled social and technical systems’ physical and functional characteristics (Madni & Jackson, 2009), which includes the dynamic relationships between systems (Hollnagel, Woods, & Leveson, 2006). The physical and functional characteristics are often considered in a context of spatial and temporal dimensions. These are standard dimensions for analysis using traditional systems theory and other deterministic methods well suited for technological systems. For example, the factors related to spatial and temporal dimensions of a power system failure can impact assessments of community resilience (Munzberg, Wiens, & Schultmann, 2016) in response to disruption. However, the incorporation of human systems requires an additional dimension of symbolic meaning be included (Holling & Gunderson, 2002) together with space and time. In an analysis of the scholarly literature comparing the theme of resilience in social psychology, ecology, planning, and engineering disciplines, Fleming (2016) found that engineering scholarship focused predominantly on the “highly technical” side of “natural systems,” and tends to ignore social systems. Though perhaps not surprising, this is problematic.

The meaning-making dimension accounts for the dynamic properties of complex adaptive human systems embedded within technological systems and operating environments proximal to physical infrastructure. That is, the human capacity to assign meaning and to dynamically interpret events and information relevant to critical infrastructure operation and management in response to disruption can impact the resilience of human coupled infrastructure systems. While many systems are designed to limit or minimize the role of human interaction, human ingenuity may sometimes be relevant to successful adaptation. Therefore, without a better understanding of
the human capacity to construct meaning, reductionist views of resilience and tacit assumptions about the complex roles of humans interacting with infrastructure will prevail.

For example, disasters such as the Three Mile Island accident in 1979, the Challenger explosion in 1986, and the New Orleans Levee breakdowns in 2005 illustrate how the complexity of human interactions with technology can amplify failures in coupled systems (Perrow, 2011). By contrast, events like the ditching of US Airways Flight 1549 in the Hudson River on 15 January 2009 (NTSB, 2010) and the safe return of Apollo 13 in 1970 (Madni & Jackson, 2009) demonstrate how human ingenuity and adaptation can overcome surprising technological system breakdowns. Each situation required unanticipated changes in operational complexity and performance and although these examples are extreme, other similar scenarios play out across multiple domains and scales that go unnoticed by the public or academia. In a worst case scenario, unexpected and unknown changes can lead to catastrophic system failures propagating across spatial and temporal dimensions and operating domains such as the Fukushima power plant disaster in 2011 (Park, Seager, & Rao, 2011). In each case, the people involved make decisions and take actions based on mental models – psychological renderings of perceived or imagined conditions (Olson, Arvai, & Thorp, 2011) – that may no longer be relevant when subject to surprise. This means mental models can fail when faced with unanticipated emergent phenomena requiring an adaptive response to ambiguity and uncertainty (Sweet et al., 2014). Therefore, disasters can create conflict between preconceived conditions and direct experience (Hollnagel, Paries, Woods, & Wreathall, 2011) that can impact human interactions with technological systems.

The unanticipated differences between actual and preconceived experience of a person in a disaster scenario may be incompatible with their designated roles and responsibilities corresponding to thoughts, actions, and behaviors. As such, effective adaptation can require dynamic adjustment of individual roles to accommodate unknown or unexpected conditions. In the examples above, human lives were dependent on the ability of the pilots, crew, operators, engineers, and others interacting with the relevant technical systems to comprehend the situation and adjust to maintain viable system performance levels. Responding to adversity with incompatible preconceived responses can amplify failures and make conditions worse (Hollnagel & Fujita, 2013; Hollnagel et al., 2011), which means the roles played by humans can be pivotal to critical infrastructure resilience. In other words, human ingenuity can either enhance or diminish resilience because the intentions, motivations, and judgments of a single individual can influence infrastructure meta-systemic (whole-system) dynamics and outcomes. Moreover, while it may seem apparent why “preparing a large population for any kind of disaster will require a developmental perspective on human resilience, risk, and vulnerability” (Masten & Obradovic, 2010, p-11) the dichotomy of possible roles played by humans in disaster scenarios highlights this important point.

From a resilience engineering perspective, resilient outcomes are a factor of the recursive processes describing the capacities of intentional systems – sensing, anticipating, adapting, and learning (Park, Seager, Rao, Convertino, & Linkov, 2013). Thus, the resilience processes involved with navigating actual versus preconceived experience are partly determined by the complex interactional dynamics between humans and technical systems striving to restore and maintain viable operating levels. Dynamic adjustments to roles and responsibilities can require
reinterpreting existing information while giving rational meaning to new and sometimes conflicting information in response to unanticipated or previously inconceivable events (Hollnagel et al., 2011). With potential near-term outcomes ranging from widespread environmental contamination to loss of life, the cascading impacts of disasters can have long lasting social and economic consequences that are less apparent (Cardona, 2003). For example, the human ability to adapt to climate change is a long time scale event with broad impacts linking complex relationships reflecting values, ethics, and world views (Adger et al., 2009) with human development (O’Brien & Hochachka, 2010) and built infrastructure.

Although humans behave like complex adaptive systems, resilience research linking the dynamic interactions between humans and infrastructure is limited (Seager et al., 2017). As a result, it is difficult to communicate complex resilience concepts and collaborate across disciplinary boundaries like psychology and engineering. Moreover, the meanings and interpretations of knowledge, operational dynamics, and events influence human perspectives of system performance, which can vary across people and cultures involved. Other factors include the context of certain roles and responsibilities for a given scenario and corresponding environmental conditions. Thus, in addition to the epistemological perspectives representing multiple ways of knowing coupled systems across relevant spatial and temporal dimensions, critical infrastructure resilience must integrate epistemological diversity to form a holistic perspective reflecting how different human systems comprehend and interact with technological systems. This approach requires understanding how humans assign meaning and interpret knowledge, which includes experience in relation to infrastructure resilience operations and management and how the processes can change across time.

Human psychological development contributes to a body of knowledge and understanding about how people make meaning of the world and interpret experience. Disaster events identify knowledge gaps between the relationships of human resilience, development, and the ability of people to respond and recover (Masten & Obradovic, 2010), which is dependent on critical infrastructure. Although human agency influences behaviors, actions, and interactions with other systems (Brown & Westaway, 2011; Nelson, Adger, & Brown, 2007), there is little research integrating resilience and adult human development perspectives with the resilience of critical infrastructure operations and management. Although less is known about how resilience appears in adults given a significant research focus on youth (Campbell-Sills, Cohan, & Stein, 2006), progress in adult human development research has advanced and offers new insights about adult resilience. A growing body of research describes how human development endures well into adulthood and throughout a lifespan (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Kegan, 2002; Kohlberg, 1973; Loevinger, 1976; Vincent, Ward, & Denson, 2015).

In this paper, we address a gap in the resilience engineering and infrastructure resilience literature to consider how the psychological meaning-making of humans interacting with infrastructure operations and management can influence factors related to perceptions and interpretations of resilience. To accomplish this, we apply a holistic approach that allows for simultaneous perspectives drawing on the resilience engineering, psychology, and human development literature. We review multiple frameworks, synthesize diverse concepts, and propose a conceptual model for investigating the relationships between the developmental capacity of meaning-making and critical infrastructure resilience. The model effectively
integrates the socio-technical resilience processes – sensing, anticipating, adapting, and learning – with human developmental capacities. Our analysis suggests that each stage of human development brings new psychological resources contributing to the capacity to comprehend and respond to increasing levels of complexity and uncertainty thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the socio-technical resilience processes. We contribute a conceptual model as a guide for future research. We argue that progressive stages of human development corresponding to more complex forms of meaning-making bring new qualities and capabilities for designers, operators, and managers that can strengthen and enhance critical infrastructure resilience.

A Holistic Perspective of Resilience Engineering Processes

A holistic approach incorporates epistemological diversity to understand the complexity and uncertainty of maintaining a viable operating performance level for critical infrastructure (Thomas, Eisenberg, & Seager, 2018). Whereas a focus on anticipating known failures related to operational disruptions and human interactions with infrastructure can enhance risks mitigation efforts (Cardona et al., 2012), preparing to be unprepared may require circumventing deterministic preparations and responses (Park et al., 2013). Moreover, the adaptive capacities of people, organizations, and engineered systems are interdependent on an ability to accommodate unknown internal and external changes (Hollnagel et al., 2011). In other words, adaptation to unpredictable system shocks may sometimes require abandoning prescriptive actions while dynamically constructing novel solutions. With regard to human systems, interactions and feedback loops maintain a sense of (rational) equilibrium by forming psychological structures that either filter incoming data to fit existing worldviews or creating new worldviews (John Manners & Durkin, 2000). Thus, a holistic framework of critical infrastructure resilience must integrate the endogenous human factors corresponding to the adaptive capacity of people and working groups interacting (proximal) with technology in addition to sensing, anticipating and learning (Thomas et al., 2018). Without consideration of human dynamics and developmental predispositions, which includes how people interpret and make meaning of information and events, even seemingly comprehensive analyzes of coupled social and technical systems risk offering partial solutions by ignoring critical dependencies.

Figure 1. Sociotechnical resilience processes – sensing, anticipating, adapting, and learning (SAAL).2

2 The feedback loops represent the recursive and reciprocal relationships between processes. The boundary condition represented by the dashed line defines the physical and functional areas of consideration for a given scenario. The resilience processes interact with the proximal environment at the boundary (Seager et al., 2017; Thomas, Eisenberg, Seager, & Fisher, 2019).
The ‘SAAL’ processes (Figure 1) describe four abilities of resilient systems: sensing, anticipating, adapting, and learning (Hollnagel, 2014; Park et al., 2013). Sensing is the ability to detect system state variables; anticipating is the ability to imagine changes in system conditions and state variables; adapting is the ability to adjust system performance while maintaining viable operation; learning is the ability to absorb, retain, and access knowledge from experience. The processes represent the recursive and reciprocal relationships between complex socio-technical systems that influence resilience. Taken together, the SAAL processes provide a coupling mechanism for linking dynamic interactions between humans and critical infrastructure (Park et al., 2013). For example, in addition to planning and preparation, humans are integral to the management and operational response to disasters and catastrophic events (Madni & Jackson, 2009). Moreover, officials and civil servants as individuals, teams, and organizations must coordinate and maintain critical infrastructure technical mitigation and recovery (and adaptation) policies and resources (Labaka, Hernantes, & Sarriegi, 2016) while also providing a diversity of rescue (recovery) and support services across other systems, (e.g. public health and safety). The four abilities are a way to describe the resilience of the coupled human–infrastructure system. Thus, the SAAL processes provide a means for describing the dynamic relationships between people and infrastructure (Thomas et al., 2019). In addition to adaptive behaviors, the relationships can also include maladaptive behaviors (Masten & Obradovic, 2010), as observed with events like Hurricane Katrina (Westrum, 2005).

The catastrophic consequences of Hurricane Katrina revealed numerous latent human inadequacies during the recovery efforts, including physical deficiencies, personnel failures, organizational failures, and bureaucracy failures (Westrum, 2005). Multiple breakdowns across operational domains exposed a myriad of individual and organizational deficits including poor leadership, poor judgment, and criminal behavior of officials. Over 200 civil servants either deserted or were absent without official leave including 25 police officers who quit while on duty at areas of intense stress and two officers who committed suicide (Westrum, 2005). “It seemed as if no one was in control. In a very real sense this was true” (Westrum, 2005, p. 5). In other words, there was a catastrophic breakdown in the human component of recovery management in multiple overlapping operating domains within the city of New Orleans. Beginning with a profound lack of preparation cited just a year earlier (Laska, 2008), a “social catastrophe” ensued (Cutter & Emrich, 2006) along with a complete loss of power, loss of the levees system, loss of communications, and a loss of civil obedience among numerous officials (Westrum, 2005). A capstone to the emergency management breakdowns in New Orleans in response to hurricane Katrina, the mayor of New Orleans when the hurricane hit in 2005 was sentenced to federal prison in 2014 (Murphy & Peristein, 2014) for corruption and gaff during and after the hurricane struck the city.

In contrast to the diminished moral capacity prevalent among a cross section of civil servants, there were also examples of exceptional human performance during Hurricane Katrina. Admiral Thad Allen, the commander of the U.S. Coast Guard gained high regard for his leadership during the recovery efforts (Sullenberger & Century, 2012). His rapid response was unscripted and credited with saving thousands of people. Allen was appointed Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency at a time of organizational dysfunction. His ability to articulate and enact a set shared values among staff, was recognized as exceptional leadership in a most difficult of circumstances.
Moral development is relevant to critical infrastructure resilience engineering for two reasons. First, moral maturity is related to human resilience (Kumpfer, 1995), which means it is embedded in any consideration of infrastructure resilience that includes people. Second, because an individual’s capacity for moral reasoning may be viewed as a protective factor for people (Stokols, Lejano, & Hipp, 2013), moral development is interrelated to the dynamic interactions between and among humans, technical systems, and environments.

Given the complex, interdependent, and interconnected nature of infrastructure systems, certain critical roles (e.g., managers and operators) require individuals to make sense of systems in complex ways that can involve high degrees of ambiguity and uncertainty. Evidence from research in developmental psychology suggest that human factors such as interpersonal awareness, the capacity to consider alternative perspectives, complex systems thinking, and adaptive capacities emerge and advance in later stages of human development (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Vincent, 2015). Moreover, research by Cook-Greuter (1999) supports the notion that capacities for complex systems thinking are rare human traits only accessible after passing through a sequence of developmental stages. Other evidence suggest that individuals are often discouraged from developing by existing educational institutions and management structures (Torbert et al., 2004). Furthermore, Cook-Greuter’s data (n=4,510) indicates that fewer than 20% of the adult population arrive at the later (postconventional) stages of development (Cook-Greuter, 1999). As a result, certain catastrophic infrastructure breakdowns may exceed the capacity of some individuals to effectively function and cope with high degrees of complexity and uncertainty. The developmental stages support a holistic structure for linking diverse concepts of resilience involving human interactions with – operating and managing – infrastructure. Thus, in addition to the potential to enhance anticipation of potential threats and outcomes, a key benefit of a holistic framework integrating human development and critical infrastructure resilience processes is to align operations and management roles and responsibilities with individual strengths and adaptive capacities of people.

Human Development Theoretical Framework and Potential Implications for Infrastructure Resilience

Human development theory incorporates epistemological diversity to account for differences in how people make meaning and interpret knowledge in different contexts across time. That is, the way in which individuals experience resilience concepts and how those concepts and definitions influence relationships and proposed solutions over time correspond to the human capacity to develop more complex ways of interpreting and interacting with their environment. In this section, we examine different human development theories to identify one able to support a holistic framework for critical infrastructure management applications.

Early Developmental Theories

Jean Piaget (1954) is considered to have developed the first structural model of cognitive development (called “genetic epistemology”). He created a comprehensive empirical method to assess the capacity for rational thought and describe how patterns or stages of cognition emerge in developing children and adolescents. Piaget identified the important transition from "concrete"
to "formal" cognitive capacities that allow for abstract concepts, logical reasoning, and the rigorous imagination of possibilities/alternatives.

Building on Piaget's work Lawrence Kohlberg developed a theory of moral development describing six types of moral reasoning in children and adults (Kohlberg, 1969, 1973). The six stages appear amongst three tiers – pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional (Kohlberg, 1969, 1973). A related pattern was found by William Perry's in his study of "epistemological growth," or how people relate to knowledge and belief – its sources, justifications, and evolution in people and society (Perry, 1970). Pre-conventional stages are not much concerned with either moral principles or how beliefs are justified. Conventional stages look to authorities and peer groups for both valid knowledge and moral rules. Post-conventional individuals have well developed "formal operations" that allow them to think autonomously and critically about both knowledge and ethical principles.

As noted with Hurricane Katrina, moral development is relevant to critical infrastructure resilience engineering partly because an individual’s capacity for moral reasoning may be viewed as a protective factor for people (Stokols et al., 2013) impacting human resilience and decision making. In other words, moral development may influence the dynamic interactions between and among humans and technical systems. Epistemological sophistication is also relevant to critical infrastructure resilience because in unexpected scenarios the normative procedures may not apply, and critical thinking, reevaluation, and creative problem solving are needed. Importantly, research shows that under stress cognitive capacities can deregulate, which can be viewed as a developmental "down shifting" to earlier levels of complexity capacity (Goleman, 2006; LeDoux, 1996).

**Development of Cognitive Complexity**

It is now a cliché and truism that we live in a "complex and fast-changing world." Increasingly we understand that real-world situations are "ill-defined" or "wicked," characterized by "vague or broad goals; large volumes of data from many sources; nonlinear, often uncharted analytical paths; no pre-set entry or stopping points; many contending legitimate options; collaborators with different priorities; [and] 'good enough' solutions with no one right answer (Mirel, 2004). Robert Kegan (1994, p. 12) notes that "when we experience the world as 'too complex' we are not just experiencing the complexity of the world. We are experiencing a mismatch between the world's complexity and our own at this moment. There are only two logical ways to mend this mismatch – reduce the world's complexity or increase our own. The first isn't going to happen." This concept links the developmental complexity of the infrastructure managers to the operational complexity of the infrastructure systems.

Developmental stage theories provide a way to understand the relationships between coupled human – infrastructure systems. As described by Gardner (1983), people exhibit "multiple intelligences" – a framework extended by Wilber who articulated over a dozen developmental "lines" studied by researchers (Wilber, 2000). Although researchers differ on the mechanisms, stratification schemes, and definitions of developmental levels, there is a surprising degree of correspondence among dozens of theories as to the general outlines of adult cognitive development. Domains studied include cognitive development (Piaget, 1954; Murray, Hufrnagel,
Gruber, Vonèche, & Voneche, 1979), moral development (Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1969), ego development (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Loevinger, 1966, 1976) values development (Beck & Cowan, 2006; Graves, 1970), epistemic development (Perry, 1970), and socio-emotional development (Goleman, 2006). So-called neo-Piagetian theories have also emerged proposing underlying mechanisms involved in all forms of development (Commons & Richards, 1984; Fischer, 1980).

In practice the sub-skills underlying many of these "lines" have common roots and overlapping branches, and we can focus on two broad categories of cognitive development. The first is cognitive complexity (using the narrow definition of cognitive as intellectual skill distinct from social/emotional skill); and the second is meaning-making capacity, which is Kegan's term for a skill-set that substantially overlaps with Loevinger's construct of ego development (we treat the two as essentially equivalent).

Cognitive complexity refers to the complexity of mental operations applied to some task or problem. More complexity involves more parts, relationships, factors, dynamism, interdependence, and/or unpredictability (Benbya & McKelvey, 2006; Grünwald & Vitányi, 2003). Elliott Jaques, who studied the complexity of tasks, jobs, and cognition, states that "the true source of difficulty in any problem lies in its complexity" (1996, p. 64). Jaques applied his findings to management and organizational theory, finding that "complexity may be defined in terms of the number of variables that have to be dealt with in a given time in a situation, the clarity and precision with which they can be identified, and their rate of change" (ibid). He developed methods for matching task and job complexity to an individual's cognitive complexity. Coming to conclusions compatible with those of Commons, Jaques identified two fundamental elements of cognitive complexity (Jaques, 1989). First, understanding in an area develops from simply recognizing or defining things and working with one variable at a time ("declarative"), to understanding simple relationships among them ("cumulative"), to understanding more complex relational and cause/effect chains ("serial"), to inter-related co-causal relationships and whole systems that coordinate multiple relational chains ("parallel"). Second, this entire sequence of increasing complexity happens first for semi-concrete (and symbolic) information, and then it reiterates for abstract systems of information.

Our increasingly complex world requires increasingly complex cognition to understand it – and humans and human systems are among the most complex objects we must think about. Meaning-making capacity can be understood as the application of cognitive complexity to domains involving human emotions, interiors, groups, and knowledge. Intellectual skills by themselves are understood to apply to the domain of "it" or external objects, but these skills can be applied to, not some idea, but my/your/our/their ideas (or needs, values, etc.).

Loevinger and Wessler (1970) say that "conceptual complexity has proven to be an important clue to [stage of ego development]" (v. I, p. 115); and Kegan's model describes how underlying "cognitive, interpersonal, and interpersonal" structures ("lines") develop in parallel. These theories were developed to understand how the average person understands "the world," including self and other, but since our context includes the technical and engineering domains involved in infrastructure resilience, we need to clarify that the complexity we will focus on is “meaning-making” complexity, which includes intellectual (strictly cognitive) complexity, but only to the degree needed to understand "the world" at a given level of sophistication. It seems
self-evident that one can have a high degree of complex intellectual knowledge about a system yet not have the ego development or meaning-making sophistication to, for example: question whether one is over-confident in one's knowledge, seek alternative perspectives, or flexibly adapt one's knowledge when it is proven inadequate. Strictly cognitive skills are important for routine (even advanced) engineering, design, and problem solving work, but in social-technical situations involving rapid change, multiple perspectives, or unpredictability, meaning-making skills are critical.

**Constructive Developmental Theories**

Researchers including Robert Kegan (1980, 1982) and Jane Loevinger (1979, 1983; 1970) created theories of "meaning making" (called "ego development" by Loevinger) that incorporate all of the above mentioned modalities – cognitive, epistemological, and ethical (including social/emotional) reasoning – into a single construct and framework. These theories are holistic – integrating cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. Furthermore, these three core dimensions align with prior work relating human and technical resilience capacities through the SAAL socio-technical processes (Thomas et al., 2019).

A central tenet of these "constructive-developmental" theories is that people construct and interpret meaning and identity in an ongoing manner to understand and adapt to changing life conditions and experiences. The developmental perspective shifts the focus on human understanding from behavior and what people think to how people think – i.e. to underlying cognitive structures that influence how complex problems are perceived and approached and how solutions are proposed and justified (Cook-Greuter, 1999; Kegan, 2002).

The gradual accumulation of new interpretations and ways of making meaning constructs an invariant sequence of psychological structures identified as levels or stages of development representing increasingly complex, nuanced, and creative ways of interpreting and navigating life conditions and experiences (Cook-Greuter, 1999; Kegan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1969; Loevinger, 1983). Each level brings new capacities while strengthening and building on existing capacities. As the complexity and uncertainty of life conditions and environments increases, developing individuals are challenged to build more comprehensive psychological meaning-making systems (Cook-Greuter, 2004) and an increasing capacity for positive adaptation (Hauser, 1999).

Meaning making (or ego) development spans a spectrum from black-and-white, narcissistic, impulsive, us-vs-them, short-sighted, and simplistic thinking into increasingly complex, nuanced, flexible, adaptive, reflective, expansive, empathic, and pro-social thinking. Vincent notes that as meaning-making develops "each shift in stage offers greater cognitive complexity, a more integrated perspective, greater self and interpersonal awareness, responsibility and personal autonomy, decreasing defensiveness and increasing flexibility, reflection and skill in interacting with the environment" (2015, p. 3). Here the reader can recognize the close connection between the research in developmental science and the need for adaptive and resilient approaches to socio-technical systems.

A developmental perspective on human resilience offers a better understanding of what type of adaptive responses may be possible when critical infrastructure resilience includes human
factors. Because developmental theories outline specific levels and detailed skill progressions, questions of resilience capability can be translated from vague notions or binary categories (is or is not resilient) into a more detailed and discriminating framework composed of multiple levels that have already been researched. A consideration of human development may assist, for example, with aligning management roles and responsibilities of people holding critical positions in emergency response networks. It can also help managers assess matches of tasks and situation complexity to human capacity in any situation, and especially in changing or uncertain contexts.

**The Ego Development Theories of Loevinger & Cook-Greuter**

Though Kegan's and Loevinger’s theories cover very similar territory, we will focus on Loevinger's ego development theory (though "meaning making" development may still be a more apt term) because (1) it has been more used and validated, and (2) its assessment method, the sentence completion test (SCT) is more practical and also more strongly validated.

The literature drawing on Loevinger's ego development model is so extensive that it includes a number of meta-analysis and critical overviews, substantially supporting its validity and usefulness (Cohn & Westenberg, 2004; Holt, 1980; Jespersen, Kroger, & Martinussen, 2013; Manners & Durkin, 2001; Novy & Francis, 1992; Vincent, Ward, & Denson, 2013). According to an overview by Cohn & Westenberg (2004) the SCT has very strong psychometric properties, having "indicated excellent reliability, construct validity, and clinical utility" (p. 596). As of their 2004 article, "findings of over 350 empirical studies generally support critical assumptions underlying the ego development construct" (p. 485). Blumentritt (2011, p. 153) says that "more than 1,000 articles and book chapters have been published examining nearly every conceivable aspect of the construct and measurement of ego development [showing an overall] substantial support" for the theory and measurement.

Translated into over ten languages (Cohn & Westenberg, 2004), the SCT has been used to study personality differences (Westenberg & Block, 1993), leadership (B. C. Brown, 2011; Vincent et al., 2013), management and organizational development (Torbert et al., 2004), and individual resilience (Gralinski-Bakker, Hauser, Stott, Billings, & Allen, 2004; Hauser, 1999). Pfaffenberger (2011, p. 10) says that "the face validity of the SCT is demonstrated by the sheer fact that it has been used in more than 300 research studies [including] such diverse topics as parenting behaviors, managerial effectiveness, and the effects of meditation on recidivism rates." Numerous studies have shown that ego development is distinct from but correlated with general intelligence (about a 30% correlation) and verbal fluency, and, as expected, like IQ, it correlates with socioeconomic status (Cohn & Westenberg, 2004; Crammer, 1999; Manners & Durkin, 2001). Pfaffenberger (2011, p. 10) says "the SCT correlates with education, socioeconomic status, and complexity of work, which has been shown to hold true across international samples" (emphasis added).

Cook-Greuter’s research enhanced and extended the seminal work of Jane Loevinger at the postconventional levels (Cook-Greuter, 1999). Cook-Greuter’s research showed that the ‘Strategist’ stage or structure in Loevinger’s model appears as two distinct stage structures. Data collected from 4,510 participants over a period of 15 years were used to characterize an additional post-conventional level and to verify adjustments to the SCT measurement instrument.
(Cook-Greuter, 1999). Table 1 identifies the "action logics" system of meaning making, and central focus for each stage along with the distribution of stages among research subjects. The dashed lines identify the stages most relevant to the present research and are discussed in more detail in the next section. The research also provided new details about the post-conventional stages such as an enhanced capacity to cope with complexity and uncertainty and an improved ability to adapt to change (Cook-Greuter, 1999; John Manners & Durkin, 2000; Vincent et al., 2015). These considerations can have both causal and prognostic implications for the resilience of infrastructure systems within which human systems are embedded.

Table 1. Ego-development Stages, Action Logics, and Central Focus.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage Name</th>
<th>Action Logic</th>
<th>Central Focus</th>
<th>% Adults (N=4,510)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preconventional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunist</td>
<td>Needs rule impulses</td>
<td>Own immediate needs, opportunities, self-protection</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomat</td>
<td>Norms rule needs</td>
<td>Socially expected behavior, approval</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Craft logic rules norms</td>
<td>Expertise, procedure and efficiency</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achiever</td>
<td>System effectiveness rules</td>
<td>Delivery of results, effectiveness, goals, success within a system</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>craft logic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-conventional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualist</td>
<td>Relativism rules single-</td>
<td>Self in relation to system, interaction to system</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>system logic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategists</td>
<td>Most valuable principles</td>
<td>Linking theory and principles with practice, dynamic systems</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rule relativism</td>
<td>interactions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alchemist</td>
<td>Deep processes and inter-</td>
<td>Interplay of awareness, thought, action, and effects; transforming</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>systemic evolution rules</td>
<td>self and others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>principles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cook-Greuter's framework was extended further by O'Fallon in her STAGES model (Murray, 2017; O’Fallon, 2011). STAGES formalizes and extends Cook-Greuter's original notion of a sequence of "person-perspectives" into a sequence of six person-perspective transformations (i.e. first, second, third...sixth person-perspective). It proposes an underlying set of generative

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3 Stage names by Cook-Greuter (and Torbert); Action Logics are meaning-making systems with increasing complexity; Central Focus describes a psycho-social disposition or frame of reference dominant for each stage; % Adults are the results of a 15 year study involving 4,510 adults across a broad range of demographics. (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Torbert et al., 2004).
parameters that give rise to the entire developmental sequence, including growth from concrete to increasingly abstract (or "subtle") objects of awareness, advancing cognition from individual objects to collectives and systems of objects, and moving from receptive to more active and reciprocal orientations to knowledge. O'Fallon's SCT scoring method is much less dependent on the content of the sentence completions (i.e. is more focused on underlying structure) and thus her method is more extensible to new domains.

Both the theoretical model and the assessment method described above apply to critical infrastructures whereby roles and responsibilities are impacted by the resilient development of the designers, operators, and managers involved as noted earlier with the contrasting management responses to Hurricane Katrina. That is, psychological meaning-making structures supporting the different ways of interpreting events, experiences, and changes associated with stages of development can impact how people interact with and influence the resilience of complex technological systems like infrastructure.

**Ego Development Applied to Infrastructure Resilience Management**

**Studies Linking Human Resilience and Development**

Related studies of human development focus on how children and young adults learn and grow (develop) in different support-and-challenge contexts. These studies offer valuable insight to human development by emphasizing a behavioral perspective of the interactions of individuals exposed to different environments such as risk and adversity (Masten, 2001), social ecology and diversity (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013), and cultural tensions (Ungar, 2006). In general these studies show that supportive social networks enhance an individual's resilience, and that resilient personalities withstand stressful situations more favorably (Masten & Obradovic, 2008). Within the Loevinger lineage we can note two longitudinal studies relating human development and resilience.

In the first study, data gathered at the beginning and end of a nine-year period showed a strong positive relationship between measurements of ego-resiliency and ego-development (Westenberg & Block, 1993). Empirical evidence suggests that ego resiliency and ego-development are interrelated, and that development may occur at different rates among individuals within the same age group (Westenberg & Block, 1993). Ego-resiliency, which describes “flexible and resourceful adaptation” was divided into three subdomains, and each proved interrelated to ego development. Although the relationship between ego-resiliency and ego-development did not contrast or change among ego stage transitions, a strong, coherent relationship was apparent. Another important finding relevant to our paper is the anticipated and observed strong positive relation between interpersonal integrity and ego development. Interpersonal integrity, which describes a capacity for authentic relations, was subdivided into two subdomains, and each revealed a strong, coherent relationship with ego-development.

Although the age range of the participants does not represent middle-aged managers, this study is most relevant to the work herein because it provides evidence of the interrelatedness between concepts of human resilience and human development. The data suggest that the properties that correlate with the resilience of a person also correlate with patterns of ego
development. A potential application to infrastructure resilience is the alignment of short and long-term roles and responsibilities with consideration of individual human strengths and growth opportunities.

In the second study, multiple sets of data collected over a 20 year period found associations between ego-development and a set of themes characterizing a group of people demonstrating resilient outcomes in young adult life despite extreme adversity in childhood (Gralinski-Bakker et al., 2004; Hauser, 1999). The research posits a perspective of resilience as the positive adaptation in response to adversity (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990) and includes measurements and assessments of both internal states of being and observed actions and outcomes (Gralinski-Bakker et al., 2004; Hauser, 1999). The research findings are relevant to our integration of human resilience and development with critical resilience for two reasons.

First, whereas the research described above reviewed data collected at the end points of a nine-year period, this longitudinal study collected data over a period of 20 years, in addition to the endpoints, including adolescence and young adulthood. Although single cross-sectional or time-point assessments can yield valuable insights, longitudinal research is vital to understanding potential trajectories of resilient development in humans (Gralinski-Bakker et al., 2004; Hauser, 1999), technical systems (Igor Linkov et al., 2013; Park et al., 2013), and social systems (Brown & Westaway, 2011; Walker, Holling, Carpenter, & Kinzig, 2004).

The second reason this study is relevant to the present work is the comprehensive research approach, tools, and methods used. The instruments, which included Loevinger’s ego development test, provided reliable and repeatable measurements of the protective factors, which were later used as predictors of outcomes (Gralinski-Bakker et al., 2004) in the third phase of data collection. The factors characterize a perspective of resilience as an internal state of being and positive adaptation to adverse events and changing life and environmental conditions (Hauser, 1999). In other words, the research included both endogenous and exogenous measures and assessments of resilient human development. The rigor of data collection, analysis, and published findings of Hauser’s research supports our conceptual framework for integrating a perspective of resilient human development with critical infrastructure resilience.

**Ego-Development Stages Influence on the SAAL processes**

Although ego stages may be viewed as coherent personality structures, Loevinger considered ego as a reference frame or a “lens” influencing an individuals’ perceptions of the world (Cohn & Westenberg, 2004). Whereas “the depth, complexity, and scope of what people notice can expand throughout life,” (Cook-Greuter, 2004, p4), protective factors like resilience and adaptive capacity are particularly enhanced in later stages of development (Gralinski-Bakker et al., 2004; Hauser, 1999; Westenberg & Block, 1993).

We emphasize the four stages in Table 2 as a focus of our human development framework for two reasons. First, the distribution of stages in Cook-Greuter’s data suggests that over 80% of the sample represent a stage at or below the conventional tier. Other researchers report similar findings whereby the majority of the adult population appear to reside at either the expert or achiever stages (Manners & Durkin, 2000; Vincent, 2015). We have excluded the Opportunist...
and Diplomat stages based on our assumption that individuals at these stages are not likely found in infrastructure design, operation, and management environments.

Table 2. Ego-development stages considered with the present work.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage Name</th>
<th>Methods of influence</th>
<th>Response to feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Gives personal attention to detail and seeks perfection,</td>
<td>Takes feedback personally, defends own position, dismisses feedback from those who</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>argues own position and dismisses other’ concerns</td>
<td>are not seen as experts in the same field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achiever</td>
<td>Provides logical arguments, experience, makes task/goal-</td>
<td>Accepts feedback, especially if it helps them to achieve their goals and to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>oriented contractual agreements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-conventional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualist</td>
<td>Adapts or ignores rules where needed, or invents new</td>
<td>Welcomes feedback as necessary for self-knowledge, and to uncover hidden aspects of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ones, open to discussion of issues and airs differences</td>
<td>their own behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategists</td>
<td>Leads to reframing, reinterpreting situation, so that</td>
<td>Invites feedback for self-actualization, conflict is seen as an inevitable aspect of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>decisions support overall principle, strategy and foresight</td>
<td>viable and multiple relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second, post-conventional stages appear to reveal qualities of people associated with enhanced human resilience and adaptive capacity, which can have positive influence on the SAAL processes in relation to infrastructure resilience. Thus, there is an opportunity for growth and expansion from conventional to post-conventional ways of interpreting experience and interacting with complex systems. Individuals at post-conventional stages can more readily adapt to more complex environments and changes because they are more flexible and have more personal resources available to them. For example, these individuals have the ability to perceive another person’s frame of reference and are more likely to respond in a way that is most effective to the task at hand by adapting their message to best be received by the other (Cook-Greuter, 1999, 2004; Vincent et al., 2015).

Many of the properties of post-conventional stages have been correlated with leadership effectiveness across a range of studies reporting similar findings (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Manners, Durkin, & Nesdale, 2004; Torbert et al., 2004; Vincent et al., 2015). Common themes and characteristics include a higher toleration for ambiguity and uncertainty, increased ability to

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4 Column list stage names by Cook-Greuter and Torbert. ‘Methods of influence’ characterize how individuals at a given stage tend to interact with others when seeking influence. ‘Response to feedback’ indicates how individuals are able to receive and integrate information and critique from others (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Torbert et al., 2004).
comprehend complexity, and a greater capacity to manage multiple and conflicting perspectives and emotions. These factors are relevant to certain roles and responsibilities in an infrastructure environment whereby people are interacting with other people and with technological systems, and where people and/or groups might be holding different priorities and assumptions. The dynamic interactions can influence potential resilient pathways and outcomes. Whereas the current stage for a given individual represents established psychological structures that can be measured, transitions to later stages are pathways of development representing a potential for growth that can be anticipated and thereby enhance critical infrastructure resilience.

How do the developmental levels relate to job situations likely to arise in infrastructure disaster scenarios? At Conventional (Diplomat and Expert) levels safety and acceptance come through pleasing authorities and merging/complying with "the crowd" of one's peers on the job. These individuals are more likely to: keep one’s head down; stay out of trouble, don't rock the boat, look good to one's supervisor, just follow the given rules, do their very best to master a defined task.

At the Achiever level individuals are more likely to take initiative, propose novel ideas, understand abstract and complicated systems, map out a rigorous field of possibilities, and search for the most efficient or effective methods.

At later post-conventional stages (Individualist and above) one is more likely to realize that even our best rational efforts are flawed, that human and natural systems are fundamentally unpredictable, and that one should be both open to and prepared for surprise. Moreover, ego development theory suggests that these individuals may be more capable of holding conflicting perspectives and possibilities without stress and moving into "sense and respond" vs. "plan and control" mode when situations are dynamic.

Although individuals tend to operate at a dominant stage (or "center of gravity"), measurements reveal a Gaussian (or normal) distribution among test items. Developmental theories in general draw on Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" model in assuming that people demonstrate a range of developmental levels across tasks and situations, such that they perform more poorly in challenging or stressful contexts, and perform at their leading edge in familiar and/or supported (also called "scaffolded") contexts (Fischer & Pruyne, 2002; Vygotsky, 1980).

This is particularly important in the domain of critical infrastructure resilience. First, as mentioned, systems failures and unexpected shocks to normal expectations can create stressors that "downshift" an individual's developmental capacity. Second, complex socio-technical systems require collaborative/collective efforts, in which each person's tasks and knowledge is scaffolded by others. In times of complexity, uncertainty, and/or stress, social and communications relationships can degrade, which means that the performance of each individual who relies on others may further degrade. This implies that trust and other forms of social capital actually protect against degradation of both individual and group performance in times of stress.
Discussion and Future Research

A developmental perspective of resilience can have broad application to large-scale natural or man-made disaster scenarios (Masten & Obradovic, 2010). Disaster scenarios and catastrophic events include disruptions to infrastructure critical to public health, safety, and well-being that supports conditions for development to occur. Thus, we propose a method for investigating the relationships between human resilience, development, and critical infrastructure resilience.

The framework proposed combines conceptual frameworks of human resilience, development, and critical infrastructure resilience to form a single meta-framework. The SAAL processes are adapted from resilience engineering concepts and frameworks representing the resilience of a socio-technical system (Hollnagel, 2014; Park et al., 2013; Woods, 2015) as applied to critical infrastructure (Thomas et al., 2019). Common theoretical foundations consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of resilience (Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Reich, Zautra, & Hall, 2010) and human development (Cook-Greuter, 1999) serve as a basis for linking the frameworks. Moreover, data from prior research revealing a strong, coherent relationship between resilience and development in adults (Gralinski-Bakker et al., 2004; Hauser, 1999; Westenberg & Block, 1993) further supports our rationale for research linking frameworks. With an emphasis on coupled social and technological systems, we offer a conceptual model a starting point to operationalize an integrated framework of resilient human development and critical infrastructure.

The proposed framework is shown in Figure 2 below. The rows are the four stages of development identified earlier, and the columns represent the four social-technical processes, which are dynamically coupled to human resilience and critical infrastructure resilience (Thomas et al., 2019). The SAAL processes serve as a coupling mechanism linking infrastructure resilience concepts with human development concepts and structures. We posit that endogenous and exogenous properties and processes corresponding to sensing, anticipating, adapting, and learning are progressively differentiated for each stage of development as identified in the first column of Figure 2. Each stage reveals capacities for sensing, anticipating, adapting, and learning that are more enhanced, complex, and integrated compared to the prior stages. We also posit the differences between stages can have a significant influence on critical infrastructure resilience. For example, as an individual’s development unfolds from conventional to post-conventional, there is a shift in capacity toward greater autonomy, and a higher tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty (Cook-Greuter, 2004). The shift can impact how individuals interpret and respond to high degrees of complexity such as catastrophic system failures and disasters. Moreover, a capacity to comprehend complex systems is emergent at the post-conventional levels (Cook-Greuter, 1999), which can impact critical infrastructure resilience.
Figure 2.5 A framework integrating technical systems’ resilience capacities with human meaning-making via the SAAL sociotechnical processes.

At this early stage of arguing for a marriage of developmental theories with infrastructure resilience scholarship we can only begin to map out the potential applications and implications. Clearly there is no extant research that demonstrates that, for example, individuals at or above a given developmental level will perform well at specific infrastructure-related jobs, or respond flexibly to systems failures and other unexpected situations. Here we can only (1) argue that the capacities required for resilient responses map well to the skills articulated more thoroughly in existing developmental theories (in particular meaning-making and ego-development models); (2) show that developmental theories and their assessment instruments have proven to be robust and valid in many applications and contexts.

How are each of the SAAL components affected by developmental factors? To review: Sensing is the ability to detect system state variables; anticipating is the ability to imagine changes in system conditions and state variables; adapting is the ability to adjust system performance

5 Note: The stage names in bold represent changes in labels Cook-Greuter made to her model in 2015.
6 As development moves from the Expert toward the Strategist stage, each cell describes the internal and external developmental properties representing the SAAL sociotechnical processes – sensing, anticipating, adapting, and learning.
while maintaining viable operation; learning is the ability to absorb, retain, and access knowledge from experience. Below we illustrate how each of these elements relates to developmental factors – but keep in mind that here one's "developmental level" is not simply one's ordinary "center of gravity," but includes the dynamic of the how one actually behaves and thinks in any given moment and situation. For example, a person who normally is open to receiving feedback may be more emotionally "shut down" and defensive in times of stress – exhibiting a lower developmental capacity. Later developmental levels will be better able to monitor both self and social-systems to notice stressor effects, and make efforts to protect against or compensate for them – resulting in a type of meta-resilience that tries to maintain optimal levels of psycho-social resilience in the face of extreme stressors. In terms of each of the SAAL elements:

- **Sensing:** Earlier stages may be less capable of perceiving novel information and may "keep their head down" focused on tasks and be less likely to scan for unusual signs. And they may stay silent and defer to authorities or consensus opinion in the face of novel or conflicting information. Conversely, later levels may notice nuances and novel signals, be able to perceive come complex patterns in novel data, be more likely to speak up in dissent from authorities or peers; and they may notice more nuanced signals and patterns in interpersonal and social dynamics.

- **Anticipating:** Earlier levels are less likely to imagine possibilities or scenarios that differ from past experience (or codified procedures); they are less likely to consider the types of complex interactions and feedback loops that lead to unpredictable and chaotic outcomes; they are less likely to take the initiative to actively seek out new information and perspectives. Conversely, later levels are more likely to anticipate more unusual and/or complex scenarios; be more active in seeking diverse perspectives on a topic; and will have the capacity to plan or imagine further into the future, and over wider social and geographic scales.

- **Adapting:** Earlier levels will stick to accepted and well-practiced protocols, fearing punishment, public shaming, or disorientation if they diverge from norms and authoritarian expectations. Conversely, later levels will adapt routine protocols more readily, and have better feedback mechanisms (sensing and anticipating) for continuous fine-tuned adjustment of their actions and plans.

- **Learning:** Earlier levels are more geared to learn from explicit instruction, and from observing and/or imitating others; they are more resistant and defensive to changing their minds or mental models or to receiving corrective feedback. The types of complexity they can learn is limited, for example, to simple associations and linear methods. Conversely, later levels are more eager to learn, improve, and excel; ego's are less threatened by challenges, and corrective feedback is not only appreciated it is sought after. In addition, more complex mental models can be learned, such as complex dynamic systems, ecologies, recursive and fractal structures, etc.; and more complex interpersonal and socio-cultural dynamics can be appreciated and accommodated to.
We posit knowledge of the properties that appear at each stage of development assist with aligning strengths and capacities of individuals with roles and responsibilities for designers, operators, and managers thereby improving critical infrastructure resilience. Moreover, because stages emerge in an invariant sequence over time (Cook-Greuter, 1999; Loevinger, 1976), knowledge of how the properties change at each stage can serve as a predictor of potential outcomes correlating with the SAAL processes representing critical infrastructure resilience. Thus, knowledge of how a person is capable of responding and interacting with complex systems can improve critical infrastructure resilience by providing a more effective allocation of resources. For example, possible responses to varying levels of complexity and uncertainty related to infrastructure disruptions can be informed by an individual’s stage of development thereby increasing the potential of aligning resilient system requirements for sensing, anticipating, adapting, and learning with human resilience and developmental capacities.

Similar to the adaptive properties of other human coupled systems that are unpredictable due to novelty and uncertainty introduced by humans (Holling & Gunderson, 2002; Martin-Breen & Anderies, 2011), we posit that meaning-making offers an important dimensional perspective of resilient social-technical systems like critical infrastructure. Thus, another reason for incorporating ego-development in our framework linking people and technical systems is that ego-development theory and model rely on measurement of adult capacity for meaning-making. Moreover, Cook-Greuter’s (1999) evolution of Loevinger’s (1976) model and O’Fallon’s extension (2011) offers a comprehensive and validated method for measuring the adult capacity for meaning-making relevant to the present application. Because stages of development correspond to structures of adult meaning-making, we argue that ego-development is an effective way to account for the third dimension of resilience, in addition to space and time, influencing complex adaptive systems like critical infrastructure.

Further work could propose how each SAAL element breaks down by each of the four developmental levels in Table 2, but the level of specificity we give above, in terms of general trends, better matches the early state of research and scholarship in applying developmental theory to workplace and infrastructure resilience. How might we apply this marriage of the SAAL framework and developmental theory? Again, we can only be suggestive at this early stage, and additional research is warranted.

- Our framework can be used to better articulate the factors that go into techno-social systems (1) design; (2) training; and (3) post-event analysis. The framework supports the consideration of internal (endogenous) and social factors, such as feelings (e.g. confidence, fear, resistance, surprise, trust, respect), expectations, values, and flows of information/communication.

- Post-disaster analysis data could be re-analyzed in the terms of our model. For example each context could be rated according to whether each of the four SAAL elements was early, middle, or late according to the trends we suggest above. This could be done for successful responses and unsuccessful responses, with the hypothesis that successful responses would demonstrate later level SAAL elements.
- The assessment of developmental levels (directly or indirectly) can inform both the expectations placed on workers and stakeholders, and also the appropriate types and goals for trainings and educational opportunities afforded.

- Developmental assessment might be used to inform which individuals are given the reins and which groups are asked to collaborate closely in response to disasters. The theory suggests that in dynamic scenarios trying to coordinate conventionally-oriented groups with post-conventional groups would only pile on additional tensions.

Here we must add a caution often included when such developmental or cognitive tests are used for "high stakes" decision-making. A single assessment has a margin of error, and any single measurement can capture the complexity of a human being. Such assessments should not be used as the only source of decision making; extreme precautions are warranted when decisions are focused on individuals (e.g. job placement); and more robust results are expected when assessment results are applied over groups, e.g. in assessing the average ability of a team to respond to a critical situation. Moreover, as research indicates that diversity of various sorts is important for team performance (Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Nederveen Pieterse, Van Knippenberg, & Van Dierendonck, 2013), relying on any single psychological construct can contribute towards cultural or epistemic ‘mono-culture’ (Bennett, 2015; Mignolo, 2011)

**Conclusion**

Human resilience, development, and critical infrastructure resilience can have reciprocal influence on one another. The holistic model shown in Figure 2 links resilience and development with technical systems by incorporating the endogenous and exogenous factors influencing the resilience of complex systems like infrastructure. The endogenous properties include the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors linking ego-development and human resilience. These factors form a developmental basis for human intentions, motivations, and agency that subsequently influences and informs social-technical processes of sensing, anticipating, adapting, and learning. The endogenous and exogenous properties are both recursive and reciprocal in nature, which means each system can interact and exchange influence in a repetitive manner, and each system can influence the resilience of other coupled systems. Future research designed to identify, apprehend, and validate the theoretical and conceptual frameworks presented herein with empirical data is recommended. Knowledge of the properties and processes corresponding to sensing, anticipating, adapting and learning for each stage of development will ground the theoretical and conceptual frameworks in practical research. A proven operational model can elucidate how each stage of resilient human development contributes unique qualities and capabilities needed by designers, operators, and managers to ensure the resilience of infrastructure critical to public health, safety, and well-being.

**Data Availability Statement**

No data, models, or code were (Cook-Greuter, 2004) generated or used during the study (e.g., opinion or data-less paper).
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Nine Paths of Growth:
Integrating Immunity to Change with the Enneagram

Amiel Handelsman¹

Introduction

In this article, I propose several ways of integrating the Enneagram system of development with Kegan and Lahey’s Immunity to Change (ITC) framework. These “meshes”² represent the latest step in a broader project to enact my own version of “integrative leadership.” In general, integrative leadership means blending together different frameworks³ for developing leaders by using each framework’s unique strengths to supplement the others. Rather than debate which approach is better, we bring them together. This integrative process comes with two prerequisites. First, the frameworks need to share enough core principles to make them compatible. Second, they need to differ in their specific practices – what you actually do to develop leaders – because it’s on the field of practice that integration occurs.

My own version of the integrative leadership project involves blending constructive adult development, of which ITC is perhaps the most popular expression, with the Enneagram, and doing so in ways that are practically useful and empirically sound. What prompts this is my experience with these two systems over the past twenty years. Both the Enneagram and ITC have shaped my work with leaders and organizations and my own development as a human being. I’ve found them to be deep, actionable, and versatile. At the same time, I’ve scratched my head wondering if they might complement each other. This typically occurs while working within one system. In moments of frustration or stuckness, I’ll look to the other system for help. I think of this as a methodological SOS call. The good news is that my understanding deepens. The bad news is that nobody else seems to be dialing the same number. So when looking for people to compare notes, I come up empty-handed. Why is this?

My best current answer to this question involves who hangs out with whom – or, more accurately, who doesn’t. The communities of practice that have grown around these two systems inhabit different universes. They speak in different languages, operate on different assumptions, and rarely cross paths either in the lab or on the playing field. Interestingly, although the adult development community is a fraction the size of its Enneagram counterpart, I’ve met far more

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² I will be using the words “mesh,” “blend” and “integration” interchangeably

³ I will be using the words “framework” and “system” interchangeably
adult development practitioners interested in the Enneagram than vice versa. Still, the numbers are small, and the hindrances to inter-communal exchanges substantial. On the Enneagram side, constructive adult development isn’t even on the radar. Within the adult development crowd, views of the Enneagram are mixed. Although some find the Enneagram personally useful, few use it professionally. Nearly everyone sees the Enneagram as a stepping stone for placing people in boxes, a topic I address later in this article. Therein lies one reason for this article: to open up an initial conversation between two communities that have yet to even go on a first date.

My secondary intent is pragmatic: to offer practitioners of both systems new possibilities for helping people grow up, wake up, and show up. The adult development community seems more likely to find this offer enticing. For this reason, I’ve framed the integrative meshes as ways the Enneagram can supplement ITC rather than vice versa. Nonetheless, regardless of which community you associate with, I hope you’ll find these to be beneficial. Each integration I describe is something you can experiment with in your own development – which is how I like to start – and explore professionally with clients or students. This reminds me of Kurt Lewin, the founder of organizational development, who famously said that there is nothing so practical as a good theory. Could it be even more practical to integrate two good theories?

Some of the material in this article reflects experiments I’ve undertaken. Other parts offer early maps of territory yet to be explored. In all cases, I assume that readers have at least some familiarity with both ITC and the Enneagram. This will make the reading experience both more enjoyable and more valuable.\[4\]

The article is organized into six sections.

- The integrative leadership project and my own take on it
- My experiences as a student of the Enneagram and ITC and how these inspired my commitment to integrate them
- Mesh #1: Ignite practice by integrating ITC’s “one big thing” commitments with the Enneagram’s Virtues and Holy Ideas
- Mesh #2: Connect ITC’s Big Assumptions with a deep tradition of archetypes and practices by integrating it with your dominant Enneagram type
- Bonus Mesh. Increase precision in the “dreadful scenario” portion of ITC’s Big Assumption by integrating it with Robert Solomon’s taxonomy of fears
- Future questions and an invitation to comment

\[4\] For readers interested in learning more about the Enneagram, I suggest checking out the Enneagram Institute. Its web site has a solid orientation to the framework and detailed descriptions of each type. To discover your own dominant type, consider taking the online iEQ9 from Integrative 9 Enneagram Solutions or using the short test and extended chapters in The Wisdom of the Enneagram, a book by the Enneagram Institute’s founders. For a solid overview of ITC, read Jonathan Reams’ “Immunity to Change: A Report from the Field” in the June 2009 issue of Integral Review.
The Integrative Leadership Project and My Own Take on It

In 1993 when I entered the leadership development field, the consulting firm where I worked advocated for change that was “transformational, not incremental.” Nearly three decades later, we talk about complexity, VUCA, liminality, and crises of meaning and legitimacy. Although these terms and the world they describe have shifted, the riddle of leadership has not. Both then and now, leaders’ capacity to navigate collective challenges is insufficient to either (a) promote health at every stage of development arising in human beings for the sake of present and future generations or (b) prevent massive institutional, economic, cultural, and ecological failure. This twin framing with divergent tonalities is deliberate. It reflects two voices within me…and perhaps you?

Let me express this paradox differently. On the one hand, by numerous measures, the human species is sinking deeper in mud, and most of us know it. On the other hand, this is happening at a moment in history that offers a gift unavailable to me in 1993: access to a “full deck” of teachings and practices for living a life of goodness, truth, and beauty. From neuroscience to the world’s wisdom traditions, there is no shortage of guidance about how to live and lead. The catch is that these teachings reside in separate orbits, adhere to different validity claims, and attract different pools of people. What I call the “integrative project” is to mesh these frameworks together in ways that are practically useful and empirically sound.

For people whose work involves developing leaders there is also an “integrative leadership project.” I see its purpose as integrating, customizing, and make actionable the best approaches to vertical and horizontal development – not for all 7.8 billion humans, but for people coordinating action with others around shared commitments. At team and organizational levels, this project shows up for me as an exciting possibility. In the broader context of systems, countries, and the planet, the word that comes to mind is “imperative.” We gotta do better than we’re doing now.

It is within this context that I’ve been exploring how to integrate three frameworks: constructive adult development, the Enneagram, and the field known alternatingly as speech act theory or promise-based management. My experiments in bringing these together have included:

- An unpublished book illustrating each Enneagram type’s strengths and stretches in managing commitments with others, e.g. making requests, responding to requests, renegotiating promises, reporting completion, declaring (dis)satisfaction

- A conference session where adult development professionals explored what their dominant Enneagram type made object for them

- A short book after the 2016 election examining Mr. Trump’s Enneagram type and developmental stage, whose writing was in the end for me a healing act

5 Promise-based management also is known as speech act theory and ontological coaching. It originated in the 20th century philosophy of John Austin and John Searles. The person who interpreted it for organizations was Fernando Flores. The “sibling” field I reference here and will introduce later is Robert Solomon’s taxonomy of moods.

6 https://amielhandelsman.com/djt-enneagram-offer/
- Most recently, a series of interviews with later stage individuals about their journey to and beyond the Self-Authored Mind through the lens of their dominant Enneagram type

The bulk of this article focuses on the Enneagram and constructive adult development, specifically Immunity to Change. I also offer a “bonus mesh” that draws upon one of the sibling fields of promise-based management.

Before getting into the nitty gritty, I’d like to share elements of my own personal journey that caused me to see these integrations as both important and possible.

**My Experiences as a Student of the Enneagram and ITC**

My interest in integrating the Enneagram and ITC is inspired by my own experiences as a student and executive coach. This section draws primarily from the former. Each of these two systems has contributed to my personal (and sometimes transpersonal) growth in powerful ways. I’ve also experienced these systems’ limitations and wondered how to make them better. Of course, isn’t this the starting point for every integrative mesh project? We begin frustrated by partial truths that seem incompatible if not contradictory, reinterpret this emotion as a cue to “supplement,” play around with various integrations, and then observe the goodness, truth, and beauty that unfolds (or doesn’t).

Although the Enneagram and ITC come from different traditions, operate in different ways, and attract different people, they have several things in common. First, they are useful in confronting what Ron Heifetz calls adaptive challenges. They assume that exterior behavioral shifts are necessary but not sufficient. Interior skills and awareness also matter. Second, they involve performing subject-object moves on interior narrative structures that live deep in your being and affect every domain of life. For ITC, it’s your Big Assumption. For the Enneagram, it’s your dominant type, its wings, lines and more. Third, they grant a positive intent to these interior structures. ITC calls this anxiety management. Your competing commitment and Big Assumption are signs not of stupidity but intelligent self-protection. For the Enneagram, the aim is to come home to the love that is your true nature. Fourth, both systems reveal to you how, in Kegan and Lahey’s words, you are “screwed.” In its efforts to protect you, your anxiety management system puts the brakes on commitments that matter to you. As for the Enneagram, your dominant type’s noble intent to connect you with love is thwarted by its radical misinterpretation of how to get there. Finally, the discovery is half the goal. Immunity Maps involve deep thinking and feeling and hold high standards for moving from one column to the next. As for the Enneagram, identifying your dominant type is intended to be not a quick assessment but a revealing journey.

ITC and the Enneagram have more in common than might appear on the surface, especially to devoted practitioners of each. Just as important, their strengths differ in ways that make them potential complements. What follows is a brief description of how I discovered this in my experiences as a student of both approaches.
Learning the Enneagram

The Enneagram is an ancient system for *waking up* to your true nature. In the last half century, it has emerged as a modern system for *showing up* in life as competent, reliable, sincere, and caring. Critics note its use for *boxing up* people into rigid categories and *hamming up* justifications for unhealthy behaviors. There is plentiful evidence of both misuses in the actions of people unpacking the Enneagram through conventional and early post-conventional action logics. What remains largely unexamined is the Enneagram’s potential for *growing up* people through stages of adult development. Russ Hudson suggests that “Type isn’t a ‘type’ of person, but a path to God.” What if each type also provided a path to the Self-Authored Mind and beyond?

The Enneagram contains many layers, folds, and permutations. In addition to your dominant type, you have access to two “wings,” as well as points of stress and integration. Right there your inner life touches five of the nine points. If you’re boxed in, the container is not one, but five boxes! Now blend in your dominant instinctual type (self-preservation, sexual, or social) and nine levels of health. Suddenly, the Enneagram is a system of great complexity. Yet complexity is in the eye of the beholder. How you make sense of your dominant Enneagram type – and the degree to which your awareness includes the other dimensions – depends on when in the journey of adult development you encounter it. And, as you grow, these encounters work on you in different ways.

My own experience is illustrative. One way to describe my first encounter with the Enneagram is to contrast it with my exposure a decade earlier to another typology, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). During my senior year of college, I learned about MBTI in a leadership class. My big “aha” was that different people are different, and no style is better than any other. As the guest instructor explained this, I remember feeling a warm compassion arising in me that was utterly novel. Here was a world where being Introverted as opposed to Extraverted was neither right nor wrong, but simply different. Appreciating these differences enables us to circumvent misunderstandings and get along better. This is what the instructor taught, or at least how I unpacked it through my existing action logic. At that time, it was likely centered in Expert attention to mastering the craft of pre-med coursework and dipping into Achiever capacities for reflection, single-loop learning, and openness to feedback.

Ten years later, when I discovered the Enneagram during a coaching course, the experience brought an updated version of that prior “aha” and added new ones. I learned that the Enneagram, like MBTI, delineates a series of types, none better or wiser than the others. Again: people are different, and that’s OK.

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7 These misuses raise important questions about who helps whom learn the Enneagram for what purposes. Is the Enneagram like nuclear fission material that belongs in certain hands and not others? Should we teach it only to people at later action logics? One could make a solid argument for this on moral and philosophical grounds. However, on a practical level, the Enneagram is less like uranium than video games. It’s everywhere (albeit to a far lesser degree), and restraining its use is impractical. Rather than slow its spread, I would distinguish its uses. At conventional action logics, the Enneagram is good for appreciating difference. This assumes, of course, that teachers introduce it with appropriate caveats, disclaimers and contraindications. I don’t know how often this happens, but it presents an intriguing challenge to any Enneagram teacher who accepts the validity of developmental stages.
Yet with the Enneagram the self-typing experience was emotional, even cathartic. When my teacher asked me, “Is it more important for you to be right…or to be safe?” tears immediately appeared. Safety. This is what I’ve always wanted and concluded I could never find. Memories appeared of my parents’ divorce at age six, hiding in the closet from suspected (but not actual) burglars as an adolescent, and terror during dates as a young adult that my primal urges would cause me to cross the line. Now each memory gained a radically new interpretation. My self-image as a spontaneous and free-spirited person dissolved in an instant. In its place arose a storyline around safety and trust that had operated on me pervasively yet outside my awareness. Oh, so that’s what’s been going on all this time! I thought I was a pretty smart guy. How could I have missed this? Classic subject-object move.

This experience with the Enneagram is not uncommon for people entering later post-conventional stages. Identifying your dominant type doesn’t put you in a box. Instead, it names the box you unknowingly put yourself in every day and offers – or at least hints at – a path out. Alas, in my case, the former stuck far more than the latter. This was not due to an absence of hints about the path out. I was aware of the Six’s Virtue of courage, the Holy Idea of faith, and the Healing Attitude that “maybe this will work out fine, maybe I can trust myself.” I also had read about the path of integration into the Nine’s serene dynamism, and the nine levels of health within type Six, marked at the upper end by being grounded and valiant. However, my teacher, an expert at coaching, not the Enneagram, did not highlight these, and I did not seek them out. As a result, although in theory I knew the Enneagram provided a path to heaven (or at least contentment), in practice I used it to keenly observe my daily sojourns to hell. Anxiety and distrust? Check. Unfolding potential for courage and faith. Say what?

Six years later, after a major life trauma, I would discover positive psychology, which propelled me to recognize my own courage and faith. Yet at the moment I first explored the Enneagram, this awareness was absent. It was as though, after mapping my Immunity to Change, I had started to observe the Doing/Not Doing behaviors in Column 2 – and never stopped. This is because the Enneagram lacks ITC’s consistent sequence of exercises for overcoming immunity. There was no standard process everyone follows to “catch” me from falling into the habitual reactions of my dominant type. How different those six years might have been had such a process existed. Therein lies one half of my motivation for integrating the Enneagram with ITC.

Exploring Immunity to Change

I first experienced ITC in 2002 through Kegan and Lahey’s first book, How The Way We Talk Can Change The Way We Work. At this time they had not yet begun using the metaphor of the body’s immune system. The four-column exercise elicited the “internal languages of transformation.” Going through this exercise wasn’t creating an Immunity Map. It was “building the new machine.”

This language had an unfortunate impact I didn’t recognize until much later, and it highlights a potential gap in ITC that is present even today with the updated terminology. In those years, one of my primary tribes was a coaches’ book club. When we started reading How The Way We Talk, we didn’t make it past the first chapter. At that time in San Francisco’s post-conventional coaching world, nature metaphors were in, and machine metaphors were out. The moment my colleagues
saw the word “machine,” they had a strongly negative visceral response to the entire book. You might say that Kegan and Lahey’s framework was rejected by the group’s immune system. (Later in the decade, when Immunity to Change appeared, most group members took to it with enthusiasm.)

The impact on me was significant. Four years after discovering vertical development through Ken Wilber, I had finally found a practical way to facilitate it, one created by giants of constructive development. When my colleagues rejected the book, I felt disappointed and alone. Where could I find a micro community of support, a “We” space, for this new system? As it turned out, and for a variety of reasons, nowhere.

Nearly two decades later, people have many places to turn for support. There exists a cadre of certified ITC coaches. There are online ITC communities. Tens of thousands of people have gone through the ITC process. Although there are few, if any, geographically based ITC nodes comparable to many cities’ long-standing Enneagram communities, more We spaces are available now than in 2002.

Having said this, there are two areas in which ITC could benefit from an integrative mesh:

1. **Orienting generalizations based on a small number of archetypal patterns.** Although experienced ITC practitioners observe patterns across students’ Immunity Maps, the ITC framework has no common language for describing these patterns. It is not unusual for participants to think their Big Assumption is unique to them. After all, they came up with it. Even if two participants discover that their Big Assumptions are similar, there is no terminology for naming these similarities across the ITC community. I suspect that few ITC practitioners see this as an omission. Yet when you’ve spent time with the Enneagram, it’s hard to imagine a developmental journey without such orienting generalizations. This is the benefit of a system with nine numbered types. You can have meaningful conversations with people who share your dominant type. You can explore how other types are part of you. You can learn how your dominant type interacts with other types and discover the synergies and tensions in these combinations. As we’ll see in our meshes with ITC, you can also ignite practice using the essential qualities of your dominant type and create rich new paths for naming your Big Assumption. In all of these cases, the Enneagram gives you and others a shared language not available with ITC alone or only through heavy pattern-recognition lifting by the ITC teacher.

2. **A rich tradition of resources that includes explicit adaptations to different personal and professional contexts.** On the one hand, the ITC framework has made traction in many different organizational settings and for navigating a wide variety of adaptive challenges. Kegan, Lahey and colleagues have applied ITC to school transformation (Change Leadership), weight loss (Right Weight, Right Mind) and what they call deliberately developmental organizations (An Everyone Culture). In terms of sheer flexibility, there is no limit to ITC’s uses. Yet there is a difference between a framework’s adaptability and maps illustrating how to make these adaptations. Here, again, the Enneagram has much to offer. If you want to enrich your self-understanding and relationships with others, innumerable books, videos, podcasts, and online resources are only a click away. I’ve
personally tapped Enneagram-based guides to marriage, parenting, managing, diversity, and spiritual growth. As mentioned above, I’ve written a workbook illustrating how different types manage commitments. As with any resources deriving from multiple sources, quality varies widely, so discernment is important, but the tradition is deep and accessible.

To summarize, my experiences with the Enneagram and ITC have prompted an interest in integrating them and a recognition that the benefits flow both ways. One gift ITC offers Enneagram teachers and students is a structured sequence for working with your interior narrative (Big Assumption or dominant Enneagram type). This keeps you in a dynamic tension that nurtures growth and therefore raises the odds of a subject-object move. In return, the Enneagram provides ITC coaches and participants with connection to community, a rich tradition of teachings, and an elegant nine-point framework whose orienting generalizations enrich both individual practice and collective conversation.

Next, by zooming in on the level of methodology, I explore tangible ways the two systems can complement each other in a feet-on-the-ground manner. One involves igniting sustained practice by integrating ITC’s “one big thing” commitment with the Enneagram’s evocative virtues and holy ideas. The other involves meshing the linguistic framing of the Big Assumption with the core qualities of people’s dominant Enneagram type. Then we’ll close out with a bonus mesh that adds precision to ITC’s dreadful scenario thought exercise.

Mesh #1: Ignite Practice by Integrating ITC’s “One Big Thing” Commitments with the Enneagram’s Virtues and Holy Ideas

The work of growing up, waking up, and showing up is compelling. It also brings blood, sweat, and tears and can be challenging to sustain. That’s why it’s useful to have what Daniel Coyle calls “ignitions” to practice. Ignitions include the South Korean girl watching a countrywoman win the LPGA golf championship for the first time and thinking, “I could be that” – and then signing up for golf lessons. It’s me realizing, after finishing Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, that restoring the biosphere requires personal transformation, the ITP Kata can do this, and I’m going to start it today – and then each morning, before practice, reminding myself of this purpose, for years. Ignition is people who dedicate their daily meditation to a grieving friend or strength training session to healing intergenerational racialized body trauma.

The notion of igniting practice is an explicit part of ITC and implicit to the Enneagram. Each system could employ ignition to greater effect by integrating strengths of the other. This is the aim of the first integral mesh.

Immunity to Change

In ITC, this ignition shows up in the column 1 commitment. Between How the Way We Talk and Immunity to Change, Kegan and Lahey raised the bar for its contents. Initially, you generated it by flipping a common complaint. Although this practice worked wonders with complaints, it didn’t consistently produce commitments energizing enough to compel practice. That’s why in the updated method described in Immunity to Change, Kegan and Lahey ask you to identify “one big thing,” an affirmative change you make that is a must for you and important to others.
What’s still missing from ITC are two recognitions: first, that commitments work best when declared anew each day, preferably before and after practices; second, that these declarations gain power when connected to essential virtues wired into your being and/or to purposes encompassing the widest moral span your mind can handle.

**The Enneagram**

The Enneagram doesn’t explicitly include practice-igniting commitments but offers dimensions that, when grafted onto ITC, can enrich people’s embodied experience and results. Let’s start with what’s missing. It’s difficult to generalize about Enneagram teachings because there are several major schools with different approaches. However, in the many Enneagram courses and books I’ve experienced, I’ve yet to witness a teaching whose standard process includes declaring a “one big thing” commitment. Individual teachers may do this, but it isn’t core to the Enneagram system.

The irony is that discovering your dominant Enneagram type reveals “one really big thing” and confronts you with the unabashed truth it contains. This discovery arguably reverberates at least as deep in the bones as most column 1 commitments in ITC. Yet there is a difference between exploring something in depth and stating it in a single sentence. There is also a difference between stating your fixation and declaring your commitment to escaping it. This is a gift that ITC offers the Enneagram: the practice of placing into language the core change you are committed to making. Imagine the benefits that would come if Enneagram teachers made this “linguistic turn” a core throughline in their work.

Here is how the Enneagram could reciprocate the favor. Unlike ITC, this ancient system with mystical origins invites you to explore essential qualities of your true nature, a transpersonal translation for “you at your best.” These qualities can ignite your practice, especially when blended into your “one big thing” and/or added as stand-alone declarations.

One quality that comes with each type is its “holy idea,” the state of its mind when unclouded and in balance. The holy idea of my dominant type, Six, is faith. This is not the everyday condition of my mind or the mind of anyone else dominant in Six. It’s a state we occasionally glimpse. Similarly, each type is endowed with a “virtue,” the state of its heart when pure and in balance. The virtue of Six is courage. I’m more frequently in touch with this, largely because I’ve learned to watch for its appearance. In developmental terms, the holy ideas and virtues of the Enneagram are both states that many of us can access temporarily and stable stages attainable by a very small number of people. Greater depth, less span.

The reason many Enneagram students get in touch with their holy idea and virtue is that mature teachers make these core to their teachings. If you stick around, you learn to identify these qualities conceptually and spot them in your experience. Herein lies another gift the Enneagram offers ITC. Column 1 commitments are by definition “big,” but they typically involve skills to improve and irritations to abate, not essential qualities to evoke. This reflects the overall intent of ITC: loosening the grip of anxiety management systems, not cultivating virtue.

I’ve experienced this difference myself. One of my Immunity Maps starts in column 1 with “staying calm when my kids fight.” I consider this a “must have;” it matters to my wife and sons;
and it implicates me. So it satisfies all of Kegan and Lahey’s updated criteria. Yet look what happens after introducing the virtue of type Six. Now the commitment reads “employing courage to stay calm.” This new phrasing isn’t just meaningful. It’s also inspiring. I love the feeling of being courageous, and no wonder: the new commitment includes the behavior I agree to change and transcends it by introducing an essential virtue. Anyone who knows their dominant Enneagram type can fold its virtue or holy idea into their column 1 commitment – and then repeat this declaration before each step in the “overcoming immunity” sequence.

In the table below, I list on the left three Column 1 commitments from Immunity to Change. On the right I imagine expanded declarations. Each new declaration includes the virtue of a type that is plausibly dominant for that person. This new version also adopts more powerful language, e.g. not “I want to be” but “I will.”

Table 1. Expanded ITC commitments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original column 1 commitment</th>
<th>Expanded commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I want to be better at increasing the number of things I delegate in order to have fewer things on my plate.” (David, p. 134)</td>
<td>“I will tap truthfulness [the virtue of Type Three] to increase the number of things I delegate in order to have fewer things on my plate.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am committed to better manage my emotional state and my expression of emotions.” (Cathy, p. 149)</td>
<td>“I am committed to accessing serenity [the virtue of Type One] to better manage my emotional state and my expression of emotions.” [Note: Cathy eventually adopts the mantra “I am calm”]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To be a better listener” (Fred, p. 242)</td>
<td>“I commit to tapping sobriety [the virtue of Type Seven] to be a better listener.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This blended approach will work better for some people than others. Not everyone is drawn to access essential qualities, and some will be turned off by the particular virtue or holy idea of their dominant type. In the latter case, finding synonyms that capture the same meaning can help. One source for these is positive psychology. For example, the VIA Character Strengths Survey contains 24 virtues. Each invokes the feeling of “me at my best” that can shift a column 1 commitment from meaningful to inspiring.

Although a solid column 1 commitment ignites practice, there is no need to rely on it alone. You can complement it with declarations based on the virtue or holy idea of your dominant Enneagram type or comparable language from positive psychology. The addition of “stand-alone” ignitions expands your repertoire for sustaining momentum through the “overcoming immunity” sequence of exercises.

One example: dedicating a safe experiment to your holy idea. I recently began an extensive research project whose eventual partners and final products I’ve deliberately declared “TBD.” This is not how I typically do things. It’s a safe (and big) experiment of one of my Big Assumptions. Each time I invite someone to an interview and each time I prepare for that interview, I dedicate it
to the holy idea of Six, faith. Doing this reminds me that I’m not only overcoming immunity. I’m also enacting health.

Wider Moral Span

In the context they set and commitments they elicit, both ITC and the Enneagram meet you where you are. This compassionate stand, not uncommon in high quality personal growth and leadership development, creates psychological safety. Yet I’ve long sensed something missing: a nudge to embrace concerns larger than you, your organization, or your family. Given the enormous and complex challenges in this moment of history, I consider this a big omission. Both systems allow you to bring in worldcentric concerns but neither prompt this nor build it into the teachings.

For example, in ITC you base column 1 commitments on what matters to you and others. You aren’t introduced to basic distinctions of moral span like “Me”, “Us”, or “All of Us,” much less asked to stretch as far as you can in framing your commitments. Again, this omission in personal growth and leadership development writ large is nearly universal. Ironically, the one group I’ve asked to frame commitments on these three levels was a high school class setting intentions for their senior year. (We used index cards. Everyone filled out three, passed them around the room, and then read aloud cards created by others. It was the emotional high point of the retreat). I’m not suggesting we push people beyond their capacity, but can’t we challenge them to step closer to its edges?

Three interests prompt this suggestion. First, I’ve observed the power of audacious goals that are big enough to include and transcend you and your tribe. Although worldcentric concerns stabilize only in later stages, the act of naming them, even as a future aspiration, can evoke a sense of goodness and nobility in many of us. These sentiments, when embedded in commitments and regularly declared, can light fire in the belly. Their contribution to sustaining practice when the going gets tough can be as potent as that of the Enneagram’s virtues and holy ideas.

Second, if every there were a place to explicitly nudge worldcentric concerns, it’s in communities devoted to growing up, waking up, and showing up. After all, practicing with the Enneagram or ITC raises the odds of expanding moral span (but does not guarantee it, because of multiple developmental lines). You gain greater presence in head, heart, and gut to collective challenges like climate change, the interplay of gender and economics, threats to transatlantic security alliances, the fragility of liberal democracy, and what the late American scholar Albert Murray called “the folklore of white supremacy and the fakelore of black pathology.” This is “growth to goodness.” Most mature teachers of the Enneagram and ITC care deeply about these issues yet don’t integrate them fully into the work. (As an aside, when these challenges shift from threats distant in space and time to dangers at your doorstep right now, as with the current Covid-19 pandemic, what once required worldcentric vision suddenly takes on sociocentric and egocentric dimensions.)

Finally, even as global challenges grow in intensity and immediacy, social media and other collective meaning-making systems are dumbing us down along every developmental line. Such conventional spaces, which are unavoidable outside of monastic life, exert the opposite force as the Enneagram and ITC. They make us less mature, more reactive, and less likely to widen our
moral span. I no longer use Facebook, but most people I interact with do, so my public conversations are affected by its algorithms and those of other social media. These exert profound impacts on our minds and nervous systems like fragmentation, polarization and plain unpleasantness. Perhaps it’s time to call them what they are: “regression to badness.” This raises the urgency of using developmental systems like ITC and the Enneagram to nudge wider moral plan in the commitments people declare.

Mesh #2: Connect ITC’s Big Assumption with a Deep Tradition of Archetypes and Practices by Integrating it with Your Dominant Enneagram Type

The second mesh involves integrating the ITC Big Assumption with your dominant Enneagram type in order to connect it to a system of archetypes you can explore and practice. What makes this valuable (if it works!) is the primacy of the Big Assumption in ITC. It undergirds the anxiety management system described in the Immunity Map and forms a big part of the ITC sequence of exercises. When you complete the map, it is the Big Assumption that you observe in action (by watching for Do/Not Do actions), test, and create safe experiments around. So any effort to improve the power or clarity of the Big Assumption can yield positive ripple effects for the overall ITC process.

Assumptions

The integration I propose rests upon the following assumptions:

- Both the Enneagram and ITC allow you to identify a powerful narrative that affects your thoughts, feelings and actions by operating below conscious awareness.

- The form this narrative take varies. For the Enneagram it’s an archetypal pattern of sensemaking known as the Fixation of your dominant type. For ITC, it’s the Big Assumption.

- Identifying your dominant Enneagram type and naming your Big Assumption both perform a subject-object move on this narrative. These actions allow you to have the narrative rather than the narrative having you.

- Although there are various ways to linguistically construct the Big Assumption, the “If-then” sentence is the easiest to test. More on this below.

- The four-column Immunity Map is one way to identify the contents of your “If-then” Big Assumption. The Enneagram provides another.

- Marinating yourself in the Enneagram before creating an Immunity Map provides access to depths of self-understanding that can enrich each step in the mapping process.
- Big Assumptions derived at least partly from your dominant Enneagram type connect you to a supportive community, tradition, and set of practices.

Phrasing the Big Assumption as “If-Then”

There are many ways to put a Big Assumption into language. Fortunately, ITC provides a particular linguistic framework that is easiest to test: the “If-Then” statement. Here are several examples from *Immunity to Change*:

- “If I am not highly regarded, [then] I will be a failure”
- “If I don’t find a way to get things done, [then] I’ll stop being valuable”
- “If I feel helpless, [then] there is no way I can be a good listener”
- “If I cannot be in control of the situation, [then] things are likely to get worse”

Testing Big Assumptions structured like this involves two straightforward and logical steps:

1. Keep an eye out in your experience for the action described in the first part of the sentence, which I call the “If” clause. In the above examples, you’d look for times you were not highly regarded, couldn’t find a way to get things done, felt helpless, and weren’t in control of the situation, respectively.

2. Each time you observe this action, note what happens next. Does the result described in the second part of the sentence (the “Then” clause) come to pass, or not?

In *How The Way We Talk*, the instructions explicitly called for “If-Then” sentences. This is how I learned it. In subsequent years Kegan and Lahey observed that “If-Then” statements sometimes are too dangerous to test, and other structures can still test well. So in *Immunity to Change* they introduced more flexibility. For example, the book includes the following examples:

- “I assume my safest route to success is to perform exceptionally well in ways that are expected and well established”

- “I assume my wife expects me to be able to help her solve the difficult problems she shares with me”

- “I assume a good me is 150%”

I’m basing this mesh exclusively on the “If-Then” structure for three reasons. First, I know it best. Since learning ITC in 2003, every Big Assumption I’ve uncovered myself or asked clients to uncover has been an “If-Then” statement. Second is timing. I came up with this mesh in 2005, several years before *Immunity to Change* appeared. Finally, the two-clause structure lends itself better to folding in both the Enneagram (as described here) and a taxonomy of fears (as outlined in the Bonus Mesh.)
Optional Methods

Imagine the following scenario: You know your dominant Enneagram type and have found it valuable to your own development. Now, you’ve decided to go through the ITC process. The first step is to create an Immunity Map. Your goal, by the end of this mapping, is to have an “If-Then” Big Assumption that is both powerful and testable.

Drawing on both your Enneagram type and the Immunity Map instructions, how might you do this? Here are four possible methods:

A. Use your Enneagram type to fill in the “If” clause of the sentence. Follow the instructions for column 4 to complete the “Then” clause.

B. Follow the instructions for column 4 (reverse your Competing Commitment) to fill in the “If” clause. Use your Enneagram type to fill in the “Then” clause.

C. Use your Enneagram type to fill in both clauses.

D. Use ITC instructions to fill in both clauses. This method doesn’t integrate the Enneagram, so we won’t explore it here, but it remains the default option.

Now, assume that in the Enneagram your dominant type, the one you identify most closely with, is One. This type often goes by The Perfectionist or The Reformer. Let’s use this to walk through methods A, B, and C.

For each method, let’s ask:

- What possible Big Assumptions might emerge from it?

- What observations can we make about how the method functions, its strengths, and its limitations?

Before we start, let’s mix things up to illustrate the actual variation that exists in the world. Rather than have just you try these methods, let’s imagine that three different people try them. All have One as their dominant type yet differ in other ways, as real people do. These differences are reflected in their Big Assumptions, which look less like Siamese twins than fraternal twins.

To mix things up further, we’ll introduce not three, but six people. For Method A, we’ll follow Bob, Jen, and Xavier through the exercise. For Method B, we’ll join with Rose, Ted, and Ari. As for Method C, by the time you get here, you’ll have a pretty good idea of how this rolls, so we can discern the method’s pros and cons without putting any more people’s feet in the fire.
Table 2. Method A: Enneagram Type as Observed Behaviors ("If" Clause)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;If…&quot;</td>
<td>Enneagram type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;then…&quot;</td>
<td>ITC – column 4 instructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This method introduces the Enneagram after completing the first three columns of the Immunity Map. When you get to column 4, you have a new option for constructing the “If” clause. Instead of simply reversing the competing commitment per the ITC instructions, you bring in your dominant Enneagram type. Taking both steps gives you two optional “If” clauses. Select the one that feels most powerful or draw on both to create two Big Assumptions.

The Big Assumption based on your dominant type can take numerous forms. Here is one example:

“If I stop pointing out what is missing, then….”

Bob, Jen, and Xavier all identify with Type One, so their Big Assumptions start the same way. However, they are different people, and the latter half of their Big Assumptions reflects this. Here are examples of their Big Assumptions in full:

- “If I stop pointing out what is missing, then my friends will abandon me and I’ll be all alone.” (Bob)
- “If I stop pointing out what is missing, then I’ll lose my job, go on welfare, and end up drunk and on the street.” (Jen)
- “If I stop pointing out what is missing, then I’ll have wasted everything my parents sacrificed and decide to kill myself.” (Xavier)

These examples bring forth the following observations:

- You can construct the “If” clause in a variety of ways consistent with your dominant type, but all need to involve specific observable behaviors. The example above could be restated as “If I make mistakes…” or “If stop being serious and methodical…” because both are observable behaviors. What would not work is using a purely interior experience, like “If I am corrupt and defective…” (the Basic Fear of Type One), because this would render the Big Assumption untestable.

- Whereas the “If” clause is derived from your Enneagram type, the “Then clause” – the horrors you imagine – can take an infinite range of forms unique to your life, family, and culture. This ability to fully and authentically engage in the “worst case scenario” thought experiment is an advantage of Method A.
This is why Bob, Jen and Xavier share the same Enneagram type yet hold different Big Assumptions. All imagine something horrible happening, but the specific horror differs. Same premise, different outcomes.

We can make one other observation about this method: people with different Enneagram types can share the same “Then” clause. As we’ve seen, Bob, who identifies as One, assumes “If I am not completely perfect, my friends will abandon me and I’ll be all alone.” Now let’s introduce Susan, who identifies as Two. She also assumes she’ll end up alone, but the route there is different. Her Big Assumption looks like this: “If I stop sacrificing for others, then people will stop loving me, and I’ll end up all alone.”

In this example, the contrast between Enneagram types is this: “If I am not completely perfect…” (Type One) versus “If I stop sacrificing for others…” (Type Two)

### Table 3. Method B: Enneagram Type as Dreadful Scenario (“Then” Clause)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“If…”</td>
<td>ITC – column 3 competing commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“then…”</td>
<td>Enneagram type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now we flip things around. As before, you can start with the Enneagram, but in this case, you use it to create a “Then” clause consistent with Type One.

Here are three plausible variations based on the Enneagram. Each is based on an expression of Type One’s Basic Fear “to be corrupt, evil, or defective” or denial of its Basic Desire “to be good, have integrity, be balanced.”

- “If..., then I will become corrupt.”
- “If..., then I will be proved wrong.”
- “If..., then other people will mess up the order I’ve created.”

After selecting one of these variations, you complete the Big Assumption by inserting the opposite of your competing commitment from column 3.

Once again, we are joined by three people dominant in type One: Rose, Ted, and Ari. As it happens, all three select the first example above, which uses language straight out of the One’s Basic Fear: “If..., then I will become corrupt.” To complete the sentence, they reverse their competing commitments, each unique to the person. This results in the following Big Assumptions:

- “If I delegate more to my team, then I will become corrupt.” (Rose)
- “If I don’t complete this task even better than I promised, then I will become corrupt.” (Ted)
- “If I stop criticizing people when they make mistakes, then I will become corrupt.” (Ari)
A few observations:

- All three people imagine the same dreadful scenario but take different paths to get there.

- I’ve taken the liberty of inserting “If” clauses that reflect common Type One behaviors. In real life, these three people may not be thinking about their Enneagram type during the ITC exercises. Their “If” clauses could feel disconnected from their dominant type or reflect a wing, integration point, or stress point. Conversely, if such type-specific behaviors were to organically emerge from the mapping process, it would lend credence to the pervasiveness of their dominant type.

- One advantage of this method over Method A is that your Big Assumption builds directly on all of the work you’ve done in prior columns of the Immunity Map. In contrast, Option One interrupts the natural flow from competing commitment to Big Assumption by grafting your Enneagram type onto the “If” clause.

Once again, people with different Enneagram types may have similar Big Assumptions. In this case, the possible point of commonality is the “If clause.” For example, Ted, type One, assumes, “If I don’t complete this task even better than I promised, then I will become corrupt.” Meanwhile, Amber, who identifies as Six, assumes “If I don’t complete this task even better than I promised, then nobody will trust me and I’ll bring harm onto my entire family.”

The contrast between Enneagram types is this:

“…then I will become corrupt” (Type One) versus “then nobody will trust me and I’ll bring harm onto my entire family” (Type Six)

Table 4. Method C: Double Bypass of the Immunity Map, a.k.a. Enneagram Type as Both Clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“If…”</td>
<td>Enneagram type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“then…”</td>
<td>Enneagram type</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike the first two methods, this one can work by relying solely on your understanding of your dominant Enneagram type. You can bypass the entire Immunity Map exercise. In this case, what you borrow from the ITC framework is the “If-Then” construction of your narrative, recognition of the Big Assumption as a subject-object move, and the prescribed sequence of exercises for working with the Big Assumption. But the full contents of the Big Assumption derive from type.

A “quadruple bypass” of the Immunity Map is costly. Although this saves time, it denies you the powerful process of working through your anxiety-management system step by step. You don’t get to declare a column-1 commitment that is energizing and compelling. You don’t get to consider
the actions you are taking or not taking that interfere with that primary commitment. And you
don’t get to experience the special tension between two commitments. These are serious omissions.

Method C works best not by entirely bypassing the Immunity Map but by carrying it almost to
collection. Call this the “double bypass” approach. Here is how it might work:

- Complete column one as prescribed

- Complete column two as prescribed

- When you get to column 3, pause before filling in the Worry Box. Ask, “What might my
Enneagram type tell me about this?” Use this to complete the Worry Box and then identify
the competing commitment. The self-knowledge you’ve gained from the Enneagram acts
here like an electronic screwdriver. It harnesses an alternative power source to produce as
accurate a result but with less effort.

- Use your Enneagram type to imagine the dreadful scenario that is behind your competing
commitment, as in Method B.

Now that we’ve explored three methods for integrating the Enneagram into the Big Assumption,
let’s take the next logical step. What if we were to create a set of “templates” for the Big
Assumption that people could refer to when creating an Immunity Map?

**Big Assumption Templates by Enneagram Type (Using Method A)**

The goal of creating templates of the Big Assumption isn’t to bind people or force them down
a single road. Instead, our aim is two-fold: first, to give people a cushion to lean against as they go
through an emotionally and psychologically challenging process; second, to construct a reliable
bridge to the Enneagram’s orienting generalizations and many applications.

As we’ve seen, one gift of the Enneagram is its set of deep archetypal patterns. Let’s assume
we could build cushions from the fabric of these archetypal patterns. What might those look like?

The possibilities are plentiful. Each Enneagram type has many characteristic behaviors, any of
which could come into play here. (Note: because the Enneagram concerns motivations, a given
behavior isn’t necessarily unique to that type). Below are five examples per type. This is the tip of
the iceberg. If you included examples for parenting, partnering, managing, handling conflict,
coordinating action, and other domains of life, this table could be a book unto itself. Rather than
create a mesh-within-a-mesh, I decided to keep things simple by providing generic examples from
the mainstream Enneagram literature. Here they are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enneagram Type</th>
<th>Template for Big Assumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>If I make a mistake, then…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If I don’t do what is right, then…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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If I let others learn for themselves, then…
If I stop criticizing myself, then…
If I stop pointing out what’s missing, then…

| Two | If I stop sacrificing for others, then…
|     | If I’m up front about my needs, then…
|     | If I cannot get others to totally appreciate my sacrifices, then…
|     | If I let someone else do this, then…
|     | If I do something good for myself, then… |

| Three | If I have not accomplished everything I set out to do, then…
|       | If I don’t do something valuable right now, then…
|       | If I stop trying to impress others, then…
|       | If I am not the best, then…
|       | If I share what’s actually in my heart, then… |

| Four | If I engage in small talk to build rapport, then…
|      | If I act in ways that are not true to myself, then…
|      | If I do not express all of my feelings with everyone whenever I want, then…
|      | If I find that others feel the same way, then…
|      | If I act as if there is nothing wrong with me, then… |

| Five | If I do not completely understand everything, then…
|      | If I speak up where I lack expertise, then…
|      | If I stop collecting ideas and start interacting with others, then…
|      | If I trust this person, then…
|      | If I let this person know what I need, then… |

| Six | If I do not cover all of the bases, then…
|     | If I do not do what is expected of me, then…
|     | If I allow something to catch me by surprise, then…
|     | If I do not foresee a problem, then…
|     | If I trust myself and my own judgments, then… |

| Seven | If I stop seeking stimulating experiences, then…
|       | If I’m not constantly active, then…
|       | If I stick with this until it’s fully done, then…
|       | If I stop taking on new projects, then…
|       | If I stay right where I am, then… |

| Eight | If I have to rely on someone for anything, then…
|       | If I stop challenging others, then…
|       | If I show that I’m feeling pain, then…
|       | If I let down my guard a little bit, then…
|       | If I use less force, then… |

| Nine | If I assert my own perspective, then…
|      | If I stop describing the silver lining, then…
|      | If I directly confront difficult issues, then…
|      | If I get energized and am involved, then…
|      | If I act as though I were powerful, then… |
Once again, the purpose of these templates isn’t to restrict possibilities for self-discovery, but to open them up. If you’ve explored the Enneagram in depth, you can complete the Immunity Map using the standard instructions, but you don’t have to. With these templates, you have a new option.

In summary, this second mesh opens new vistas in working with Immunity Maps to uncover Big Assumptions by both including ITC’s inherent strengths and transcending them through inclusion of gifts from the Enneagram. The ITC strengths preserved are a sequential process for discovering your immunity to change, the compassionate insight that this immune system stems from a noble motive, the framing of anxiety management, and a structured series of exercises for overcoming your immunity. To this mix we blend in complementary attributes from the Enneagram: archetypal patterns for linguistically framing the Big Assumption, a potentially smoother path through the mapping process, orienting generalizations that invite new forms of conversation, and access to a rich tradition of teachings and practical applications.

**Bonus Mesh: Increase Precision in the “Dreadful Scenario” Portion of ITC’s Big Assumption by Integrating it with Robert Solomon’s Taxonomy of Fears**

This mesh reaches beyond ITC and the Enneagram to embrace a set of distinctions from the late philosopher Robert Solomon. Solomon traveled in similar circles as key figures in promise-based management, the third leg of my integral leadership project. For this reason, and because it’s short, I’m calling this a “bonus mesh.”

Here we set our sights again on the “Then” clause of the Big Assumption. As seen in the preceding examples, Kegan and Lahey insist on high standards for this clause. It needs to represent a really dreadful scenario, something that no one would lovingly will upon themselves or others. In other words, it involves an outcome you fear.

Some people – indeed, some Enneagram types – find it harder to identify their fears than do others. For these folks the act of naming a dreadful scenario presents a formidable challenge to completing the Immunity Map. What support might we introduce that is commensurate with this challenge?

Let’s assume that you’ve used Method A above and, perhaps, a template for your type to construct the “If” clause of the Big Assumption. What might aid you in completing the sentence? Here we turn to Solomon, who introduced a set of distinctions around fear. These distinctions have an added benefit. You can use them if you don’t know your Enneagram type or care about the Enneagram at all. They are equally useful for completing an Immunity Map by the book (save this mesh).

In his book, *The Passions*, Solomon offers a taxonomy of moods, which he describes as assessments or judgments we make about the future. We can also say that moods are to emotions like climate is to the weather. However you define them, Solomon’s moods include many that fall under the umbrella of fear. The table below shows five:
Table 6. Taxonomy of Moods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anguish</td>
<td>Fear of something I will do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>Fear of something global that will happen to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Fear of something cosmic happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dread</td>
<td>Fear of something unknown happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear (proper)</td>
<td>Something specific that will happen to me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When I first came across this list, I had already begun exploring the role in my life of fear, which is central to my dominant type, Six. Solomon offered me a way of breaking fear down into its many shades. As with any powerful set of distinctions, this one gave me new language to describe my experience. It made me a more competent observer.

This ability to discriminate between variations of fear is equally valuable in completing Big Assumptions. Instead of simply asking yourself “What dreadful scenario do I fear?” you can explore five different types of scenario: anguish, despair, anxiety, dread, and fear. This opens the door to many more possibilities. It may be just the boost you need to finish fleshing out your Big Assumption.

The expanded table below provides examples of how this may look:

Table 7. Taxonomy of Moods with Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mood</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anguish</td>
<td>Fear of something I will do</td>
<td>“…then I will make a fool out of myself”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“…then I will go crazy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“…then I will kill myself”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>Fear of something global that will happen to me</td>
<td>“…then my career will be over”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“…then no one will ever love me again”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“…then I’ll never earn another dollar”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Fear of something cosmic happening</td>
<td>“…then everything will turn out horribly”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“…then the world will collapse”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“…then God will punish me”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dread</td>
<td>Fear of something unknown happening</td>
<td>“…then something horrible will happen”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“…then something I’ve always been afraid of will happen”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“…then we’ll experience a sudden shock nobody expected”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fear (proper)  Something specific that will happen to me  “…then people will hate me”  
“…then my boss will fire me”  
“…then my partner will dump me”

In summary, imagining a dreadful scenario that completes your Big Assumption is far too important a project to be left to chance. Just as in Rome, you do as the Romans do, in the land of fear, it helps to speak the language. Enter Robert Solomon. His taxonomy of moods teaches us that there isn’t just one type of fear. There are five. This awareness gives you a leg up in envisioning the catastrophic “Then” clause. Coupled with a strong “If” clause derived from the Enneagram, it produces a Big Assumption worthy of its name. Immunity Map complete!

From here you move onto the next enterprise: overcoming your immunity to change. For this venture, the early integrative meshes have you prepared are useful. ITC sets you in the right direction with its sequence of exercises for working with your Big Assumption, and your Enneagram type’s essential qualities ignite your acceleration into practice.

Reflection and Future Questions

I opened this article declaring two intentions: first, to initiate a conversation in which the adult development and Enneagram communities could “break bread” together, an occasion for which I’m offering my services as maître d’; second, to provide practitioners, especially of ITC, with a few specific new methods for developing leaders. Think of these as appetizers to stimulate the palate.

I’m now reporting completion. How did we do?

The assessment is yours to make, and below you’ll find an invitation to share it. Rather than weigh in on this question myself, allow me to provide a few reflections on what this was like to write. The first draft, now fifteen years old, was born quickly and in a spirit of naming what seemed obvious, at least to the author. Like the discovery late in the history of the suitcase that of course it should have wheels, so came that first intuition about ITC. Of course there should be one Immunity Map for every Enneagram type and a menu of fears for the Big Assumption! Fast forward to spring 2020 when I realized that the initial mesh actually was conjoined twins needing to be separated. Fortunately, that operation turned out far simpler than its medical analog, which is probably why I’m a coach-cum-writer rather than the physician my family originally hoped I would become. In fact, the most challenging part of this update was interrogating two original assumptions about what I came to name Mesh #2: first, onto which clause of the Big Assumption

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8 The phrase “reporting completion” has a specific meaning in the field of promise-based management. It’s the important and oft overlooked step where the person who’s promised to bring about a particular What by a specific When says to the “customer” of this promise: I’m done. This is the cue for the customer to say thanks, assess what they’ve been given, and declare themselves satisfied or dissatisfied. Every Enneagram type has strengths and stretches in these steps, and arguably the entire framework calls forth growth in the mental demands it places on both parties.

9 This opens up yet another can of worms that, if not resolved by the new interview project, may yet nudge me into completing my long-gestating developmental autobiography.
to graft the Enneagram; and, second, how to accomplish this without damaging the integrity of the overall mapping process. On both questions, it turns out, I ended up precisely where I started, but the rigor of the procedure raises my confidence that the mesh will prove useful for people other than the author.

One final reflection about sharing the life experiences underlying these meshes. The words I’ve used to describe them are less memories than reconstructions. Writing them has been an excavation into layers of emotion and sense-making buried beneath the foundation stone of my awareness. Although I appreciate the discoveries, a slight change in site preparation or equipment could have turned up very different interpretations. In simpler terms, I think this is why these meshes grabbed ahold of me, but I wouldn’t wager more than a week’s wages on that thought.

Let me bring this to a close by describing where I would direct that wager. If you’re looking for a big upside, zoom out from this article to the larger project of integrating constructive adult development as a whole with the Enneagram (and promise-based management). Here you’ll find many rich possibilities for waking up, growing up, and showing up that simultaneously reduce the risks of boxing up and hamming up. This being a place of learning rather than investment, allow me to shift from the language of ROI to the language of inquiry. What follows is a series of questions animating my interest in the larger integrative leadership project. Perhaps one or more of them will entice yours.

1. How well do Enneagram teachings meet people where they are developmentally – and how could they do this better?
2. How can the Enneagram help (or hinder!) the journey toward Self-authored Mind and beyond?
3. How does your developmental stage, when encountering the Enneagram, shape how you “use” it?
4. What might the life experiences of later stage people reveal about post-typological Enneagram awareness?
5. How does the internalization of others’ perspectives (the Socialized Mind) differ by Enneagram type?
6. What orienting generalizations can we make about how people with different Enneagram types grow into the Self-Authored Mind? The Self-Transforming Mind?
7. How can we customize the adult development field’s best practices to Enneagram type?
8. What type-based idiosyncrasies persist in the conversations and meaning-making of later-stage people?
Invitation to Comment

I invite you, dear reader, to send your thoughts my way. What new possibilities does this article reveal to you? What experiences have you had that (dis)confirm its core assumptions? What ideas do you have for improving these meshes or creating new ones? And if you actually do want to make some form of investment, what do you have in mind? Email me at amiel@amielhandelsman.com.
Possible Mistakes of Late Action-Logic Actors in a Polarized World

Bill Torbert and Aftab Erfan

Last summer, when we began trying to map the possible mistakes of late action-logic actors, the world was not as polarized as it is today. There had been no global debate on mandatory face masks, or whether people had a right to gather in church in the midst of a deadly pandemic. Nor had millions marched after the killing of George Floyd and called for defunding of police, only to be confronted by further police brutality in some places. Our organizations, communities and families had not gone through the upheaval of 2020. Nevertheless, we had plenty of examples of polarized situations and our own attempts to be of use in these situations. We both felt that, in spite of each of our longtime commitments to personal, organizational, and social development toward complexities of thought and simplicities of awareness that can bridge social differences, and our attempts at creating mutuality as an antidote to polarization, we had often fallen flat on our faces. How could we have gone wrong in so many ways, we asked ourselves? And would it be of benefit to ourselves and others if we studied and shared the patterns of our mistakes?

Thus began an attempt at aggregating our phenomenological, first-person experiences and reflections related to this topic, in order to share them at the September 2019 Growth Edge Network Conference. This being a gathering of many late action logic actors, we planned to expand our sample size and analysis based on the participants’ responses and additions. This article now reflects such changes, including, at the end, three later e-mailed reflections. We are delighted by the offer of Integral Review to publish the current version of the essay and we invite further responses from readers of this essay.

At the outset of our conference presentation and dialogue about this topic, we admitted to our audience that the announced title of the session demonstrated one of the mistakes to which late action-logic leaders are prone. When we had proposed the session, we had called it “Common Mistakes of Late Action-Logic Actors”. Upon actually getting serious about planning the session, however, we very quickly realized that we had no empirical research on how common such mistakes are. How could we have been so wrong in our thinking about mistakes? And what could we learn from each other’s experiences that could help us improve our leadership of complexity?

1 A graduate of Yale (BA & PhD), William Torbert taught at SMU, Harvard, and Boston College. Winner of many awards for teaching and research, including HBR’s designation of ‘The Seven Transformations of Leadership’ among its top ten most read leadership articles ever, he developed the Collaborative Developmental Action Inquiry paradigm of social science and social action, along with the Global Leadership Profile, a measure of leaders’ developmental action-logics. To learn more, see www.actioninquiryleadership.com torbert@bc.edu

Aftab Erfan is a scholar practitioner interested in social change, currently serving as Chief Equity Officer for the City of Vancouver. She received her PhD in Planning from the University of British Columbia, where she has also taught since 2010 and was Director of Dialogue and Conflict Engagement for several years. Collaborative Developmental Action Inquiry has been a central pillar of her practice, and the subject of much of her writing. aftab.erfan@gmail.com
mistakes were. We were largely extrapolating based on our own limited experience and some observations of those around us. Hence the revised, more humble title “Possible Mistakes of….”

**Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #1**

*Overconfidence in one’s ability to accomplish one’s initial vision, based in part, paradoxically, on one’s humble ability to correct one’s subsequent path based on one’s openness to feedback.*

During our preparation, we had next realized just how ambiguous the word “mistake” is in any developmental context. At earlier action-logics with short time horizons and concrete goals, as well as little sense of longer-term purposes and strategic plans, a particular action that fails to achieve its goal is likely to be perceived, quite simply, as a ‘mis-take’ (a ‘take’ – an action – that ‘mis’ses its immediate mark). At a later action-logic, the same action may be viewed less as a mistake and more as one of dozens of initiatives necessary over time – to generate the feedback about ‘local’ conditions that will eventually be recognized as the early part of the path toward realizing the ultimate purpose. From this difference in how persons at different action-logics may interpret a mistake, we can infer:

**Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #2**

*Too much attention to long-term purposes and outcomes and too little attention to creating a culture and leadership development process that attunes more and more participants to the value of mistakes in the service of purposive learning.*

Another way of thinking about mistakes late action-logic actors may commit in a polarized world, which raises the stakes and the tension, is to delineate mistakes that early action-logic actors are likely to make. Later action-logic actors are much less likely to make such mistakes, except when a situation ‘triggers’ them to fall back.

Actors at the earlier action-logics (Opportunist, Diplomat, Expert, Achiever) are likely to use forms of unilateral power to try things, which do generate common mistakes, as the following table succinctly (and very incompletely) suggests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action-Logic</th>
<th>New Type of Power Available</th>
<th>Relationship to Feedback</th>
<th>Common Mistakes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunist</td>
<td>Coercive</td>
<td>Rejects altogether</td>
<td>Damages &amp; loses other’s trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomat</td>
<td>Charming</td>
<td>Agrees in order to make others happy</td>
<td>Can’t critique in-group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Logistical</td>
<td>Accepts only from masters, Data has final word</td>
<td>Fails to see own axioms or others’ perspectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #3

Late action-logic actors may commit mistakes typical of early action-logic actors under conditions that trigger fallback.

However, there are different, more subtle kinds of mistakes endemic to the later action-logics as well.

Table 2. Possible Later Action-Logics Mistakes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action-Logic</th>
<th>New Type of Power Available</th>
<th>Relationship to Feedback</th>
<th>Common Mistakes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redefining</td>
<td>Visioning</td>
<td>Offers critical, structural, double-loop feedback</td>
<td>Can sabotage own power in “idiot collaboration”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transforming</td>
<td>Praxis</td>
<td>Welcome receiving as well as offering double-loop feedback</td>
<td>May not quickly recover from fallback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alchemical</td>
<td>Mutually-transforming</td>
<td>Plays the action-logics like musical instrument, generates transformational “shocks”</td>
<td>May overheat situations with single-, double-, or triple-loop feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironist</td>
<td>Liberating Disciplines</td>
<td>Creates organizational systems that generate single-, double-, or triple-loop feedback</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with such a process typical of the early action-logics. ‘Idiot collaboration’ refers to the self-contradictory process of creating an absolute in the name of relativism. In so doing, the person at this action-logic mutes their own discretion and power, a serious mistake.

**Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #4**

The Redefining action-logic may overgeneralize the virtues and efficacy of pure collaboration in all decisions.

In each case of transforming from one action-logic to another, there initially tends to be a disdain for the previous action-logic, as part of the cognitive-emotional differentiation from that action-logic. Because the Redefining action-logic is the first that recognizes that we all act through our (different) action-logics, it may lead to an illegitimate sense of superiority and arrogance in regard to all of the prior action-logics. This sense of superiority is illegitimate in two senses: 1) in that persons who are just beginning to explore the implications of the Redefining action-logic often continue to operate from earlier action-logics a great deal of the time; and 2) in that, by favoring their new-found capacity for offering critiques of earlier action-logics, they are overemphasizing the ‘deconstructive’ aspect of transformation and underplaying the ‘reconstructive’ initiatives necessary for successful transformation.)

**Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #5**

Actors at the Redefining action-logic may disdain and critique the unconscious absolutism of the earlier action-logics, while not noticing it in their own tendency to engage in absolute relativism.

In contrast to the realistic/materialistic tendency of the early action-logics, actors at the Redefining action-logic can develop a deep commitment to a more idealistic/spiritualistic vision of life. They may tend to dismiss the material realities that impact others (and themselves). For example, first-person ‘mindfulness’ practice may become the solution for all life problems, along with an implicit or explicit dismissal of second- and third-person disciplines for addressing ethical dilemmas and structural, societal issues of economic and political injustice.

**Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #6**

The Redefining actor may start caring about the spiritual and act dismissively about the material reality that impacts self and others.

The inefficacy associated with these performative contradictions can gradually motivate a person to evolve toward the Transforming action-logic. This action-logic realizes that in a human world characterized by multiple action-logics, few of which even recognize the possibility of other action-logics or the possibility of exercising mutual power, we need to inquire-in-action in each new conversation, new setting, and new project. A new kind of question arises: Which action-logic and type of power (or which blending of types of power) is it most timely to exercise when? To even approximate effective action consistently, it is necessary to work, not only with a theory of
individual action-logics, but also with an analogous theory of event action-logics, and with attentional disciplines which allow one to see incongruities in the moment of action and to act reliably with theory-and-practice-reconciling praxis power.

**Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #7**

*The Transforming actor may have developed theory and skills for working with self or a single other individual (as in coaching) in a timely way; but may as yet have little theory or associated practice skills for intervening in a timely way at the organizational or historical scale.*

Even if the Transforming action-logic actor is working with some kind of organizational development theory, strategizing action using both individual and organizational development theory is very difficult to do in reflection, and all the more so in the midst of action. Even more difficult is estimating how historical eras transform, since one has often lived most of one’s life in but one such era. Thus, leaders at the Transforming action-logic are often as shocked and stymied as anyone else by sudden social changes, such as the Black Power movement of the late 1960s, the #MeToo movement of the late 2010s, and the Covid-19 Pandemic cum Black Lives Matter movement of 2020.

**Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #8**

*A change in Zeitgeist or historical epoch is initially likely to frustrate a Transforming actor’s efforts at timely action.*

What some gradually realize is that, in spite of their theory of transformation and their well-intentioned efforts to practice it, they are in fact repeatedly — nay, constantly — falling back to earlier action-logics in their daily life. Some kind of unfamiliar exercise of awareness— some kind of meditation-in-action — is necessary if we are to find the post-cognitive attention that can, in real-time action, trace our own and others’ thinking, feeling, acting, and impact on the presenting situation and assess the degree of efficacy and mutuality that is being generated.

We begin to seek out — not just single-loop feedback that changes specific actions to improve the likelihood of reaching a goal, and not just double-loop feedback that can change our strategy or action-logic — but also triple-loop feedback that can awaken a ‘bare’ attention or ‘pure’ consciousness, again and again and again. This requires a humble, comic, lifelong, spiritual, relational, Alchemical commitment to a task never completed. Only this commitment and developing capacity to offer and to receive triple-loop feedback provides traction at historical moments of changing paradigms.

Whereas the Transforming action-logic can fool itself about how often and for how long it experiences reality in a fallback mode, this is less likely at the Alchemical action-logic because its primary practices involve testing how many of the four ‘territories of experience’ (outside world, sensation of one’s own behavior, thinking/feeling, and bare attention) it is in contact with at a given moment. What is more likely at the Alchemical action-logic is that one gets vilified,
ostracized, hunted and killed for creating so much disruption in people’s early action-logic habits and assumptions (e.g. Socrates, Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King).

**Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #9**

*An actor at the Alchemical action-logic may disrupt early action-logic habits and assumptions to such a degree that people react violently.*

But does getting killed necessarily count as a mistake? Socrates, Jesus, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King all knew that they were risking death every day and quite deliberately continued to do so. They and their visions are remembered and are inspiring to this day because of what they were willing to die for – a kind of mutual, non-violent action inquiry.

The repeated references to fallback to earlier action-logics in the previous paragraphs invite several additional comments. First, by no means all early action-logic behavior by someone with a later action-logic center-of-gravity represents fallback, or a mistake. It may represent a calculated attempt to engage a person or organization at their earlier action-logic center-of-gravity, in order to establish initial contact and trust as a basis for a conversation or project that can gradually transform toward later action-logics.

Second, fallback is not the only source of ‘mistakes’ at the later action-logics. Each later action-logic occupies an incomparably larger ‘territory’ than the earlier action-logics, not only because it includes the territory of all the earlier action-logics, but also and primarily because it recognizes a much vaster realm of possibilities in its own right. Whereas the early action-logics through Achiever operate in the historical, durational dimension of time, the later action-logics gradually become familiar with two more dimensions of time – ‘presence in the present’ and the ‘volume of all possibilities.’ But, during one’s long apprenticeship in each of the later action-logics from Redefining on, there are many opportunities for mistakes. During the apprenticeship period of exploring a new action-logic, a person or an organization will often ‘get lost’ among the many possible responses to the moment, or may mis-estimate the energy charge of a particular response one chooses.

**Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #10**

*During the apprenticeship in each action-logic, one often tends to get lost among the many new possibilities for action that become available and may act ineffectually.*

Furthermore, a person may evolve to a late action-logic along just one or two lines of development. In such a case, the person’s non-mutuality along other lines of development reflects their early action-logic in that realm. (Think Picasso’s alchemical treatment of shapes on canvas, in contrast to his opportunistic treatment of the women in his life.) This uneven development results in a sharp dichotomy between the light and the dark sides of the personality.
Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #11

Uneven development across different lines (practical, cognitive, emotional, ethical, aesthetic, spiritual) can lead to a dichotomy between unilateral and mutual action in different spheres.

A final kind of mistake that we have experienced at later action-logics is the mistake of engaging earlier action-logic actors in a fashion that is too peer-like, too I-Thou, early in the relationship. An attempt to clarify mutual boundaries may be interpreted as a violation of boundaries. This mistake may be motivated by a spiritual loneliness on the part of the late action-logic actor, and may be received as a threatening, seductive, or manipulative pre-mature intimacy by the early action-logic counterpart. Sometimes, this breach is resolved almost immediately by either party making it discussable and by a joint establishment of agreeable boundaries.

Possible Late Action-Logic Mistake #12

A late action-logic actor may prematurely seek a late action-logic relationship with another, arousing suspicion and withdrawal by the other.

We would like to end by thanking the participants at the original Growth Edge Network session for raising many questions and offering various illustrations of possible late action-logic mistakes in a polarized world, which we have tried to incorporate in this paper. There are undoubtedly more such possible mistakes, and we encourage readers of this article to suggest some. Indeed, we have already received the following suggestions about additional ‘possible mistakes’ on the GEN website since our conference conversation, reproduced here with permission from commentators.

Yotam Schachter: I want to add one category of mistake that I don’t recall hearing in the session itself. Once someone has firmly established the capacity for double-loop learning, then a particular discernment is required in each situation: What loop should I feed this information back into? Is this cause for single-loop or double-loop learning? Do I rethink the whole project, or just tweak the implementation? It’s a new mistake only available at higher action logics to double-loop learn from something that only really requires single-loop learning.

Bill T.: Hi Yotam, I’m very glad you have reminded me of this particular mistake, quite common in the early period of recognizing the value of double-loop feedback: namely, the implicit or explicit denigration of single-loop feedback and learning. In fact, a single-loop behavioral correction is what is appropriate in the vast majority of instances, and the art of offering or acting on such feedback continues to be an important discipline to practice.

Jan Weetjens: One question/suggestion I would have in terms of “mistakes” of later action-logics relate to some of the mistakes that are listed in the paper (superiority, issues with boundaries, ignoring (others’) concrete life challenges, etc.). While people may have entered late action logic, they may still be caught in unresolved aspects of their shadow side. As Ken Wilber would say, they may have “grown up”, but they may still have work to do to “clean up,” or to “wake up.”
I would say that two aspects would deserve particular attention: the first is narcissism. My sense is that late action logic can actually have the effect of bolstering (rather than dissolving) the egoic mind, especially in the early late action logic stages. Some of the “common” mistakes (such as superiority) would point to that. The good news, though, is that, given enough time for ego to run into the stubbornness of reality (and suffering as a result), the person may outgrow this “mistake.”

The second, and more dangerous, “mistake” could be the patriarchal mind, or the “guru” mind, where the person positions him or herself as the one who knows, expecting others to surrender their capacity for discernment and agency. Unfortunately, we see all too many headlines in the press of extreme cases where this phenomenon led to abuse of power and violation of victims. Contrary to the narcissism (which only requires suffering of the ego to be dissolved), the patriarchal mind-frame triggers suffering of others, and can take a long time to be unmasked and dissolved.

**Aftab E:** Thank you Jan. I couldn’t agree with you more and I worry about these very serious and dangerous tendencies among post-conventional leaders. Our Mistake #1, referring to our own over-confidence, was meant to be a tongue-in-cheek reference to the kind of arrogance you talk about here. Perhaps it was too tongue-in-cheek.

**Dimitri Glazkov:** I am not an expert on others. I am only an expert on myself. My observation with my own development is that the stages didn’t arrive in a neat stepping diagram. A metaphor that comes to mind is that of a tool belt. I have various meaning-making models (conceptually similar to Bill’s action-logics) available to me, some are less familiar than others. I choose them according to the situation. Intention, habits, stress, fatigue influence these choices. Sometimes the choices are so fluid and instinctive that they almost seem to combine (like Achiever with a tint of Opportunist, using action-logic terminology). My own sense is that the number of the models I have is quite small, but the combinations of them produce the impression of many more.

My self-development challenge is two-fold: I continue to grow my edge and seek out new meaning-making models. At the same time, I work to be more intentional in what I pick from my tool belt in any given situation and have my choices be less influenced by habits, stress, and fatigue. That latter part is what comes to mind when Jan talks about “clean up” and “wake up”, and shadows. A “mistake” in this context sounds like a gap in intentionality.

In conclusion, each different action-logic is, in effect, playing a significantly different kind of game from the others. Each of our moves is likely to be interpreted differently in several different ways by the other players. Early action-logic players assume all are playing a common game. In actuality, continual effort is required to transform the event into a shared game. This is so at each scale of relationship – whether between marital partners, among organization members, or among citizens of a nation. Failure to create greater mutuality generates greater polarization and distrust. To our knowledge, no one, nor any community of inquiry, has yet ever succeeded in creating a game that seems developmentally fulfilling for all the participants across generations.
The writing of this paper has been a reflective and playful exercise in mapping and typifying mistakes as a way of inviting open conversation and critique of later action logics. While it is probably not very important that mistakes be mapped and typified in a systematic way, it is very important that they are discussable among the members of communities of inquiry dedicated to personal and societal development. The challenging and potentially transformative times we find ourselves in call for honesty about our idiosyncrasies as well as our collective illusions, blindness, and patterns of self-deception. To not engage actively in these conversations would be a mistake.
Aikido and the Pursuit of a Better Life

Mark Shraga ¹

Introduction

When I first stepped onto the Aikido mat in 2010, I was an intensely cognitive person with an abundance of conceptual structure around how to live a ‘better’ life. I had already built a couple of successful businesses in telecommunications and had employed learnings from across a broad spectrum of human development to handle myriad challenges. I had set up my Coaching company Brighter Lives in 2008 as a vehicle for focusing on my ongoing personal development whilst also holding myself accountable both to a professional standard and to the clients I would help along the way. I was however, becoming profoundly aware that issues from my early life, a plethora of setbacks ranging from poverty to being fatherless and subject to intensive bullying until I was 16, were clearly restricting my potential.

I had always had a vision of a better life, and a powerful sense of the possible, driven by curiosity and a passion for connecting to others. I would invariably find that however much ground

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I would gain in the pursuit of my goals and dreams there would come a time when the spectre of my early life would throw a spanner in the works. Since arriving in London in 1998 I had spent around 12 years studying various meditative processes and embodied practices from meditating with Sufis to becoming a pupil of the Alexander Technique. I eventually realised that the core problem was that my body was riddled with fear and fearful patterns. These patterns were obscuring my search for a better understanding of how to live a fuller and more enlightened life, turning me into a walking contradiction at times; quite frankly I was getting sick of myself. Between 2013 and 2015 I would pursue these patterns further during my Master Degree in Applied Coaching by looking at how fear impacts our ability to process information, and how this knowledge could be utilised to help people develop towards self-authorship and beyond; assisting the cycle of moving from the implicit to the explicit, from subject to object.

As I looked around the Aikido dojo, on that first occasion, I could see adults of various ages doing things with their bodies that seemed wonderous and scary. It stimulated in me contradictory feelings of needing to leave immediately whilst also wanting to throw myself ‘head-first’ into it. As my curiosity began to fire up, I found myself being inducted into a supremely counter-intuitive life-long learning experience; failing forwards as way of being a better human being. For me Aikido was the catalyst that enabled me to transform years of cognitive understanding and deep internal conflict into a much more fluid sense of being and doing in the world. Every lesson was an opportunity to be challenged down to my atoms and rebuilt again in the application of principles I was quick to grasp but slow to embody. I was in the process of becoming increasingly aligned with my deepest values and grounded in the bodily knowledge that, at my core, I had the capacity to be ‘ok’ regardless of what life throws at me (particularly when I was literally being thrown on the mat).

I was beginning to see that the more I could become ‘ok’ in my body, and reduce the ways in which I would go into a fight or flight state, the better my ability would be to honour my deeper core values and ways of being in the world with others. Essentially, my body was enabling my mind to be as fully intelligent as it dreamed of being. I still experience intense moments of confusion and frustration, but these are now fused with an awareness of the illumination that will follow if I am prepared to be courageous in the face of the unknowable moment. In this essay I will explore how the qualities of Aikido as a lifelong physical, emotional, mental and spiritual (PEMS) practice, can support us in facing the challenge of developing our potential regardless of the obstacles we face in day to day life.

An Embodied Approach to the Theory of Mind

The most fundamental thing that I have come to understand about Aikido is that it operates on the basic principle that all human conflict arises out of a confusion of compound illusions, where both parties believe their own separate piece of reality to the exclusion of the others. Aikido works at a deep level in the body to create a grounded emotional intelligence that is indispensable in every area of our lives. The insights from practicing Aikido can help shed some light on a variety of areas most of us struggle with at some point. Simplifying a broad spectrum of dynamics that influence our emotional reactivity, Aikido has the potential to show that at the root of all conflict is our quest for safety. The way that it reveals this is by taking us on a journey towards developing an embodied knowledge that who we think we are right now is only a partial truth.
Over time, as we continue to practice being in a body that flinches less and opens up more in the spaces we inhabit, the idea of a fixed sense of self gets increasingly left behind. It is this shift, coupled with the fact that it is facilitated in partnership with others, that enables us to transcend the urge to project our fears onto others. It is precisely in the moments where two parties project their fears onto the other, believing their own versions of the truth to the exclusion of the other, that they fight. At an abstract level it is a fight to prevent their truth from being obliterated or consumed by the others. At a more physical level it is a fight provoked by a sense of scarcity of one kind or another; in the modern age we are fortunate not to have to face real scarcity of resources that often, therefore most examples of conflict arise from a scarcity of feeling safe in the body; de-oxygenation from breathing shallowly in a state of fright is a literal example of scarcity in the body and it has direct implications for how we make sense of things both emotionally and mentally. Our decision-making capabilities are either enhanced or degraded by the state of our wellbeing; stress has a direct impact on our ability to gauge the consequences of our actions and often leads to actions that limit our possibilities for living a better life.

These moments of conflict are at their most threateningly real when both sides are at the stage of their development where they have invested more in their sense of identity than they have in their strategies for how to live a better life with others. However, it is precisely these moments of conflict that are the exact moments when we are closest to a reconciliation of differences, towards a greater whole. If we can find a way to have open hearts, with the intent to make space for the other, in a dance of movement and mindful partnership, then we are provided with an opportunity to ‘get over ourselves.’ Training together in Aikido the practitioner, or Aikidoka, can gain an appreciation of the harmony of all things that awaits our calm attention. When in the deep flow of a training session our bodies experience living reality as an ongoing process, flowing change into fusion and fusion into change as we become more aware of the interconnected nature of all things. But therein lies the core problem of the human condition: We are profoundly unaware of the inherently interconnected nature of things. This is, and has always been, a very special kind of ‘hidden’ knowledge, known as esoteric, sapiential or ‘initiated’ knowledge; only available to those who are fearless enough to surrender themselves to a greater truth. Aikido has the potential to offer access to this ‘hidden’ knowledge through a lifetime of practice in a community of practitioners who all go through similar stages of confronting others in practice to realise they were only ever confronting themselves.

Throughout the course of our lives we will go through phases or stages where our world seems to be coming apart at the seams, which can be particularly surprising at times when we felt we were ‘doing well’ or ‘really getting somewhere.’ The truth of this phenomenon of human experience is that it is developmental, and the parts of our lives where we are really developing generally feel confusing. Ken Wilber (2000) discusses the concept of fulcrums in *Integral Psychology* as axial points along our developmental journey. His description is also a useful one for the journey one undertakes in Aikido; from an embodied point of view Aikido was seen as very supportive of ‘vertical literacy’ both by Tony Buzan the chief exponent of mind maps, and George Leonard, one of the early developers of integral transformative practice.

Each time the self (the proximate self) encounters a new level in the Great Nest, it first *identifies* with it and consolidates it; then disidentifies with it (*transcends* it, de-embeds from
it); and then includes and *integrates* it from the next higher level. (Wilber, 2000, p. 35. Italics in the original)

This is how learning, or most forms of growth occur, i.e. it is the tears in our consciousness that allow more information to get in, and when it does it starts the process of integration towards a greater whole. From this perspective we can see what at least three of the things are that Aikido is trying to tell us:

One, conflict is neither bad nor good, it simply is; two, conflict is absolutely necessary to almost every life process; three, people need training in how to respond effectively and appropriately to conflict situations. (Dobson & Miller, 1992, p. xii)

**Creating Space for Change**

Another core element within Aikido is the concept of Ukemi (see Figure 1), which is the process of taking a controlled fall, known as a break-fall, so that we are able to ‘survive’ attacks that we have not been able to fully avoid. The key to Ukemi in the deeper conception of Aikido is that it enables us to keep the space open for further understanding, as we do not dig in and engage in a game of attrition. Rather we bend and move with the energy and use the space around us to safely fall out of the way, quickly regaining our balance and finding a safe distance again.

![Ukemi illustration](image)

**Figure 1. Ukemi illustration: backwards break-fall.**

Ukemi is a form of surrender which enables the space between self and other to be respected and maintained without the corruption of violent damage. On our lifelong journey towards a more connected relationship to all things we experience what could be described as ‘mini deaths.’ This is where our old selves die a little bit in order to integrate new truths (see Figure 2). In ‘Tobi Ukemi’ the Aikidoka must literally get over themselves in a high flip to avoid a potentially broken wrist (at the minimum if it were a real conflict). The experience of learning to do this is like coming to the edge of a cliff and experiencing the very end of everything we know as we take a leap into nothing. The edge or end of what we know can feel like the edge or end of all things, and that end includes the end of ourselves. In Aikido we regularly go over that edge, into a space that is beyond who we were before.
The more that we practice literal and metaphorical Ukemi, the more we realise that we can ‘survive’ further encounters with new truths; we become both more than what we were, and the truth that we integrate within our being. Both ourselves and the world have changed in the process of integrating new feelings and insights. One cannot help but draw a relationship here to what it is like to actively pursue ‘the good the beautiful and the true’ in a world filled with so much miscommunication and confusion, wherein fear is the natural reaction to ‘the unknown;’ or the merely ‘poorly understood.’ The stages of being on our developmental journey are marked out by moments of surrender, so that we can access the greater space and truth that awaits us just beyond our current moment.

Aikido has, at its core, a deep relationship to space and the moment before any action, a moment in which there are myriad possibilities. It is precisely this space that is essential for anything to express its energy in the moment. If we give something the space it needs in order to be seen and understood we can better appreciate its nature; increasing our chances of placing it in a broader, more complete context. One could argue that for an integral vision to emerge, there must be enough space in mind for myriad truths to find their place in a more holistic model of the world. In Aikido these concepts are brought to life within the body, both in motion and in stillness through years of methodical practice.

This practice begins (and ends) with a short meditation called Mokuso which has the purpose of helping us to access a state of awareness where we allow our attention to more fully inhabit our space, known as Mushin Mugamae; a state of pure bright awareness with no intent in any direction; neither towards nor, away from anything. We begin our movement from a state of readiness which has emerged from the state of no intention, known as Shizentai; this state has us ready to move in any direction but not yet committed to any direction.

With a still heart one can access the wonders of nature and by suppressing action one can still the gods of change. (Tomiki, 1958, in Allbright, p. 41)

A vital aspect of our journey in Aikido is to become increasingly aware of the gestalt of the room in which we train; this is tested during practice and furthermore when we are graded at a senior level. With this awareness we then move, in partnership with our fellow Aikidoka; deeply respecting our relationship to our partner and the many others around us. Even when training to respond to attacks we are constantly judging, feeling, sensing the distance between us and the other and then moving to a different vantage point at the moment of attack. This is known as Tai Sabaki.
(see Figure 3) and can be translated as body avoidance/movement. Rather than opposing the incoming ‘communication’ we move off the line to an angle (or vector); primarily so we are not harmed but also so that we can respond with the least harm possible to the attacker. The problem with most conflict is that people stay on the line, in front of the other, in effect ‘opposing’ the other; taking up the position of opposition immediately brings with it predictable counter-productive outcomes; this is why Aikido is less about competition to win against others, and more about co-development so that we can win together.

It is very common in Aikido to allow the force of a blow to come past us and then redirect it in a circular motion to allow the energy to play itself out. This gives the communicator the chance to play out their message without the worst kinds of conflict emerging i.e. where one or both parties are seriously harmed. This kind of mindful movement is very much like when we ask questions with the intent to understand rather than needing first to be understood. We keep asking questions until the thing that has created the energy in the moment has been exhausted, and we find ourselves at the end of a process of learning: one of many cycles of fusion, and then exploration that leads to further differentiation and integration. In Japanese they have a phrase you will often hear when training which is Mou Ikkai, which translates simply as ‘and again’ or ‘repeat’ but the difference is that it comes completely without judgement and with the expectation that anything that is worth doing is worth doing many many times in order to achieve competency. If you fail the answer is mou ikkai, and if you succeed? Mou ikkai!

The Body is Our Deepest Frame of Reference

All of this is very intellectual, and as Aikido is primarily an embodied practice it is also important to take up an embodied viewpoint here. We mostly learn Aikido without talking; some dojos (training studios) are quite rigid about this for a variety of reasons. One very good reason is that the new information we are trying to learn cannot immediately be processed until we have first learned the frame of reference that we need in order to relate to it: to become it. The frame of reference we first acquire is within our bodies, and it implants a deeper sense of balance and its vital importance within our psyche.

Aikido, from an embodied perspective, could be seen as a practice of stealing the balance of others, known as Kuzushi, whilst also being totally prepared to have yours stolen. Interestingly, another definition of Kuzushi is ‘mind-steal,’ wherein an opponent has a piece of their mind or attention stolen, to the advantage of the one who can leverage the opportunity that it creates. The problem that faces almost all new beginners of Aikido is that they arrive on the training mat already...
off balance in their bodies. This basic state of being off balance in their bodies makes the initial learning process a steep one, with very little in terms of ‘takeaways’ to show for it. The application in the everyday world from this ongoing adaptation to becoming more balanced in the body and mind, is commensurate with becoming increasingly ok with having this balance temporarily stolen in the body without it putting you mentally off balance.

A full-blooded Aikido session for an active participant will see a person doing hundreds of breakfalls until being on the floor is just as valid a part of the learning experience as being upright. An experienced Aikidoka knows that whether they are giving or receiving techniques the best lessons are the ones that challenge us. As a receiver of a technique we are the one who surrenders and takes a fall. This role has less to remember but it is more physically demanding. As the giver we carry the responsibility for remembering and performing a technique both accurately and safely; either can be highly challenging at different stages of development. Aikido is an embodied artform wherein this learning cycle of giving and receiving, of surrender and agency mirrors a variety of patterns of experience that we struggle with in everyday life. Where Aikido really excels at getting to the root of what blocks the learning cycle is its ability to teach us through our bodies how to escape the myriad double binds that stop us in our tracks, often leading to entrenchment and resistance to new information,, For example, we are hard wired to stand upright and to avoid falling and yet failure and making mistakes are fundamental to a healthy and productive learning cycle. We are geared to move forwards, rather like an automatic car left in drive mode, and therefore we don’t handle going backwards well as it feels counterproductive to our core sense of purpose and direction. Ukemi acts like a somatic antidote to this dilemma, quelling the all too human aversion to falling over and the more general fear of failure, particularly when either are witnessed by others.

Breath, Vision and Our Dynamic Potential

Another confounding factor for the beginner in Aikido is that most of us live primarily in our heads, breathe shallowly in our chests and have very little natural peripheral awareness. We’re also scared stiff of falling over, which is a metaphor that proves quite costly when we do fall as our bodies suffer more from being rigid than if they were relaxed. All of these bodily impediments are vitally important in the context of our greater developmental journey as they relate to our ability to be vulnerable to all of the new information that we will need to process on the route to becoming our increasingly inclusive and integrative selves. As we develop the ability to breathe more fully throughout all of our movements, and in advanced stages to enhance our movements, we find
ourselves more able to handle obstacles outside of the training space. Access to more information and a wider array of options become available to us as our peripheral awareness (see Figure 4) becomes an integral facility supporting how we process our reality; leading to more information being processed from within a broader context.

**Frame of Reference Equals Frame of Relevance**

It is precisely this increased capacity, to process more information from an increasingly broader context, that underpins both continuous adult development and the inoculation against the need for violent conflict. The counterpoint that Aikido works against is the ‘tunnel’ vision effect that arises from entering a fight or flight state. Tunnel vision is similar to foveal vision, which is at the acute end of our ability focus our eyesight and is ideal for focusing on what is immediately in front of us, however it is often to the cost of broader context or new information. Coupled with being in an unresourceful state this is a potent recipe for various levels of conflict. We all have blind-spots, areas we overlook, or ‘things that are missing from our frame of reference, therefore they are not in our frame of relevance.’

Aikido is just one way of supporting our capacity to expose these blind spots to increased awareness, however as an embodied methodology it is a valuable factor in a broader integrated approach alongside more cognitive practices.

Ultimately, physical, psychological and spiritual mastery are one and the same. The egoless self is open, flexible, supple, fluid, and dynamic on body, mind and spirit. Being egoless, the self identifies with all things and all people, seeing them not from its self-centred perspective but from their own respective centres. In a circle of limitless circumference every point becomes the centre of the universe. (Ueshiba, 1984, p. 9).

As we adapt to living in a body that is comfortable shifting within any permutation of a 360 degree position in space (see Figure 5) we increasingly find ourselves able to take different perspectives and vitally, get out of our own way so that we can see what something is from someone else’s perspective and not just from our own. The net effect is a kind of ‘switching off’ of the smaller (identity) self and an increasing of our fullest potential self (spirit), unrestricted by fears, planning or strategizing. From here there is receptiveness, flexibility, speed and fearless
engagement. This quote from Professor Kenji Tomiki beautifully sums up Aikido with Mushin Mugamae at its core:

Non-conscious action stemming from a neutral physical posture (in other words, neither aggressive nor submissive – mu gamae), executed without emotion or prejudgment (mu shin). (Allbright, 2002, p. 41)

A Personal Reflection

Over time, I have been fortunate to experience glimmers of these kinds of realisations. I increasingly experience states of a kind of activated or applied openness where my model of the world is more readily open to being expanded. Even in the face of facts that I would quite often prefer not to be true, the benefits from accepting them continue to outweigh the initial struggle to relate to them and eventually integrating them within a more holistic model of reality. The opportunity to pursue my master’s degree was a classic example of this. I was working on having a workshop certified for CPD credits to be delivered as an executive training and had it failed by the supervisor. That same supervisor liked the way that I took the feedback onboard and commented that the work I had put into creating the course said to her that I had what it took to make an application for higher learning for master’s course in applied coaching. I took the hit of the rejection as a gift and flowed with the direction of the energy it had to give. The outcome was to change my life by giving me a space in which to pursue my core interests at an advanced academic level. If I had become fixated with the failure to have my course certified I would not only have failed to move forwards, there’s a strong possibly that I would have gone backwards, with no profit (learning) to show for it.

The final core concept I would like to share is more generally a Japanese one, but it is quite common to hear it being said in Aikido: Ganbatte. This word means to really go for it, and to do your best. It is said with a passionate energy and it is a core aspect of the Japanese psyche that they really want you give it your all, even if they might have to work harder because of it.

Ganbatte.

References


Ken Wilber’s Problematic Relationship to Science

Frank Visser¹

Abstract: Ken Wilber has argued for a spiritual view of evolution. To make his case he has defended three knowledge claims: (1) current science fails to explain major transformations in evolution, (2) some scientific views seem to support his view that the cosmos is inherently creative, and (3) his own theory of evolution is “the only theory that can actually explain the mysteries of evolution.” The validity of these three claims is questioned by the argument that a more believable integration of evolutionary theory within integral theory is called for. This requires both an openness to criticism and more solid expertise in this specific field of science. Thus far, both of these features have been lacking within both Wilber’s writings and the integral community.

Keywords: Eros, evolution, evolutionary science, extended synthesis, integral theory, modern synthesis.

Introduction

Throughout his many works, Ken Wilber has shown an ambiguous attitude towards science, and especially evolutionary science. Even though the concept of evolution has been central to his entire work spanning four decades, his engagement with evolutionary theory has been minimal. He has often argued science can’t explain some forms of complexity. He has suggested his ideas are like those of some famous scientists, seeming to suggest they implicitly support his ideas. At the same time, he has explicitly denied that these scientists would accept his specific idea of evolution as Spirit-in-action, metaphorically pictured as Eros-in-the-Kosmos. And finally, he has claimed to have “the only theory that can actually explain the mysteries of evolution” (Wilber, 2017, p. 14), even though his mystical notion about Eros doesn’t qualify as a scientific theory. In sum, the interface of integral theory with evolutionary science needs much more thoughtful consideration than it has received until now.

In 2010 I presented the paper “The ‘Spirit of Evolution’ Reconsidered” at the Integral Theory Conference, where it received an honorary mention in the category of constructive criticism. It reviewed in chronological order the most salient written and online statements Wilber has made about evolution and evolutionary theory (Visser, 2010). Over the years I have offered the more critical reviews in dozens of essays on Integral World (Visser, 2008). Here, I propose a more systematic and analytical treatment of the areas where Wilber and evolutionary science meet – or don’t meet.

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Wilber has given four reasons for taking a spiritual perspective on evolution. In his recent *The Religion of Tomorrow* he argued, among other things:

Rational reasons to believe in this miraculous spiritual dimension to Reality include the following: (a) the "creative advance into novelty" that is demonstrated by evolution itself and is inexplicable by mere "chance mutation" (the evolution from strings to quarks to subatomic particles to atoms to small molecules to massively interconnected molecules to asexual cells and early organisms – just for starters – is an awful lot of evolution in a universe that is supposed to be "running down" but can easily be seen as yet more evidence of creative Eros or Spirit-in-action, "a self-organizing self-transcendent drive," as Erich Jantsch put it). (Wilber, 2017, p. 498)

The other three areas involve the interconnectedness of things and events, the presence of consciousness and the evidence from meditation. This quote reveals a number of problematic claims. First, the grand sequence from sub-atomic particles to complex biological organisms is taken as *prima facie* evidence for a Spirit behind everything. Second, doubt is cast on the commonly accepted view in science that the second law of thermodynamics, according to which the universe is “running down” holds sway, apparently in contradiction to the increase of complexity Wilber refers to. And third, this cosmic process is explained, quoting complexity scientist Jantsch, by a generic “drive” towards self-organization and self-transcendence.

In my view, the growth towards complexity can be explained more fruitfully by closely paying attention to what science has to say about each of these transformations. Chance is only one of the many factors involved. Further, this growth towards complexity does not violate the second law but is paradoxically powered by it through the energy flows it continuously generates. And finally, postulating a generic drive towards complexity (or behind biological evolution) leads to more questions than it answers. Why, for example, would that drive work well on Earth but not on the Moon or Pluto, if Eros is a cosmic phenomenon? And why, for that matter, did it take billions of years before even on Earth complex life arose? Science provides more believable explanations for these processes.

We can contrast a religious with a scientific view of reality like this. In the religious view, taken by Wilber, one feels overwhelmed by the complexity of nature and invokes a metaphysical principle (Spirit) to explain it all. Before exploring reality, one already knows the final answer. Science comes down from that “view from 40,000 feet” and breaks up this problem in more manageable chunks. It does not pretend to have final answers but makes daily progress in solving these piecemeal problems. Invoking Spirit to solve problems of science is a non-starter, a question-begging strategy, the “God of the gaps.” When one argues for Spirit, it is important to find areas where science supposedly fails, as much as areas where science can be included. Even a creationist will accept that minor variations are possible during evolution. It is major transformations that are usually seen as problematic within the current status of science. This is Wilber’s stance as well (Wilber, 1995, p. 10, 492).

On many occasions Wilber has expressed doubts about the ability of science to solve the mysteries of evolution – so that it needs to be complemented by a spiritual perspective. Here’s an example from a recent Integral Life video (Wilber & De Vos, 2019):
One of the most boring criticisms I have received over the years is that my theory doesn't fit the modern theory of evolution. And that's right! The modern theory of evolution is catastrophically incomplete!

A strong statement such as this leaves me to wonder, if, to make this field of evolutionary science “more complete,” we are supposed to add Spirit to our worldview, or if we rather should really investigate what current evolutionary theory entails. A similarly strong statement about the incompleteness of science was made in a blog post by Wilber in which he responded to criticism about this understanding of evolution (Wilber, 2006b):

Do I think Mayr or Dawkins or Lewontin or Kauffman believe in telos or Eros that is Spiritual in any way? Absolutely not. Virtually all mainstream theorists embrace scientific materialism.

This, again, makes me wonder, if Wilber’s view of evolution is in fact not supported by science at all. Yet on occasion, as I will show, he claims support from famous scientists. However, in general one cannot claim support from thinkers that do not share one’s particular views. Personally, I would worry when the view of evolution I hold is not supported by science, but Wilber apparently thinks otherwise. He indicates his reliance on other ways of knowing, based on his own mystical readings or meditative experiences (generally phrased by him as the “Eye of Spirit”).

But in general, when one invokes an extra-scientific principle to explain the complexities of nature, one surely has the burden of proof to show that this explanation really clarifies things. As is the case with the God of the creationists, this is fundamentally impossible. Wilber’s spiritual-mystical views on evolution suffer from the same fundamental drawbacks, in my opinion.

To see more clearly where Wilber and science meet, or part ways, we need to see what Wilber’s view of evolution actually consists of. Then we need to see if evolutionary science speaks with a single voice about evolution or many different (and sometimes conflicting) voices. And finally, we need to see if there is common ground between these two areas.

Ken Wilber’s View of Evolution

Where to begin? Why not at the beginning? In his first book, The Spectrum of Consciousness, Wilber (1977) pictured the cosmic process (following Coomaraswamy) as divided in two phases: evolution, or the movement from Spirit to maya (matter), and involution, or the opposite and subsequent movement from maya to Spirit. In later works he reversed these terms (following Sri Aurobindo), with involution being the prior movement from Spirit to maya and evolution being the opposite and subsequent movement from maya to Spirit. (Wilber, 1993, p. xviii-xix) However, the basic abstract scheme remains the same: All natural processes come from Spirit and return to it, whichever name we give to its phases.

Spirit therefore plays a crucial role in evolution as Wilber understands it. This is clear from another early work, Eye to Eye, in which he states: “The strict theory of natural selection suffers from not acknowledging the role played by Spirit in evolution” (1983, p. 205). Further, the
subtitle of Sex, Ecology, Spirituality (1995), his major academic work, is “The Spirit of Evolution,” and in A Brief History of Everything (1996), a more popular version of this main work, Part One was specifically called “Spirit-in-Action.” One can even say he believes in a certain view of evolution because he believes in the doctrine of involution.

This active view of Spirit differentiated the neo-perennial philosophy from its predecessor the Perennial Philosophy, according to Wilber. Where Spirit was traditionally depicted as the passive Ground of Being, without any clear notion of evolution, in this more recent formulation Spirit is seen as both passive and active at the same time: passive-transcendent as World Ground and active-immanent as World Process. This Neo-Perennialist view was rather recent, “no more than a few hundred years old” and its precise origin is “almost impossible to pinpoint exactly.” It started with Hegel and Schelling, was taken up by Spencer and “applied to biology” by Darwin, before reappearing in Sri Aurobindo and Teilhard de Chardin, in Wilber’s reading of the history of evolutionary thought (1997, p. 62-63).

In Wilber’s reading of the evolutionary literature, Charles Darwin didn’t do much more than “dutifully and drudgingly” (Wilber’s words) accumulate evidence for a view of evolution that was already “in the air” (Wilber, 1995, p. 491). What Wilber failed to realize, is that Darwin fundamentally broke with the prevailing notions about evolution, in a way that was shocking to many of his contemporaries, even to those who accepted the theory of natural selection. Darwin replaced the concept of transformation or transmutation, as evolution was called in those days, by the theory of variation and selection (Visser, 2019d). And where Wilber (1995, p. 491) concludes in Sex, Ecology, Spirituality that Darwin’s lasting contribution was to obscure “for over a century” a spiritual view of evolution (driven by Eros or Spirit), for science his contribution was taken to be an enormous clarification of the evolutionary process (Visser 2019d). Wilber’s concept of evolution is fundamentally at odds with that of science. It is here that Wilber’s scholarship is most wanting and in need of a substantial correction.

Wilber’s highly esoteric-idealistic view of evolution gets brief mention in the historical overviews of the idea of evolution. For example, Bowler (2009, p. 209), in his Evolution: The History of An Idea, does mention Goethe, Hegel, Fichte and Schelling in a brief paragraph on Idealism and Romanticism, and their reaction to Enlightenment materialism, in which they wanted to see “spirit as an active force imposing its will on nature to create order and purpose.” But nothing like the elaborate esoteric doctrines of involution and evolution can be found in the Western philosophical literature.

A more likely source therefore, is the Western-esoteric Theosophical tradition, which started in 1875 with H.P. Blavatsky and whose magnum opus The Secret Doctrine (1888) contained not only elaborate details about involution and evolution, but also dozens of references to Darwin. According to Indian scholar Meera Nanda (2010, p. 284) all these Eastern-esoteric philosophers are “Blavatksy’s Children” (Visser, 2019c). She writes: “The entire repertoire of intellectual arguments used to dress up traditional Hindu cosmology in the scientistic costume of progressive evolutionism was created and popularized originally by Madame Blavatsky and her fellow Theosophists” (Nanda, (2010, p. 284). Theosophy revitalized Indian philosophy, but introduced ideas of its own, one of which were the elaborate cycles of involution and evolution. Meera emphasizes specifically that these Hindu doctrines are incompatible with Western science.
What immediately stands out about these theories is how deeply and fundamentally they contradict Darwin. While Darwinian theory explains [the] evolution of species by descent from a common ancestor by genetic modification, Hindu teachings assume spirit or consciousness to be the primary force of evolution. Does it not follow, therefore, that one can't believe in the Hindu view of evolution, and in the same breath claim to be in accord with [the] scientific – i.e., Darwinian – understanding of evolution? (Nanda, 2010, p. 282)

This points to a fundamental theoretical difference Wilber tends to gloss over in his dealings with evolution. Integrating the Darwinian view of evolution has consequences for any spiritual view of evolution.

Of course, some contemporary thinkers have tried to forge an integration between these two opposing views, usually called theistic evolution, in the sense that evolution is God’s way of creation, or that God fine-tuned the original conditions under which evolution could subsequently take off (Lazlo, quoted in Visser, 2014a). I have called this “the God of the Knobs” (Visser, 2019b). But I find these forms of synthesis or integration hardly convincing. They are parasitic on the scientific view because they never specify the added value of introducing Spirit. And what empirical data are proof for God’s existence? This is the major weakness of Wilber’s view of evolution: if there is such a pervasive cosmic force operative in evolution, as he claims, how could that possibly work in practice and be detected?

To repeat, traditional doctrines of evolution were “transformational” (or “transmutational” as it was expressed in the nineteenth century) to use Ernst Mayr’s (2001) terminology, whereas Darwin’s proposed a “variational” model of evolution. In the traditional view, species morphed into other species by a mysterious process of transformation or transmutation, whereas Darwin abolished such a notion in favor of variation, selection, and inheritance. Wilber is fond of using the terms “transcend-and-include” when dealing with evolutionary processes, which are supposed to be driven by Eros, a Whiteheadian “creative advance into novelty” or an “extraordinary power.” In a video on evolution Wilber (2014) claimed:

This seems to be the general overall thrust of evolution – and one of the things that is certain about it – is that it won't give up. It simply is there, with an extraordinary power, in the entire cosmos.

Scientists don’t think in these generic and generalized terms about evolution at all. They want to precisely understand under what conditions complexity may or may not emerge.

There are only two basic options here, in my opinion. Either there is such a pervasive “drive” towards complexity in the cosmos, or there is not. If there is, one has to explain why, if we take our solar system as an example of a self-contained energetic unit, life seems to be so rare – as far as we can tell. Life on earth seems to be the exception to the rule, instead of the rule itself. But if there is no such cosmic and pervasive drive towards complexity, the task is to explain why there is life at all in our solar system. Science understandably points to the specific conditions that exist on Earth – the so-called “Goldilocks conditions” of the habitable zone in which our planet exists (Christian, 2018). The fact that life may exist outside of our solar system, and may even be
abundant, does not change that observation. Invoking metaphysical principles should really be our last resort – if at all.

Incidentally, this does not mean that the scientific theory of evolution doesn’t accept the notion of progress, as is often assumed mostly because of Stephen Jay Gould’s influential anti-progress arguments (Gould, 2002). However, both Ernst Mayr (2001) and Richard Dawkins (2003) have argued, persuasively, that natural selection was bound to lead to progress, under certain conditions, and in the restricted sense as being better adapted to the environment. What is not accepted by science is a general progressive movement in all departments of nature, least of all driven by an inherent force or pressure, let alone one of a spiritual or divine nature, as Wilber proposes. This latter conviction remains, in the words of Dawkins (2017, p. 124), a mystical doctrine which is “not really a theory at all, and I shall not bother to discuss it. It is obviously mystical and does not explain anything that it doesn't assume to start with.” I agree with this assessment of the theoretical emptiness of these mystical notions. Wilber’s notion of a Spirit-driven evolution (which can hardly be called a “theory”) suffers from the same defect.

Does Wilber in fact have a proper theory of evolution? In his main work Sex, Ecology, Spirituality Wilber (1995, p. 35-78) has fleshed out his “Twenty Tenets,” which he defined as “the 'laws' or 'patterns' or 'tendencies' or 'habits’” that “all known holons seem to have in common,” (p. 34). Remarkably, in this long section those thinkers that get included are philosophers, social scientists or complexity scientists, such as Whitehead, Derrida, Foucault, Freud, Marx, chaos theorists – but most notably absent are those who should be consulted first when it comes to evolution: evolutionary theorists. In fact, these Tenets are highly abstract descriptions, not causal explanations. As one example, tenet 3 reads “Holons emerge,” which is to say that atoms give rise to molecules, as molecules give rise to cells, etcetera. That may be true at an abstract-descriptive level but doesn’t contribute to our understanding of how exactly molecules and cells emerge from simpler holons. These processes are usually well understood by science and are non-mysterious.

In his more popular books or videos, Wilber has used a rather colloquial style of presentation to convey his understanding of evolution. Most of these dealings with modern evolutionary thought have been rather critical about mutation/variation and natural selection theory (Wilber restricts himself usually to neo-Darwinism). He usually questions that science can explain a certain form of complexity (be it human eyes, bird’s wings, the immune system, regeneration, morphogenesis or speciation) without in any way engaging the relevant evolutionary research literature. More often than not, this criticism is couched in graphic and sarcastic statements, meant to cast doubt on the scientific, neo-Darwinian understanding of evolution. Here’s a typical example taken from a video about Integral Buddhism.

To get one species from another requires several mutations. It’s well-known that the vast majority of mutations are lethal, so we would have to have several extremely unlikely mutations all occurring at once in the same animal. But even more unbelievable, the exact same number and type of mutations would have to occur in another animal of the opposite sex, in order for them to procreate and pass on the new mutations. And even more unbelievable yet, these two would have to find each other – what if one is in Siberia and the other in Mexico? The odds of all of those happening is basically zero. (Wilber, 2014)
Science, however, explains speciation by populations being split in two parts, so the problem of its members being in two countries far apart simply does not arise (Coyne & Orr, 2004). How mutations spread within populations is well understood by the modern synthesis. Again, Wilber’s understanding of the principles of evolution is inadequate and at variance with science. What does he actually have in mind, that Eros is tweaking genes? That Spirit is the Great Mutator? He does not tell us.

On more than one occasion, Wilber has pointed to the literature of intelligent design, which, he believes has correctly identified the shortcomings of neo-Darwinism, even though he disagrees with their alternative solution (of the Christian God). For example, in a footnote of Integral Spirituality he states,

I am no fan of intelligent design either, which is just Creation Science in drag. But you don't need an intelligent designer to realize that evolution seems to involve some "creative allure," or what Whitehead called "the creative advance into novelty." That drive – Eros by any other name – seems a perfectly realistic conclusion, given the facts of evolution as we know them. Let's just say there is plenty of room for a Kosmos of Eros. (Wilber, 2007a, p. 236n.)

What “facts of evolution” has Wilber taken into consideration, one wonders? Wilber’s “integral design,” as we can call it (Visser, 2009), suffers in my opinion from the same defects as intelligent design proper: it doesn’t have a positive theory of evolution of its own. Apart from a generic “drive towards self-organization” no further details are provided. All it can do is cast doubt on science and its supposed shortcomings, but it cannot, by definition, get explicit about the ways of working of the divine Eros or Spirit.

As Shanks (2004) formulated it in his critique of intelligent design “theory”: creationism (or intelligent design) cannot answer the crucial questions about the What, Who, How, When and Why of evolution. Wilber may not be a typical creationist (Visser, 2019), but he can with some justification be called a “creativist” (Visser, 2011). In Whiteheadian style, Wilber relates all evolutionary novelty to the “creativity” inherently present in the universe. This primordial creativity cannot be explained any further, other than identifying it as the “action” of the divine Spirit. As we will see, there are other, more believable ways to conceptualize the creativity of the cosmos.

A different way to contextualize Wilber’s take on evolution is found in the magazine article "The Real Evolution Debate" (2007), which was published in What Is Enlightenment?, a Andrew Cohen related publication which served as medium for Wilber’s ideas for many years. In it, no less than twelve approaches to evolution are portrayed, six from a material-scientific and six from a spiritual-religious perspective.
It is argued by the anonymous author(s) that the evolutionary landscape is much more varied than the usual "Darwin vs. Design" dilemma, which dominates our public discourse. Wilber's integral philosophy, listed as the final and most comprehensive approach, is described as follows, "The integralist's goal is not so much a new theory of evolution but a larger perspective that can effectively integrate disparate existing theories, both spiritual and scientific, into a coherent picture of the entire evolutionary process. More than synthesizers, they offer a sort of radically inclusive meta-theory, one that sees truth everywhere – from the gene-centered focus of the Neo-Darwinists to the mathematical insight of the Complexity Theorists to the creativity of the Process Philosophers – but attempts to provide a larger context that allows us to see the relationships between these many evolutionary perspectives... Like the Conscious Evolutionists and the Process Philosophers, the Integralists are reaching for a higher synthesis and a deeper integration between science and spirit." (p. 100).

Be that as it may, in my opinion the two basic options still remain: evolution is seen as either unguided (or naturalistic) or it is seen as guided (by whatever divine Principle, Process or Person). Wilber's Eros-in-the-Kosmos is such a transcendental Principle, which places him squarely in the religious-spiritual-mystical camp.

This raises the pertinent question: what is the added value of that "larger perspective" and "coherent picture" in terms of understanding evolutionary processes? For example, does a Whiteheadian "creative advance into novelty" qualify as a theory? Or does it provide any new understanding? Is it an improvement on what science has to offer, as Wilber claims? Can a meta-theory actually have any bearing at all on scientific problems? Wilber suggests a positive answer to this question by introducing the notion of Eros when discussing the evolution of eyes and wings, or other biological phenomena, but it is questionable.

Wilber claims to transcend-and-include science in his integral philosophy, but this leads to problems: evolution is either guided or unguided. Tertium non datur. Or put differently in more modern terms: you can't have it both ways. Species are either created or evolved. And if science is included to some extent by an integral philosophy, to what extent is it included? And more importantly: when is it transcended? Wilber does not provide any specifics here.

In summary, by introducing Spirit into the evolutionary equation Wilber doesn’t clarify any single empirical evolutionary problem. He does on occasion refer to some areas of science, most
notably complexity and chaos science, that seem to point into the direction of a creative cosmos, but we should keep in mind this in no way implies automatically there is a Spirit behind everything we see in nature. His attempts to cast doubt on the ability of science to explain these natural phenomena have not been very convincing to me, in part because his penchant for caricature and dismissive humor have not helped create an atmosphere for serious reflection.

**What Does Science Say About Evolution?**

Turning now to science itself, it should immediately be obvious there is not one single scientific theory about evolution – or about anything else within the province of scientific study, for that matter. Instead, there are various schools of thought, which debate intensely about the mechanisms of evolution, and more specifically the relative importance of natural selection. Most, if not all, however, subscribe to the Darwinian thesis that we do not need to invoke spiritual forces to explain the diversity and complexity of nature – nor should we.

Of these evolutionary schools, Wilber usually refers only to “neo-Darwinism,” which is a label applied to the so-called modern synthesis, which took form in the early decades of the 20th century. Where Darwin postulated natural selection as the main evolutionary mechanism, though not the only one, he was in the dark about the precise workings of heredity – which made many of his contemporaries doubt the viability of this model. We would call it Evolution 1.0 these days. But when the work of Gregor Mendel was (re)discovered around 1900, and the laws of heredity were formulated, Darwin was finally vindicated (let us call it Evolution 2.0).

This “modern synthesis,” a term coined by Julian Huxley (1942) in his book *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis*, became the received evolutionary science. In recent decades, however, multiple additional evolutionary mechanisms have been proposed and debated, to the extent that an “extended” or “post-modern synthesis” has emerged (Evolution 3.0). Many of its insights have been documented in a single book as well: *Evolution: The Extended Synthesis* (2010) by Massimo Pigliucci and Gerd B. Müller. Table 2 provides a very rough timeline:

**Table 2. Three generations of evolutionary thinking**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1850-1900</th>
<th>Charles Darwin</th>
<th>Evolution 1.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900-1950</td>
<td>The modern synthesis</td>
<td>Evolution 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-2000</td>
<td>The extended synthesis</td>
<td>Evolution 3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Entire new fields of investigation have opened up this way, such as: evolutionary development or evo-devo, ecology, epigenetics and phenotypic plasticity (Pigliucci, 2007). And even then, some fields have been left out, according to Dutch biologist Gert Korthof (who owns a large online review website dealing with this Third Evolutionary Synthesis, but also a great variety of critiques of Darwinism at www.wasdarwinwrong.com). He mentions among other things: endosymbiosis, horizontal gene transfer, viral evolution, earth system science, catastrophe theory, the origin of life and astrobiology (Korthof, 2014).
Difference of opinion exists in the field about how important these theoretical additions have been (‘Extended Evolutionary Synthesis,” n.d.). In my opinion this is just a testimony of the progress of science resulting in a richer image of the processes of evolution. At any rate, this is a lively field of scientific research. It is also sensitive to hype and exaggerated claims, as if Darwinism has been refuted. Just claiming, as Wilber does, that “the modern theory of evolution is catastrophically incomplete” is irresponsible without specifying what is included or excluded in the analysis. For sure, it is widely believed these days that the modern synthesis itself was still incomplete and needs to be expanded. Such is the progress of science.

In my opinion, this debate can be structured helpfully by seeing each of these schools of evolutionary thought as addressing one or more levels of the Linnean taxonomic hierarchy (Table 3).

Table 3. Evolutionary researchers address different taxonomic levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taxonomic level</th>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Focus of study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Kauffman</td>
<td>Origin of cells, molecules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domains</td>
<td>Woese</td>
<td>Origin of bacteria, archaea, eukaryotes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdoms</td>
<td>Margulis</td>
<td>Origin of fungi, animals, plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes</td>
<td>Carroll</td>
<td>Origin of wings, eyes, limbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Species</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>Origin of species</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In true integral fashion, this prevents researchers in the various fields to argue past each other. It is also relevant for assessing Wilber’s statements on evolution, especially when he claims support from any of them.

As one well-known example of mixing taxonomic levels: where Darwin studied the origin of the various animal and plant species, Lynn Margulis (1998) focused on the way the animal and plant kingdoms emerged in the first place, through endosymbiosis of single celled organisms and bacteria, an insight she derived from early Russian biologists. In that sense, she went deeper, and further back in time, than Darwin was able to do. Margulis opposed Neo-Darwinist gradualism, not by invoking Spirit, but by empirically discovering other evolutionary mechanisms. Later in life she argued that endosymbiosis was also the main mechanism of speciation (Margulis & Sagan, 2002). But even if occasionally the tree of life shows signs of merging instead of splitting, especially in the case of horizontal gene transfer (Sapp, 2009; Quammen, 2018), the overwhelming majority of species emerge through splitting of populations (Coyne & Orr, 2004).

As a second example, and more relevant to my analysis, Stuart Kauffman pioneered the phenomena of self-organization, especially around the origin of cellular life and even molecular structure (Kauffman, 2019). His work is not addressing the question of speciation, which remains Darwin’s domain, or symbiosis, which is Margulis’s territory. Wilber often refers to Kauffman as an ally in his opposition to neo-Darwinism. For example:
I am not alone in seeing that chance and natural selection by themselves are not enough to account for the emergence that we see in evolution. Stuart Kauffman and many others have criticized mere chance and natural selection as not adequate to account for this emergence (he sees the necessity of adding self-organization). (Wilber, 2007)

In doing so he overlooks that self-organization is not primarily the mechanism that produces biological adaptations or species; it is the process that spontaneously yields (constituent parts of) cells and molecules. We shouldn’t mix taxonomic levels when discussing evolution. Nor should we prematurely take the incompleteness of neo-Darwinism as proof for Spirit.

Then there are those scientists who stand closer to creationist or spiritual views of evolution, even though they still don’t explicitly invoke divine influences. First there’s the so-called “Third Way of Evolution” (at www.thethirdwayofevolution.com), which counts as members James A. Shapiro, Dennis Noble, Eva Jablonka, Gerd B. Müller, Eugene Koonin and many others. They argue that neo-Darwinism (or “ultra-Darwinism”) overlooks important aspects of the evolutionary process. They want to steer a mid-course between creationism and neo-Darwinism. Obviously, there is considerable overlap with the extended synthesis.

The creationists proper (or their pseudo-scientific spokespersons of intelligent design) argue more explicitly for a divine hand in nature. Michael Behe’s *Darwin’s Black Box* (1996) – a title Wilber has recommended to his students as evidence for the supposed failures of Darwinism (Wilber, 2005) – and further works inaugurated this movement, mostly in the US. Scientists have wholesale rejected this approach because it doesn’t provide any positive evidence for or theory of divine intervention in evolution. It can only cast doubt on the capacity of naturalistic science to explain all of its details, usually by arguing for the “irreducible complexity” of this or that biochemical process. It is telling that Wilber sees intelligent design as an ally against the “flatland” approach of neo-Darwinism, while overlooking the many scientific evolutionary schools critical of the modern synthesis.

I would like to highlight an aspect of the notion of design when it comes to biological complexity that is often overlooked. In the case of intelligent design, it is one thing to speculate about a cosmic Spirit which has designed biological organisms or biochemical processes, it is wholly something else to implement this design. It is unclear to all parties involved how this could possibly have worked. And this shortcoming applies to Wilber’s Eros-theory as well. Even so, as late as Wilber’s latest book *The Religion of Tomorrow* he has quoted creationist Hugh Ross (2001) to argue for the improbability of life, or a habitable planet Earth, without a divine Designer/Spirit/Eros (Wilber, 2017 p. 497-498). One may ask: what does Wilber have in mind here, that Eros/Spirit prepares a planet for us to live on?

Then again, it is sometimes suggested that a spiritual view of evolution becomes available only for highly developed researchers, who have entered post-formal stages of cognition of mystical states of consciousness. An unlikely hypothesis, as if all mystics would agree with Wilber’s idiosyncratic view on evolution. And if they do not? Not enlightened enough? However, one could equally argue (playfully) that these post-modern developments in evolutionary science are already made possible by higher, post-formal forms of thought.
The first Darwinists stressed the element of competition, between separate and selfish individuals, most notably by using the term “the survival of the fittest” (a term that was coined by Herbert Spencer, not Darwin, and reluctantly used by the latter). Later theorists emphasized that cooperation is much more important (Kropotkin, Margulis, Sloan Wilson). This can be interpreted as a change from agency to communion. A truly “integral” view of evolution stresses the genealogy of all the various forms of life, first as a linear ladder but after Darwin more as a non-linear, bushy tree of life which branches out in all directions. All organisms are put in historical perspective by seeing them as descended from a last universal common ancestor (Dawkins, 2016). And to understand the recent findings of the prevalence of horizontal gene transfer even between different domains (i.e. viruses and humans) requires another mental transformation, crossing traditional boundaries between domains.

Ironically, at no point in this scheme of theoretical advancement have unspecified and unspecifiable spiritual factors been introduced. Even stronger, all these new discoveries have been made by modern empirical methods (microscopy, phylogenetics, etc.). Spiritual approaches have not contributed to our knowledge of evolution at all.

Wilber has covered very little of this evolutionary theoretical landscape in his writings, seemingly implying that one is either a neo-darwinist or a creationist. He seems to feel at home in the latter camp (Lane, 2011, 2017). Even if the field of evolutionary theory is a rich tapestry of schools and opinions, and debates often get considerably heated, most if not all scientists squarely subscribe to the fundamental Darwinian notion that you can get to species without invoking Spirit in any of its guises.

Creationists, including Wilber, often seem to use the healthy controversy within this field of science as, or perhaps only as, an argument for the need to postulate Spirit. In defense of Wilber, some integralists (e.g., Reynolds, 2019) have claimed he is able to see the spiritual dimension of evolution because he uses his Eye of Spirit, whereas science is limited to the Eyes of mind and senses only, leading to a materialistic worldview. This raises the question: what additional insight into biological phenomena is gained by using such a form of extra-scientific knowledge? Reynolds argues that Eros or Spirit is not in any way a creationist God or Deity, but rather behind “everything that arises.” This contradicts Wilber’s many statements that evolution is “Spirit-in-action,” in my opinion. But even if that were the case, its absence or presence wouldn’t make any empirical difference. Like beauty, Eros seems to exist only in the eye of the beholder, but not in any objective, empirical sense. Does that make the notion of Eros theory or poetry? (Visser, 2017).

In summary, Wilber has rarely engaged the modern synthesis in a serious manner (and often ridiculed it), has not dealt with the extended synthesis and its many offshoots, has recommended his students to read Michael Behe, the front man of intelligent design, quotes creationists such as Hugh Ross, and at the same time claims to have “the only theory that can actually explain the mysteries of evolution” (Wilber, 2017, p. 14). To date, Wilber’s sympathies and affinities do not appear to lie with the realm of evolutionary science.
How or Where Do Ken Wilber and Evolutionary Science Meet?

Given this situation, we should now ask, has Wilber contributed to our understanding of evolution, either by intelligently commenting on current scientific schools or debates of evolutionary thought or proposing a theoretically viable explanatory model of his own? Given the above analysis, the answer must be no, in both cases. Neither intelligent design nor Integral Design has been able to clarify how biological complexity has emerged under the influence of Spirit. This is and will remain a religious belief which is hard to reconcile with the scientific method. This is Wilber’s vision in a nutshell, as expressed in *Integral Spirituality*:

That drive – Eros by any other name – seems a perfectly realistic conclusion, given the facts of evolution as we know them. Let's just say there is plenty of room for a Kosmos of Eros. (Wilber, 2006a)

By repeating this catechism instead of substantiating it, Wilber is mixing up the factual language of science with the poetic language of religion, without attention to precise terminology (“by any other name”). Rather than offering positive evidence for the existence of Spirit, he is making an inference, in the same way that intelligent design uses this argument (Dembski, 2006), about the necessity for such a hypothesis.

Based on his writing thus far, it is difficult to discern the reach of Wilber’s understanding of science. He often argues that science relates all phenomena to chance, and since chance by itself is obviously not able to produce biological complexity, “something other than chance” is needed. Here’s a typical quote, taken from *A Brief History of Everything* (Wilber, 1996, p. 23):

In other words, something other than chance is pushing the universe. For traditional scientists, chance was their god. Chance would explain it all. Chance – plus unending time – would produce the universe. But they don't have unending time, and so their god fails them miserably. That god is dead. Chance is not what explains the universe; in fact, chance is what that universe is laboring mightily to overcome. Chance is exactly what the self-transcending drive of the Kosmos overcomes.

Science, however, sees chance as only one factor, lawfulness or necessity or selection being the other. Evolution is decidedly *not* the result of mere random chance, but also of non-random selection (Isaak, 2003).

Without any opportunity for a positive theory of evolution, explaining in detail how Spirit intervenes or how biological complexity is an expression of Spirit, the only alternative left for Wilber is point to developments in science which, if not prove his thesis, at least seem to go in the right direction. In this context he usually mentions two scientific giants: theoretical biologist Stuart Kauffman and complexity scientist and Nobel Prize winner Ilya Prigogine.

As stated before, Kauffman’s field of research does not touch directly on the processes of speciation or adaptation. Regarding these fields Kauffman is a Darwinist (Kauffman, 2019, p. 87: “Darwin was right”). And since Wilber does not specify what this self-organization (understood by him as a spiritual phenomenon) is able to accomplish in terms of biological
complexity (eyes?, wings?, cells?, multicellularity?) – in stark contrast to Kauffman’s attention to detail – he can not present Kauffman as one of his allies. True, Kauffman (2008) has written *Reinventing the Sacred*, but that refers to an explicitly naturalistic sacredness or sacred naturalism. Contrary to Dawkins, he is not in favor of combatting religion, but instead wants to open our eyes to the wonders of nature itself. By elucidating empirical processes of self-organization, Kauffman may not be Wilber’s ally at all, but in fact an adversary, given Wilber’s explicitly spiritual agenda.

The same is true for Ilya Prigogine, who won a Nobel Prize for his work on dissipative structures, which are able to create “order-out-of-chaos.” Wilber (1995) reads into this phenomenon a transformative power of nature or even matter, which suits his spiritual philosophy. But in my opinion this interpretation is questionable. Self-organization definitely exists, and in many forms, but it is not something that can be explained or clarified by a single cause. What Prigogine actually discovered is that *under certain conditions* of energy flows, matter tends to assume a new structure, which processes (“dissipates”) this energy in a more efficient way. Order can thus be produced *by exporting disorder*. Likewise, we humans continuously have to take food in order to live and thrive and would otherwise die. A constant energy input is therefore needed to keep living organisms going. This pre-eminent role of energy flows or gradients is consistently overlooked by Wilber in his writings when discussing the emergence of complexity.

For example, in a recent video (Wilber & De Vos, 2019) he argues for a self-organizing drive *intrinsic* to matter:

That's why Prigogine, Nobel prize winner in 1967 or so... the research he did demonstrated absolutely beyond a shadow of doubt, that even dead and sentient matter, if you push it far from equilibrium, it will escape its turmoil by jumping to a higher level of self-organization. Matter does that inherently! That is built in to it! You don't have to do something special, a funky thing to get it up and running.

This strikes me as a misunderstanding of the nature of Prigogine’s discoveries. Matter reorganizes itself under the impact of energy flows or laws such as gravity, not because it “inherently” wants to do that. Indeed, when the role of these energy flows through matter is made explicit – as is done much more adequately in the so-called Big History literature (Visser, 2013, 2014c) – there is no longer any need to invoke Spirit to explain complexity. Again, Prigogine might not be Wilber’s ally here, but instead his opponent.

This discussion relates to the wider field of entropy, which also is touched upon by Wilber in various recent online communications. Starting with the science story: The second law of thermodynamics holds that entropy – usually understood as disorder, but dispersion or diffusion is an alternative reading – tends to increase in nature, when no external energy is added to a system. Likewise, our Sun radiates energy in all directions, every single second of our lives, in huge amounts, lost forever in cold space. Only a tiny part of this energy output is captured by life on Earth to be used for the construction and maintenance of its cells. And interestingly, the more complex organisms are more efficient in capturing and dissipating this energy, either directly or
indirectly. Thus, biological complexity emerges not against, but in accordance with this second law.

Wilber (1995) has given a rather different reading of these scientific topics. In his understanding matter itself is able to “wind itself up,” as he phrases it, which he even extrapolates to the universe at large. In *A Theory of Everything* (Wilber, 2000, p. x), he states:

> The second law of thermodynamics tells us that in the real world, disorder always increases. Yet simple observation tells us that, in the real world, life creates order everywhere: the universe is winding up, not down. The revolutionary new understanding found in "chaos" and "complexity" theories maintains that the physical universe actually has an inherent tendency to create order...

Note again the word “inherent” here. Wilber glosses over the scientific distinction between the second law, which works across the cosmos *globally*, and *local* pockets of complexification, which are possible given the right conditions of energy flows. We clearly cannot just rely on “simple observation” in these matters. Simple observation tells us also that the sun rises… Wilber does not seem to go beyond this superficial analysis. But it is the Sun, not Eros, that in the end fuels the evolution of life on Earth in all its many forms.

In this quote, Wilber creates an artificial contrast between seeing the second law as pervasive, and the new findings of complexity science about the emergence of complexity, but that contrast is non-existent. Rather, it is a *paradox*, which is well understood by Big History authors, such as David Christian, but not by Wilber:

> According to the second law of thermodynamics, the tendency of the Universe is for simplicity. There are no drivers for complexity… And since the universe tends to wind down, constant energy input is needed for complexity. (Christian, 2015)

> How does the universe create complexity given the law of entropy?... with great difficulty. And with every next step, the going gets tougher… We, as complex creatures, desperately need to know this story of how the universe creates complexity, despite the second law.” (Christian, 2011)

Again, Wilber’s claim that some famous scientists support his position (without explicitly endorsing his spiritual view of things) is spurious. Much more reflection is needed here.

I would like to suggest the following metaphor to clarify the differences in worldview that are at stake here (Visser, 2018). Imagine we are paddling upstream on a river, that, naturally, flows downstream. Wilber concentrates upon our upward movement (i.e. psychological growth) and says: “we make an awful lot of progress on a river that is supposed to flow downstream!” By doing so, he overlooks the enormous amount of energy that is needed to make that happen (i.e. to sustain life). And he feels the curious need to cast doubt on the second law of thermodynamics (“the world is not winding down, it is winding up!”). Without grounding in basic science, he needs to invent his own cosmic dynamic of an Eros-in-the-Kosmos and an “Erotic Universe,” as
I have documented in an extra online chapter of *Ken Wilber: Thought as Passion* (Visser, 2014b). Wilber wants to have his rivers run upstream.

**Conclusion**

Overseeing the questionable strategies Wilber has followed to argue for his Spirit-driven “theory” of evolution, in contrast to science, I see these three as most problematic.

− Claiming failures of science – Wilber has been skeptical about science’s capacity to explain certain forms of biological complexity (similar to arguments provided by intelligent design). Examples he has used are: the evolution of eyes and wings, the human immune system, multi-cellularity, morphogenesis, regeneration, etc. In none of these areas has he reported on current scientific research. He has also not been explicit in where he draws the line between what science cannot explain and what it can.

− Claiming support from science – Wilber has suggested similarity between his ideas and those of famous scientists, without adequately accounting for major differences, even though he has at the same time acknowledged that mainstream scientists do not support his spiritual view of evolution. When we look beyond verbal similarities such as “the universe is creative” and search for actual explanatory mechanisms, the fundamental differences between Wilber and these authors does not result in support from science.

− Claiming superiority to science – Wilber has continuously proclaimed the superiority of his own “theory” of evolution without meeting the demands of theory formation in science. What he has to offer is in fact not evolutionary theory but evolutionary theology. A true theory clarifies natural processes and breaks them down into explicit steps, by suggesting possible mechanisms. Wilber’s “Eros-theory” is by definition and in principle not able to do just that.

In baseball, the rule is “with three strikes you are out.” I do think that when it comes to Wilber’s dealings with these fields of science, given these failed strategies, the game is over.

When responding (briefly and unsystematically) to my challenges, he (Wilber & De Vos, 2018) once called me an “extremely conventional evolutionary theorist” (I have actually no idea what he means by this: does it refer to Evolution 1.0, Evolution 2.0, Evolution 3.0?).

I am always getting criticized by extremely conventional evolutionary theorists, like Frank Visser, because I postulate Eros, an inherent novelty in the cosmos... which by the way is Whiteheads point, the 'creative advance into novelty'. Eros... Stuart Kauffman, self-organization is built into the universe. Eros... Ilya Prigogine, a Nobel prize winner. 'Order out of chaos'. Even insentient matter, when pushed far from equilibrium, jumps into higher levels of order. Eros...

But name-dropping and sloganeering is not the same as doing responsible science or philosophy. In Wilber’s universe one is either a flatland scientist in favor of neo-darwinist, flatland reductionism, or a spiritual theorist who sees the Divine as active everywhere in nature.
As I have argued, there is a huge middle ground that is covered by contemporary evolutionary science, which is worthy of further careful exploration. Instead of repeatedly claiming “support” from a handful of famous theorists, who are either long dead or have not been in contact with Wilber, it is more honest to acknowledge the theoretical vacuity and lack of sophistication of the whole notion of “evolution as Spirit-in-Action.” A more robust integration of evolutionary theory within Integral Theory is called for.

Finally, some humility is in order when it comes to making far-reaching knowledge claims. Science, and especially evolutionary science, is such a wonderful field of human endeavor, that it does not deserve to be maltreated by “the world’s greatest philosopher.” Evolutionary theory is a rich and varied landscape that cannot be dealt with in a few sketchy paragraphs. Furthermore, shouldn’t the integral movement open up its windows by now to theoretical approaches outside of its own ideological domain? The absence of a healthy culture of debate, the strongly emotional reactions of Wilber to theoretical challenges over the years and the intellectual apathy of the integral community around matters of science do not help us in our search for assessing the truth and validity of Wilber’s particular views on evolution.

References


“Extended Evolutionary Synthesis,” Wikipedia.


A Hierarchy of Consciousness from Atom to Cosmos

Marilyn Monk

Introduction

Listening to, or reading, presentations of consciousness studies can often be very confusing. There are several reasons for this. One reason is that the presentation may come from two very different viewpoints. It may be focused on human consciousness or it may be coming from an interest in the idea of an all-pervasive consciousness throughout the cosmos (known as panpsychism). In this respect, experientially, as humans, we could ask – do we, as individuals, have consciousness or does a cosmic consciousness have us (so to speak). Many of us will relate to different personal experiences that suggest that both are true according to how preoccupied we are with immediate everyday concerns about the survival of our physical being and its ego, versus more meditative states, perhaps in nature, of being outside of our selves and 'aware of being aware.' We will come back to this seeming contradiction later.

Another reason for confusion is that the discipline, or background knowledge and interest of the scholar of consciousness may be very different. For example, it may be mystical/religious, philosophical or scientific. Each of these categories may be further subdivided in a way that influences the approach and outcome of the investigation. For example, the scientific approach may involve scholars in psychology or psychiatry (e.g., Velmans, 2017; Beauregard et al., 2018), in quantum mechanics (e.g., Marman, 2018), in Darwinian evolution (e.g., Velmans, 2012), or biology and geology. The approach from biology can be further subdivided into neurology (Koch et al., 2016; Chalmers, 1998) or, as in this article, evolution.

The literature covering the various approaches to the study of consciousness is huge and diverse and often confusing and will not be covered here. In this paper, the approach is limited to a simple mechanistic biological analysis of how consciousness is involved in increasing complexity in evolution – from atoms, to molecules, to tissues and organs, to life forms, to populations of life forms and then, after introducing the life forms into ecosystems, continuing on through solar systems, and galaxies to cosmos. With a few rules governing the nature of the formation of this interconnected hierarchy of evolution it is a scheme that delivers consciousness as primary and defines matter as derivative from consciousness in evolution.

This approach was initiated by the definition of consciousness as given in the Oxford dictionary ('aware of, and responsive to, surroundings', and see below) which, when viewed from

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the author's own experience in biological research, immediately pointed to the view of consciousness known as panpsychism. Panpsychism (defined as consciousness pervasive throughout existence) has been postulated throughout the ages by mystics and philosophers such as Plato, Spinoza, Leibniz, and James (cited, along with many other early proponents of panpsychism, in Goff (2020). It holds that consciousness is present in all natural bodies that have a unified and persisting organization (both pertinent aspects of the players in the scheme presented here).

My own research has involved many levels of biological existence, experimenting in each case towards a greater understanding of the mechanisms of increasing complexity and survival in evolution. In summary, my laboratory research has involved:

1. Atoms – the use of radioactive isotopes of atoms in enzyme substrates to isolate mutants in DNA synthesis to identify the genes involved, and the development of highly sensitive single cell molecular biology to measure specific enzyme activities in single cells (many references in the review by Goto & Monk, 1998, and for clinical relevance see Monk et al., 1987).

2. Molecules – the study of genes, gene modifications and gene expression, involved in DNA replication and repair, gene expression in embryos, germ cells and cancers, regulation of gene expression in development, epigenetic modification directing gene activity, molecular mechanisms of Lamarckian inheritance (see many references in the review by Goto & Monk, 1998, and earlier references e.g., Monk & Kinross, 1972; Monk, 1990; Adjaye et al., 1997; and later references, e.g., Goto et al., 1999; Zuccotti & Monk, 1995).

3. Viruses and plasmids – the study of DNA/gene transfer cell to cell, e.g., transduction in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, indirect induction of phage lambda (Monk, 1969), plasmid transfer (see e.g., Holloway & Monk, 1959; Monk & Clowes, 1964).


5. Multicellular tissues and organs – cell signaling in differentiation, conglomeration of cells into higher order structures, amoeboid migration, embryonic and fetal development (e.g., Alcantara & Monk, 1974; Monk & Petzoldt, 1977; McMahon & Monk, 1983).

It is not necessary to read all these references for the proposal of consciousness of evolution described here. They are cited only to provide evidence from 'person-at-the-bench' science for the known material mechanisms showing how consciousness drives the evolution of more and more complex conglomerations of matter in existence ascending the hierarchy from atom to cosmos (and, as extinction equals creation, back again). The model presented here is not about the *evolution of consciousness* in humans or other life forms by Darwinian variation (random mutation and selection) – a study that runs into considerable difficulties (see e.g., Velmans,
2014). Rather it is concerned with the *consciousness of evolution*. It supports the oft-quoted statement of Max Planck, the originator of quantum physics – "I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness."

**Definition of Consciousness**

Yet another reason for confusion in consciousness studies is the different definitions and uses of the word 'consciousness' itself. The human centred studies are more aligned with the Cambridge Dictionary definition of consciousness, namely, "The state of understanding and realizing something." Certainly that has been the main focus since Descartes who confined consciousness and mind to humans. It is this field of research which is concerned with the so-called 'hard problem' (Chalmers, 1996). The hard problem is human centered and is about how the physical mechanisms of brain processes give rise to subjective feelings – i.e., how the brain gives rise to experience, or phenomenal consciousness, and mental states with phenomenal qualities – 'the neural correlates of consciousness' (Strawson, 1994, Koch et al., 2016). These studies, looking for some uniform neural explanation of a particular experience, may be complicated by the different influences of the variable and interconnected neurological, physiological and psychological (experiential memory) backgrounds of the different individuals in the study (see e.g., Marman, 2018).

The other viewpoint that consciousness is pervasive throughout the universe (panpsychism) proposes that all matter has an element of consciousness. This approach is more aligned with the definition of consciousness from the Oxford Living Dictionary – "The state of being aware of, and responsive to, one's surroundings.' Immediately, most readers of this article will see that 'aware and responsive to surroundings' applies to so many things. All life, plant and animal, is aware and responsive to surroundings and thus appears as conscious according to this definition. Recently there has been much debate about consciousness in animals and even in plants.

In this article I will not be concerned with the human centred studies and the hard problem but with the more pervasive view of consciousness extending throughout the cosmos. The approach will be based on what is known scientifically and on the Oxford Dictionary definition of consciousness – aware of, and responsive to, surroundings.

**Aware of, and Responsive to, Surroundings**

One of the problems of considering consciousness in lower life forms, and non-life forms, is the use of various terms in consciousness studies that seem to apply more to humans. The term 'aware' is certainly more of a human concept and may be taken to include a huge range of consequences of awareness – sensations, feelings, self-reflection, memory, imagination, and so on. But, in biology and geology, when we consider the simple definition – aware of, and responsive to, surroundings – we see that consciousness extends outside of the human realm and, in lower life forms, or even non-life forms, we see 'awareness' more simply as mechanisms of 'detecting' or 'sensing' the surrounding environment. With this broader concept of awareness we can start thinking about consciousness at the level of the atoms, molecules, cells and tissues and work our way up from the micro- to the macro-cosmos, looking for the material mechanisms of
consciousness (sensing environment and responding to change) at each level of increasing complexity.

The starting rules for my hierarchy scheme of consciousness in this paper are views that are well known already – specifically, that everything is interconnected to everything else and everything is in service to its own higher order structure. For example, when I was at Edinburgh University in the early 70s, Henry Kacser taught the concept of interconnectedness as metabolic flux in the metabolome – the intricate interconnected biochemical pathways within a cell (Kacser & Burns, 1973). Also in Edinburgh, Conrad Waddington taught the concept of service as epigenetic programming of different cells in the body to serve their higher order structures – the different tissues and the organs (see Noble, 2015).

As humans, we experience consciousness with our senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. There are also messages from body to brain (e.g., hunger or pain), and messages from brain to my body for different emotions. And indeed, messages from within the environment of self of mental functions of memory, imagination and the various machinations of the human mind. These are functions of human brain/body communication and a lot (but not all) is known about material mechanisms involving transmission of signals between body and brain via circulating informational molecules binding to specific cell receptors. However, it is evident that all forms of life have consciousness but at different levels of sophistication, and with a very different range of consequences of their consciousness. A worm is conscious in that it detects and responds to changes in its environment. It can feel a harmful stimulus (pain). A snail can remember where it belongs in the territory of the back garden. A bacterium can detect a gradient of sugar involving special receptors on its surface and respond by transferring this information to trigger its means of movement – its flagellae – to swim towards a food source. The degree or sophistication of consciousness at different levels of life's complexity is different. This article is not concerned with mechanisms of evolution of increasing sophistication of consciousness. Suffice to say, it is difficult to see how random mutation and selection over millions of years could bring this about. However, note that Lamarckian inheritance of acquired characteristics by epigenetic modifications of genes passing through egg and sperm (Zuccotti & Monk, 1995) from parents to offspring might well be involved. Evolution by Lamarckian inheritance occurs rapidly by selection of individuals better adapted to their surrounding environment.

The scientific approach in this article is to consider the material mechanisms of consciousness at each level of increasing complexity in the hierarchy of evolution from atom to cosmos. And, indeed, material mechanisms are known at all levels. Surprisingly, with such a materialist approach throughout, the analysis shows that matter is derivative from consciousness and displays a sense of belonging, meaning and purpose of everything throughout evolution and existing today.

An Example of Consciousness in a Lower Life Form

As an example of consciousness in a lower life form we can look at an area of the author's own research in the early 70s (Alcantara & Monk, 1974), namely, how slime mould amoebae (*Dictyostelium discoideum*) become aware of changes in their environment, and how they respond. Aggregation of the individual free-living amoebae into a multicellular structure is
triggered by their awareness that they have run out of food. The individual amoebae detect the change in environment (due to starvation) and start to emit a signal (pulses of cyclic AMP), which diffuses out into the territory (see Figure 1). The fastest signaling amoebae establish and take control of their territories. Amoebae in a territory, detecting the gradient of cyclic AMP, make movement steps towards the source and emit their own signal to attract amoebae further out to join the aggregation. So the signal is relayed out and bands of amoebae move inwards. They move towards each other as they come closer to the centre to make amazing spirals looking like galaxies.

The aggregate formed in the centre of the territory forms a multicellular slug capable of movement over a greater distance than the individual amoebae could manage. The slug develops phototactic and thermotactic receptors at its tip so that it moves towards the light and heat at the soil surface where it forms a fruiting body. To make the fruiting body, a third of the amoebae in the slug sacrifice their lives to create a stalk which bears the spores (differentiating according to their position in a gradient in the remaining two thirds of the slug) aloft so that they will be distributed to better feeding grounds. It is amazing how clever this organism can be when triggered by the need to move to new pastures. It is a good example of consciousness in a lower organism – how cells sense and respond to their environment at several stages in order to differentiate into a multicellular structure. The material mechanisms are known.

![Figure 1](image1.png)

**Figure 1.** Aggregation, slug movement, and fruiting body of *Dictyostelium* after the amoebae detect they have run out of food. a) Individual amoebae in the field, triggered by starvation, start to emit pulses of cAMP and those with the shortest periodicity form territories with surrounding amoebae relaying the signal outward and making a movement step inward towards the source. b) As they approach the centre, amoebae are attracted to each others' cAMP signal to form streams and spirals. c) The slug, measuring several centimetres, has receptors that detect heat and light, and so can detect, and move the distance to, the soil surface. d) At the surface the slug transforms into a fruiting body. A third of the amoebae in the slug sacrifice their lives to form stalk to bear the spores aloft (Alcantara and Monk, 1974).
This example also demonstrates how consciousness can operate at the level of whole populations of individuals. What about lower and higher levels of complexity – atoms, molecules, cells and tissues, or ecosystems, solar systems and galaxies? Does it make sense to say that the mechanisms of consciousness are still material throughout?

**A Hierarchy of Consciousness**

In the following model of a hierarchy of consciousness, the mechanisms at each level of complexity depend on interconnectedness (awareness of surroundings) of the parts serving (responsive to surroundings) their higher order structure. A model of interconnectedness of increasing orders of complexity is shown in Figure 2. This is a highly simplified model. It does not include subatomic particles and, with respect to life, there are millions of species of life existing on earth (and an approximately equal number gone extinct) that are linked in various ways by the process of evolution. In the hierarchy model here they are simply presented as flora and fauna. Also, for simplicity, the model of interconnected hierarchy is illustrated as a binary interconnected model limited (for ease of illustration) to only eight orders of increasing complexity from atom to cosmos. The shift to a higher order structure at each level of complexity is due to a conglomeration of multiple members from the level below. The coming together of parts ensures their greater survival. The model as shown is binary although, clearly, at each level more than two parts form the conglomerate that is the higher order structure at the next level. For example, variable numbers of atoms conglomerate to make molecules and there are around 3000 molecules in a cell.

There is another simplification in the model of hierarchy as shown in that there is one exception to the general rule of conglomeration of parts to form a higher order structure. This is in the transition from populations to ecosystems. It is clear that ecosystems are not simply an aggregate of populations of living organisms (flora and fauna). In order to progress towards cosmos, I have introduced a stage (ecosystems) including elements from another hierarchy of increasing complexity of non-life forms – soil to rocks to mountains, rivers to lakes and oceans – in which to place the populations of animals and plants. The aim is to present an image representing the linking of all levels of increasing complexity into one interconnected structure where every existing organised structure is interconnected and aware of immediate surroundings and so on throughout the evolution of existence.

Analysis of this hierarchy of interconnectedness will show that, at each level, the parts are in service to ensure the survival of their higher order structure in evolution – the electrons to the atom, the atoms to the molecule, the molecules to the cell, and so on (although remembering that equally there is extinction from cosmos to atoms in the other direction). The parts in service at each level are conscious in that they detect and respond to their surrounding environment. The mechanisms are material and known at all levels of complexity as we will now examine – starting with the atom.
**Cosmos**

Galaxies

Planets > Solar systems

Ecosystems

Populations

Life-forms

Tissues > Organs

Organs > Cells

Atoms > Molecules

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**Figure 2.** *A diagrammatic representation (an inverted ancestry model from Gregoire, 2014) of an interconnected hierarchy of increasing complexity in evolution. This is a binary model for simplicity – the number of atoms making a molecule, or molecules making a cell, and so on, is greater than two. It shows a path of increasing complexity going through life forms. A similar hierarchy could be created for non-life and the step from populations to ecosystems in this diagram brings soil, rocks, mountains, rivers, lakes and oceans into the ecosystems in this scheme of interconnectedness. The hierarchy also operates in the other direction from cosmos to atoms with extinction approximately equal to creation.*

**Atoms to Molecules to Cells**

Atoms consist of a balanced number of neutrons and positively charged protons in the nucleus and negatively charged electrons in their orbits (Bohr, 1923). For example, a carbon atom has six electrons and six protons, an oxygen atom has eight protons and eight electrons. When the balance of protons, neutrons and electrons is disturbed, the atom decays. The components or parts of the atom are in service to their higher order structure – the atom.

Next, we have the molecules which consist of several atoms joined together by covalent bonds formed by a sharing of electrons in their outer orbits. The stability of molecules is variable depending on the strength of bonding between the atoms and the possibility, or not, of their bonding with another atom or molecule. One could say that the atoms are in service to the molecule and the mechanisms by which they bond and form the molecule are understood.
Molecules interact in an interconnected way to form cells. There are approximately 3000 biochemical pathways, with their associated enzymes and cofactors, interconnected in every cell. This is called the metabolome. Interconnectedness means that a change in any part (substrate, product, enzyme, cofactor) of any biochemical pathway affects all the pathways in the cell. The interconnected changes in all pathways is called metabolic flux, which can be observed by mass spectrometry. For instance, one can distinguish a starvation metabolome, from an addiction metabolome, from a sugar eating metabolome, and so on. Metabolic flux shows the interconnected pathways detecting and responding to a changing environment – our definition of consciousness. The molecules are serving their higher order structure – the cell. Mutation any of the key genes supporting growth and survival of the cell leads to cell death.

**Cells to Tissues to Organs to Life-Forms and Populations of Life Forms**

Referring back to Figure 2, we see that the next items in increasing levels of complexity are tissues and organs. In the case of a mammal (e.g., a mouse) as an example of a life form, all cells in the body have the same 20,000 genes. The differentiation into over 100 different cell types in the body is directed by signaling from the different environments of the cells in the developing fetus to programme their genes to be on or off, up-regulated or down-regulated. The programming is by epigenetic mechanisms – modifications superimposed on the DNA of the genes to regulate their expression (for example, methylation of cytosine in the DNA, Lindsay et al, 1985). In computer language the genes are the hardware and the programming is the software. The cells detect information from their environment in the developing fetus and respond by differentiating into cells with the required function (bone, muscle, blood, skin, nerve, and so on). In this sense they are conscious and serving the tissues and organs of the body. Studies on other life forms in the laboratory – e.g., nematode worms, flies, fish – show similar material mechanisms governing differentiating cells to establish the required functions for service of the cells to the different tissues and organs. If the cells cease to serve their tissue, for example by epigenetic deprogramming (Monk et al, 1987) due to cessation of informational signaling, the tissue may be lost (e.g., to death or cancer).

The next level I have included in Figure 2 is populations. Populations of multiple members of a species can form a higher order structure – for example, the slime mould slug (Alcantara & Monk 1974), the beehive, or the Portuguese Man O’ War jelly fish. Here we have a colony of organisms taking on different roles and working together for the sake of survival of the greater whole (and themselves). Again, the material mechanisms of service are known in populations of individuals in service. For example, in the beehive the genes of different worker bees – nurse, farmer, forager, warrior – are epigenetically programmed to differentiate them to perform their specific tasks. If they do not serve their higher order structure, the beehive will die and so will the bees. Anarchic behaviour in worker bees causes destruction of the beehive and death of the bees.

**Ecosystems, Planets, Solar Systems and Galaxies**

As the model moves from populations to ecosystems in Figure 2, it will be obvious to the attentive reader that we have departed from the concept of conglomeration of multiple parts into a higher order structure at each level. Ecosystems are not an aggregate of populations of flora
and fauna. Here, another hierarchy of increasing complexity of non-life is introduced – the soil, rocks and mountains, and rivers, lakes and oceans of the ecosystems – in which to place the living populations of animals and plants. Beyond ecosystems the model returns to conglomeration of parts to make a greater whole – ecosystems to planets, planets to solar systems, solar systems to galaxies.

Also, at this point, it is time to observe two further 'rules' I have postulated within the system. We have been looking so far at two rules – interconnectedness within and between levels of increasing complexity, and service of parts to their higher order structure at each level. A third rule is that, even though the parts are in service to their higher order structure at each level, the parts do not know what they are serving. However, if they do not serve correctly the higher order structure will not survive. The fourth rule is that the whole is looking after its parts at each level.

The next level of complexity included in this hierarchy is the ecosystem. An ecosystem is an interconnected biological community of interacting life forms and their physical environment. It will have the right pastures for the herbivores, the correct herbivore to predator ratio, it will have rivers (and maybe an ocean) and mountains and forests. The parts are in harmonious interconnected service to the whole for survival of the ecosystem. The mechanisms are known. As we know, if the forests are destroyed, if a river is diverted, if the top predator is removed (e.g., the wolves in Yellowstone Park), these disturbances can unbalance the whole interconnected system leading to the destruction of the ecosystem.

And the case is the same with the next level – our solar system. Although we trust that our planet will safely look after us in the future, a glimpse at the past is not so reassuring as it contains inhospitable ice ages and a meteor that wiped out the dinosaurs. And now, our planet is threatened by climate change and the melting of the ice caps or, possibly, a solar flare. Indeed, only last year, Nature published a report of a distant star spitting out a giant flare that packed 100,000 times more energy than any seen from Earth's sun (Argiroffi et al., 2019). This is the first clear detection of a remote star emitting a kind of eruption known as a coronal mass ejection that until now have only been seen from our sun. The authors state – 'such explosions may wreak havoc on surrounding worlds.'

Consequences of this Model of Aware (Interconnected) and Responsive (Service) Consciousness

We have reached our galaxy and the cosmos, and we can summarise the preceding arguments in the following key points:

1. A view of a hierarchy of interconnectedness between, and within, levels of increasing complexity from atom to cosmos. There is a survival advantage, which drives evolution, in increasing complexity due to the coming together of parts into a greater whole. Everything exists in a field of belonging. Outside that field the parts cannot exist.

2. At each level the parts are conscious – aware of, or detecting, or sensing, their surrounding environment, and responsive to change, in service to their higher order
structure. The material mechanisms of service are largely established and known at each level of complexity.

3. The parts do not know what they are serving.

4. The higher order structures are caring for their parts.

Some important consequences flow from this scheme as follows:

a. Interconnectedness means that reverberation (or flux) can move through the whole system, top down or bottom up or middle out. For example, a solar flare, or human interference, might disrupt ecosystems, scattering populations to new environments, leading to cellular adaptation and reprogramming of genes. Or the human race could become extinct leading to recovery of damaged ecosystems.

b. Flux through the system leads to events that do not seem to have a material mechanism because consciousness – awareness and response to change in surroundings – is happening across several levels of complexity. This allows the possibility that aspects of the paranormal might be explained in this way – certainly in space (e.g., remote viewing). However, it is not so clear how paranormal events happen across time, for example telepathy between previously interconnected elements in the hierarchy. Here, connections made between individual aspects in the interconnected system due to flux must be recorded in some way and recoverable later. What could be the mechanism of recording previous events in time and re-membering?

c. Service of parts to the higher order structure to which they belong is essential for survival at all levels of complexity and ensures development in evolution. However, it is important to note that this is not an imperative because it is also essential that there is turnover – the replacement of the old with the new. Extinction is equal to creation – for all species that exist on earth today an approximately equal number have become extinct. So, equally, the hierarchy model can be seen in reverse orientation as the higher orders of complexity return to molecules and atoms. The rule is that death equals birth. One wonders whether this implies that birth and death apply to our whole cosmos.

d. This scheme of things establishes consciousness as the unity of everything, and the belonging to the unity of all things in service to their higher order structures and the whole. It shows that consciousness is primary and that matter is derivative from consciousness (as defined in this paper). It fits with the experience of individual consciousness of the individual part located at its particular position in the hierarchy, and the experience of consciousness of the whole through the interconnectedness and belonging to everything else. It celebrates belonging, and meaning, and purpose, for everything on planet earth and beyond. This creates a sense of a spiritual context even though the scientific approach is material.

e. In humans, unconditional service, often imbued with the sense of unconditional love, is an evolutionary selectable in that it activates the pleasure centres of the brain. Beyond that,
unconditional love for all beings and every thing works to support the flourishing of all. Loss of service, or anarchy, leads to loss or, in this scheme, extinction.

Conclusions

In the introduction, it was suggested that individual humans personally experience that they possess their own consciousness but sometimes they can have a sense of belonging to a much greater consciousness of the whole. The same could apply to our dual experience of free will and predestination. In the scheme presented here, both could be true depending on the viewpoint – whether the observer is viewing self from their own particular location in the hierarchy or, in dropping the mind, has gone outside of self into possible experience of the reverberating interconnected whole (a 'peak experience'). One might ask what does it mean to drop the mind? Observation of our own human mind activity shows that it seems to exist in past and future. Indeed, projection of past into future could be seen as an imperative for survival of the physical self and its ego. Dropping the mind has an experience of presence - no past and no future.

We also observed that the study of consciousness was complicated by whether the analysis was from the viewpoint of the human mind or from a perspective of pervasive consciousness throughout existence (panpsychism). The latter view, followed in this paper, was prompted by the Oxford Dictionary definition of consciousness as 'aware of, and responsive to, surroundings' and the author's own experience as an experimental biologist. In addition, we noted that consciousness studies are further complicated by the many approaches depending on the background discipline of the scholar – religious/mystical, philosophical, psychological, quantum physics, geological and biological.

The approach here is not concerned with quantum mechanics. My observer relationship in this scheme does not alter the understanding of the biology of increasing complexity in the hierarchy of evolution. It derives purely from my own experience in biological research at many levels of study - observing and playing with evolving life forms. It is just another view to add to the already existing multiple views of consciousness. It may be simplistic but it does however remove what is clearly known from reproducible science from the darker areas of confusion created by quantum mechanics and philosophical and psychological analyses of consciousness.

Finally, can we draw a line at the top of this hierarchy? Remembering that parts cannot know who or what is being served at all levels, and that the higher order structures are looking after their parts, we cannot yet know the next higher order structure beyond cosmos. It is plausible to argue that beyond this entire scheme of all that is known to exist, beyond cosmos, there may be a yet higher order of complexity.

References


An Epistemic Thunderstorm: What We Learned and Failed to Learn from Jordan Peterson’s Rise to Fame

Jonathan Rowson

Abstract: The cultural pressure to endorse or reject public intellectuals wholesale can be problematic, perpetuating groupthink and diminishing scope for intellectual growth, societal maturation, and political imagination. On encountering public figures who appear to be both right and wrong, sometimes simultaneously, perhaps dangerously, there is scope to be more creative and less reactive in our response. In the illustrative case of Jordan Peterson, commentators often oriented their analysis within a conceptually moribund political spectrum; e.g. Peterson is “alt-right” attacking “the radical left.” Social media echo chambers lead some to read that Peterson’s “fanboys” were “misogynist trolls” while others heard that his critics were “virtue signaling snowflakes”. The tendency of print and broadcast media to seek a defining angle diminishes rather than distills complexity; for instance, Peterson’s fame was associated with a perceived crisis in masculinity, but that was not the whole story. “Petersonitis” is introduced here as a serious joke to describe the intellectual and emotional discomfort that arose from the author’s attempt to seek a fuller understanding of complex characters in a divisive political culture. In a response to Peterson’s book, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, twelve relatively dispassionate perspectives on his contribution are offered as an antidote to the language of allergy and infatuation that surrounded his rise to fame. Peterson is described here as symptomatic, multiphrenic, theatrical, solipsistic, sacralizing, hypervigilant, monocular, ideological, Manichean, Piagetian, masculine, and prismatic. First person language is used to reflect the author’s experience of Petersonitis, after having been drawn to Peterson’s online video lectures, debating with him in a public forum, and gradually clarifying the nature of the limitations in his outlook and approach. It is hoped that the paper will help readers recognize, recover from, and ultimately transcend Petersonitis, and to appreciate the much wider application of the idea.

Keywords: Books, Christianity, conversation, culture, Jordan Peterson, Jungian, masculinity, media, Piagetian, postmodernism, psychology, public intellectuals, reductionism, spirituality, transgender, twitter.

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1 Editors note. An earlier version of this was submitted in August 2018, just after the release of our previous regular issue. The prolegomena has been added for this updated version, along with minor edits to the text.

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Prolegomena

I first heard the expression “It’s never about what it’s about” in the context of marital disputes. Couples fight about diary clashes that shouldn’t have happened, phone chargers that shouldn’t have been moved, surfaces that should have been wiped, and other domestic emotional landmines. Yet the intensity of the escalations and explosions that follow are usually about something altogether more challenging in the relationship – something requiring time and discernment to uncover. This refrain – it’s never about what it’s about – is not literally true, but it’s a useful notion more generally, and it helps when we consider: what was that Jordan Peterson thing about?

I’m sure it wasn’t about Jordan Peterson as such. The rise to fame and notoriety of this particular intellectual, spiritual and political warrior during his apotheosis in the period 2017-2018 was experienced by millions of fans and critics as a kind of epistemic thunderstorm; questions of what we know and how we know them felt unusually charged and salient. Peterson had a significant impact on literally millions of readers and viewers as individuals and a direct influence on cultural influencers including The Intellectual Dark Web and Rebel Wisdom. However, the Peterson phenomenon also represented a significant collective epistemic growth opportunity that I believe was mostly squandered. For this reason, I have done what I can to convey the deeper aboutness of the Peterson moment.

I met Peterson in January 2018 and began writing soon after to make sense of a strange cocktail of conflicted thoughts, feelings and convictions, resulting in the following paper several months later. Once I finished writing, I felt free of Petersonitis, as described below, but it lingered just a little because it proved difficult to publish. I approached several longform journalism and academic outlets, often supported by contacts, but the cultural gatekeepers I encountered wanted a clear appraisal of Peterson’s main ideas, or they wanted commentary on the world’s reaction to Peterson, both of which became well-trodden terrain as a result. Instead, I sought to examine the Peterson phenomenon as a touchstone for our capacity for epistemic and spiritual growth at a cultural level, which is part of my professional purpose at Perspectiva; the paper’s length and tenor stemmed from that deeper objective, and felt necessary, even if that meant it didn’t ‘fit’ into the places I wanted it to go.

I have paid little attention to Peterson for the last two years, but Patricia Marcoccia’s documentary The Rise of Jordan Peterson (2019) appears to share my premise that this was a teachable moment that got away. More directly pertinent to Integral Review is Rebel Wisdom’s interview with Ken Wilber on Peterson which was promising because a rigorous developmental perspective is lacking in discussions by and about Peterson. However, I felt Wilber missed an opportunity to highlight the principle limitation of Peterson’s thought, namely his ambivalence and neglect of ‘bottom right’ phenomena in the terms of integral theory’s quadrant map. Those inter-objective features of reality, including the economic and institutional structures that are driving technological and ecological systems, are arguably the preeminent issues of our time, but Peterson very rarely goes there, and when he does it is mostly to offer generic praise of capitalism.

3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDjCnFvz11A
Fully developing the significance of this point would require another paper but it can be intimated with some comparisons. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* by Shoshana Zuboff is broadly about how Facebook and Google are extracting and manipulating data in a way that is destroying culture and making people unfree, while *The Uninhabitable Earth* by David Wallace Wells is about the economic logic of fossil fuel extraction destroying nature and with it, our only viable home. These critically acclaimed and high-profile books were both published in 2019, after Peterson’s peak, but neither have received anything close to the same cultural attention, and neither represented the same kind of epistemic inflexion point. With that in mind, I think what my article below is *about* is an attempt to show that Peterson’s psycho-spiritual offerings are valuable when they help us contextualise and transform the socio-economic logics that are precipitating ecological and technological peril, but they are positively harmful when used to distract us from them or downplay their importance.

On a more conciliatory and appreciative note, Peterson’s Foreword to Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* for Vintage Classics also came out in the interim and served as a reiteration of what is driving Peterson – fear of societal collapse and an acute awareness of just how much worse everything could be. He is right about that – a functional society is a fragile achievement in need of vigilance, not a default setting to be taken for granted or casually lamented. The teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg can perhaps be thought of as Peterson’s nemesis in this regard. In fact, I find it curious that Greta rose to Peterson-like levels of fame just after Peterson began to retreat from view. While Peterson appears to thrive at life’s social game and regularly wins the battle for attention, Thunberg has said it is her high-functioning Asperger’s and selective muteness that helps her see through the social game that everyone is caught up in. That game of performativity and pretending is arguably what is preventing us from attending to the life-giving ecological foundations that should matter to us most at this moment. Alas, the controlled urgency we need to feel to collectively attend to the fragility of human civilisation is often lost in the more palpable entertainment of culture wars and identity politics that facilitated Peterson’s rise to fame.

At the time of writing in the summer of 2020, Peterson appears to be convalescing after an extended period of ill-health relating to depression and withdrawal from benzodiazepines. At a personal level, I wish him a speedy and full recovery. If I have a regret about the following article, it is that with hindsight it looks like I was trying not only to outsmart Peterson, but to be seen to be out-smarting Peterson. In that sense, my approach was perhaps unconsciously hubristic or foolhardy, but it was nonetheless a wholehearted effort. Peterson himself is currently not prominent in public discourse but may soon become so again. And many others might rise to fame in a similar way. I am grateful to Integral Review therefore for giving me a formal platform to be able to share what I think the Peterson phenomenon was about.
Introduction

Jordan B. Peterson is easily misunderstood. He is a clinical psychologist and Professor of Psychology at the University of Toronto but is now known as a forceful cultural commentator who emphasizes the value, depth, and dignity of individual responsibility in an embattled manner, as if civilization is at stake. His magnum opus is not the self-help bestseller, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, but a much deeper inquiry into myths and archetypes, *Maps of Meaning*, published two decades earlier. Peterson’s online academic lectures derive from this earlier textbook and are where his intellectual quality is most evident; these videos are viewed in their millions by his fans but mostly ignored by his critics (Peterson, 2018a). Peterson’s news interviews, public debates, online discussions, and social media comments on the other hand typically relate to identity and ideology and are often much less judicious, though they attract widespread attention. He is possibly the best-known public intellectual of the time, though some argue that his fame is symptomatic of a global intellectual crisis rather than a product of the quality of his thought (Robinson, 2018).

Reaching a settled view on Peterson’s contribution is difficult because it manifests in so many ways. While he has built an impressive academic career respecting data and nuance, he is often undiscerning in his political diatribes. Critics of any aspect of Peterson’s work tend to be typecast by his fans using their icon’s favored dramatic terms and tenor. They are often assumed to be LEFTIST NEOMARXIST POSTMODERNIST FEMINIST SOCIAL JUSTICE WARRIORS who think only of GROUP IDENTITY, abdicate INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY, and know nothing of BEING – Peterson’s favored term for human existence. The online Peterson phenomenon is powerful because it is built on academic prestige, fueled by personal charisma, and driven by oppositional identities.

On January 16, 2018 I spent three hours with Jordan. We had a civil but charged hour-long discussion at the Royal Society of Arts in London. I arranged additional shorter interviews for my organization Perspectiva, which, like Peterson, seeks to increase awareness of the relationship between psychological and spiritual sensibility and societal challenges. That evening, thinking the day had gone well, I made the mistake of reading the RSA Video YouTube comments where I am “the host” but verbally flogged like an insubordinate outcast. The conversation has now been viewed over 200,000 times – modest by Peterson’s standards – but there have also been several spin-offs on Conservative online platforms viewed in their millions, including vintage clickbait titles like “Leftist Host SNAPS at Peterson – Instantly Regrets it!” I have been approached by strangers at the hairdressers, the gym, the library, and in the playground of my son’s school, who recognize me from the Peterson video. The encounter, including preparation and reflection, gave me an appreciation for Peterson’s quality and intensity, the vituperative loyalty of his fans, and the atmosphere of allergy and infatuation that surrounds his work. It also gave me acute Jordanpetersonitis.

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Jordanpetersonitis

*Jawh-duhn-pee-ter-suhn-awy-tis/
Complex noun. Also, abbr.: “Petersonitis”*  

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1. **Intellectual and emotional discomfort caused by the perceived need to reach an informed view on the significance of Jordan Peterson’s cultural contribution, but being unable to, despite considerable effort.**

*Petersonitis* is not a casual slur, but a serious joke to recognize the cultural indigestion caused by Peterson, and an attempt to redirect the public conversation. We are probably past “peak Peterson” but we must go beyond describing Peterson’s work or even offering a conventional critique – because the Internet is saturated with both. *Petersonitis* serves as a conceptual tool to investigate a confounding experience that may contain the seeds of cultural maturation. The pressure to pick sides is ultimately much more important than the complex public character of Peterson himself, but is well illustrated through the Peterson phenomenon:

**Symptoms:**

- **Mesmerized intellectual excitement at the spectacle of passionate thinking, laced with confusion at what exactly is being said.**

- **Moral dumbfounding, arising from the intuition that Peterson is wrong in important ways even when his reasoning is persuasive.**

- **Emotional exhaustion caused by too many hours expecting answers from an anguished face on a computer screen.**

I am not alone in calling for this broader reflection in the context of reactions to Peterson. *The Guardian*’s Oliver Burkeman (2018), for instance, took the rare step of devoting a column to resolutely not forming an opinion on Peterson:

> My wishy-washy ambivalence about Peterson has hardened into defiance: why the hell should I be obliged to decide, as seemingly every writer who encounters his work thinks they are, whether Canada’s most controversial professor is A Good Thing or A Bad Thing? This sort of pressure … is a symptom of our hyper-partisan times, in which everything is politics … and it’s your responsibility, as a good citizen, to adopt and then feverishly defend one sharply defined, absolutist viewpoint, come what may. (np)

2. **Derivative and general application: Feeling frustrated by the cultural obligation to approve/disapprove of a complex thinker for reasons of social or political identification, rather than to form a more discerning view.**

In the process of taking a political view on Peterson, as if casting a vote, we seem to be killing precisely the kinds of breadth and depth of perspective that might revitalize political imagination. As the writer Norman Mailer put it in the context of loving Jorge Luis Borges despite his reactionary political views: “I detest having to think of a writer by his politics first. It’s like thinking of people by way of their anus” (Whalen-Bridge, 2008).

This counter-pungent preference is particularly important in the context of Jordan Peterson, because at the surface level, his politics are unsophisticated and divisive, and the language of
infatuation and allergy towards him bifurcates accordingly. For some, he is reenchanting masculinity, reviving Christianity, and providing meaning and direction for thousands of lost souls; for others he is a crypto misogynist authoritarian offering banal advice with footnotes to dangerously entitled people. The answer is probably not to take either side or find a place in between, but to try an entirely different approach.

One of Peterson’s favorite sources of insight is psychoanalysis, where a comprehensive diagnosis sometimes functions like a cure. What follows is not another attempt to reach a balanced view of Peterson’s work – “he’s right in some ways but wrong in others” – but to back up one level of abstraction and reflect on why such “balance,” by tacitly endorsing the polarity that calls for it, offers neither catharsis nor transformation (Cooper, 2018). Here, Peterson is not just another intellectual with some good and some bad ideas, but a test case for approaching difficult thinkers who intrigue us in some ways and annoy us in others.

For this, our conceptual language needs refreshing more generally. Distantly inspired by Peterson’s injunction to be precise with words, and mindful of the title of his bestseller, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, I offer twelve conceptual tonics clustered in four trios: to explain the cultural phenomenon, describe his intellectual character, consider major thematic critiques, and offer hope for cultural learning and maturation. The tonics are micro-epiphanies, not revelations, but I hope they present the phenomenon from a wider range of perspectives and thereby help people recover from, live with, or transcend Petersonitis. It is for the reader to determine which of these is the proper aim.

### Prevalence:

- Petersonitis seems to be a minority affliction. It probably affects about 10 percent of the millions of people who come into contact with Peterson’s work – the floating voters. Those who strongly like or dislike him (the majority) are immune due to political markers and other identity-based antibodies.

### 1. Symptomatic

Intellectual prominence on the world stage usually requires the coalescence of at least three factors: the message, the messenger, and the moment. In Peterson’s case, the message is that personal responsibility is sacred; the messenger is a charismatic psychologist; and, whatever optimists like Steven Pinker suggest, for many this moment feels demoralized, rudderless, and cacophonous. Perhaps there is also a fourth factor – the missing: Peterson’s message resonates most with people – typically young men – who do not feel properly attended to in public discussions.

Peterson’s ascent coincided with the rise and consolidation of powerful strong male leaders around the world, and he is cut from similar cloth: self-assured, identifying enemies, offering answers, and giving people something to believe in. While Peterson shares some qualities with

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5 Perhaps the most comprehensive engagement with Peterson’s work as a whole is by political sociologist Brent Cooper (2018).
Trump (whom Peterson has said he would have voted for) or Putin, Xi, Erdogan, or Modi (Peterson, 2018b), the more challenging point is that in substance he’s also like Noam Chomsky of thirty years ago, when, from a very different political vantage point, *Manufacturing Consent* offered the insight the moment was calling for, rallying students all over the world (Herman and Chomsky, 1988).

In a time of post-truth politics, Peterson emphasizes forms of metaphysical and personal truth that resist cultural assimilation. As ISIS barbarism was broadcast nightly, his online lectures illuminated what might be distinctively Christian about a civilization worth defending. In the context of economic competition from the developing world, the ominous impact of robotics on employment, and a generation likely to be poorer than their parents, his message of self-development gives people an alternative to despair and resentment that doesn’t rely on forces outside their control. His rise occurred alongside a broader intellectual crisis in social democratic thinking, the eclipse of Obama, and the more general dearth of oratory and leadership. At such moments of social, economic, and political flux, when material questions do not have ready answers, spiritual questions become more salient. Who am I? What’s the point of life? Peterson dared to offer some answers.

And how dare he! In a recent critique in the *New York Review of Books*, Pankaj Mishra (2018) remarked: “His apotheosis speaks of a crisis that is at least as deep as the one signified by Donald Trump’s unexpected leadership of the free world” (np). In *Current Affairs* magazine, Nathan Robinson (2018) contextualizes that claim: “If Jordan Peterson is the most influential intellectual in the Western world, the Western world has lost its damn mind…. He is a symptom. He shows a culture bereft of ideas, a politics without inspiration or principle” (np).

The reasoning in these two cases and in many other critiques of Peterson is somewhat perplexing. In *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill (1859/2016) wrote: “In all intellectual debates, both sides tend to be correct in what they affirm, and wrong in what they deny.” This captures why the Peterson phenomenon is important. If part of the perceived problem is that Peterson is now revered by many despite his faults, surely the other part is that people who make their living from intellectual reflection seem dumbfounded as to why, unable to appreciate the value in what he offers. That is also a symptom, also a crisis.

In an atmosphere of rights inflation and ambient entitlement, Peterson’s balancing emphasis on personal responsibility is timely. As the Christian tradition often feels moribund, his hermeneutic approach to Bible stories creates precious streams of revitalization. In his emphasis on knowing the truth experientially and striving to establish one’s own locus of agency and authority, he saves people from pervasive groupthink. In an increasingly desacralized world, his capacity to yoke lessons from religion without being tethered to a limited conception of “belief” is necessary. Taking a stand against the pressure to conform to unthinking approaches to equalities and diversity, he has provoked public reflection on the difference between genuine care for others and the demands of political correctness. In his admiration for neglected thinkers like Piaget and Jung, he has cultivated new resources to enrich our understanding of ourselves and the world. And with his attempted integration of philosophy, biology, psychology, and theology, he is an exemplar of intellectual excitement – embodying the power of ideas.
Peterson’s swift ascent to fame began with his public refusal to agree to Bill C-16, a new law in Canada requiring people to use non-binary pronouns like ‘eir’, ‘zie’, or ‘they’ for transgendered people. Peterson insists he is not transphobic. His principled stance against the top-down imposition of a new regulation of grammar touched a nerve that is still in spasm. That nerve apparently relates to the question of which groups have what kinds of power over the individual and who gets to decide what follows. Peterson’s well-articulated public position on that issue, combined with his freely available lectures on psychology, mythology, and self-help has earned him hundreds of thousands of fans and critics.

But the root of the nerve goes deeper still. Much of Western intellectual life, including some of the mistrust between sciences and humanities, stems from an unresolved tension between two paradigmatic approaches to knowledge. Underlying many of the debates Peterson is involved in, is a broadly modernist either/or mentality: defining to exclude, reducing to explain, and narrating as if there was one story, and they are up against the both/and insistence of postmodernism, in which ideas are fuzzy edged and cross-pollinating, context is critical, and values and stories are plural. This is the underlying skirmish in which questions of gender fluidity become not niche but emblematic – are you either a man or a woman, or can you, somehow, be neither or both?

Peterson’s broader loathing of postmodernism stems from treating it like a discrete cultural virus requiring mass inoculation, rather than a diverse and divergent set of ideas that one might learn to live with and sometimes through. He has a tendency to argue by shutting down both/and complexities and doubling down on either/or rhetoric; some things are true and others are false, and science is our guide. “No! Wrong!” he is fond of saying. Those with both/and sensibilities say that truth may be scientific and objective but it is also subjective and relative, and power and culture are also our guides. The either/or sensibility neglects context and perspective and uniqueness. However, in its insistence on its own exclusive truth, postmodern both/and self-righteousness subtly contains the either/or it purports to transcend. That is why “it’s all relative” is an absolutist statement, and Blake’s celebrated line “to generalize is to be an idiot” is, by definition, an idiotic thing to say.

The challenge is that both claims remain somewhat true. The truly inclusive approach – the real “both/and” – contains “either/or” and “both/and.” Perspectivism of that kind is chastened objectivism, in which we forgo the immaturity of mad relativism but insist on putting perspective at the heart of realism. We learn from relativism but don’t submit to it; we have a both/and perspective but don’t lose our either/or discernment or resolve. That kind of perspective is the cultural pattern waiting to manifest, but it is palpably lacking in Peterson and in most reactions to him.

Intensity of Petersonitis:

- Mild: Feeling confounded that someone previously unknown in the world of ideas is suddenly so famous and won’t go away. Some report that their initial impression that he is an unhappy man offering banal advice made them ill at ease with their own judgment.
– Acute: Sensing that his attempt to better connect our psyches with our societies could help us transcend our political polarities and culture wars, only to feel dismayed when his reactionary views and caustic manner reinforces them.

Knowledge of minority and disempowered perspectives is morally and epistemologically necessary, but the truth is not subsumed by perspective. We can still celebrate, let’s say, the industrial revolution, while remembering it was built on slavery, colonialism, and a fossil fuel frenzy with enduring consequences. And we can accept that by some metrics, the world is in better shape than ever before, but in the context of ecological and technological volatility it doesn’t follow that we are going in the right direction. Moreover, the data feels obtuse when viewed from the perspective of Syrian refugees, mentally ill teenagers, the working poor, and vanishing small island states. It is possible both that we have never had it so good and that everything has to change, and to argue for a course of action on that premise (Rowson, 2017). If we can work towards understanding that something is real and we are partly right and partly wrong about it most of the time, we might, as Peterson puts it, “grow the hell up,” though not in the way he seems to have in mind.

2. Multiphrenic

Peterson shifts between reflective, iconoclastic, avuncular, demagogic, compassionate, scientific, and philosophical modes of communicating. I don’t think this is an act as such; the protean performance is who he is. One moment he cries in solidarity with forsaken young men on BBC Radio 5 live, and the next he eviscerates his prime minister Justin Trudeau for his enthusiastic tweet supporting women’s rights in Canada, asking, “Is that the murderous equity doctrine?” This shifting quality is intriguing and spellbinding, but it makes the task of locating his judgment and motivation like trying to pin jelly to a wall (Peterson, 2018c). 6

Peterson is multiphrenic. The concept of multiphrenia originated in Kenneth Gergen’s The Saturated Self (1991), before social media, and it has even greater resonance today because most of us play multiple roles in life. We are saturated with myriad opinions, values, and ways of life, filtered through an array of relationships, projects, and commitments, and viewed increasingly in short nuggets: 800-word reviews, tweets, and video clips. In this world of snapshots we can choose which aspect of ourselves to bring forth, but more often that is decided for us by the medium and the context. In this respect, Peterson illustrates the sociologist Erving Goffman’s theory that the self is constituted through presentation; who we are is the sum total of the parts we play for the audiences in our lives, and those parts do not always speak to each other or for each other (Gergen, 2007).

As his former colleague and friend Bernard Schiff (2018), who was responsible for hiring Peterson at the University of Toronto but who now believes Peterson is dangerous, puts it:

Jordan exhibits a great range of emotional states, from anger and abusive speech to evangelical fierceness, ministerial solemnity, and avuncular charm. It is misleading to come

to quick conclusions about who he is, and potentially dangerous if you have seen only the
good and thoughtful Jordan, and not seen the bad. (np)

The concept of multiphrenia makes sense of why Peterson can appear quite so impressive,
without always actually being so. He wields multiple intellectual weapons with panache, a
compelling approach for audiences looking for fragments of meaning to tweet and practical advice
to act upon rather than coherent world views to understand life as a whole. If his grasp of
psychometrics and statistics from social psychology doesn’t persuade one part of you, his
archetypal stories from depth psychology will move another part of you. If the case studies from
his practice as a clinical psychologist don’t speak to your personal experience, his references to
neuroscience and evolutionary biology might.

3. Theatrical

Peterson is a performer. Thoreau said people go fishing all their lives without realizing that it’s
not fish they are after, and millions watch Peterson not so much for the content but for the drama.
They are drawn in by the resolute deliveries of choice words, the chastening paternal voice, the
summoning pauses, the clipped passive-aggressive responses to challenging questions, the
clenched lips, narrowing eyes, and latent rage rendered tolerable by occasional folksy charm,
humor, and imploring hand gestures. His literary success is driven less by the quality of his insight
(which varies) or prose (which is prolix) than the spectacle of his articulate and assertive public
performances, which linger. He lectures by thinking aloud with extraordinary physical energy,
constantly pounding and gesticulating, embodying the thinking process as a form of prowess,
putting Rodin’s inert statue to shame. He might possess what Max Weber (1947) calls “charismatic
authority.”7

In person, Peterson is civil, with flashes of conviviality, but he harbors more melancholy than
most and bristles easily. In his demeanor I see some of Daniel Day Lewis’s elegance but also Count
Dracula’s balefulness. There are also traces of Jack Nicholson’s Colonel Jessop in A Few Good
Men, especially in the film’s climactic line: “You can’t handle the truth!”

Peterson’s insistence on truth is heartfelt, and part of the theater, including statements such as:
“The Logos is symbolically represented in the figure of Christ.... The West has formulated a
symbolic representation of the ideal human being. And that ideal human being is someone who
speaks the truth to change the world” (Transliminal, 2017).

That’s a good example of a Peterson contention: pithy, compelling, intriguing, apparently deep,
even exhilarating, but also question-begging, leaving you wondering if you really understand, or
want to (the notion of “ideal human being” has a dark history). Peterson may offer the truth, but it
rarely feels like the whole truth.

7 “A certain quality of an individual personality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and
treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.
These as such are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary,
and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader ... How the quality in question would
be ultimately judged from an ethical, aesthetic, or other such point of view is naturally indifferent for the
purpose of definition.”
4. Hypervigilant

Isaiah Berlin said that if you want to understand a thinker you need to grasp what they are fighting against. In Peterson’s case that is not difficult. He fears and loathes the brutal forms of collectivism in Hitler’s Germany, Mao’s China, and Stalin’s Russia, and his home is decorated with memorabilia of these dangers, what a New York Times profile described as “a carefully curated house of horror” (Bowles, 2018).

Peterson’s formative influences included trying to uncover the psychological roots of ideology during the Cold War – how large groups of people could become so attached to ideas that they might destroy the world to defend them. Peterson doesn’t see today’s liberal order as a historical inevitability but more like a precious, even miraculous, achievement that is extremely fragile. He may not be wrong, but he holds that view in a way that feels deeply personal.

My speculation is that Peterson’s odyssey has made him hypervigilant. He admits in an interview with The Tablet that he has experienced “derealization” every day since his rise to fame began: “When something happens to you and you can’t believe it is your life.” Peterson seems to have a higher than average level of threat response, which becomes even higher when he relives the genesis of his derealization at the University of Toronto. His body language tightens and tone of voice sharpens whenever he speaks of THE RADICAL LEFT or POSTMODERN NEOMARXISTS (Stanford, 2018).

Peterson sounds shrill and extreme to some, but wise and prophetic to others, and the difference seems to depend on how threatened a person feels on a day-to-day basis. Moral psychologist Jonathan Haidt has shown that conservatives are likely to be more concerned with threats to sanctity, order, and tradition than most liberals can even imagine, and their driving concern is often not social progress but personal survival (Haidt, 2013). In an interview with the Radio Times, Peterson admits: “I think, because of my proclivity to depression, that negative things hit me harder than they hit people in general” (Hodges, 2018). His main concern is to help people hold down a job and have a family; and social order – he wants us to keep creating, refining, and following the rules that allow us to have a viable economic and political system.

By offering a combination of archetypal myth and conventional vigilance, Peterson’s main product amounts to what the author of The Listening Society Hanzi Freinacht calls “dark depth” (Freinacht, 2016). Pankaj Mishra’s reference to “Fascist Mysticism” perhaps misses the point here. Peterson’s focus is how we return from depression and anxiety to normality, and how we try to avoid falling again (Mishra, 2018). He places little emphasis on the numinous aspects of spiritual experience or soulful visions of transformation or transcendence.

His preferred reference points for collective meaning and action are still Mao’s revolution and Stalin’s gulags, and not, say Aldous Huxley’s Island Utopia. Peterson speaks of “the evil trinity,” of “equity, diversity and inclusivity” as “a mask of virtue under which is something truly awful.” Petersonitis arises because while his vigilance about respecting the sovereignty of individuals over
the group is justified by history, his hypervigilance – ongoing heightened threat awareness and extreme sensitivity to group overreach – is not.

5. Sacralizing

I began the RSA public event by asking Peterson about the dream he shares near the start of *12 Rules* because I think it is the key to understanding him and his following:

I was suspended in mid-air, clinging to a chandelier, many stories above the ground, directly under the dome of a massive cathedral. The people on the floor below were distant and tiny…. I have learned to pay attention to dreams, not least because of my training as a clinical psychologist. Dreams shed light on the dim places where reason itself has yet to voyage…. I knew that the cross was simultaneously, the point of greatest suffering, the point of death and transformation, and the symbolic center of the world.

He describes how he returned to anonymity and was beginning to fall asleep when a wind was trying to blow him back to that place, from which there was no escape. He seems to have taken this experience as a kind of existential if not divine revelation: “The center is occupied by the individual. Existence at that cross is suffering and transformation – and that fact, above all, needs to be voluntarily accepted.”

Then he asks: “How could the world be freed from the terrible dilemma of conflict on the one hand, and psychological and social dissolution, on the other. The answer was this: through the elevation and development of the individual, and through a willingness of everyone to shoulder the burden of Being and take the heroic path.”

In our discussion, he seemed to think there is something sacred about individuals taking responsibility and sorting themselves out. His response was striking: “It’s not even that there is something sacred about it. That is what's sacred … the source of the sacred is that idea.”

There are other ways of viewing the sacred; sociologist Gordon Lynch considers it “an inherent structure in morally boundaried societies,” and clearly the nature of that structure and those boundaries varies, with many forms that are not about the sanctity of individuals (Rowson, 2015). For Peterson, however, the hero myth, with its journey quality of figurative dragon slaying, is the heart of the matter – the code to living a meaningful life.

The idea is not particularly new. Peterson does with analytical psychology what Joseph Campbell’s *Hero with a Thousand Faces* did with comparative literature, and what many other thinkers have attempted before and since. Moreover, the heroic journey towards individuation as life’s meaning is arguably a distinctly male emphasis. Carol Gilligan (1982) and Sarah Blaffer Hrdy (2009) among others would question the universality of Peterson’s idea of the sacred, which may instead be reflected in the aesthetic unity of skillful cooperation or fuller self-knowledge through the experience of profound and deepening interdependence.

On reflection, what Peterson is offering is sacralized Nietzscheanism or mythologized existentialism. It’s not *Christian*. Peterson admits he has not read René Girard (1979), which is a
strange scholarly oversight given the extent of his research for his first book, *Maps of Meaning*. Girard’s influential line is that the archaic sacred is the religious ritual ethos of violent sacrifice to pacify the tribe and appease the gods; the purpose of God in Christ is to overcome this form of the sacred and institute the reign of ongoing peaceful self-sacrifice in community, which is the new sacred, symbolized by the act of communion supper.

Without that kind of resolution, Peterson is suspended between Nietzsche and Christ.\(^8\) He is drawn to Nietzsche’s iconoclastic freedom from herd morality, but he can’t go all the way with his nihilism. And he is drawn to Christ as the Logos incarnate, the ultimate truth teller, and meaning maker, but his individualism precludes following where Christianity leads, namely to community, communion and charity. In that anguished space between Nietzsche and Christ he busks with psychometrics and archetypes, singing the blues about bearing the burden of being.

6. Solipsistic

Peterson’s apparently heroic individualism is actually an existentialist isolationism. Humility and activism in synthesis is the hard-won achievement of the best of religious communities of practice and those they work with. But if, like Peterson, you write about the Logos but don’t work in communion somehow, whether through church-going or otherwise, you don’t discover that synthesis or contribute to it. Instead Peterson has found himself looking at a computer camera, wearing a headset and microphone, charging hundreds of dollars for a forty-five-minute online “ask me anything” call, whereby random people seek his advice about their life, watched not by a shared community but by the atomized masses (Bowles, 2018).

These points have political implications. Climate change, for instance, is not a discrete environmental issue but a collective action problem at every level of society, from the home to the office, all the way to the UN. It calls not merely for individual personal responsibility but also shared cultural and democratic responsibility; what we seem to lack is precisely that sense of collective ownership for the problem and our responsibility towards it.

It is not enough to trust people who are competent, as Peterson suggests we should, because the people with economic and political power who are ostensibly competent are tragically letting us down (Rowson, 2013). Activism arises from the impression that we need to walk the talk of collective action at scale. In her Nobel Prize-winning lecture, political economist Elinor Ostrom – celebrated for her studies of collective action solutions – makes the point elegantly: “Extensive empirical research leads me to argue that … a core goal of public policy should be to facilitate the development of institutions that bring out the best in humans.”

Peterson would agree with Ostrom on this point, but they may differ on the question of what “the best in humans” means. Before going on stage at the RSA we had a relatively short and focused interview in which I tried to connect Peterson’s interest in Jean Piaget to human development more generally. I asked whether he felt “self-authorship” – in which our judgment is truly our own rather than a mélange of social conventions – was the ultimate stage of human development. Peterson built a company around the idea and comes across as quintessentially self-

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\(^8\) I am grateful to Ian Christie for this astute way of putting it.
authoring – the locus of authority is within oneself, not the social surround. However, Robert Kegan is one of many theorists to argue there are stages beyond self-authorship; in his model, for instance, the subsequent stage is the self-transforming mind or inter-individual stage (Thomason, 2012).

In this advanced stage of maturation, we gain an additional perspective on our own perceptual processes and implicit ways of knowing; we start to see our own personal ideologies. We can thereby form a more constructively critical relationship with our own world views and improve our capacity for empathy and intimacy with a wider range of people, because we cease to filter other people’s experience through our own models of the world. Peterson broadly agreed with this idea intellectually, but seemed reluctant to concede the point explicitly, perhaps for pragmatic commercial reasons. That sounds like a cheap shot, but in a tweet he writes: “What’s your vision? What’s your strategy? What’s your destiny? Take control with www.selfauthoring.com” (Peterson, 2018d).

As a trained clinical psychologist, Peterson should not only be familiar with but also skilled at inhabiting the world from the perspective of others, ready, willing, and able to set aside his own assumptions and constructions in order to view the world through another’s eyes; to feel what they feel in the way that they alone feel it. And yet, the more I read and listen to Peterson, the more he sounds solipsistic. He clearly has regard and concern for the lives of others, but everything he encounters seems to be filtered through his own self-construction of the world, which he seems unwilling to critically reflect on beyond a certain point.

In the philosophical tradition, solipsism is about whether we can trust that anything outside of our own minds is real. Peterson is solipsistic in a looser and more figurative sense relating to intellectual character – he filters his definitions, anecdotes, and understanding of opposing views through his own personal coda. That only takes one so far, and it is precisely that additional self-transforming and inter-individual step that is called for at a cultural level today.

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7. Monocular

Peterson is an expert and a generalist, but he is not an expert generalist. That distinction matters because of the many millions who trust his judgment in a general sense on the basis of specific intellectual authority.

The idea of an expert generalist is paradoxical but not oxymoronic. In theory, our very best philosophers, civil servants, political leaders, and writers are expert generalists – their defining skill is inclusive synthesis and their defining qualities are epistemic acumen and agility: know-how with knowledge, having enough expertise in one domain to value different forms of understanding, and knowing how to integrate them while retaining curiosity towards whatever remains unfamiliar.

With respect, Jordan Peterson is not like that at all. He is a social psychologist with an impressive publication record on psychometrics, a clinical psychologist with several years of client
experience, and a depth psychologist with a flair for mythology and theology. But he sees everything through an augmented psychological lens, rather than showing any inclination to move between different forms of knowledge.

Peterson is not the first psychologist to come across as sociologically blinkered (the reverse also applies). Alienation, for instance, is experienced psychologically as estrangement from oneself as familiar places and people become strange; anomie is a loss of the structuring principles through which to orient ourselves through life. Peterson speaks directly to the experience of alienation and anomie psychologically, but they are also sociological phenomena with political and economic causes that he more or less ignores. His inclination is to reduce emergent social, cultural, and economic phenomena to the individual, operationalized into psychometrics like IQ, “agreeableness,” or “conscientiousness.” This meta-theory – methodological individualism – is a respectable approach to knowledge, but widely contested for good reason.

Peterson is an individual-differences psychologist with related passions and convictions, and nobody can be expected to know everything. In a now famous academic paper by Kieran Healy (2017), “F*** Nuance,” the author argues against “a free floating demand that something be added.” To say that Peterson is not an expert generalist is not to say he is a negligent thinker, but to help make sense of the personal and political limitations of his ideas.

Peterson appears skeptical about the conceptual integrity and explanatory power of many features of social, economic, and ecological systems and structures: gender, class, race, place, institutions, poverty, educational inequality, social capital, culture, habitus, reflexivity, emergence, finance. Such features of our shared reality are not merely irreducible to psychometrics but they also interrelate in ways that add to the complexity of credible social explanations. It would be refreshing to hear Peterson wonder aloud with a question like: how would a good anthropologist, political economist, sociologist, or ecologist think about this phenomenon? But he never does.

When Peterson inveighs against the use of “patriarchy” for instance, he seems to examine it like a psychometric and find it wanting, rather than a theory of society as a whole that points to a phenomenon we struggle to see because it is so thoroughly endemic that it shapes what and how we see. More generally, he lacks sociological imagination. He shows almost no interest in how power, elites, class, institutions, capital, and media come together to shape the world and indeed the individual; and why we might therefore be inclined to try to reshape it for the better. This is not a minor point. As we grow in understanding of those structural and systemic effects we see that social analysis cannot be reduced to psychometrics (Wright Mills, 1959).

In fact, Peterson has no compelling story to tell of what it might mean for society as a whole to improve itself. He has no endgame, as Seth Abramson (2018) put it. His vision seems to amount to whatever emerges from billions of politically disengaged individuals steadfastly getting their shit together, with a view to dominating each other. As Peterson is fond of putting it: good luck with that.
8. Ideological

In a sense, Peterson is hiding in plain sight. The essence of ideology is being possessed by a set of ideas that we cannot think critically about because we see with and through them. On this point Peterson approvingly quotes Jung: “People don’t have ideas. Ideas have people.”

Peterson has spent his career researching the dangers of ideology, but the sanctity and sovereignty of the individual clearly “has” him in the Jungian sense. And yet “the individual” is a historical and cultural construct like any other. My Oxford politics tutor Larry Siedentop’s (2015) The Invention of the Individual makes precisely this point. The idea of the individual is a key element in the construction of social reality in the West over the last few hundred years, but it is neither a metaphysical axiom nor a cultural universal.

Peterson juxtaposes ideological thinking with religious thinking by saying that while ideology offers self-serving partial truths (e.g. nature is wonderful and beautiful), religions offer fuller truths (e.g. nature is beauty and wonder, but also cancer, tsunamis, and death). Yet he seems unaware of his own recurring tendency to create and attack strawmen. The shortcomings of his views on postmodernism, for instance, have been highlighted in a range of places, most impressively by the writer Shuja Haider (2018). Peterson lacks substantive knowledge of postmodern thinkers and conflates postmodernism and neomarxism. When he is charged with conflation, he says no, or more like “NO!”, “WRONG!”; he says the postmodernists filled their own explanatory void with Marx, or the Marxists used the fashion of postmodernism to conceal their mischief, but the overall impression is of intellectual cobbling to serve a narrative, not judicious scholarly discernment. His hypervigilance about neomarxist ideology permeating the academy makes him sound McCarthyesque, as if there is a vast conspiracy afoot, but it seems more likely he has overextrapolated from his own experience, again. But Peterson needs, even wants, his enemies, because his ideology takes a particular binary form.

9. Manichean

Manicheanism was a religious movement founded by the Persian prophet Mani in the third century; it teaches a dualistic cosmology of good and evil, light and darkness, and is used figuratively to refer to moral binaries. Peterson is Manichean. He is not a process philosopher who instinctively thinks in terms of complex systems in motion, cross-pollinating in pluralistic and unpredictable ways. He is much more absolutist and dualist in spirit. The intellectual structures he thinks with are mostly polar opposites, like pillars on a stage in which our dramas must unfold. He recognizes antinomies like good and evil, yin and yang, order and chaos, truth and falsity, individual and collective. However, he typically frames these juxtapositions as binary battles to be fought and won rather than co-constituting and porous relationships that we have constructed and might reimagine together.

Manichean views of the world are difficult to avoid. The human love of binaries has been widely theorized since structural anthropologist Levi Strauss revealed their cultural function. To orient ourselves by juxtaposing polar opposites is a natural way of thinking. Even so, Manichean thinking is not fit for purpose in a multipolar, multivalent, multimodal, multiethnic world, and it is compounded by our political spectrum. While the language of left and right once made some sense
of class-based attitudes to the role of the state, politics is now about so much more; attitudes towards ecological and technological phenomena in particular cannot be parsed in terms of left and right, nor can national identity or the challenge to defend liberal democracy from populism.

In that context, the ambient pressure to choose a tribe and say “yay” or “nay” to the issue of the day is the problem that obstructs meaningful progress. We are building division within people that is culturally muted, while amplifying the divisions between people that are reinforced on a daily basis. Broadcast media selects guests with opposing views to get “both sides” of an issue, as if they were coins. Oppositional identities, in which we define who we are by what we are against, become the defining characters in public debate. We are rarely allowed to be curious but disinterested. Instead we must pick a side: Are you left or right, atheist or believer, with us or against us? This kind of ambient divisiveness is part of what Rowan Williams (2016) calls “the meta-crisis” of our times; namely how ecological, economic, social, and political crises are compounded by the limited and harmful ways we encounter, conceive, experience, and discuss them.

Peterson appears to be invested in perpetuating the individual/collective binary, which significantly limits political imagination. This distinction dissolves, however, when you realize that the self is constituted through communicative interaction between individuality and sociality. Hope lies in a richer notion of a social self, which was most fully worked out by the sociologist and process philosopher, G. H. Mead, but also features in Buddhist notions of interdependence. Rowan Williams (2018) makes a similar case from a Christian perspective in his new book Being Human. The juxtaposition that matters most may not be the individual and the community but the individual and the person. While the individual seeks to differentiate itself from what Peterson calls “the chaos” and thereby to control it, the person accepts they are partly constituted by that chaos, manifest in relationships of all kinds. We don’t need to accept a Manichean world view of perpetual struggle. Seeing reality in process-relational terms could lead to reform in various institutions. There is deeper hope in a vision of the interplay of systems, souls, and society in which we are at once lost and found.

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10. Piagetian

Peterson speaks of Piaget, the relatively neglected intellectual giant of the twentieth century, in glowing terms, a genius who revealed the foundations of morality and whose ultimate aim was to unite science and religion.

A central Piagetian notion is the schema, our perceptual and conceptual patterning of thought through which we take in information (assimilation) and which changes our understanding (accommodation), leading to an equilibrated state which is the thing – our mental process – that we can’t really see because we see with it. In Robert Kegan’s language, consciousness is this “subject-object relationship”; we are subject to some things that we are, and we can relate to some things as objects that we have. We grow through differentiation and integration, slowly having things we were previously had-by, including thoughts and feelings and thereby relating to them better.
This distinction matters crucially in the context of ideology, which all too often possesses people. The point goes beyond Piaget and Peterson to a whole domain of research and practice based on an entirely different conception of the human being as a process of human becoming. We are developmental processes that adapt, evolve, and transform in response to an evolving set of cultural expectations that both shape and are shaped by human development. This developmental perspective on life offers not just a new psychology but a new biology and a new epistemology, and ultimately a new ethics and politics; it is a view of life (Csikszentmihalyi & Rathunde, 2014).

In the video interview for Perspectiva, I asked Peterson whether a fuller understanding of development might help us transcend our culture wars by encouraging people to reflect on what they are subject to in their thinking. For instance, the postmodern contention that truth is perspectival may be a necessary evolutionary stage for a culture to pass through, and for individuals to adapt to and move beyond before we collapse into mad relativism. He seemed to agree, albeit very cautiously, suggesting it was rare to see that kind of evolution of perspective in practice (Perspectiva, 2018). He is right, but I believe it is precisely the necessary cultural evolution that the Peterson phenomenon points us towards and improving our discussion on gender is a fundamental part of it.

11. Masculine

If the conversation between Peterson and his critics teaches us anything, it is that we are biopsychosocial-spiritual beings and any useful conversation about gender will reflect that.

Men and women are different, even if in aggregate we are much more alike than different. And men and women are not just biologically different, because when it comes to human beings “just biological” is incoherent. Biology informs epistemology and therefore ethics, and, in that context, the idea of “women’s ways of knowing” makes sense. It is not clear what kind of sense, and what follows politically, but that is a useful question to ask (Belenky, et al., 1986).

What is less useful is describing metaphysical heuristics in gendered terms. Chaos/Order is perhaps the defining binary of life in 12 Rules for Life and Peterson identifies order as masculine and chaos as feminine, which seems gratuitous. The comparative mythologist John David Elbert (2018) draws attention to Ancient Egypt as one illustrative counter-example. It is worth quoting the extract in full to give some idea of the depths to which you have to plunge to make sense of this material and Peterson’s selective use of it.

One thing that Peterson doesn’t tell you, because he’s an absolutist – he likes everything to be flattened out into simple clear absolute unshakeable structures – is that in Egypt the valences regarding gender were reversed; the sky was female and the earth was male. The sky was the sky Goddess Nut, the starry expanse of the stars in which the Pharaoh was born in would come out of her and go back into her, become an embryo like the stars. The earth was Jeb, the source of earthquakes like Poseidon in Greek myth. And the earth was always

9 See also Kegan, (1982) and my reflection on the first chapter there: Rowson, (2016).
10 I develop this point in my book, The Moves that Matter (Bloomsbury 2019) in a section on men and women, pages 170-177.
what was opened up and dug into, the father was dug into in order to reinsert the dead *Pharaoh* who becomes a new embryo in the sky when he ascends to become one of the stars in the body of the Great Mother thus becoming intrauterine once again. So a different valence there for the Egyptians. They like the woman on top and that’s the sexual metaphor there goes right through … and they had early matrimonial traditions very strong on Goddesses and the Great Mother in that civilization.

The underlying point is there are many myths and archetypes, and the extent to which they are gendered is culturally specific. The gender question is even more vexed at the social level. How might men and women be most fully themselves, in ways truly chosen, not merely mandated, and in ways that serve everyone’s interest in living what Roberto Unger calls “a larger life” – lives of greater intensity, scope, and capability? The struggle against entrenched inequalities of all kinds, including gender inequality, is secondary to that more inclusive objective (BBC, 2013).

Peterson provides useful grist to the mill here; while he walks his talk of a forthright masculinity, his solipsism and hypervigilance often make him sound clueless about gender relations more generally. When he suggested in an interview with VICE News that men and women cannot work together well because the rules are not clear, and that one of the rules should perhaps be that women cannot wear makeup at work, he sounds about half a century out of date (Mind Temple, 2018). Similarly, in an unstructured chat over a brisk lunch with several people at the RSA it emerged that Peterson strongly disliked the Disney movie *Frozen*; in essence because he thinks it is “reprehensible propaganda.” He sees it as an inversion of Sleeping Beauty and believes it has a political agenda – I think relating to men not being needed – though he didn’t spell that out. But *Frozen* is not merely admired but adored by millions. It celebrates sisterly love with the best kind of postmodern ironic twist on the familiar theme of “true love” and it includes positive male characters. I have savored watching the film several times with my sons and it strikes me as fundamentally innocent and inspiring, perhaps especially for girls grappling with social and emotional expectations. If I had to choose a single thing that makes me doubt Jordan Peterson’s fundamental soundness, it is that he sees political conspiracy in *Frozen* and does not like the film as a result (Redpill Media, 2018).

More usefully, Peterson highlights that men who lack orientation become depressed, then resentful, and then dangerous, and he has drawn attention to distinctly male challenges relating to knowing our shadows; how our craving for status and purpose can lead to aggression and violence. His popularity among young men also reveals an appetite for facing up to practical challenges, starting with an injunction for which he is famous: Make your bed! Tidy your room! Perhaps men in particular are responding to this message, that meaning arises from responsibility, because that message is already evident to women.

In most couples with children, even if the father purports to parent equally, it is invariably the mother who manages most of what feminists call “the mental load”: play dates, keeping track of domestic supplies or dealing with difficult feelings arising from friendships at school (Barberio, 2017). Valuing this kind of undervalued and unpaid labor, typically done by women, Kate Raworth sees as a critical feature of a viable twenty-first-century economics. Such work is also a good example of the challenge of discussing gender because of the often heard argument that women do such work more “naturally” and better than men. To state that should not risk ridicule and nor
does it mean accepting the status quo as fair. The point is to move towards a clearer and wiser division of labor where effort and proclivity are recognized and properly rewarded (Maushart, 2003).

Peterson’s conversation with Cathy Newman on Channel 4 is a related case in point. That discussion has been viewed over 20 million times and accentuated Peterson’s fame. The debate concerned women generally being paid less than men for doing the same job, with Peterson saying that the gap is not really about gender – which he seems to view as an arbitrary variable like any other. A closer look at the data nested within gender divides reveals a range of factors including the trait “agreeableness,” with women generally being more agreeable than men, and less likely to push for pay rises. This is the truth, but it’s not the whole truth – and a sense of failure in converging on the whole truth is a core element of Petersonitis.

In this case, what is valued socially and culturally is not valued financially, and that’s a structural problem at the heart of the pay gap. It is “structural” because the relationship between social and cultural value and financial value is set by processes mostly still controlled by men; those processes and their outcomes are relatively beneficial to men, and those outcomes arise in a world where financial value has become the predominant value, thereby perpetuating gender power imbalances.

In the Channel 4 conversation, Peterson was better armed with facts and arguments and more fully present, but the spectacle was quintessentially a debate where both sides were competing and the more nimble side “won.” It was not a dialectic where both sides sought resolution through synthesis, nor a dialogue where each side sought to know an issue more deeply and fully by incorporating the perspective of the other. It was male against female, right against left, data against narrative, reason against emotion; it didn’t resolve anything. It was a cultural touchstone because it was a cultural failure.

12. Prismatic

Which brings us full circle back to the experience of Petersonitis, and the question of how to improve conversations on thinkers like Peterson where allergies and infatuations are the norm. Peterson is prismatic in the sense that looking through the phenomenon opens up new vistas on this abiding issue. How should we relate to those like Peterson who on fuller inspection probably should evoke a both/and and either/or response? How do we bring about a cultural conversation where we can praise and critique without giving up on moral discernment or objective truth?

Politically speaking, that would mean a searching conversation with different premises and divergences. Men and women are different and they are the same; and we have to decide what kinds of gender roles are wise in myriad contexts. Capitalism is often part of the solution and part of the problem; and yet we need an economic model that works within social and ecological limits, so we can’t continue to assume capitalism will survive in anything like its present form. Climate change is an existential threat to humanity and there is some doubt about some details in some climate models; and we urgently need a rapid global energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables. Democracy is increasingly an embarrassment, but it is also the noblest ideal we have; and we have to proactively reimagine it for a digital age. Human rights lack secure philosophical
foundations and they are politically under siege, and yet they may be a necessary moral touchstone, worth defending not in spite of but because of their constructed and negotiated nature. Artificial intelligence creates great opportunities and is a threat to civilization; and the question is not how cool AI can be, but who owns it, and is what they want aligned with the greater good?

Peterson appears to have little to contribute to such conversations, which is why, although I have enjoyed the ride, I ultimately feel disappointed by him, and no longer expect to learn from him about the most important questions of our time. Some would say that his role is not to model such dialogues, but the point is that such issues are not in his purview. He is a psychologist, granted, and speaking mostly to individuals looking for direction in life. If he wants to focus on the message that individual responsibility is sacred and to use his fame and wealth to further amplify what he believes in, perhaps we should just salute his inner lobster?

But no. Given Peterson’s influence, that kind of oversimplified message is precisely what keeps us trapped in outdated constructs (e.g. left and right) and oppositional identities (e.g. men and women) and militates against the generative and imaginative perspectives we need. He has the charisma, clarity, and following to add psychological and spiritual depth to our collective action problems on an ongoing basis, but shows no inclination to do so. The challenges of our time are daunting precisely because they are not principally about individuals solving discrete problems but interrelated challenges arising from collective processes. We therefore need visions of individuality that are not about slaying the dragon of the collective, but more like learning to ride it. The question for the individual is how to grow morally, cognitively, and spiritually by expanding circles of belonging, developing bio-psycho-social-spiritual selves in a manner that is truly one’s own because it speaks to a social milieu in which the self is created.

Set against that fuller context and perspective, our challenge is to imagine a world beyond consumerism, where 9 billion humans can survive and thrive on a planet that is technologically imperious but ecologically imperiled and politically and spiritually confused. Peterson growls: Grow the hell up and tidy your room! Perhaps we should. Our rooms after all are dramatic settings, and microcosms of the world as a whole. But I think Peterson needs to grow the hell up too. The more profound story begins when we ask who owns the room, why there is so much stuff in it, and what joy we might find and create with the people outside.

Treatment: If neither abstinence nor denial works, try writing.

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Daring of Be(com)ing Wise: Perspectives on Embodied ‘Sapere Aude’ En-lightened for Today

Wendelin Küpers¹

Wise people [sapientes],
who through all the obliquities and uncertainties of human actions,
aim for eternal truth, follow roundabout ways,
because they cannot take straight ones;
and execute plans which in the long run are for the best,
as far as the nature of things allows
(Vico, 1725, SR 7)²

“The function of Reason, is to promote the art of life”.
(Whitehead 1958, p. 4)

Sapere aude is often translated as ‘dare to think,’ especially in the sense of dare to think critically for one-self, or with a community in mind and for a different world! But sapere is not simply ‘thinking’, merely mentally, but closer to bodily sensing and this is making ‘wise’ sense, thus having an embodied sense of what is the ‘fitting thing’ to be done or not and how to make it happen. Therefore, sapere aude, is not merely daring to think or being cognitively critical, but more processually daring to be and to become wise. Such be(com)ing implies to give sense via coming to the senses and common sense, and making sense anew, culturally and politically as well as ecologically. Thus, living sapere aude is the be(com)ing of a living embodied and practical wisdom, embedded in, shifting and shaping to social and environmental dimensions!

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² SR = «De nostri temporis studiorum ratione” (Vico 1709/1990). Vico (1725/1968) envisioned in his ideas about a ‘poetic’ (anti-Cartesian) form of knowledge (sapienza poetica) - as part of his ‘Scienza Nuova’ (‘New Science’ 2014) - a historical movement that was neither linear, nor circular, but following a spiral-like dynamics (see also Miner 1998, Strati, 2018). For Vico, wisdom has a double meaning: a ‘poetic’ (sense) and a philosophical or ‘scientific’ (intellect). Poetically, it provides intelligibility for the peoples of societies or nations and their myths that arises out of and is sustained by piety. Scientifically, as noetic knowledge, wisdom refers to contemplating concrete historicity and its human praxis cultures, customs and languages in the light of the New Science.
Historically, the legacy of sapere aude as Leitmotif of wisdom traditions and ‘the Enlightenment’ as formative period and ongoing transformative program, was and is pervasive as many of the past and contemporary ways of thinking, values, practices and institutions of our present civilization are rooted in them.\(^3\)

Various rationalist development and expansions of scientific discovery, technification and its applications, modern economic institutional arrangement, political and administrative reforms, state sovereignty, individual social liberations and emancipation, religious tolerations and secularization as well as democratization, nation-based and world citizenship have historically emerged from enlightened spirit, however full of variations and ambivalence.\(^4\)

But then, what does it mean to become wise today, to live this sapere aude, enlightenment and wisdom in the 21 century, a time characterised among other phenomena, by socio-economic and political instability, worsening local and worldwide injustice and inequalities, resurging of nationalism authoritarianism. As we’ve seen with the recent Black Lives Matter protests, Covid-pandemic, stagnant economies and mass unemployment as well as protests all kind fires a lighting up beneath ongoing ideological battles over history and social justice.

Related to these developments, can we still sense the signs of those tremendous engaged revolutionary commitments that enlightened men and women, communities and collectives fought and stood for? Are those, who strived and enacted enlightened values calling us to condemn

\(^3\) Having partly its origin in the so-called Scientific Revolution, the Western Enlightenment, often referred to as ‘The Age of Reason’, eighteenth century named by French as ‘le Siecle des Lumieres’; by Germans, as ‘Aufklärung’; by Italians, as ‘L’Illuminismo’; by Spanish, as ‘L’alillustracion’. Interestingly, there was also an Arabic tradition which called it ‘tanwir’, ranging according to Kassab (2020) from Damascus to Cairo that is from Syrian-Egyptian tradition up to 19th-century, to Arab modernist movement known as the nahda (renaissance) and the withered Arab Spring recently. Historically, this age was differentiated in an Early Enlightenment (1685–1730), a High Enlightenment (1730–1780), and a Late Enlightenment (1780–1815). Only recently criticism has begun to rework the historical category of ‘the Enlightenment’ in terms of its geography and history, but also in terms of its historical significance, self-image, ethnocentric and racist assumptions (Peters, 2019).

\(^4\) Graeme, (2006) studied in detail those variations and ambivalences that have gone and still go the promising rise and tragic fall and failures of the ‘Enlightenment Project’. He refers to Lester Crocker (1959, 1963) for outlining how the ‘philosophes’ set out in search of a new foundation for ethical life, and ended up lost in an abyss of nihilism as a consequence. According to this critique philosophes failed to construct a naturalistic substitute for the religious order, not being able to bridge the nature–culture abyss and getting lost in a futile search for an universal civilisation based on reason and a rational justification for morality. According to the ‘inversion thesis’ the attempted implementation of Enlightened principles and ideals produces the very opposite effect to that intended, resulting in disaster. While liberal assumptions about rights, liberty and rational self-interest arose out of the Enlightenment, it also produced theories of indoctrination, of conditioning and control, which compromised them. The destructive potential at the disposal of the human appetite for power, cruelty, stupidity and hatred is now enormous and growing. In addition, the increase in individual freedom of conscience, religious expression, mobility and self-determination that the Enlightenment helped to facilitate has undermined many traditional sources of conflict while fostering others (Graeme, 2006: 1).

Today positions of counter-Enlightenment have becomes part of a more general critique of the West and its values, losing the reflexive dimension that had so long been at its core (Jung 2016: 220). For further sources and discussions concerning the ‘Counter-Enlightenment’ as endarkenment see footnote 10!
forms of neo-authoritarian rule reactionary and dogmatic orthodoxy, rigid intolerance, fearful xenophobia, and group chauvinism?

When we look around today we see how human and other incarnate beings are suffering from various forms of direct and structural and symbolic violence, ongoing institutionalized austerity, imperialist warfare, and religious fundamentalism, extremist terrorism, refugees crisis, nothing to say about human caused unprecedented ecological crisis, climate heating and its environmental disasters and suffering.

We are living in a time that is cast in the twilight of the ‘Anthropocene Idols’ (Cohen et al. 2016, Küpers, 2020), illuminating that the light of reason progressed only by co-opting fire, coal, oil, nuclear energy and the exploitative labor of many beings not blessed with the spoils of enlightenment. Can reason, especially the one of instrumental rationality, appropriated by the forces of unreasonable commercialism and wealth-craving, be made aware of that shadow side and ‘debt’ only when the source of light is waning, in an age of depletion and ecocidal destruction?

The related narratives range from dystopian and (post-)apocalyptic imaginaries and stories of disaster, decline, demise and extinction in an eco-eschatological vision to neo- and eco-modernist visions of progress, salvation and solutionist mastery. For some, the end of the world has already occurred and implying that civilization, organisms and organ-izations are already deceased and must simply begin the difficult task of adapting, with mortal humility, to this new reality. Lingering in the shadowy world of irony and difference, ugliness and horror, such a dark ecological orientation is announcing the coming climatic Armageddon or other apocalyptic framings often used as discursive-representational tactics or rhetorical strategy. For others, the Anthropocene offers a hopeful opportunity for a profound transformation via a heroic neo-Prometheusian Earth-mastery, playing with ‘fire’ via techno-scientific knowledge in neo-technocratic solutionist ways. Such orientation is following a hyper-accelerationist vision in which big science, geo-engineering, and big capital save both earth and earthings or a specific problematic politics of partly illusionary hope (Küpers, 2019). These narratives are taking us either towards the edge of a personal, socio-political, economic and ecological abyss or towards promising land of saved ascendance where all problems and conflicts are or can be re-solved.

However, all these imaginaries and interpretations are in danger of foreclosing the asking of serious political questions, for example, about the possible organisational and socio-environmental trajectories of continued neo-liberal practices or of the possibility of transitioning to something even more reasonable and wise.

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5 Apocalyptic imagination has been described as uncovering revelation of and through the elements envisioning the imperceptible toxification and elemental dissolution of the annihilated world (Toadvine 2014).

6 Eco-Eschatology and eco-eschatological narratives as end-of-the-world fantasies suspend the present between a geologically deep past and an indefinitely distant future. As Toadvine (2019) elaborated, our obsession with the end of the world finds expression in the form of the eco-eschatological narrative and frames speculative fiction as well as environmental prediction. Such obsession is a phantasm that reflects our desires and anxieties in the present, which leaves its mark, directly or indirectly, on our individual and collective identities, institutions, and sense of the world here and now.
Instead of seeing a storied account as a single hegemonic, linear one that is supposedly apolitical, there are multiple, debatable and polemical narratives. These storylines range from Cassandran versus Panglossian advocates to slowing-down Doomsters versus accelerating Boomsters and are thus situated as either tragic, elegiac stories with hopeless endings and the collapse of civilization or heroic, hegemonic stories of awakening.

Furthermore, our time is also characterized by ‘retro-progressive’ moves and neo-conservative or neo-authoritarian trajectories, including revived tribalist and populist contagion, and manifestations of personal and functional stupidities, and illiberal democracies’, attacks on cosmopolitan orientations and institutions, spreading throughout Europe and the USA as well as may other countries and parts of the world. For example we might ask: Does the so called “Intellectual Dark Web” use a veneer of ‘reason’ and ‘science’ to justify prevailing inequalities economic, gender, and racial as natural, thus defending (neo-)liberalist capitalism while drawing on biology and the dreary science to bolster the status quo by depoliticising politics (Brooks, 2020)?

But there are also old and new, social movements and advocating political activism, like the environmentalist movements, anti-racial and black-rights movements, feminist movements and LGBT movements among others, All of them are manifesting a radical democratic politics of dissensus and attempting to radically, ethically and often publicly challenge existing reactionary orientation, given social norms, and, reclaimingly, who is recognized as being a competent agent to speak and shape civil life.

Why does reconsidering ‘Enlightenment’ may help for understanding and interpreting these developments? What would historical enlightened figures or philosophers who reflected on the role of wisdom and enlightenment tell us from their respective perspective?

Historically, the ideas of the ‘Age of Enlightenment’ undermined(d) the authority of the traditional aristocracy and monarchy as well as religious orthodoxies of Churches, while preparing and enacting ways for the scientific, socio-cultural political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, reaching into the 20 century and today. Based and centred on regimes of reason and scientific approaches as principal sources and media of authority and legitimacy as well as knowledge7, enlightenment functioning as a formational event established and advanced powerful ideas and ideals, and. These include among others those like freedom, progress, tolerance, fraternity, (we would today call brother- and sisterhood), constitutional government and separation of church and state, all serving as a base for civil society. In this way,
Enlightenment brought cultural political ‘modernization’ to the West, in terms of introducing democratic values and institutions and the creation of modern, liberal democracies (Gay, 1996).8

Enlightenment yes, but which one: a moderate or a radical one, and how was and is it related as such with its clandestine underground to the making of modernity (Israel 2001, 2006, Jacob, 2006, Muslow 2015, 2018)?

And today? Is this present a time of an “Enlightenment NOW” (Pinker, 2018)? Or do we need understanding for how irrational conceptions of reason are harmfully defective in relation to what the traditional rationalistic Enlightenment was and is?

In particular:

– What would the mentioned and other intellectuals and lovers of wisdom (philo-sophers) say about why unenlightened politician and populists, extremists, including left- and right-wingers, and ideological, religious and other fundamentalist are again and increasingly influential today?

– How would they respond to the re-emerging radicalizing conservative or progressive ideologies and movements, especially neo-identitarian, alt-right shift in public spheres all over the world?

– How would Enlightenment thinkers interpret resurging of neo-authoritarian politics of power with its rhetoric and practices that are having far-reaching effects on various levels (Fielitz & Laloire, 2016).

– What do calls for an enlightened life and a wisdom-oriented citizenry9 mean today? How is daring to know and ‘be(com)ing wise’ constituted by an embodied practice and co-created by a ‘body-mindful’ cultivation of a well-understood tasteful art(istry) of living?

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8 For Peter Gay (born as Peter Joachim Fröhlich) Enlightenment was the unified work of a small group of men, "the little flock," who shared liberal progressive attitudes, a critical method and mind, working for a better future, who knew and admired one another's work. According to him they shared an understanding of Enlightenment as a program of secularism, humanity and above all freedom in its many forms; it is humanity's claim to be recognized as adult, responsible beings and an Enlightened optimistic faith in social progress by the use rational principles to solve problems of social interaction.

9 ‘Civilization’ although often associated solely with certain levels of technological, social, and cultural advancement, can also refer to the reflective and moral status or level of development concerning enlightenment. To be 'civilized' in this sense is to have a disposition to be concerned with civic excellence (politeikê aretê) and virtue (aretê) in feelings, thoughts, competencies and action. Respect for others (aidôs) and a sense of justice (dikaiosynê) moderation or self-control (sôphrosynê), holiness of life or piety (hosiotês), and courage were among the foundation of political wisdom guiding all civic endeavors. Historically, this disposition and positioning was considered as required to live a good and successful human life and seen as the result of proper education and habituation. Moreover, the enactment of individual and collective wisdom was understood as a form of civilization, as the result and expression of a moral civilizing-process that comes about through the creation and transmission of interpretations of human experience and the concomitant skills to be developed (Kiefer, 2015).
Accordingly, the underlying concern of the following is to inquire into the status of an illuminating Enlightenment (Aufklärung/Erleuchtung) in relation to signs of reviving of an obscuring Endarkenment (Verfinsterung/ensombrement/nigredo),\(^{10}\) including to understand an elusive *'twilightening* as a kind of entwinement of both.

This inquiry implies the quest and question about how to rethink, reimagining and re-evaluate integrally an Enlightenment beyond traditional orientations.\(^{11}\)

Correspondingly, the following asks: In which way can the call for sapere aude still mean experiencing and thinking the world and future by opening out; while we are facing the present

\(^{10}\) Endarkenment can be related to the tradition of ‘Counter-Enlightenment’ movement as part of history of ideas’ that have been characterised as relativist, anti-rationalist, vitalist and organic connected to supposed proto-romantics, like Vico or Hamann (see Berlin, 1973, 2013). According to Berlin, this Counter-Enlightenment consisted of a ‘family of political and moral conceptions … based on the defiant rejection of the central thesis of the Enlightenment, according to which what is true, or right, or good, or beautiful, can be shown to be valid for all men by the correct interpretation of objective methods of discovery and interpretation, open to anyone to use and verify’ (Berlin, 1990: 19). As Berlin (1973: 19-20) stated: “The rejection of the central principles of the Enlightenment universality, objectivity, rationality, and the capacity to provide permanent solutions to all genuine problems of life or thought, and (not less important) accessibility of rational methods to any thinker armed with adequate powers of observation and logical thinking – occurred in various forms, conservative or liberal, reactionary or revolutionary, depending on which systematic order was being attacked…. In all cases the organisation of life by the application of rational or scientific methods, any form of regimentation or conscription of men for utilitarian ends or organised happiness, was regarded as the philistine enemy.” Critics found little historical evidence for what they called Berlin’s essentialist dichotomy between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment as two coherent and unchanging traditions (Mali and Wokler, 2003). Overall, “modernity is inherently multiple. It comes in different blends, including Enlightened, non-Enlightened and Counter-Enlightened currents” (Lok & van Eijnatten, 2019: 415). This multiple interpretation includes for Lok and van Eijnatten also a global Counter-Enlightenment that is existing in different times and places. “The Enlightened, liberal, progressive modernity so widely applauded as the way upwards and forwards had failed to deliver; it could never deliver because it was unable to meet the deepest spiritual needs and time-tested values of mankind, the principles, tenets, customs and ethical precepts embedded in age-old civilizations...” (ibid 417). There has been a ‘flight from reason’ manifesting in dark and occult counter-movements to enlightenment (Webb 1971, 1976, 2009). Even efforts to eradicate the irrational appear as being themselves irrational, and often manifesting a disclosure in time of foreclosure (Smith, 2019). There was a rationality of irrationality in connection to enthusiasm especially in late enlightenment (Conrad, 2008). See also Nick Land’s ‘The Dark Enlightenment’, that – as part of accelerationism – opposes egalitarianism, incorporates explicitly racist views and is sometimes associated with the alt-right or other right-wing movements. http://www.thedarkenlightenment.com/the-dark-enlightenment-bynick-land/ Millgrams (2015) sees a great endarkenment related to our age of hyperspecialization and entrenched in disciplinary conformity. Scholars and their scientific work are becoming more narrow, self-contained, and disintegrated as they don’t know and don’t care about anything other than their own tiny field, reviewing each other’s papers and training each other’s students to behave in the same fashion. All this results into deterioration of creative, integrated, systemic and critical thinking in the academic world, a corruption of scientific integrity by a slow, degenerative process of endarkening. Nikos Kazantzakis: “The real meaning of enlightenment is to gaze with undimmed eyes on all darkness.”

\(^{11}\) For example those that take light as a major metaphysical symbol, equating with spirit and its manifestation as intellect, virtue, morality, healing both physical and spiritual, and other positive set values or traditional political orientations like socialist versus liberalist worldviews.
enclosing turmoil in socio-cultural, and political cultures and dominance of non-integrative economic imperatives? And, how to respond to the challenges for transforming from an unsustainable Anthropocene towards a more sustainable wiser ‘Ecoscene’ (Küpers, 2020)?

For responding to all these quests and questions as well as diving in an uplifting way deeper into the reasons and responses to the current state of affairs and actual and acute developments, it makes sense to learn from different positions or contentious perspectives and connecting them to our times and futures to come.

In order to explore the same, the following invites you, dear reader, in the form of an alternative textual/contextual narrative practice, first to a thought experiment and then to enter a multi-layered dia- or metalogue.12

12 Rather than constructing separate, fixed or closed individual-based definitions of realities or rational-lines of argument, such poly-logical practice of a metalogue (see Bateson 1972; Bateson & Bateson, 1988) open up to a living relationality and possibilities of a spiraling, disclosing and co-emerging flows. Polyphonic voices, individually and interwoven in an arguing chorus as a kind of aesthetics of (re-) presentation. Such presentational practices uncover and allow other modes of communication, including felt sensitivities, imaginative sounds, visual associations etc. Accordingly, such dia- and/or poly-loguing is opening for a poly-sensuous interplaying of tasted, gestured, and viewed expressions thus multi-voiced con-versation that is a living narrative, which includes a diversity of points of standing and moving. Not aiming for a single vision or finalizable version, these inter-exchanges are an array of juxta-positioning reasons for or concerns about and perspectives on various angles. In terms of epistemology, this implies that if there is any truth to be found or better to say co-created, it happens through a multitude of simultaneous expressions with their quests and questions, engagements and commitments. This kind of heteroglossia can help to question, test and contest our own and others’ ideas, those established and those merging or to be developed. It is through the plurality of our consciousness, inter-relationships and hybridised negotiations that the potential can be actualized or “actuated.” In particular, these are possibilities of ‘trans-individualistic’, post-entitative and more integral understandings of and repertoires for creative interpretations and enactments. As a writing modality, this form, much like a sounding board opens up for complexity, ambiguity, and emotional resonance. Such resonance comes from making the words – for lack of a better word – embody what they are about and make them breathe experience. Hopefully, the listening reader can relate to those or invoke in them likewise sensory experiences that may lead to a more nuanced understanding, and invite them to extend the text, or relate to their life-worldly con-texts. By practicing a dialogue as a “discipline of collective inquiry” (Isaacs, 1996) or co-inquiry (Heron, 1996), you the reader(s) are thus invited to open-up to discover or co-create inter-pretations of what appears as “real”, relevant or insightful. Listening to multiple voices, incarnated in presences of different persons and propelled contents, allows participatory witnessing an embodied relational logic and enacting an inter-practice in praxis that is sensitive for the oblique, meanings between lines and alluded hints, revealing other ways of being and becoming. As active audience or engaged readers of this concert of voices, we are becoming listeners, and perhaps are provoked to comments or to ask possible questions, state contestations or find other forms to contribute with our own ideas. This can lead to further weaving the con-textures or advancing the ongoing, unfolding fluid disourses to emerge. Please feel invited to share your responses, reflections or imaginations by writing, dabbling, drawing or expressing them and, if you like, forward them to the author for co-creating a hyper-contextual repository: mail@wendelinkuepers.eu. The idea is to set up a web forum or blogging space on-line, where all comments will be gathered, as a forwarding feedback and continuation of an ongoing inter-involving conversation…
Imagine enlightened men, who meet, and are having conversations about events in 21 century and the status actual en-darkening reality and still potential ‘en-lightening’ wisdom therein. The chosen personalities – representing selectively different and contested positions – in the following are Horace, Kant, Nietzsche, Foucault, Habermas and Merleau-Ponty and some more. This conversation does not include Aristotle and only implicitly refers to the Aristotelian tradition of phrónētic wisdom (see Küpers 2013), nor indigenous and non-Western wisdom traditions in poly-cultural world (see Intezari, et al. 2020).

The first one, Horace was an antique Roman poet, then Kant, who was the philosopher of Enlightenment and the post-Enlightenment philosopher Nietzsche as well as then also Foucault as post-structuralist/postmodern scholar, focusing on power and conflict and Habermas as representative of the unfinished project of modernity as well as finally Merleau-Ponty as post-Cartesian philosopher of the body and embodiment.

You might ask: What do these so unalike personalities with their very different ways of feeling, thinking, speaking and writings in quite different languages have in common? Well,  

13 Just a word on words and language: The conversation you are going to listen to uses English as ‘lingua franca’. For many of those who speak here this is not their mother tongue. Using another language and any language at all is, at one and the same time, enabling and limiting, liberating from the confines of our own spoken tongues and restrictive and constraining by using a foreign lexicon and its loss of subtleties and cultural qualities in translation. Speaking about translation, another related challenge concerns the transference of ideas of distant and different times and contexts to our world today and for a future to come. All what was presented here, all the expressions of representations were done in ways the author understood and understands them provisionally, informed and related to the world arounds him. Correspondingly, the same might be true for you as a reader who interprets and uses in your own ways. Overall, while questioning an unreflexive use and hegemony of English in academic practices, what would be wise!, is to become more imaginative, inventive and experimental in performing multilingual forms of expressions (Steyaert & Janssens, 2013), and making the multiplicity and linguistic repertoires involved visible or hearable, moving towards a Cosmopolitan Multilingual Franca approach (Janssens & Steyaert, 2017).

14 As these authors and their writings manifest, the courage to use reason and wisdom as well as the project of enlightenment are not unified on a single set of doctrines, but serve a diverse set of ends, a pluralized interpretation – ranging from cosmopolitan ‘radical’ enlightenment to various, more conservative, national enlightenments (Israel, 2001) – as well as Enlightenment as transfiguration (Verklärung) of reason and also Counter-Enlightenment (Mali & Wokler, 2003). However the unrestricted definition of Enlightenment, or its alternative, the admission that there were multiple Enlightenments, has rendered the subject so blurred and indeterminate that it is impossible to reach any assessment of its historical significance (Robertson, 2003: 82). With Robertson, the Enlightenment for which a case is made here is one, which existed as historical phenomena, rather than an artificial philosophical construct. It is not an Enlightenment which can be held directly responsible for the horrors, any more than for the advances, of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; far too much history lies in between. But as a specific intellectual movement of the eighteenth century, it is an Enlightenment which can be matched against the conditions which faced it in its own time. (ibid, p. 82). Accordingly, Robertson (2003) proposed that the intellectual content of the Enlightenment is to be found in its “commitment to understanding, and hence to advancing, the causes and conditions of human betterment in this world” (ibid, p. 78). He emphasized the following three concerns as central to the Enlightenment’s efforts to understand the causes and conditions of human betterment: (a) the systematic study of human nature; (b) inquiries into the causes of “material betterment, the subject matter of political economy”; and (c) more
they all have thought about the role of reason and wisdom in and for their time and beyond. Correspondingly, they have all written programmatic essays that are calling and processing the status of enlightenment and daring to know, respectively to become wise! Some of these voices and reports may appear as hopelessly outdated historical accounts, others may appear as revealing in being revisited others promising or providing inspiration for us today and a future to come ….

Let us enter and ‘zoom’ into the symposium and listen to the ongoing conversations of this meeting of embodied minds as a co-inquiring process of various converging but also diverging stances and dialectical dances.

Stage: The “dramatis personæ” are gathering at a round table in a beautiful room with natural light, and a view to the cultivated and wild nature around, designed for having such a symposium. There is an ongoing informal conversation, as some of the participants know each other, while others are introducing each other, and again some are casting suspicious glances or remain in silence. Some refreshing drinks and light food are offered, and an overall relaxed atmosphere pervades the gathering.

After some time, the facilitator rings a mindfulness bell and as the participants have found their place he commences speaking:

Facilitator: Welcome everybody to this symposium! We have gathered here for a conversation about what ‘sapere aude,’ daring to know and becoming wise, meant in the past and may mean today and a future to come. This gathering aspires to revisit and reflect critically the meaning of ‘Enlightenment’ in and for a time in which enlightening orientations seem to be overshadowed by various forms of a multiple crisis and unwise realities, economically, socio-culturally, politically.

First, I would like to thank you all for that you have accepted the invitation for what promises to become an extra-ordinary event. Timely, we will move through time, chronologically but also throughout with links to the present. Furthermore, an interjecting observer is guiding us and I as a facilitator will try to moderate the discussion.

Salve Horace, can I ask you as pioneering thinker who coined the term, to share your understanding of sapere aude and its context and also why its practice, thus wisdom seems to be not present or event lost in our crisis-driven time today? What would you recommend to us today?

general investigations, beyond the more specific concerns of political economy, with the historical progress of society “from ‘barbarism’ to ‘refinement’ or ‘civilization’” (ibid p. 78). Enlightenment was an actual historically situated enlightening activity, especially; the framing of sciences of human nature, political economy, and a historical development, but also a construct relevant for us and a future to come.

15 Sapere aude” (Horaz/Horatius, 20 BC/ Epistulae 1,2,40)
„Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung“ / “Answering the Question: What Is Enlightenment?” (Kant, 1784, 1999),
“Qu’est-ce que la critique? / “What is Critique?” (Foucault, 1978, 2007),
“Qu’est-ce que les Lumières?/ “What is Enlightenment?” (Foucault, 1984, 1997),
“Theory of Communicative Action” & “The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity” (Habermas, 1990)
Horace: Gratias vobis ago, for the invitation here! Dear wisdom-loving friends (philosophoi), as you know, I have been concerned for the public welfare and the need for returning to early Roman standards of morality after those cruel periods of bloody decadence, that I experienced. And it is not only me, as I am speaking and echoing the aspirations of a war-weary society at large. Accordingly, I warn you not to fall into a retro-regressive, degenerative and even decadent state-of-affairs, characterized by intrigue, conspiracy, demagoguery, and vain and fierce ambitions and bloody civil unrest …

You ask: Why is there not more reasonable processing and acting in accordance with reason (akrasia), when facing the challenges of your crisis today? Well, you know your situation reminds me of what I experienced during my life in late-Roman time with its paralysing politics. In that context, I called for daring to know and to begin again. For me to begin is already to be halfway. Get your-self going with efforts and properly being underway is what matters. Dare to know, begin! And dare to begin is to know qualified as daring to become wise! How to do so? Well with elegance in simplicity (simplex munditis) and perhaps sometimes even being nobly untruthful (splendide mendax).

But never forget: carpe diem: be in and enjoy the moment, thus make the best use of your day and night. This focus on the now does not mean to ignore the future. Rather it is not to trust that everything is going to fall into place for you, but that you need taking action for the coming. In other words, be mindfully present and to cultivate what is called a Stoic and Epicurean sentiment and practice!

Stoics: Yes, using one's mind to understand and resonate with the natural world helps accepting the moment as it presents itself. But for us, all this means not allowing oneself to be controlled by the desires for pleasure, nor the fear of pain. Against your misinterpretation of our approach today, being wise for us does not seek to extinguish emotions and passions of anguish or suffering. Rather, we need to liberate ourselves from and transform what affects us - what you may call sublimate – by resolute exercises (askesis) of self-discipline. And this needs to be employed by methods of logic and reflection that enable developing clear judgment and inner calm.…

Epictetus: This helps to realise that not things, but opinions about things, trouble you and all men. Test and assess all impressions by asking yourself: ‘Is this something that is, or is not, in my control?’ And if it’s not one of the things that you control, be ready to realise: ‘Then it’s none of my concern.’ Review then your emotional responses, for example. What made you angry? What
nagging fear continues to wear at you? To whom do you have antipathy? What other negative emotions are you experiencing and why? To what inappropriate impression have you assented? What form of being virtuous and virtuoso have you lacked to respond impulsively and to allow this disharmony into your “inner citadel”? Thus, take a moment and deep breath before responding, preserve your serenity and remain above the fray.

**Stoics:** Thereby, we can maintain equanimity in the face of life's highs and lows as well as to cultivate modesty. Thus, this self-mastery is not about repressing feelings, but about becoming emotionally resilient to misfortune and having eu-pathos and perpetual tranquillity, while being one with the workings of nature and fate as well as the cycles of existences and the divine orders of the pulsating universes. Thereby you can cope with any tragedies and all suffering and cultivate a life of eudemonia.

**Facilitator:** So it is all about learning to think clearly, consistently and see things as they really are in a controlled way. Then we can make good choices from smallest everyday actions - including those about where to focus our time and energy - to the biggest decisions of your life? As much as I understand your humble program of being happy with what you have, but how do you find a sense of inner peace, while also dealing with other people not with anger but with compassion and in a democratic way.

**Hierocles:** One must consider that, in a certain way, one's brothers are parts of oneself, just as my eyes are parts of me and so too my legs and hands and the rest.

**Stoic Zeno:** Let us gather under the shade of the Stoa porch (poikile) in the public space (Socrates: or market place) of our polis, where anyone can listen and join in the debate. For us certain and true knowledge (episteme), can be attained only by verifying the conviction with the expertise of one's peers and the collective judgment of humankind. And for us striving to become citizen of the world external differences such as rank and wealth are of no importance in our social relationships.

**Diogenes:** In this sense, I am also a kosmopolitês as that is where I come from …

**Stoics:** To get a more objective perspective, it’s helpful to take a step back and view an issue as if you were a disinterested, but sympathetic, 3rd party. Importantly, our stoicism is not a religion, but is compatible with different faiths and religious traditions. There is room for different interpretations and different levels of philosophical commitment.

**Seneca:** Organise your Self, including knowing your strengths and weaknesses, handling your negative emotions while maintaining spaces to form reasoned responses and considering what you would call in your time now contingency planning, and repurposing!

**Irvine:** Mastering one's self is being engaged in the only moment where we exist, this one, while trying to understand the ways things are and living modestly, that is program of a good life via an ‘Art of stoic joy’ (2009).

**Epicure:** Indeed, we need to gain knowledge of the workings of the world, while we limit our desires in a simple life to attain a state of tranquillity and freedom from disturbance, or
imperturbability (*ataraxia*) as well as freedom from fear as well as an absence of bodily pain (*aponia*), independence (*autarkeia*), good disposition (*euthumia*) and so forth… Apropos ’joy’: But what is also important indeed is to cultivate the presence of intrinsic pleasure without denying its life-enhancing qualities.

*Voice from off-stage Marx:* Epicurus is the ‘greatest representative of the Greek enlightenment’ as I have shown in my dissertation on the difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature.

*Lucretius*: *nodding in agreement* Yes, how essential are those quiet, long-lasting and never cloying pleasures and the appreciation of embraced natural beauty gained by contemplative pursuits in the spirit of the wise Epicurus. This even more in those times of violent civil wars, political assassinations, massacres, revolts, conspiracies, mass executions, and social and economic chaos, a world of anxiety and turmoil that I have experienced with cities decayed, trade declined, and an anxious populace scanned the horizon for barbarian armies.

My life has taught me – as expressed in my book ‘On the Nature of Things’ – that there is no hope of bribing or appeasing the gods, no place for religious fanaticism, no call for ascetic self-denial, no justification for dreams of limitless power or perfect security, no rationale for wars of conquest or self-aggrandizement. And for you urgently to relearn is also that there is no reason to set humans apart from other animals thus that there is and cannot be a triumphing over nature. Rather, human beings should conquer their fears, accept the fact that they themselves and all the things they encounter are transitory.

*Seneca and Montaigne*: That is another reason why a wise life is learning to die!

*Lucretius*: … and embrace the refined phenomenal qualities and the pleasures of this incarnation in this very material world.¹⁶

*Interjecting voice from contemporary time*

*Roy Scranton*: Today now it is learning to die not as individuals, but as a civilization. in the dire so-called Anthropocene as that period of a large-scale die-off in the biosphere and global ecological collapse that’s already well underway, caused by and ending the global capitalist civilization as we know it, within decades and the possible extinction of the human and other species within centuries. But there is a New Enlightenment possible: Through interrupting social circuits of fear and reaction, looking deep into the face of death, and open up a human relationship to the universe in which we might live not as parasitic consumers, but as co-creators—a relationship in which we might learn to live as the very light from which all our power ultimately flows. Our future will depend on our ability to confront it not with panic, outrage, or denial, but with patience, reflection, and love (2016).

¹⁶*Bergson*: Lucretius you are not only a genial poet, but also an inspired and singularly original thinker. We need to see the world sub specie duratioinis, i.e., as enduring (see Ansell-Pearson, 2018).

*Santayana*: I praise you Lucretius as true creator of scientific materialism and the real founder of Epicureanism. Certainly in an Orphic spirit sings Hölderlin; “For we are a conversation and have been able to hear from one another…” Has humanity learned; but soon [we] will be song!” “Seit ein Gespräch wir sind und hören von einander, Erfahren der Mensch; bald sind [wir] aber Gesang” (Hölderlin, 1975–2008, FHA VIII, 643).
**Epicureans:** We need the higher art of life! Cultivating an art of living in our sense is the opposite of what is connoted to our philosophy, misunderstood as a self-indulgent hedonistic, luxurious pleasure-seeking affair. On the contrary, to such superficial life, daring to know and pursuing a serene elevation of refined sensual and intellectual pleasures and a tranquillity of body and mind constitute a flourishing happiness in its highest form.

**Epicur:** Indeed: it is better to abstain from coarse or trivial pleasures if they prevent our enjoyment of richer, more satisfying ones...And this all is best celebrated in a beautiful garden with a circle of friends, being open to both slaves and women as part of a community for joint philosophising, but also growing our own food: going against the mores of the time!

Why with friends? Well because of all the things which wisdom has contrived that contribute to a blessed life; none is more important, and more fruitful, than genuine friendship. In such circle of friends everyone can self-improve, experience mutual admonition and gentle correction in the ethos of goodwill, respect, frankness, and gratitude as well as with an openness and moderation in all things.

For this kind of life, we have to shun politics and public affairs because it could lead to frustrations and ambitions, including lust for power or a desire for vain fame, all in vain. Please hear me well: ‘do not get involved in political life’! Such undertakings cause mental disquiet and disturbance and thus can directly conflict with our epicurean pursuit for peace of mind and eudaemonia as well as lived virtues. Only indirectly by our alternative ways of organising communities, promoting practices – such as justice, friendship, and economic co-operation – that are genuinely useful to people’s needs and eliminating all that promotes false conceptions of values and places our happiness in danger we may inspire others to create their ways of life and modes of virtuous communities or societies.

**Christian Theologian and Priest:** Speaking about virtues, reinterpreted in religious form and opposed to vice, our theology provided an explanation for the chaos of the Dark Ages. And we, with help of our almighty God, know the way back into light, provided only by the church. For us, human beings are by nature corrupt, sinful inheritors of Adam and Eve, and therefore deserve every miserable catastrophe that befell them. God cared about human beings, just as a father cared about his wayward children, and the sign of that care was anger. It is only through pain and punishment and even then only some pious faithful believers in Christ as the incarnation of God, the creator can find the narrow gate to salvation and see the divine light. Augustine: Again it is our Christian doctrine of salvation and damnation that offers human existence hope for an eternal happiness out of the misery and suffering of the ‘interim’ world.

**Petrarch:** No, I do not need you priest and dogmatic lessons. I experienced delight and found enlightenment on Mont Ventoux that I climbed for pleasure alone and could return then descending to the valley of the soul with my inward eye upon myself. Afterwards I could then travel on as an international scholar and singing poet-diplomat, retreating to contemplate on enlightenment of humanism that was than mediating the flowering of what you call Renaissance, the re-birth of the lift of antiquity.
Observer: Now we have listened to representatives from ancient times. We learned about the difference between Stoic focus on cultivating life, advocating debate in public spheres and becoming cosmo-political versus Epicurean exercises or ‘askesis’ of refining private pleasures with friends, while shunning politics as well as various tensions between religious and secular orientations!

Hadot: We need to revive the existential dimension of (ancient) philosophy today as therapeutic, transformative way of life (manière de vivre!). Let us rescue the synthetic nature of wisdom by which practical skill, rational knowledge, political acumen, artistic expertise and mystical experience are different facets of the same! I’m very much convinced that it is possible for modern man to live, not as a sage (sophos), but as a practitioner of the ever-fragile exercise of wisdom (1995, 211). But he needs relearning recognizing imaginatively himself as all things in a perpetual state of transformation or metamorphosis, while being part of the Whole and elevating to cosmic consciousness, thinking and acting in a universal perspective.17

Observer: Next, we will listen into a continuation and furthering of discourses in ‘modern times’ where the advocacy of a reason-based Enlightenment is voiced by Kant that in turn is provoking a radical critique and counter-orientation expressed by Nietzsche.

Kant: Dear Horace and Stoic, respectively Epicurean friends! I still resonate with some of your orientation and agree with your intentional thrust, but cannot accept your positions that appear to me as outdated approaches as well as the forms of operation you suggest and status of reason you presuppose!

17 The absence cosmos and cosmic Whole (and considering the underlying mysticism) and the other in the technologies of the (politically) caring relational understood self in Foucault and the insufficiency of his program of an aesthetics of existence as an ethical model for the present as well as some of his philological deficits, e.g. a mistaken emphasis on pleasure, are reasons why Hadot criticized him (But see: Testa 2020). Hadot argues that two broad attitudes have dominated our understanding of nature over the millennia, each of them with a god to represent it. The first is the Promethean, the second the Orphic. The first Promethean one is voluntarist and grasping, seeking to impose cultural forms on nature the better to understand and control it and this conception shows up in the history of both magic and mechanics. The second Orphic one, by contrast, is essentially cautious and as perspective is more aesthetic, contemplative and disinterested compared to the Promethean. Unlike the latter, it seeks out and is content to abide in nature’s irreducible mystery and wildness. Both approaches, says Hadot, have as their goal the defense of humanity’s “vital interests” (Hadot 2006: 317).
I am using your motto *sapere aude* in my answering of the quest and question of what Enlightenment is, responding to a critical inquiry by a master free-mason, namely: „Was ist Aufklärung?“ (1783). Importantly, this Aufklärung does not only characterize the period of my lifetime. As was the spirit of the time, the Zeitgeist, I am designating ‘Aufklärung’ as something each reasonable man can pursue, rather than merely an age in which one is living. You know ‘aufklären’ literally means to illuminate and to clear up. Accordingly, I am using this – itself wise – leitmotif for developing my theories of the application of Reason – yes written with capital letters – in the public sphere of all human affairs.

**Facilitator:** What does Enlightenment mean for you then?

**Kant:** For me, Enlightenment is man's departure and emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance (Kant, 1996: 58), The German word for immaturity, ‘Unmündigkeit’ means not having attained age of majority or legal adulthood. ‘Unmündig’ also means dependent or unfree, and another translation is tutelage or ‘non-age’ (the condition of not [being] of age). My moral philosophy is centred on the concept of autonomy, and here I distinguish between a person who is intellectually autonomous and one who keeps himself in an intellectually heteronomous, i.e., dependent and immature status. And this very unenlightened immaturity is self-imposed if its cause lies not in lack of knowledge and understanding, but lack of resolve and indecision, and thus lack of courage to use one's own mind and reasoning without another's guidance.

**Facilitator:** What is needed beyond courage and determination?

**Kant:** Enlightenment not only requires courage! What is needed is ‘orientation in thinking’ and giving direction of thought that is to reflect on what basis does our thought path determine the way we act.

**Cassirer:** Indeed enlightenment is a *Denkform* a form of thought/reason (1951, Renz 2020)!

**Kant:** Thus, we need to enquire into the conditions necessary for the possibility of knowledge as well as morality and wisdom. Likewise, what is called for are institutional changes and a corresponding ‘carrying’ machinery and institutions, like my envisioned cosmopolitical League of Nations, or ‘Völkerbund’, which became the United Nation!

So you see: The Enlightenment program is a universal one of rationality, equality and practical morality as well as inner autonomy and political authority, all based on private and public use of reasoning, preparing eternal peace.

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18 In my essay ‘Perpetual Peace’ (1795, 2016), I proposed a peace program to be implemented by governments while demanding a commitment between states and organizing peace (as teleological goal of history) as contract by following these principles: “The civil constitution of each state shall be republican” and “The law of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states” as well as that “The rights of men, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality” (ius cosmopoliticum).
Nietzsche: And it is that very spirit of Aufklärung that is an essential step into decline, ending in passive nihilism, starting with the French Revolution, Aufstand a rebellion of slaves, a victory of egalitarianism of the weak. What we need is re-evaluative transformation of all values. And it is the will towards power as driving force that deconstructs existing values and raises itself as highest value. With the passing of the old moral, after the remaining death of God and Gods killed by us and our Enlightenment! (A greatness of a deed perhaps too great for us?), we need to give a different meaning, thus to lay a new significance into what became meaningless.

Your rationality-based enlightenment appears to me as an arrogant intellectual ethos that made troubling universal assertions about the nature of human existence, knowledge and society. The pious faith of Descartes, and his doubtful belief in rational autonomy, the revolutionary fantasist and moral fanatic Rousseau and his social contract and egalitarian politics of general will, you Kant, misunderstood reason, categorical imperative and universalistic morality as well as secularised subterranean Christianity in your values, but also Mills utilitarianism and ideas about freedom and later then the beliefs of Darwin and Spencer an others in progress, I have a disgust for the demagogic traps for these ideas of ‘enlightenment’ for being cosy and for their plebeian familiarity.

Facilitator: What do you think about the philosophical base of Enlightenment and in particular the reasonable autonomous self?

Nietzsche: All those claims of Cartesian and Kantian metaphysics and epistemologies cannot hold. Cogito is after all only a word, a grammatical custom and its use a linguistic trick. You see, the Cartesian method of universal doubt and Kantian quasi-theological prejudices of invented fictions of transcendental ideals for justifying a moral scheme, are all based on an unconscious dogmatism. All of them are actually an impediment to knowledge and opposed to life, precluding a joyous science and perspectivist approach. We need an autonomy beyond good and evil, defined not in terms of moral laws, but in terms of character and nobility, enacting a creative will that engenders the new that transgresses reason itself.

Facilitator: On what do you how lay the foundation for wisdom that can serve us well also in the 21 century?

Nietzsche: For me, before all, it is the Leib (Body) is the great reason and wisdom. And this very ‘bodied’ reason becomes a function of the other, the a-rational, as part of an intensified life. I tell you, there is more sagacity in thy body than in thy best knowledge. Again, in the corporeal is a real and great sagacity, a plurality with one sense... Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brothers, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage, whose name is self. In your body s/he dwells; s/he is your body.
Kant: No, not the irrational body, but the Reason – yes with capital letter – is the source of all knowledge and wisdom! We need to keep reason ‘pure’ from merely contingent bodily and social influences. It is the reason-based Enlightenment that liberates us from passions and from authority and authoritarianism by making use of our rationality and knowledge that can be understood by others, who are equally rational beings, thus open the possibility for universalisation.19

Facilitator: Why then, do unenlightened politician and populists as well as extremists and neo authoritarian regimes find such influential followership in our contemporary world?

Kant: Perhaps for similar reasons as the avaricious Sophists with their specious and rhetorical practice using also fallacious and deceptive arguments gained currency before in Greek and Roman times. I do not think, like the elitist Plato seems to be inclined that it is because people were and are too stupid to see through them. Rather, the sophists had been influential and ‘successful’, because they met with the expectations that a majority of debarred and frustrated people had, with regard to the needs and wishes they wanted to be fulfilled.

Likewise, radical forms of doubting scepticism that deny that knowledge or rational belief is possible feed into populist power, although I learned a lot from the mitigated scepticism by Hume. While he was right to claim that we cannot strictly know any of the existence of God, the soul, free will, etc. our moral experience entitles us to believe in them.

Facilitator: What about ordinary humans? How can moral philosophy help for our behaviour? What power has Aufklärung for humanity today?

Kant: Admittedly, as an academic, I was tempted to be sceptical about the abilities of ‘ordinary’ human beings, but reading Rousseau had taught me that morality was not the exclusive field of expertise of philosophers. Human beings act morally quite independently of philosophers’ thinking about it. What moral philosophy can do is help to achieve clarity about what motivates us in our moral behaviour and can give us reasons and confidence. This is what the critical method is designed to do in the field of ethics and

19 Gerhardt: As important as it is to take the departure of the body, there is the need for moving beyond the same and developing the organisation of reason which enables also a social connection through mutual communication and evaluation out of an individual-including, liberal, but ultimately public consciousness (“homo publicus”). And as "animal sociale sive rationale" humans have the ability to rule themselves normatively, thus to act according to reasons that have to be justified factually and societally. Yes he can play, say not and create! “homo ludens, homo negans et homo creator” (2019).
And I discussed with my friends that Aufklärung carries the power to make humanity more mature, also today.

**Facilitator:** Would you say that we are living in an actual or potentially enlightened age?

**Kant:** Again, my and your age was and is one of enlightenment, by which a process of emancipation has become possible – in my days also because of the enlightened monarch King Frederick, who you call ‘the Great’. But, I concede, it is not an enlightened age yet. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the progress towards a full Enlightenment is humankind’s final coming of age, the cultivation of the human consciousness from an immature and dogmatic state of

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20 While the first one focusing on ‘Theoretical Reason’ was dealing with questions concerning the foundations and extent of human knowledge, thus a critique of the pretensions of pure theoretical reason to attain metaphysical truths beyond the ken of applied theoretical reason. The conclusion was that pure theoretical reason must be restrained, because it produces confused arguments when applied outside of its appropriate sphere. The second one of ‘Practical Reason’ defended that (theoretical) reason is capable of grounding behavior superior to that grounded by desire-based practical reasoning, thus is actually a critique, of pretensions of applied practical reason. Practical reason is the faculty for determining the will, which operates by applying a general principle of action to one's particular situation. And here wisdom in particular is concerned with the practical end of humans’ existence on earth. (see also Rowley & Slack, 2009). Pure practical reason – as opposite of impure or sensibly determined practical reason – that drives actions that are good in themselves without any sense dependent incentives, must not be restrained, in fact, but cultivated. Thus, how can the principles of practical reason be brought to bear on real life (via moral education) how can we make people live and act morally. Reason, common to all human beings, must be properly controlled: Reason itself is not an unqualified good but must be employed critically to lead to moral principles. Likewise, people can understand the moral law without the aid of organised religion. There is an inherent tension between morality and religion because there is a danger that people may act morally not because it is the right thing to do but because their religion prescribes it. This would take away the value of a good act: I am convinced that we can do the right thing for the wrong reasons, which would be devoid of moral merit. Achieving desirable outcomes is not enough; moral merit lies in the right intentions that are freely willed. Freedom is the necessary ground for the existence of the moral law. In my ‘Critique of Practical Reason,’ I elaborate on ideas about how moral judgements can be made. A maxim, a moral belief, must stand the test of the ‘categorical imperative’ before it can become a moral law. Moral laws are not contingent, they are not ‘hypothetical’ imperatives, but universal principles, ‘categorical’ imperatives. Pure reason fails in the area of knowledge but comes into its own in the area of moral judgements. We can rationally figure out what to do by identifying the principle – of praxis - that lies behind a proposed course of action: What do I commit myself to by doing x? Next, we need to find out whether the principle can be a categorical imperative by asking ourselves if we could will it to be a universal law, as unbreakable as a natural law. The categorical imperative is strongly bound up with a belief in the dignity of the human individual (and ‘Perpetual Peace’ for human kind). It would be absurd to deny that all human beings are moral lawgivers, and as such merit our respect. It is therefore rational to treat them accordingly, i.e. never to simply use others for our own ends but to respect that they too have ends. In philosophy we are interested in three great questions: “What can I know?”, “What should I do?” and “What may I hope?” These three, however, can be subsumed under one great question: “What is a human being?” If making a contribution to this project is the aim of all philosophising, we must go further than talking only about knowledge and ethics. Therefore, I wrote a third Critique, the Critique of Judgement, being concerned with the areas of aesthetics and religion. After all, the question of the human being would be very inadequately answered if we didn’t for instance examine the fact that we can appreciate things from an aesthetic point of view.
ignorance is our future! But affect and passion shut out the sovereignty of reason and no human being wishes to have passion, for who wants to have himself put in chains when he can be free?

**Nietzsche:** As much as I share to a certain attach your attack on superstition, religious dogmatism, outmoded forms of governance and resonate with some of your ideas of liberation (/in my middle period (late-1870s to early 1880s), your disembodied life-alienating Aufklärung will never be the one I call for to be enacted experimentally and artfully by an avant-garde of free spirits!

A life without genuine passions, life is rigidified and the world reduced to simply ‘quantity and line and law and nonsense. And if this is all that existed, life would be turned into something strictly mechanical, automatic, predictable, regular, and even boring. We need learn loving, elevating, gilding, cultivating, sublimating and singing our passions, transmuting passions (*Leidenschaften*) into joys (*Freudenschaften*)! Instead of obedience for predetermined ventures, other-worldly escape, or metaphysically defined purity, we need free adventures towards the indefinite, this-worldly exploration, allowing the discovery of the alloyed and the possible!

*Nietzsche getting up and moving, while shaking head, shivering with his body, leaving the room for traveling to the ‘de-lightful’ South... calling back with the voice of Zarathustra:*

**Nietzsche:** All your pseudo-enlightening morality and moralising are oppressive, punitive, and a normalizing force, poisoning genuine life and living. This moralism is a weapon of the weak ‘serving’ the decadent people and their apathetic superstitions with all their Ressentiment of being the last men of this nihilistic age unable to build and act upon a self-actualized ethos!

**Facilitator:** What is truth and what to live for then?

**Nietzsche:** The truth to live for is one of the new *Übermenschen*, the overcoming man, who is more than human and who remains faithful to the earth. Once again: The human is something that must be overcome: and for that reason you must love your virtues as being themselves sublimated – i.e. rising to a limit or upper threshold – transfigured passions and expression of your unique self-cultivated character dedicated to overcoming as practice of wisdom – for you will perish by them.

Hear this naked truth: And you wise and knowing ones, you would flee from the solar-glow of the wisdom in which the overman joyfully bathes his nakedness and then walks and dances with light feet and in a non-fanatical mode beyond human, all too human, unintelligent good and evil! Let us – like incarnated in Epicurus who has been alive in all ages and lives now, allow wisdom to assume bodily form (as I outlined in ‘Human All too Human’ II 224) a poiesis that enables the individual to negotiate and affirm the most demanding and challenging questions of existence! Overall: The secret of realizing the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is to live dangerously!

**Lewis Call:** *shouting back to him in a post-anarchist voice:* The irony of your relationship Nietzsche with the Enlightenment, is that despite your virulent and profound critique of its rationality, its misunderstanding of the individual, its politics and its science and moral schemes, you retained its faith in progress and its desire to construct a better world, thus an utopian project.
that retained enlightened ideas. However, yes, you were in favour to create some kind of modified or transformed Enlightenment. Your attacks of the conventional Enlightenment, was done so in the name of a project that is in its goals and in many of its methods, fundamentally enlightened. Isn’t for you the Übermensch or Overman – as neo-aristocratic, this-worldly figure of an avant-garde – representing the fulfilment of a different but, profoundly ‘enlightened’ project”? And for you this is realised by facing and affirming willingly, the most abysmal thought that is the eternal recurrence of everything and amor fati or love of one's destiny, passionately beyond endurance and fatalism. While this affirming might include suffering, pain and evil, it allows creating the meaning of the earth anew, and faithing into a future, yet to come. Importantly, for you this fate-loving overman does not mindlessly accept the world fatally with all its sorrow. Rather, the true power of the one, who overcomes lies in his or her ability to choose and make decisions, as s/he is able to affirm only that which is worthy of being affirmed (2002).

**Hegel:** Wait, wait, I think we need to radicalise your philosophy Kant, through understanding an absolute as all-encompassing, self-realizing spirit that includes otherness. Enlightenment reason (Verstand) with its insistence on abstract opposition had to be integrated into a more comprehensive, speculative, form of reason (Vernunft) of absolute knowledge as Weltgeist that could even unify the opposition between unity and difference. This allows us to think dialectically of what Enlightenment reason excluded as other than reason, as reason's own other. With this transformation of the Christian eschatology into Absolute Spirit, the ‘cunning of reason’ into the history helps to rationally comprehend that all tragedy and suffering, are part of the progression of the Spirit.21

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21 **Critchley:** Well dear Hegel (and Marx) tragedy is neither progressive as you thought or regressive as others would have it, but retains an ‘ambiguity’ to be reconsidered. What if we took seriously the form of thinking that we find in tragedy, and the experience of partial agency, limited autonomy, deep traumatic affect, agnostic conflict, gender confusion, political complexity, and moral ambiguity that it presents? Adopting a theatrical standpoint, in the tragedies reason is not a tool that can stabilise the contradictions of experience. Rather, tragedies are giving voice to what is contradictory, constricting, and limiting about human beings and the space between freedom and necessity. The power of tragedy as a political mode lies in its tendency to subvert the penchant for reasonable, neat plots and outcomes! It confronts us with the unknown forces that move human being and doing in the basic activities of life, including love, war, worship and grief. Thus, it confronts us with a chaotic order of dissonant energies where multiple claims on our lives have reason on their side! Tragedy is thinking in action, thinking upon action, for the sake of action, where the action takes place offstage and is often described to us indirectly through the character of a messenger. This type of thinking, is not resignation but rather disorientation, and takes the form of a radical questioning: How do I act? What shall I do? And this in a fractured world, without the capacity for redemption and of ‘irreducible violence revealed by tragedy! (2019).
**Marx:** We need to put this spirit on its feet and realized a revolutionary practice. Yes history follows dialectic meaningful pattern of progress, but it is be found in relation to concrete material, economic conditions of human existence, in particular modes of production and labour.

**Darnton:** By the way, we need to see the material basis of literature.

**Sangmeister & Mulsow:** …including the dissemination (sic!) by erotic, pornographic novels and gossiping short stories, expressing also political critique!

**Darnton:** …. literature and the technology of its production and distribution – including roles of publishers, book dealers, traveling salesmen, and other intermediaries in cultural communication – that affected the substance and diffusion of ideas, including those of the business of Enlightenment!

**Marx:** History unfolds towards enlightenment in a rational process towards greater freedom and rationality, but through a conflict of classes over resources! You philosophers also all you of enlightenment until now have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however is to change it! We need a collective prâxis, as activity of human emancipation to overcome all forms of alienation, and reification. A from this prâxis new social formations, ideas, theories and consciousness and ultimately a post-capitalist communism as gruel enlightened way of living together in perpetual peace will emerge.

**Post-Colonialist:** Related to your critique, I still try to understand how it came about that liberty, intellectual freedom, and constitutionalism were in many or most cases actually set back, rather than advanced in 18- and 19 century Europe, and still more in the European colonial empires, despite the tremendous escalation in the justifying rhetoric of enlightenment, liberty, and reason. Disinclined to oppose actual inequalities and hostile to actual universalising proclivities, on the contrary ‘enlightened’ reforms and rhetoric were misused for crushing opposition, suppressing criticism, and furthering colonial economic exploitation often for consolidating personal control and profit.

**Historian Israel:** Well this is a known pattern: ideas promoting the interest of society as a whole came to be almost defeated by ideas buttressing the interests of the privileged few (2019)!
Observer: Hello again! Just as a brief comment from my meta-position. Again different historical voices and patterns of thinking and relating to the world by emphasizing different perspectives and orientations, as particularly expressed by Nietzsche and Kant who represent voices of that influential intellectual and philosophical movements in Europe during 17, 18, and 19 centuries.

As we have seen all those distinct and critical understandings and interpretations of Enlightenment are themselves enlightening. Revealingly, but also elusive the status and role of objective rationality, subjective relativism, logos and pathos, status of reasons, monist-unity and pluralist orientation, evolution and revolution were put and seen in quite different lights, twilights and/or shadows.

By listening to the next round, we come even closer to our times including what we used to call modernity and postmodernity, entering 20 century. These are voices from Critical Theory, expressed by Adorno, Horkheimer, and Habermas in dispute with poststructuralist/postmodernist, especially Foucault, who is even speaking with Kant directly.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno: Yes my dear Kant and Hegel as well as particular dear, lieber Karl Marx: Enlightenment, understood in the widest sense as the advance of thought, has always aimed at liberating human beings from fear and installing them as masters. Yet, the wholly enlightened earth radiates under the sign of disaster triumphant (1947: 3).

In the process of enlightenment, modern philosophy and (positivist) science, especially in the 20th century, had become over-rationalized and an instrument of technocracy. There is a continuity of the age of myth within Enlightenment and modernity. Modernity fulfils what myth always wanted to. For us, Enlightenment is a kind of totalitarianism. It is mythical fear radicalized! Enlightenment regresses to the mythology it has never been able to escape. Thus: ‘Myth is already enlightenment, and enlightenment reverts to mythology’ (1947, p. xviii). Accordingly, we need to reflect critically the “Dialectic of Enlightenment.” With this orientation, we can understand the relapse of reason into mythical irrationality that leads to the necessary distortedness of reason.
**Cassirer:** As I have experienced painfully it, the NAZIs, had combined the regressive and mystifying powers of myth with technological advances and the methodological precision made possible by the Enlightenment (1946, 282-92)

**Horkheimer and Adorno:** As propounding a rationalist dogma without capacity for self-criticism, Aufklärung was and is bearing a potential for the massively efficient and dehumanizing myth-making perfected jointly not only by NAZI propaganda but also by what we experienced and observed at the (American) 'culture industry’!

**Bredvold:** Even worse: we will see the breakdown of civilization as the result of the Kafkaesque systematizing of the modern age inaugurated by the ‘Brave New World of Enlightenment’ (1961).

**Gray:** Enlightenment's wake is the close of the Modern Age (1995)!

**Horkheimer:** And therefore, we need moving from traditional theory towards critical theorizing! And you Nietzsche as a defender of naturalized, elitist, socio-political hierarchy and stance against democratization appear as anti-emancipatory, conservative even reactionary (2011).

**Heike Schotten:** What about rereading and reinterpreting Nietzsche’s critique re-deployed from the queered perspective of the other and the oppressed? Let us openly and radically embrace immoralism in the name of emancipatory rejecting and undoing morality and its array of punitive moralisms (2009, 2018).

**Adorno:** Moreover, we need moving away from identificational and teleological approaches towards mimesis and a negative dialectic that allows a systematic critique for example of the cultural industry as one of the ideological distorted forms of capitalist society. As our life in late modernity that is an inhuman society affecting everyday behaviour, a good, honest one is no longer possible. While we live in an untrue whole, No Hegel not as you stated: „Das Wahre ist das Ganze“ (“The True is the whole“), but „Das Ganze ist das Unwahre“ (MM 55), (“The whole is the untrue”) and „Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im Falschen“ (MM 43) (“There is no right life in the wrong one“)!

Nevertheless, with my friends, like Walter Benjamin, I have had still the vision of redemption as only valid viewpoint with which to engage a deeply troubled world. By bringing the "Messianic light" of criticism on a landscape of consummate negativity, I tried and suggest to you to project negatively an image of utopia (1978 Minima Moralia), while you are facing those crisis and re-totalitarising developments again. For me late capitalism totalitarianism is an ineluctable destiny of modernity.

**Arendt:** Totalitarianism is a system of power that destroys politics. As such it is an attempt at building a monolithic, homogeneous community in which any form of pluralism and division of the social body is eliminated, thus destroying politics as realm of infra, a space of interaction between citizens, very different human beings sharing a common political sphere as equal actors (1951).
**Leftist:** We need to fight political totalitarianism with its abolition of pluralism and representative democracy, suppression of constitutional rights, concentration of power and leadership and persecution of deviances. Similar let us critique economic neoliberal totalitarianism that would lead to a reified world, in which all human and social relationships take a commodity form, and in which the market becomes a universal anthropological model and human beings are unable to conceive of their relationships outside of individualism and competition. Such a world would be totalitarian, though even dressed in anti-totalitarian clothes of market and individualism as symbols of freedom against racial and class collectivism.

**Koselleck:** We need to understand the conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*) notions of Enlightenment and related ‘modern’ guiding terms and meanings and when and how they were employed. The study of the changing semantics and pragmatics of these concepts in their social and political contexts showed that these were transformed during the transition time between circa 1750 to 1850 that I call 'saddle period'. Moving from civic-war preventing absolutism, to enlightenment, to French revolution, away from transhistorical-static to future-oriented anticipatory contents including showing a more dynamic form as politicisation, democratisation, ideologisation. Also contemporary understandings of politics have become dangerously depoliticized by Enlightenment utopianism! As I have shown in my book “critique and crisis – pathogenesis of bourgeois world” the modern that orginated out of the Geist of Enlightenment carries the seeds of its own crisis due to a critical understanding of an enlightened understanding of history.

**Foucault:** Well my dear friends, “What is Enlightenment?” – *les Lumières* – is also a question that I processed and which I propose to re-open. I took up the formulation of daring to know, and became very interested in the interpretation of Enlightenment as a modification of the preexisting relation that is linking will, authority, and the use of reason. As you all were in your time, pursuing your own philosophies, I was intrigued to think about and to find a place for the individual as supposed autonomous man and woman in my time and what is called post-structuralist and post-modern philosophy that is rejecting Enlightenment metanarratives.

**Lyotard:** nodding intensively, oui! incredulity versus totalising grand narratives, méta-récites! Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside? My answer: Avec petits récits, or more modest and localized narratives and local micro-legitimations, as a progressive politics has to be grounded in the cohabitation of a whole range of diverse and always locally legitimated language games (1984)!

**Foucault:** Connected to my thinking about critique, governmentality and resistance (“Qu’est-ce que la critique?”1978), in reopening this quest(ion)–that became my last lecture (1984) and
you may see it as a testament, I tried to come to terms with the problematic legacy of the so-called age and project of ‘Enlightenment’!

**Kant:** Monsieur Foucault, Qu’est-ce que les Lumières pour vous?

**Foucault:** Pour moi, cher Monsieur Kant, your interpretation of Enlightenment as the opposite to a state of immaturity or tutelage, specifically as incapacity to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another (heteronomy) are interesting. I find it fascinating how you suggested a connection between an excess of authority, on the one hand, and a lack of courage and resolution, on the other. You showed that the courage to know is at one and the same time the courage to recognize the limits of reason (to be seen as a play of power and truth that is of obedience and argument, acknowledging the authority of the sovereign and a self-determining subject retaining its autonomy) thus critique as art of ‘voluntary inservitude.’ I see the domains in which the contest between a state of immaturity and one of enlightenment takes place are those of the opposition of critique to governmentality, namely, religion, law, and conscience.

**Kant:** et voila! comme je dis!

**Foucault:** Turning directly towards Kant: Interestingly, for you Kant, Enlightenment has to be considered both as a process in which men participate collectively – even universally – and as an act of courage to be accomplished personally. Thus, men are at once, submissive elements part of an imposed agency and voluntary actors and of a single process. One of the most bewilderingly unsatisfactory moments in your essay is that famous and fateful distinction between the realm of obedience and the realm of reason, among other dichotomies, like duty and inclination and coercion and freedom as well as transcendence and immanence.

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22 Your obedience with this notorious nonaggression pact (tutelage of a king?!) with Frederick the Great, committing yourself to applauding the sovereign's suppression of politically subversive acts in exchange for your own intellectual liberty disappointed me. A subtle, daring, and psychologically penetrating you Kant may have enticed a sovereign hungry for a reputation, not just for overmastering puissance, but also for wisdom into an agreement in which the sovereign obliged himself to permit freedoms that the philosopher well knew might be radical in their ultimate, if not their immediate, effects. Perhaps a generous heart might argue this is why the argument conveys a powerful sense of lulling: In some ways your obedience anticipates not liberal democracy, but totalitarianism. Accordingly, Answers to the Question: ‘What Is Enlightenment?’ would then be (1) a piece of flattery thrown off by a tame intellectual; (2) a shrewd effort to circumscribe the sovereign's recognized appetite for the suppression of (especially religious) dissent; and (3) a prescient disclosure of the (totalitarian) obscenity of Enlightenment itself. Whatever it was, it did not work. When you published “Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone” nine years later, you were rebuked by the official censor and forced to apologize. This exercise of old-style power in the very heart of the Aufklärung raises once again the initial question: What is Enlightenment?
In retorting to your propositions for intellectual courage, I do not share anymore that inherent spirit of rational optimism for a fulfilling promise of reconciliation or happiness – and naïve faith that all will be good via rational reasoning and universally valid statements – that are inherent in your thought. Even more, I do reject much of those hopeful politics that were proposed by you Kant and your contemporaries and those, who followed and still follow.23

Kant: But for being enlightened, we must understand that the private use of reason renders individuals both submissive to external political authority and identifiable in terms of strictly definable social roles. This has ramifications at both the level of the individual (ethics) and that of the collective (politics). To see reason as that what must be free in its public use, but submissive in its private use, is opposite of what is ordinarily called freedom of conscience! The question we are called to ask is how can we take the use of reason the public form that it requires, how can the courage, the audacity to know be exercised in broad daylight, while individuals are obeying as scrupulously as possible? For responding to this, we need a transcendental, formalized system that allows universalization.

Foucault: For me, the criticism inherent in critical work of reason is no longer to be used in the search for formal structures with a universal value. Rather, the task of Enlightenment thinking is to make a historical investigation into those particular events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are thinking, doing and saying… How does the ‘Age of Reason’ had to construct an image of ‘Unreason’ – and treating all those ‘insane’ accordingly – against which to take an opposing stand…

Facilitator: Can you rephrase this and elaborate please?

Foucault: In other words: The ways in which we think and act or the rationalities or games of truth that we play out in diverse institutional fields have a history and should be analysed as a product of particular contingencies and struggles. Accordingly, I see a great potential in a genealogical critique to understand the constitution of subjectivity. We do not have to be for or against the Enlightenment and do not need to escape the principles of rationality. Rather, we have to accept that the Enlightenment was a powerful event or set of events that has made us, who we are. What role did power play for being free, how much was there a force to be autonomous, and what delusion of progress were all stabilising each other based on rationality?

23 The idea of a people ruled by just rulers; ethical leaders and those ‘modern’ heroes, well-educated class scholars and academically trained men of genius, spokes-persons of the Enlightenment, who are inspired by the existential dare advised in the phrase sapere aude and the idea of a transcending knower, all of this appears to me as problematic. My underlying issues and question is how do we experience our own freedom, our ability to reject as freely as we affirm possibilities for our lives, without falling prey to nihilism? Without engaging in a form of criticism that once again emphasizes limits rather than the transgression of limits and the production of possibilities? Concerning the promise of Aufklärung, in relation to expectation of autonomy, and claim for authenticity see Rosa (2010).
The problem is not rationality as such, but the form it took and can take. Such critical reconstruction is a vital resource for questioning societal, political, economic or managerial regimes as ‘common-sense’ and ideologies. We need debunking them as oppressive and limiting systems of thought that inhibit our capacity to imagine other possible ways of organizing and living.

**Kant:** What does your historical and genealogical interpretation imply, in particular in relation to status of the Reason of Enlightenment and the autonomous subject?

**Foucault:** Historio-genalogically, there is not an essential kernel of primary universal rationality and an unified rational subject that you Kant and your followers presumed to be found during the process of enlightenment. There exists multiple and historically specific forms of rationalities, due to which reason can never discover its essence or founding act. Rather, what is reasonable can only reveal different modifications in which rationalities engender one another, oppose and pursue one another as well as the elements of rational disintegration within the subject itself and within reason. Accordingly, I re-interpret sapere aude as practice of a radical, critical thinking and as a permanent reactivation of an attitude and an ethos as a critique of our and your historical era and practice of fearless speech (2001).

**Facilitator:** What does this mean for our lives? How can we dare to be wise today?

**Foucault:** For me, daring to be wise is realizing a life – in sensu of the aesthetics of existence – in which the critique of what we are can be found and unfold, while promoting possible changes and thus the practices of freedom, including restraints imposed by institutions. Such an enlightening approach applies pluralized and decentered reason to experience. This kind of criticism and lived aesthetics is thus an experiment with the possibility of going beyond forced limits, of centred modern individuality in order to reach intensifying limit-experiences. Then adopting an ‘ethos of enlightenment’ enacts experimentally a courageous practice of liberty (1984: 1388–1393) as perpetual self-elaboration and self-problematization (1984a: 1431, 1984b). And such orientation is moving towards perpetual becoming by creating our-Selves as a work of art (1983: 1211) also as one involved organizing and managing (Bardon & Josserand, 2011). Thus, rather than universal structures of reason it is all about autonomous self-government and aesthetic self-creation. Being critical against the ‘modernist’ colonialization of perception by our logical faculties and cognitivist assumptions of high modernity, such aesthetic program is about tuning in and turning toward tactile and passionate alternatives.

**Facilitator:** I understand your emphasis of ethos-oriented, aesthetic and critical orientation! But how is this approach different compared to the progressive continuity of traditional enlightenment?
Foucault: Turning the life and body of an individual into a transgressive site of a living artwork, does not merely continue your tradition of philosophical Enlightenment (Aufklärung). Rather, such undertaking transform the same into a new program of sublation (Aufhebung), which is a different one compared to what you Hegel, or you Adorno and Horkheimer thought of. Here ‘Aufhebung’ is taking and lifting up (‘sub-late’) that is exceeding the limits and decoupling of the autonomous spheres of aesthetics, ethics and politics as well as those between the supposed ‘high’, (rational, universal) and the devalued ‘low’ (passionate, bodily, historically engaged). Taking Enlightenment as the ‘on-going’ age of critique (1997: 308) calls us to ask what this means in the very historically constructed and relative present that is the neo-liberalised global world in the 21 century!

Facilitator: Speaking about present, can you share your pondering about why unenlightened politician and populists and their programs are ‘successful’ today?

Foucault: Well, in a way, this does not surprise me! I fear that it is a kind of ‘normalization’ of foolishness that will dominate more and more. I am concerned about the far-reaching implications if this all becomes a generalized 'normal-ness' and when old or new authorities are imposing order to achieve obedience and conformity. Therefore, for me, the question is in particular how ‘Discipline and Punish’ are used that is which and how ordering disciplinary technologies, and ‘micro-technique of power’ are employed for which purposes.

Moreover: How are power and knowledge as well as its nexus exploited for what kind of supposed ‘post-factual’ or ‘post-Truth’ politics? Furthermore, what forms of ‘governmentality’ emerge from all this, defined as all those organized practices (mentalties, rationalities, and techniques) through which subjects are governed? In particular, how are these visions policed by social pressure, while attacking and excluding other imaginations and undermining subversions?

Malette: To be added with „Ecogovernmentality“ for considering and as a response to our ecological crisis!

Kant: Considering all this, will we as mankind ever enter a genuine enlightenment of living maturely, and autonomously in freedom ultimately?

Foucault: My dear Immanuel: Considering your hope for humankind’s final coming of enlightened emancipated age, I do not know whether we will ever reach such mature post-dogmatic adulthood and freedom. From my perspective, we can never become totally free, because freedom is not a fixed state of being. Rather, becoming free is alive in possibilities to create ourselves and transgress the limits imposed on us, not in the sense of overcoming these limits, but as illuminating and critically testing them. What is important is that ‘the process of transformation from immaturity to maturity – on your terms Kant - can be enhanced, valued, and intensified insofar as it is a process of realisation (Pryor, 2002: 320-1). This is what being ‘determined’ by the Enlightenment means and engages us with a ‘trans-evaluation’. So you see, I am not an anti-Enlightenment thinker! What I try to do – at least in my late work – is re-visiting
and reworking some of the central categories of Enlightenment and its values, such as the interrelated notions of the caring self,\textsuperscript{24} autonomy and emancipation.

\textbf{Facilitator}: What does sapere aude then call for today? Is your approach not an elitist and aesthetising one that for many people appears us unreachable or even ‘otherworldly’?

\textbf{Foucault}: Sapere aude in our times calls for and enacts an entanglement of aesthetics and ethics of self-power and -unfoldment! Please hear me right, I am not for a decadent or otherwise understood aestheticism, nor any kind of frivolous aestheticization or light-headed ‘devil-may-care’ form of dandyism. Because of their critical function, aesthetically refined and artful practices of the caring self are not confined to aesthetics. Rather, they are also essentially part of one’s personal and interpersonal realizations of ethics, politics and freedom. Thus, these practices are searching and creating alternatives to modern self-subjugation.

It is about re-defining identity as a site for cultural resistance and individual autonomy that might pave the way for alter-native styles of living and identification. And critique will be the art of voluntary inservitude, of reflective indocility and a care of the self!

\textbf{Derrida}: All critique and deconstruction for an ‘Enlightenment to come: Le monde des lumières a venir!’ (2003).

\textbf{Habermas}: There are many misunderstandings here! What we need is: ‘sapere aude in communitas’ via what I call Communicative Reason – beyond your Kant monological approach – and that implies following the regulative idea(l)s of ideal speech situation and ever better rational argumentation. For me valid knowledge can only be reached in ‘ideal speech situations’ where the only acceptable power is that of the ‘better argument.’ I thus invite you to respect the rules of the ‘discourse ethic’ to reach a consensus, which would constitute the condition of our emancipation (Habermas, 1994). In the best Kantian sense, the normative criteria of any ‘validity claim’ is universal and it is the only acceptable way to emancipation as enlightenment in 21 century! Since validity claims require that interlocutors justify their claims to reach a consensus, they will subscribe to a universal morality that they agree to and can live up to it.

Your totalizing critique of reason, my dear Foucault, deprives your own work of the normative grounding and still requires civilizational approach and perspective, everything else would be a

\textsuperscript{24} Foucault’s French translation of the old concept of care ‘to ’care of the self’ or ‘care of oneself’ Le souci de soi i.e. ‘attending to oneself’ or ‘being concerned about oneself’ (Foucault, 2005, p. 2) is not an egoistic process; but it is an action that includes relationships to others, where the individuals are involved with each other through shifting constellations.
performative contradiction! And this modernist heritage is part of the very Enlightenment goals of human emancipation and the expansion of reason, non-violence, and recognition of and in relation to the ‘other!

Modernity, initiated by Enlightenment, is a worthy project – albeit unfinished. Modernity is unfinished, because there is a gap between the specialized knowledge i.e. scientific, moral and aesthetical knowledge and everyday life. It is worthy because of the gains it has made, especially in the expansion of individual freedom and a post-national orientation, urgently needed in our times of neo-nationalistic resurgence.

To complete the project of modernity requires a discursive selection of scientific, moral and aesthetical values that the modern enlightened age has to offer that is created its normativity out of itself. And this discourse-based process have to be organised in such a way that there are more possibilities for valid claims, while not compromising the lifeworld by the encroachment of systems of power and money.

**Foucault:** From the beginning with the reformers of the Enlightenment, modernists have succeeded in influencing the mind by turning the individual into an object of knowledge. Hence, the glorification of knowledge lies not in its capacity to understand the objective world as commonly celebrated by Enlightenment thinkers. Rather, modernist power lies in its success in microscopically analysing the internal and the external conditions of individuals to allow better institutional coercion thus, processing a normalization of human behaviour and enforcing the power structure of modern society.

All communication is integrally embedded in power in an existing social system, serving interests of domination and manipulation as much as enlightenment and understanding. Language and knowledge are subject to historically contingent and specific constraints and biases in contemporary society. These are functionalized and rationalized, their meanings and uses are socially constructed to serve hegemonic interests, including legitimation and control and so never universal and transcendent of social conditions.

Dear Habermas! Your vision of enlightened communication through which minds can meet, and a shared understanding can established, truth can be revealed, and that unforced consensus can be reached, is merely a utopian ideal, like the regulative ideas by Kant before. Even more, and you won’t like me saying this, but your emphasis on discursive-mediated political will-formation through the process of deliberative and procedural democracy, as your discourse theory conceived are very problematic. These discursive processes that cultivate rational and moral subjects through reflection, argumentation, public reasoning, and reaching consensus are and remain illusionary and may be misleading.

**Habermas:** No, I am not convinced and do not agree at all, on the contrary: Your approach remains for me a detractors of reason as you cannot account for an alleged validity of itself you claim and collapsing the ineluctable Kantian distinction between genesis and validity, between questions concerning the factual origin of claims and its possible justification on grounds that cannot be reduced to its de facto origin.
Like Nietzsche, you are blurring the principal distinction between the three equiprimordial spheres of claim and adjudication: the cognitive sphere in which claims concerning factual correctness are raised and adjudicated, the moral-legal sphere in which claims concerning normative correctness are raised and adjudicated, and the aesthetic-critical sphere in which claims regarding artistic authenticity are raised and adjudicated. Therefore, I have to dismiss your genealogical historiographies as relativistic, and crypto-normative illusory science. You are not giving an account of the normative foundations' for your thinking. To avoid relativism our thinking must be rationally and universally grounded.

Again, we need a minimalist theory of rationality that attempts to replace the unacceptable substantialist notion of reason as universal subject with a conception of rationality based on reason as the necessary standard of interaction between subjects that rely on each other for the recognition and adjudication of their claims. What we need is a communicative rationality and to keep the emancipatory potential of reason alive. This alone allows developing a deliberative democracy, whereby only the weight of the better argument prevails.

Foucault: Monsieur Habermas, you are functioning as a standard-bearer of the legacy of Enlightenment rationalism, and a corresponding normative stance. But the distancing from foundationalism and metaphysics does not leave me normless or without any value-orientation. Norms cannot be given a universal grounding independent of those people and their context. Contextually situated, my norms are expressed in a desire to challenge 'every abuse of power, whoever the author, whoever the victims' (Miller, 1993: 316).

No, mon cher Jürgen Habermas, it is not the force of better reasoned argument that encourages consensus by informed and intellectually competent citizenry. Rather, it is through control of minds that produces compliance. As we are institutionally coerced into complying with the norm of docile body, we must re-empower and re-embody ourselves!

James Schmidt: There was and is a lot of problematic misunderstanding concerning the very question ‘What is Enlightenment?’ and need for rethinking today as well as with regard to the debate between Habermas, and Foucault (2011, 2018ab).

Matytsin, et al.: And we should not underestimate the religious and mystical sources of the rationality of Enlightenments (2018).

John Dryzek: Let me add a word on embodied dimensions. Part of this embodiment is extending and re-interpreting communicative rationality to be open to unconstrained dialogue with the non-human voices located in the natural world having its own agency (Dryzek, 1998: 588). This is relevant also as the ‘ideal speech situation’ seems somewhat detached from the realities of the empirical social world and lived experiences in all their corporeality.

Observer: Before we learn more about the reality of this corporeality related to wisdom and enter a preliminary final part, once more, a few words of transition from me the observing agent. After all those radically critical reflections, ideas and approaches situated in creative tensions between modern and post-modernist orientations, we now turn to embodied wisdom, the tasteful original, presence and future of sapere and sapiential. With this we re-enter the territory of embodiment, and will hear about sensual qualities and
moves towards a more integral understanding of wisdom and Enlightenment. Thus, enlightenment interpreted as a period, practice, and project may has been winded up and further unfolds as various accounts required it (Schmidt, 2011) and as our voices here confirm. And as we will see, with its Leitmotiv and call for daring to know and becoming wise sapere aude well again and remain in need for a further interpretations, different realisations and ‘creactive’ enactments as the open(ing) questions and quest in the end invite….

Merleau-Ponty: Yes, daring to be-come wise in the 21 century calls for being re-embodied.

We need to move away from the cerebrocentric, information-processing, and representational models of mind, cognition, knowledge and wisdom towards the corporeal, enactive, and world-involving understandings and relationships.

Varela: even more a “disenchantment of the abstract,” i.e., for a move away from “the rarefied atmosphere of the general and the formal, the logical and the well-defined, the represented and the foreseen” and a “re-enchantment of the concrete,” i.e., for a “radical paradigm shift” based on a stronger recognition that “the proper units of knowledge are primarily concrete, embodied, incorporated, lived” (1999, 6-7).

It is about embodied meaning as experiential, lived-through in and through practices that bring forth and allow further emergences of incarnated and cultured existence as well as living ‘civilisation.’ These bodily-mediated practices are not (only) those of subjugation, not merely processes of sub-jectification through which the individual submits to the imposition of social forms and passively mediates this imposition. Rather, incorporeal meanings are really more intricate, and open for transformative creativity than are the meanings imposed by social formation.

Spinoza: Knowing what the body can do is the route to better knowing, and, ultimately, the kind of grounded wisdom or ‘blessedness’ that I see as coming from recognising the world’s immanence to our own being.

Jonathan Israel: you dear Baruch Spinoza and the so-called Spinozism were the intellectual backbone of the European Radical Enlightenment (2001) and foundational for the origins of modern democracy (2009).

Shaw: Yes: Men are wise in proportion, not to their experience, but to their capacity for experience (1903: 239).
Bähr: How the body was constructed and killed in and by enlightenment showed its limits.

Polylinguist: And with this, we need a taste-ful understanding of wisdom as the very ‘sapere’ means in Latin and before all to taste! In French, tâter, that is to palpate, to explore by touching, is kin to the English taste, to explore by the mouth, ‘audé sapere’, thus could also be translated as ‘dare to taste’, and in Spanish ‘con sabor’ also means with gusto. 25

Serres and Latour: Yes, human ancestors associated wisdom with taste as the Latin sapien(t)s connotes knowing and wise with ‘tasting.’ Taste, i.e. sapor, is itself knowledge (sapere), and thus wisdom (sapientia), an association that is also present in the present participle of sapere ‘to taste, to savor’ and ‘to be wise’ (which also gave us sage and savant). While sapient suggests subtly sensing flavour and aromas, having taste as sagacity, sane just merely stresses mental soundness, rationality, and levelheadedness and judicious emphasis a capacity for reaching wise decisions or just conclusions. Accordingly, homo-sapiens means both ‘men of wisdom’ and ‘men of taste.’ When we say homo sapiens, we should keep in mind that the origin of the notion of wisdom, or of discourse – man as speaking man – lies in the capacity to taste with the mouth, and with the sense of smell (1995).

Hutcheson and Hume: Oui, Si, Yes, value judgments are expressions of taste, rather than reasoned analysis alone. And the faculty of taste can be used to determine an object’s aesthetic value. Thus taste is a productive faculty, and gilding or staining all natural objects with the colours, borrowed from internal sentiment, raises, in a manner, a new creation of beauty and deformity, virtue and vice. For use, taste is immediate and spontaneous, yet the application of ‘good sense’ and sound understanding of ‘reason’ improves it. Accordingly, for cultivating this valuable taste we need to expose ourselves to variety, learn about artistic media and practice imaginative associations and pleasure of ideas. Tasteful aesthetic appreciation involves disinterested delight that does not regard the aesthetic phenomena as a resource or instrumentalist tool for serving our interests and purposes.

Kant: Indeed, cultivating taste reasonably is vital and aesthetic judgments of taste must not only be disinterested, but also be universal, exhibit purposiveness without purpose, and be necessary. It is the objective, disinterested, pure aesthetic pleasure in the presentation (Vorstellung) that allows a universal agreement, validity and judgement.

Deleuze, Lyotard, and Rancière: Considering your third ‘Critique of Judgment’: What about rethinking the formless Sublime as incomprehensible event and a kind of aesthetic break and reconfiguration that challenges all tastes, imaginations and sense-making while providing openings for new political formations and initiatives?

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25 Dare to be-come wise was and is about a cultivation of the Wo-Man of taste, who share those in a proto-political community. Displaying taste as an exercise of judgment even and especially in public affairs would enable citizens to regain, having pursued a sense of place in the world.
**Romantic Poets:** Yes, yes sublimity, the elevation of the sublime that is the very visionary gleam of being lightened!\(^{26}\)

**Shapiro:** In particular, the experience of a ‘Political Sublime’, including contemporary threats of annihilation and violence, may lead to an ethico-political sensibility that recognizes the fragilities of our grasp and enjoins engagement with a pluralist world in which the in-common of different communities must be continually negotiated (2018: 4) and thus allowing to reveal, redistribute, and create conditions of possibility for alternative communities of sense.

**Kant:** Well these are all post-Kantian ideas that go beyond my understanding of the sublime as overwhelming overawing the imagination a presentation of an indeterminate concept of reason recognized by the same. For me your political interpretations are not compatible with my commitment to a universalising community of taste: sensus communis, as we seek in reflective judgment we seek unknown universals. Only transcending from individual whims and idiosyncrasy, there can be a common sense and correspondingly, taste reflects the transcendental principle of general acceptability, and only transcending from individual whims and idiosyncrasy, there can be a ‘sensus communis.’ And we need to focus also on the beautiful, and the good, connected with the form of the object!

By the way, for cultivating taste in a social context, I have developed rules for a tasteful feast at our ‘Tischgesellschaft,’ which is a kind table community for gathering at a dinner party:

a) To choose topics for conversation that interest everyone and always provide someone with the opportunity to add something appropriate,

b) not to allow deadly silences to set in, but only momentary pauses in the conversation,

c) not to change the topic unnecessarily or jump from one subject to another . . . topic that is entertaining must almost be exhausted before proceeding to another one . . .

d) not to let dogmatism arise or persist, either in oneself or in one’s companions in the group (e) in a serious conflict that nevertheless cannot be avoided, carefully to maintain discipline over oneself and one’s emotions so that mutual respect and benevolence always shine forth (Kant, 1798/2007a, p. 381, 7: 281)

These rules are providing the guidelines for sociable exchange and, more generally, ethical and productive conversation! Such sociality cultivates not only taste, but in various ways, the very vitality of the body and the mind related to pragmatics (Ercolini, 2012). Thus the conversations should be of taste, and enjoyable, while leaving the guests feeling something had

\(^{26}\) Different from pleasure in the beautiful, the shock of the sublime forces us out of stable states. The sublime is not something we bask in, but something we pass through or undergo. Furthermore, the sublime isn’t simple like the beautiful, with its straightforward connection to the pleasurable. The sublime combines passions such as terror and delight (Burke: what I call delightful horror) or pain and relief. As such, though it involves negative effects, these can serve positive outcomes coming as a result of the initial shock.

**Charles Taylor:** We need romantic expressionism and overcoming excarnation even more as the naturalism of atomising, disengaged and instrumental reason and a disenchanted immanent frame we are living in today.
been accomplished on the level of culture. At the same time, the conversations are regulated by certain rhythms, specific movements, and itineraries (Kant, 2007; Ercolini, 2012).

**Friedrich the Great:** We need to dine and drink together to bring Enlightenment alive, like in my philosophical “Tafelrunde” at my castle Sanssouci and ‘Vereinigungen’ in my kingdom.

**Ursula Pia Jauch:** … I need to throw some light on shadows of that light. In your intimate male circle you staged yourself imitating as a philosopher in Machiavellian ways for using this for your authoritarian paternalistic rule and propaganda. Simultaneously, you did not believe that the majority of your people would be able to be ‘enlightenable’ at all.

**van Dulmen:** There would be no Enlightenment in Germany without the emergence and growth of the many different learned societies, clubs and associations, including masonic lodges, and secret societies, winning the support of princes and aristocrats, that created a self-confident bourgeois elite and early middle class culture (1992).

**Coffee House owner:** This sound rather like a private gathering. What we need are also public places, like coffeehouse where people can congregate, to read, write, to learn and to debate with each other, including urban artisans and businessmen to discuss latest reform ideas! (2004).

**Salonnière:** What we need is both public and private institution of intellectual sociability. We, as socially conscious and learned women, regularly organised and governed salons in which we were hosting and regulating discussions of literary works, artistic creations, and new political ideas. Although, our need to be recognised us into Enlightenment cultural practice, and our expressions of aesthetic *bon goût* and political ideas were more and more ousted and silenced by the male ‘philosophes’, for example the misogynistic Jean Jacques Rousseau. And often we were not afforded the same opportunity to publish, and our feminist claims and women civil rights ignored: so much about the supposed ideal of free thinking and openly questioning the world.

**Connoisseur:** What these salons mediated were also those gustatory moments that shaped individual and communal identities and their style et esprit, sensually and metaphorically! The enlightening aesthetic taste, the nuanced ethos of *gustus* is to be developed through discretionary cultivation of worlds of food and drinks as much of those of words. Just like the tongue and the palate are able to appreciate the quality of dishes tasted, we need to cultivate a faculty that entail judging the value of literary or artistic works and practices.

Used as a metaphor, that is an expression for a set of preferences and dispositions that admit shared social standards and public criticism taste functions for an aesthetic discernment and appreciation or dis-appreciation. The taste of the body as well as the one of the mind is perceived through an immediate sensation of pleasure or repulsion. Having cultivated and enjoying delicate, refined, exquisite tastes, the ‘esprits bien faits’ (refined/proper minds especially among the French as a refined form of civility expressed in superiority of their taste) revolt the bad taste as one of excesses or exaggerated artifice; breaking aesthetic rules and declining to vulgar. Instead of awe bad taste is just awful, like kitsch, quite unrefined taste of mawkish sentimentality and faked sensation.
**Gadamer:** Yes in kitsch as in all bad art we see only what we already know, not wishing to see anything else. We enjoy the encounter insofar as it simply provides a feeble confirmation of the familiar, instead of changing us. For something can only be called art when it requires that we construe the work by learning to understand the language of form and content so that communication really occurs.” (1986, 52). What is needed is Bildung as connected to tact, judgment and taste for acquiring and intensifying sensitivity, subtlety and selectivity as well as a capacity for discrimination. The personal and civic arts of wisdom, when practiced well, can be beautiful, not only in terms of thinking beautifully, but also enacting a beautiful ethical life (1982, 1986).

**Perullo:** The Wisdom of Taste and the Taste of Wisdom are connected! Wisdom thus does not correspond to a strict rule, but rather to a suggestion: trying to understand as many different experiences as possible in order to joyfully participate in the variety of ecological gustatory occurrences (2016, p. 116). Practical wisdom and gustatory wisdom in particular allow moving skillfully in accordance with the rhythm of experience (2016, 118). Wise taste capacity implements perceptual sensitivity toward little variations and nuances: minimal differences in qualitative characteristics of the objects enjoyed, but above all, minimal differences in the contexts of experience and the connections in which the qualities of the objects emerge….. Wise taste capacity is not acquiescent to extant cultural codes, but expresses critical potential. It promotes the ability to make independent choices and resist imposed models..... Wise taste capacity allows for exploring the connection be- tween consumption and production in the food chain. It therefore allows a critical look at production issues, the environment, nature, and the economy (2016, 124).

**von Hoffmann:** As a move from gluttony to enlightenment, we can observe a spiritualisation of culinary, medical, religious, and philosophical tastes that is the invention of taste as the seat of a system of representations defined as a new sense modality that was no longer perceived as being exclusively material.”(2017: 136).

**Connoisseur:** Complementing taste, all senses contribute to an aesthetic sensible judgement. As a ‘judicium sensitivium’ it processes via integrated operations case by case in a situation-specific way of assessing, appraising and evaluating thus appreciating particular phenomena. The wisdom of taste can also be understood as the constant exercise in gustatory empathy in situations of diversity and contention

**Robin Holt and Frank den Hond:** What configures enlightenment is the experience of knowledge being created and savoured, especially when daring to push at the edges of convention, to enquire along the limits of common sense. To taste and to dare are far from metaphysical experiences, they are rooted in one’s empirical awareness; enlightened knowledge remains with life and the things of life (2013: 1587).

**Serres:** Importantly, it is through taste we experience ourselves sensually thus ‘sense-makingly’ as matter, bodies among other bodies, unavoidably ‘complicit with anonymous materials’ in a ‘continuity of material transformations of decomposition and regeneration’, whose immanence, as a certain Adam and Eve experienced, radically denies any transcendent God or Law, facilitating the expulsion from an Edenic world with relatively known consequences. Rather than God throwing out and banishing hu(wo)man from the Garden Paradise, it was the(ir) very
act of tasting the forbidden fruit (of knowing) that immediately engendered the collapse of the Garden itself.

This act was and has ever since projected human-kind into the materiality of a world devoid of the hopes and fears of a transcendent beyond. This is our sapid knowledge: “We were too quick to forget that homo sapiens refers to those, who react to sapidity, appreciate it and seek it out, those for whom the sense of taste matters – savouring animals – before referring to judgement, intelligence or wisdom, before referring to talking man … Sensation, it used to be said, inaugurates intelligence. Here, more locally, taste institutes sapience (2008: 154).

In doing so we make of our own bodies, our sensibilities, the principle which marks the passage from local to global. It is sensibility which renders our bodies as able to mix, to create knots of relations, and thus to ‘multiply between-spaces’ (2008: 302) in topological transformations. Because we can taste, we can discern and build a practical body of knowledge, a wisdom or ‘sapience’ that materially links vines and grapes with the soil and climate of particular regions. The body ‘smells a rose and a thousand surrounding odours at the same time as it touches wool, sees a complex landscape and quivers beneath waves of sound’ (2008: 306). The senses are then best characterised as ‘exchangers’. They agitate mixtures, make new knots and proliferate space through prolonging and extending relations. A taste becomes a spectacle; a touch gives rise to a song. Sensation becomes the very thread that weaves things together.

Merleau-Ponty: Thus, it is sensation that inaugurates intelligence, and it is taste that constitutes a form of sapience as wisdom! Let us process Körper (physical body we have as corps) and Leib (we are ‘becomingly’), unearthing the flesh-and-blood texture of lived experience of becoming wise!

Munro: Exercises, as practiced in slow food movement, can help caring for the self (2014).

Panagia: and educating the senses, because there is a political life of sensation (2009).

Küpers: … as does knowing about the “Sense-Makings of the Senses,” applied to organising and organisation (2013a).

Munro: Yes indeed and also cultivating to enjoy the pleasures of ‘conviviality’ by transforming experiences of taste and intensifying the appreciation of the pleasure of eating together mindfully. This entails exercises to test and enhance one’s sensory experiences including: (i) the testing of five taste sensations (sweet, salty, sour, bitter and 旨味 umami in fermented and aged foods, described as pungent "meatiness", "relish" or "savoriness"; (ii) the testing of one’s experience of different aromas in terms of their intensity and duration; (iii) the testing of one’s experience of trigeminal sensations and texture; (iv) the testing of one’s perception of the sound of foodstuffs (e.g. crunchy); and (v) the testing of one’s visual sensations (e.g. smooth and rough).

All of these practise and politics of taste can contribute to micro-emancipations, resistance and creating agents capable of challenging the status quo by running counter to the prevalent hegemonic forms of neoliberal subjectivity (2014).
**Green:** and not only eating, but also speaking with your own cultivated mouth with maturity. Already the German usages of ‘Mündigkeit’ im-maturity refers to the bodily organ of the ‘Mund’ (mouth) - indicating that the underlying meaning that those, who are ‘Unmündige’ (the immature ones) are being unable to speak on their own behalf (1996: 292).

**Röttgers:** Therefore, we need a ‘critique of the culinary reason’ (2015). To taste and to dare are far from metaphysical experiences, but they are rooted in one’s empirical awareness; as enlightened knowledge and orientation remains with life and the things of life. Daring to know’ and becoming oriented by wisdom is the experience of respecting and upending the world into which we are thrown and situated, also culinary. This could be done through enquiry that occupies the space between ordinary, everyday understandings and distant, generalized assertions.

**Küpers:** Yes, wisdom integrates the particular and the general (2013) and leave the polarising either/or orientation behind, overcoming a parochial identity towards an open integral pluralism. Consequently, it would be wise to leave the metaphorical dichotomy between light and darkness and thus Enlightenment (Aufklärung/Erleuchtung) and Endarkenment (Gegen-Aufklärung/Verfinsterung) behind, and not entering into the political game of playing one out one against the other. The enlightenment, lumieres’ self-conception casted in a denouncing way the supposed anti-philosophes regularly in philosophe discourse as obscurantists and deceptive shadow-creatures, while seeing themselves as representing the true and eternal light.27

As mentioned before, in the twilight of our complexified times and as many have shown, the binary categories and framework of interpretations and a Manichean struggle between Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment are insufficient and its simplistic dichotomistic modes, appear as flat and overly schematic.

**Schmidt:** Knowing this is itself enlightening, a new level of an Enlightenment (2018b)!

**Küpers:** Connected to the patterns of the old struggles between the forces of good and evil, the long-lasting popularity of these binarising can be found on their usefulness for polemical purposes. To this their role as pivots of historical narrative is ultimately subservient and might continue to function in the same way today as they did when emerging in former centuries.

Incarnating the wisdom of sapere aude today, daring to become wise needs to be an embodied integral practice. As such it would process positions and oppositions, structuring and de- and reconstructing, moving between aspirations for modernist deliberations and consensus (e.g. Kant/Habermas) and post-modernist dissensus and conflict (e.g. Nietzsche/Foucault) also in

27 **Jung:** To emphasise the contrast between the eternal light and the worldly light sources championed by the philosophers, the anti-philosophes exploited the latter’s blinding and potentially destructive metaphorical implications to their rhetorical advantage (2016: 219), such as when the Sabatier de Castres warned that the supposed ‘lumieres’ had in fact proven themselves to be burning torches, ready-made to carry fire everywhere (“des torches ardent es, pretes a porter par-tout l’incendie”) (Sabatier de Castres 1779: cf. Deprun 1973: 717).
relation to a revived practical wisdom for a civil society and applied ethics that is enabling a sustainable development.

Flyvbjerg: Practically, this requires wisdom-related, de-biasing planning and decision making in megaprojects, and city management [Ed. Note – italicized text here are links] as well as conceptually a phronetic social science (2015a, 2015b).

Xiang: What is needed is also an ‘eco-phrônêsis’ as ecological practical wisdom for and from ecological practice - what I call ‘eco-practicology’, including planning, design, construction and management (2019, 2019a). This wise practice is integrating (moral) knowledge and (virtuous) action and by employing the master skill of moral improvisation the *ecophronimoi* are capable of being responsible in a double sense. That is in any particular instance of ecological practice they are showing “honoring commitments and upholding principles on the one hand and attending specific circumstantial particulars, on the other” (2016: 58), thus enacting ethical beliefs and mindful actions.

Integral Voice: Yes, we need an Integral Enlightenment that embraces premodern, modern and postmodern orientation towards a ‘postpostmodern’ integrative understanding and practice. It embraces the wisdom of the great meditative traditions, but also reaches forward to unleash the profound spiritual potential inherent in our recently evolved capacities for self-awareness, introspection, self-authorship and relational intimacy.28

Meta-Modern Voice: (alias Freinacht, 2018, 2019): Yes and even more! Enlightenment for us is the realisation of a ‘postpostmodern’ integrally informed form of metamodern politics. This is an interactive view of politics that includes the interrelated elements of the Politics of Democratization, Theory, Empiricism, Emancipation, Existence and Gemeinschaft29, enacted by a metamodern aristocracy as avant-garde, reintroduces non-arbitrary and well-founded hierarchies of complexity! A metamodern enlightenment is redefining what appropriate progress and development entails, based on the postmodern critique. But it is doing so without throwing out the hope that we can develop things for the better. Going beyond an anti-thesis stance and deconstructions, the task of reconstructing our symbolic universe and reconnecting it to other aspects of reality. Yes, the great objective of our Metamodernism, is to erect a new grand narrative by combining all known knowledge and wisdom, well aware that it is a never ending endeavour and that the only achievable synthesis (of apparent opposites) is a proto-synthesis of a ‘both-and’ thinking, forever subjected to critique and never without flaws.

28 https://integrallife.com/integral-enlightenment/

29 Democratisation Politics, aims to create ongoing processes for developing and updating the system of governance and the quality of institutions. Gemeinschafts-Politics (politics of relationships and community) aims to improve the quality of human relationships across all aspects of society. Existential Politics, aims to support all people on their life’s journey and spur inner growth mental health and strong moral integrity Emancipation Politics, aims to create ongoing processes protecting citizen from all sorts of oppression, not least from the other new forms of politics. Empirical Politics, aims to evaluate all policies and institutional practices and make sure they are based on the best available evidence. Politics of Theory (or narrative) aims to create ongoing processes for developing and updating the narratives society relies upon, who it “brainwashes itself” (2019, NI, 174-175).
Metamodernism offers to keep the postmodern irony, keep the distance, but creating a new sincerity and self-consciously naïve belief on top of it.

**Critical Voice:** But what gives you critical metamodernist theorists (‘the enlighteners’) the epistemic authority to tell ordinary people (‘the to-be-ennobled’) that they are alienated and how they are to be emancipated etc.? Moreover, what if the latter not only ignore the concerns expressed by the former but also enjoy the seemingly disempowering elements commonly associated with alienation and not being emancipated, like in capitalist consumerism and mass entertainment, fundamentalism and tribalism, esotericism and mysticism, hedonism and escapism, populism and authoritarianism. Who are we, as critical theorists, to affirm that those relishing these (or other) types of ‘alienation’ are victims of social domination?

And your interpretation of wisdom is highly problematic.30

**Facilitator:** What a neo-progressive, re-evolutionary agenda for a game-change, is this metamodernist one, but also those concerns raised are critical ones to be considered and further discussed indeed. What is the future of enlightenment and in particular of homo-sapiens also in relation to other, more-than-human beings with regard to the mentioned sustainable and meta-modern developments?

**Future Researcher:** With regard to the future of enlightenment it remains ambiguous, defying prediction. The terra incognita of the future is uncharted land, it is beyond what any scientific projection or social prophesy can tell. All what we know is that any pursuit of pure

30 Let me respond to your section stating that “Wisdom Is Overrated” https://metamoderna.org/wisdom-is-overrated/ Your discussion criticises rightly certain interpretations of “hyped wisdom,” I have trouble with your “Wisdom Troubles” as a “relatively overrated notion of wisdom and spiritual enlightenment”. Wisdom does necessary entail believing in “a variable that is always good, and the more of it, the better” (connotation of goodness and normative, perfectionising progress orientations are historical relative, constructs, to be deconstructed and misunderstanding wisdom in the sense of a resentful and self-righteous moralism to be attacked by all means! For me wisdom is not “entirely beneficial and unproblematic” While sharing your scepticism there are attempt to “operationalize” the concept; to make it workable and it is possible to show what and how wisdom is a practice (not only for solving wicked problems). That wisdom is appropriated by preacher of ascending “higher consciousness” does not exclude its relevance of being an embodied down-to earth practice! Wisdom is not (only) about “inner dimensions of people and society and the possibility of an active and deliberate development of these”. There are integral and interrelational understandings of practical wisdom that criticises and leaves those reductive ideas behind. Yes we need to consider different developmental capabilities and context, influencing wisdom as a processual culture-dependent practice evolve! There is empirical research on showing in which context and “mechanisms” wisdom has what kind of complex effects that are not always “good”, sometimes even tragic! Yes, you are right, there is a danger that the concept of wisdom becomes a projection folio for wishful images and desires, and like you I am in favour of specific, operationable “stricter” definition, related to an uplifting “great depth” and we could discuss the status of complexity of the same. Although the quest and question and methodological challenges of measurability required an elaborated investigation and practice in empirical research. Wisdom is (not only a combination but) a proto-integral development practice of bodily, mental social structural systemic health, with high processual complexity and uplifting great depth. Considering a more comprehensive understanding and the actualisable potential of a practice of wisdom for meta-modernism and its politics: that would be wise.
states of being turns totalitarian and incompatible with diversity and plural dispositions of human nature. These might be idealised pasts or utopian futures, supposed true religions, superior races or territorial chauvinism, unsustainable productions, unbridled consumerism. We need to be aware of dangerous forces stirring up at present, including social polarization, economic failures, local, regional and geopolitical conflicts, environmental degradation, barbarised social chaos and disintegration on all levels and all over.

**Küpers:** As a counterforce a new sustainability-oriented ‘enlightenmentality’ can help overcoming conservatism and resistance of special interests, via decentralising the overconcentration of power, towards ‘glocal’ governance, political subsidiarity and direct democracies. Such planetary orientation may contribute healing from the myopia of narrow short-termist towards more integral and long-term outlooks and solidarity, community based living help getting out inertia of complacency, asking critically and responding practically to the question how shall we live how to co-create congenial meaningful and fulfilling lives, all leading towards genuine transformations as fulcrums in time, situated in places, but now planetary!

**Paul Raskin:** I would call this the great transition as a “Journey to Earthland” (2016)?

**Yuval Noah Harari:** Concerning the status of homo, do we now again aim to upgrade humans into gods, and turn homo-sapiens into homo-deus?31

**Facilitator:** There are many open questions: Do we need to relegate humanity back to one of many natural species, thereby rejecting any claims founded on anthropocentric dominance, or extend subjectivities beyond the human species (Wolfe, 2009)? Do we need re-centering on the human(ism) or an anthropo-decentering (Küpers 2020) and moving beyond the human towards anti-, post-, trans-, or meta-humanism (Ferrando, 2013; Miah, 2008)? What would it then mean to

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31 Yuval Noah Harari: Do we now (again) aim to upgrade humans into gods, and turn Homo sapiens into Homo deus? Moving from humans who worship gods into humans who become gods... Mythologically and historically, playing god – apotheosis – is an old recurring theme. You might ask: How is it envisioned today for which kind of future? Well, by bioengineering and cyborg-technology and production of non-organic entities?! What we can observe is that technology overtakes religion; the fear of nature transmutes into an unprecedented capacity to control nature. Are we humans doomed by superhuman biological or computational machines? Our capacity to manipulate two fundamental forms of information – the biological and the computational, the byte and the gene – will thus result in the birth of superior beings who will ultimately overrun our world. In my reconstruction of “Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind” I discussed the genetic, anthropological, cultural, social and epistemological (macro-)history of humans over the last 100,000-odd years processed by three broad “revolutions.” The first, the “cognitive revolution,” resulted in humans acquiring the capacity to think, learn and communicate information with a facility unprecedented in the animal kingdom. The second – the “agricultural revolution” – allowed humans to domesticate crops and animals, enabling us to form stable societies and intensifying the flow of information within them. The “scientific revolution” came last. Humans acquired the capacity to interrogate and manipulate the physical, chemical and biological worlds, resulting in even more potent technological advances that surround us today. Why should we assume that sapiens are the end of the evolutionary line? What comes next? Are we given ourselves over completely to machines, to re-engineering bodies and brains? This dystopian vision rests on many questionable assumptions. For example, that we don’t have free will, and never did, or that humans will somehow shed their collaborative, social instincts which, are what made us so successful in the first place.
examine discourses and practices to uncover inherent humanistic, anthropocentric, normative notions of humanness and the concept of the human, versus exploring possibilities of posthuman-centred ways of living and enacted convivialities?

We’re going to need not only new conceptual understandings, but new and different imaginations, images, imaginaries, myths and stories. We are in urgent need for new INTER-relationships to our self, to other selves, to plants and animals, relating to nature as part of us! Likewise what is called for a ways of relating to ‘proto-wise’ traditions of human culture about what makes live good, just and truthful those that have been suppressed, marginalised or forgotten by our capitalising and commodifying systems of appropriation? What does it mean and imply to live a meaningful live, while facing death? Who are we all as a communal and collective existence? Not only asking: What does it mean to be human? But: What is our vision of conviviality of ‘hu-(wo)-man’ and ‘more-than-human’? What role might the digitalisation and digitalised (trans-)formation play in all this?

We cannot respond to these questions and underlying quests here anymore. But in any case, for all these inquiries, we need more of these forms of encounters and dialogues, not only between philosophers, scholars and scientist, but between people in public spheres...

To regain wise forms of daring and wayfaring may then become, as described in mystic and Asian wisdom traditions, an awakening that allows to sense and see ‘truthfully’ through. This implies seeing through misleading orientations of illusion and ignorance, and through the dark veils of habitual comprehension towards an immanent bodied-spiritual self-transcendence... Perhaps this also helps practically to cultivate a ‘well-be(com)ing’ in and through organisations (Küpers, 2005) of a sustainable and wiser praxis, practices and actions as well as a responsible engaged ‘letting go’ (Gelassenheit32) as a lived, living and enlivening enacting of the ‘Art of Wisdom’ (Küpers, 2013).

As such art an embodied wisdom is personal and professional artistry that integrates a refined sensibility, creative imagination, implicit knowing and explicit knowledge, poignant acuity, experiential and reflective learning and the ability to make ‘optimal’ micro-, macro- and meta-judgements about the feel and significance of the particular and given circumstances effectuating action characterized by virtuosity and excellence. This all serves a careful concern for the

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32 Such Gelassenheit is not a consoling form of quietist tranquility, a kind of Schopenhauerian release from the turmoil of existence and the cravings of the will, not as one that is one of promotion of contemplation as a way of life amounting to a decadent form of nihilism, or a flight from the realities of existence! This ‘Gelassenheit’ translated as letting-go, serenity, composure, detachment refers to a non-objectifying ethos of active and ongoing passivity, to an accepting by letting-go, implying an abandonment of habitual, representational and appropriating orientations. In this letting-be of things, the one who acts wisely does not attempt to manipulate, master or compel things, but instead let things be in their vital nature. More importantly, ‘Gelassenheit’ is not about the indifference or lack of interest in things, but rather an ‘engaged letting.’ Entering a modus of letting-be is realized through a receptive waiting and listening, thus more an active non-doing, rather than a willing and controlling business of mastering. It moves specifically from representational and calculative modes, via presencing, meditative thinking towards more poetic relations. Following an ethos of ‘Gelassenheit’ the wise cultivates remaining present, responsive and ethically responsible as well as connected to the ‘materio-socio-cultural’ practices and worlds they participate in and co-constitute while detouring (Küpers 2015).
common good and transforming today’s personal, social, cultural, political and economic realities into a more equitable, peaceful and enjoyable existence and evolution, a lived and living, convivial ‘Sapienism’!

May the sagacious ‘owl of Minerva’ take her flight, not as a fight at the dusk of the Western philosophical tradition, as Hegel would have it, but – via a post-Eurocentric, global and local thus ‘glocal’ and inclusive integration as a common planetary hi-story – towards into the emerging faint silver lining light of a dawn in the clear-obscurr ‘a-wake’ of daring to ‘be(come)ing’ wiser…

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33 The metaphor of the flight of the owl of Minerva refers to a quote in the concluding paragraphs of the Preface to his Philosophy of Right, by Hegel where he examines the role of philosophy in prescribing principles on how the world ought to be. ‘When philosophy paints its grey in grey’, Hegel writes, citing a part of Goethe’s Faust, “A shape of life has grown old, and it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized by the grey in grey of philosophy; the owl of Minerva begins its flight only when the shadows of night are gathering” (Hegel, 1991: 23). “if we are to avoid that ‘cold despair’ which confesses that ‘things are bad or at best indifferent, but that nothing better can be expected here’, we need to do more than simply watch the owl of Minerva spread its wings at dusk. We might also need to tell her where to go by identifying appropriate principles orienting moral and political reform” (Ypi, 2013: 131).

34 Contemporary Enlightenment calls for global integration as we need more inclusive post-national, global and less Eurocentric approach. But as much as there might be moves towards a Global Enlightenment in all its ambivalent legacy there will be Global Counter-Enlightenments existing and emerging in different times and places (Lok & van Eijnatten, 2019: 415).Various global crossings, encounters, exchanges, transfers, appropriations and diffusions are at the root of the European Enlightenment, which can itself be defined as an accelerated and enhanced “movement of ideas across borders and overtime” (Nussbaum, 2003: 2), rather than as a fixed set of genuinely European ideas. …European travellers, emperors and scientists didn’t come to the extra-European world with ready-made models of an Enlightened society, but rather, the global experience is at the root of concepts that are generally seen as genuinely European and/or Enlightened (D’Aprile, 2019, p. 394).
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Reviewed by Elke Fein

A Personal Introduction

I met “Hanzi” for the first time in 2011, right before the founding meeting of the European Consortium for Research in Adult Development (ESRAD) in Lund where the main “Hanzi” author was studying at the time. He had contacted me over Facebook in response to some entry on integral politics and adult development, a passion that we both share. And so we decided to meet a few days before the ESRAD conference, to exchange ideas and visions about how to transform politics into an integral direction.

Already then, the young Swedish sociologist (he asked me to remain with the pseudonym) was close friends with his future “Hanzi” co-author and sparring partner, an equally young Danish historian and philosopher, who later founded “Fri Tanke” publishing. At the time, the two of them, together with a couple of other friends, had put together a manifesto of integral politics, hoping to develop the foundations of a new political movement or party around these ideas in Sweden and the Nordic countries. As I had been actively involved in the first integral party, founded in Switzerland in 2008, we had plenty to talk about.

While I met Hanzi 2 and the rest of their gang only briefly, Hanzi 1 had kindly offered to be my host at the ESRAD event, which he also attended himself. So over about a week of co-working and living, multiple impressions added up to a picture, in particular that of a bright and ambitions young thinker, thrilled by integral and developmental models and the prospect of infusing these into societal reality. At the same time, he also shared a couple of deep personal issues and challenges which made clear that – by necessity – he was working as hard on the level of psycho-emotional processing and personal transformation as he was in the area of theory building. And he had strong claims and solid views in both areas.

One of the topics that was present in our conversations already then was the strong green-social-liberal political mainstream in the Nordic countries, in particular Sweden. Yet, while probably being culturally ahead of things in many other western countries, the question was if, or to what degree it was actually ready to embrace “integral” ideas, for instance those of vertical growth and...
development in individuals and societies. For the “Hanzi” team, consisting of critical social scientists, one of the main challenges was therefore how to find an appropriate language and approach for bringing “integral” into the discussion without triggering the typical reflexes of the “green meme”. The Listening Society is (part of) the answer that the authors came up with: a contentious, provocative, sometimes even offensive invitation to dance, debate – or fight – towards what they imagine to be a typical “green meme” intellectual reader. Their recipe is to mix deep sincerity and thorough analysis with playfulness and irony.

Part of the reason why they decided to publish their book under a pseudonym supposedly was, first, to somehow go beyond a common reflex of mainstream publishing and academia, namely to claim praise for individual work. Instead, the author(s) suggest that transcending certain natural impulses of the ego is an important feature of the to-come meta-modern phase and stage of societal development. Also, “Hanzi” seems to make it easier for them to ride their attack against the green meme mainstream, a confrontation that purposefully transgresses the usual moral boundaries of academic politeness and respect time and again.

At the same time, “Hanzi” also shares quite a lot of detail about his own (in this case, Hanzi 1’s) life trajectory and experience (“Who is Hanzi Freinacht?”, p. 5ff.), including his daily schedule and routine when writing the book over a year or so in a chalet in the Swiss alps. This personal background does indeed reveal some of the deeper motivations behind certain aspects of the model laid out later in the book, in particular the comparatively strong focus on subjective states and depth (“My friend, I write this from a subtle longing of my heart”, p. 6). So, what is this longing about that a listening society is the answer to?

The Listening Society – Resources, Vision and Main Contents

The term “listening society” refers to the idea of a societal culture of awareness that listens – and responds to the needs of its citizens in a deeper and more holistic way than the current materialistic one, including the deeper longings of body, mind & soul. The book spells out elements of a vision revolving around how we could “create and reproduce a society in which the average human life experience is more emotionally satisfying and spiritually productive” (p. 95), assuming that more happiness, in turn, will cause people to give something back to society and thus lead to better communities, more sustainable economies and a healthier planet. The basis for this is a world view and epistemology which Hanzi chose to call “metamodern,” drawing on theorizing in the fields of art, aesthetics, philosophy and culture theory. Even though the book’s major resources and inspiration come from Ken Wilber’s integral model (as one of the authors acknowledged in his presentation of metamodernism at the IFIS Online Colloquium in April, 2019), this choice of terminology is presumably also motivated by the consideration to reach a wider audience in the academic mainstream this way.

The term “metamodern” is borrowed from the Dutch art scholars Timotheus Vermelen and Robin van der Akker who noted a new trend of “pragmatic idealism” in arts already two decades ago. They also describe it as both a product of and a reaction to postmodernism, embracing “doubt, as well as hope and melancholy, sincerity and irony, affect and apathy, the personal and the political, and technology and technè.” (Levin, 2012). “Hanzi” now sets out to add more specific
meaning to the term, in particular that of a developmental stage and related philosophy, thereby aiming at making the concept travel to the social sciences and political practice.

So what is the essence of this socio-political metamodernism and how is similar to or different from “integral”? To what degree are its contents borrowed from integral or actually go beyond the latter in substantial ways? Even though these questions are not explicitly addressed in the book, they were at least ever present in my reading.

Hanzi himself proposes three different definitions of metamodernism (a cultural phase, a developmental stage, and a philosophical paradigm, p. 362f.). Readers interested in terminological fine-tuning will have to go into Hanzi’s appendix where he offers a condensed version of his conception of the metamodern paradigm (p. 363 ff.). My own reading is that metamodernism as outlined in “The Listening Society” is one possible interpretation, expression and/or application of integral thinking – even though the author(s) might not subscribe to this reading.

Given the Hanzi authors’ background in the social sciences, what they do offer beyond the integral model per se are elements and foundations of a vision for a more integral society and some political choices and changes of perspective that could help to bring it about. On the level of modeling strictly speaking, there are some interesting terms and categories that one has not seen or that are used differently in Wilberian models. However, I don’t see these pointing at completely new dimensions that integral philosophy would not have been aware of before. Hanzi’s metamodernism rather comes across as a “reframing” of integral for a post-modern (academic) audience, which it explicitly speaks to in both tone and style, and in view of addressing more specifically socio-political challenges. That, of course, is of value in its own right, given that much of the academic mainstream is currently struggling with late forms of modernism (for part of the sciences) and post-modernism (for the humanities and much of the social sciences), as well as with their paradigmatic contradictions and limitations preventing more efficient action on pressing global issues.

So let’s spend a few words on Hanzi’s language and style first. In line with the identification of sincerity and irony as a core characteristic of metamodernism, The Listening Society displays a mixture of these two qualities itself. More precisely, it takes the reader on a roller-coaster ride between sincere high-level theory and epistemology on the one hand, and a way of addressing the (presumed) reader in a personal dialog that is sometimes witty and playful, but as often also straight and provocative (“the less intellectually gifted readers are by now conjuring up ways to get out of the stranglehold”, p. 11; “in case you still don’t get it…” p. 351), partly de-constructive (“bullshit,” p. 60; “science is a whore dressed up as queen, a jester posing as king,” p. 20; “wisdom […] is a crap variable,” p. 300) and sometimes purposefully insulting (“my theories deeply insult the prevailing moral intuitions. I spit straight in the face of their political identities […]”; “it is the solemn duty of the philosopher to piss on all that you hold dear and sacred, to show you that your gods are false”, p. 9; “frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn about your feelings; if [you are mad at me for insulting you] you should probably put down the book, go take a long, hard look at the mirror, get over yourself, ad re-read the last section,” p. 19). Of course, this style is an integral part of Hanzi’s message and strategy. He wants – or (thinks he) needs – to be provocative in order to make himself heard and get the message across: That mainstream postmodernism is in a dangerous dead end and should start noticing the new paradigm that is knocking at the door. It should start acknowledging that metamodernism is much more effective in addressing the pressing needs of
our times and therefore deserves exceptional intellectual-emotional efforts, even if this might appear painful to the holders of certain current belief systems.

One can discuss whether the book has always chosen the right means to this end. Yet, it does essentially walk its talk when it comes to the symphony of a rather colloquial (personal, dialogical) style, theoretical depth, playfulness and sincerity, or as Hanzi puts it, “sincere irony” (p. 27, 107). The fact that it is generally very well edited, with almost no language and spelling errors or typos, also demonstrates and emphasizes the sincerity part of its message.

Giving a complete summary of the book’s rich content would go beyond the limits of this review. I will nevertheless try to give some insights into Hanzi’s core ideas and some of the inspirations I have gained from the reading.

The Listening Society is conceived as the first book of an envisioned series of several more to come. In the book itself, two more volumes were announced, a developmental perspective on history, including core principles of metamodern politics (n° 2), and a volume on “the Nordic ideology” (n° 3 – this has actually just been published in May 2019 as number two), featuring developments in the Scandinavian countries. According to the author, the latter have come particularly close to a metamodern political culture, and are thus particularly well prepared for implementing it. Meanwhile, however, the main Hanzi author has also been talking about a series of up to six books that seem to be taking shape in Hanzi’s mind. Well, let’s see what comes next.

The series’ overall focus is on politics and transforming society based on an integral, or, in Hanzi’s terms, metamodern paradigm. This includes an analytical perspective on historical and present socio-economic developments and a multidimensional vision of how (a metamodern) society could take responsibility for the development of its citizens. As Robert Kegan has coined the vision of a “Deliberatively Developmental Organization,” The Listening Society spells out the first steps towards the vision of a deliberatively developmental society.

In this context, considerable space is dedicated to the idea of personal happiness in a broad sense of the term (p. 73ff.), which is conceived as a worthwhile socio-political goal. This is because happy people whose immediate and deeper needs are met, are more likely to take responsibility for others and the society as a whole. “Happy people are more productive in profound and complex ways” (p. 78). Moreover, the term listening society refers to a new, more complex notion of welfare – one that by supporting peoples’ development not only facilitates better choices and healthier, happier lives of its members, but thereby also helps to actually saves costs which would otherwise be generated for various kinds of treatments and by a considerable number of collateral damages (p. 84). In Hanzi’s words: By “deliberately and carefully cultivat(ing) a deeper kind of welfare system that includes the psychological, social and emotional aspects of human beings (…) the average person (…) becomes much more secure, authentic and happy (in a deep, meaningful sense of the word); (…) such people can then recreate society in a myriad of ways, solving many of the complex, wicked problems that we are facing today” (p. 72).

While the book does give some examples as to how this could happen, drawing on happiness research and an impressive list of references from meditation research documenting meditation’s multiple benefits (pp. 96-103), it seems to be primarily concerned with laying the groundwork and seeding the broader, overall vision than with defining concrete strategies and steps. The vision itself
is extended to a larger systemic level, with societies competing for being the most listening one, as a “competitive edge in the global economy”, so to speak (p. 93). With “human development driv(ing) economic growth, (this) deeper welfare system is necessary” in order not to “be outcompeted by other, more listening societies where citizens truly do thrive” (ibid.).

The Metamodern Model

In a nutshell, the metamodern model is essentially introduced as a combination of four dimensions that Hanzi presents as independent of each other: cognitive complexity, cultural code, subjective state and depth. The first two dimensions: personal (individual) cognitive development and socio-cultural development (or “code”) come across as elements from the Wilberian integral model. Cognitive complexity is essentially presented based on Michael Commons’ Model of Hierarchical Complexity (MHC); cultural code appears to be a modified version of Spiral Dynamics. The two other dimensions, state and depth (p. 158), differ from the Wilberian integral model to some degree, even if probably less substantially than with regard to their relevance and positioning in the Hanzi model. (Unfortunately, Hanzi’s model is not visualized anywhere in the book, so that the reader has to mentally build it up from the text on her own). Let’s look at each of the dimensions successively, with the two developmental ones going first.

Cognitive Complexity: The fact that Michael Commons’ MHC is given a particularly prominent place as “the by far most scientifically viable and consistent [model], and the one that indisputably has the strongest empirical evidence” (p. 171) is less surprising, given that the Hanzi author has spent several months working with Commons in the US after completing his dissertation. Since the MHC is well known to IR readers, I will not bother summarizing its merits and contents, but rather report some of the dissonances I stumbled over during my reading. While there is no doubt about Hanzi’s assertion about the solidity and mathematical basis of the MHC, I had to read twice when it comes to some of Hanzi’s other claims. For example that “Commons is the only one that has discovered one [i.e. cognitive complexity, E.F.] of the [Hanzi’s] four fundamental dimensions of development” (p. 173) – what about the Piagetian foundations of cognitive developmental research in the 1930s?

Equally irritating is Hanzi’s treatment of essentially “all of the (other) holistic adult development theories” as “fail(ing) to grasp quite what it [development] is” (p. 172). Without any mention of the specific goals and approaches of the respective theories, Hanzi somewhat seems to criticize everything that is not MHC, precisely for not being MHC. For instance, he claims that renowned researchers of ego development such as Robert Kegan, Jane Loevinger and Susanne Cook-Greuter “mix things up” or “blend in issues of personality into the different stages and spice it up with a bit of psychiatric diagnostics (where the lower stages are described as psychopaths, more or less),” p. 173. – Excuse me?! Several similarly bold claims about other authors are based on similarly fluffy grounds that often raise more questions than they answer.

There is no discussion of the distinction between hard and soft stage models and related debates on measurement (see Stein & Heikkinen, 2009), nor of their respective merits and limitations. Just plain judgement. What’s worse, Hanzi claims that “the main problem of many of the adult development theorists, from Jane Loevinger and Susanne Cook-Greuter to Robert Kegan, stems from the fact that their authors are at this [the MHC systematic] cognitive stage” (p. 201) (sic!).
Neither does he elaborate what “problem” he is referring to, nor does he provide any evidence for his claim about the developmental stage of the mentioned researchers. In a private communication with the main Hanzi author, he explains that the above claim is based on their “putting development into one scale which is one-dimensional, and driven by one central logic (one system, rather than several systems with differing properties).” Hanzi sees this “tendency to view everything as "ONE system" (as) a hallmark of systematic stage thinkers” (private communication).

While lacking empirical evidence is a reoccurring theme in the book, Hanzi remains relaxed: “I don’t have the data to prove it, but as far as I can tell…” (p. 337); or: “parts of the book are based on arguments and generalizations that you must weigh and consider with your own rational and emotional faculties, much like the arguments of other social theorists. (...) Social theory is where science and common sense meet” (p. 20).

Another irritation arises when Hanzi complains that “many of the neo-Piagetians (...) tend to be relatively narrow researchers who don’t fully take stock of the social implications of their own theoretical work” and therefore “fail to understand the vast consequences of their theory for understanding society, and the world at large” (p. 385, footnote 80). While it is true that most adult development researchers “are lousy political sociologists,” why accuse them of their choice of topic and academic focus if they have never claimed to deliver a sociological analysis? True, “that is another reason we need Hanzi” (ibid. 385, fn. 80). At the same time, Hanzi would not have been possible without the work of all these previous researchers in the first place. So, while claiming that all the “solid science” is on his (and Commons’) side, Hanzi fails to apply a basic principle of scientific integrity when it comes to paying due credit to the achievements of other research traditions. We will come back to this and the problem of empirical back-up.

The second developmental dimension in the Hanzi model of metamodernism is sociocultural development or, as he puts it, cultural code, evolving through a range of symbol stages from A (archaic) to G (metamodern). Here again, the author draws heavily on work by preceding researchers, namely Jean Gebser, Clare Graves and Don Beck/Chris Cowan’s Spiral Dynamics. Even though he slightly modifies some of Beck/Cowan’s stage names (“Faustian” for “Red” or “Imperial” and “Post-Faustian” for “Blue” or “Mythic/Traditional” and calls the overall stage category of the cultural code dimension “meta-memes,” there is no substantially novel quality claimed for these stages description-wise. Given that the Hanzi model is not based on evidence of its own, this is not surprising.

At the same time, Hanzi uses and introduce several terms, namely value memes, symbol stages, “meta memes” and, later in the book, “effective value memes,” the definition – and distinction of which remains somewhat unclear. While the contents of the seven memes/stages appear to be what we know from the SD/Wilberian models, the almost synonymous use of some of these terms adds some conceptual confusion. For clarification, Hanzi, as often in the book, refers to further forthcoming volumes with a promise of more detail. (In this case, The 6 Hidden patterns of World History is announced to discuss “the historical development of meta-memes, i.e. the overall patterns that set the logic for what memes can be expected to show up at a certain stage of societal development,” p. 213). Later on, we learn that the concept of “effective value meme” is in fact a new, way more complex variable, first mentioned, but only vaguely explained on p. 174 as an “overall pattern” generated by the relationship between Hanzi’s four dimensions complexity, code, state and depth. Here again, the aim is high, namely to provide “a more stringent version of the
Spiral Dynamics model, solving its main problems and clearing some of the confusions around it…”, while its clarification and operationalization is postponed (“each of which [the four categories] will get simplified but workable definitions…,” p. 174).

Before we move over to the two other dimension of the model, what I do find helpful in view of the first two is the analogy of using the terms “hardware” and “software” for cognitive development and cultural code respectively (216ff.). Hanzi argues that it needs a certain cognitive stage (as the necessary “hardware”) to be able to function properly at the respective level, while the cultural code of a social context can be adopted through socialization, like “downloading” a software content, provided the corresponding hardware/cognitive level has sufficient “hard drive space”. This illustrates that with a given kind of hardware (or, more precisely, operating system), only equal or lower level software can be run successfully, whereas higher level (more complex) software can possibly be downloaded, but might not function properly based on the existing hardware (operating system, my term, EF).

This analogy is a nice illustration of the differences and interrelations between individual and collective/cultural development. An individual that is born and socialized into a certain culture, and hence is exposed to that culture (has the software available and downloaded), but will interpret and run it according to their own currently operating hardware/operating system. Stephen Chilton (1988), in his Neo-Piagetian account of political development, has formulated this relationship in view of what has become a frequent challenge in the area of democratization politics: transferring democratic institutions to non-democratic environments. Chilton states: “Unless the institution’s structure is preserved by people at the appropriate stage, the institution will regress to less developed forms” (Chilton 1988, p. 88).

In this sense, Hanzi’s chapters on the development of “cultural code” (also called “symbol stages”) and on “language travelling through history, picking up new symbols and meanings as larger societies and more complex interactions between greater numbers of humans over greater distances emerge” (p. 223), are a nice reframing and adaptation of developmental theory to social science discourse. This is of value in itself, given that the latter appears to be one of the main target audiences of the book.

So let’s now turn to the two other dimensions that are introduced as core elements of the metamodern model besides cognitive complexity and cultural code: subjective state and (psychological) depth. To readers familiar with integral modelling, it comes as a surprise that Hanzi presents these as the “inner dimensions”, as opposed the two former ones. According to the author, the developmental dimensions describe “a kind of ‘exterior’ reality, meaning that they can both be intersubjectively recognized and, in some sense, ‘objectively’ studied” (p. 249). While he sees the two developmental dimensions as referring to “the organism’s behavior”, he refers to state and depth as “the organism’s own inner experience”. This, then, is suggested as a cure to a claimed “inner dimensions blindness – the failure to recognize and understand the primary importance that peoples’ inner lives have in society” (ibid.).

Note that Hanzi does not make reference to Wilber’s zones and the integral methodological pluralism derived from them, and that he only mentions phenomenology very briefly. Therefore, one has to assume that all of the latter seem to not suffice him to cover what he is after – up to
experts in phenomenology to judge whether his own modelling (see below) adds substantially new insights and better ways of conceptualizing things here.

By “subjective state,” Hanzi refers to “higher” and “lower” inner states of being. They are claimed to be different from emotions, but rather something “more fundamental” that includes “some kind of sum or totality of how we feel” in each moment (p. 254). As an ordering principle for subjective states, he then comes up with a scale from 1-13, reaching from lower states (“hell,” “horrible,” “tortured,” “tormented”) to medium states (“very uneasy” to “joyous, full of light”), up until the high states (“vast/grand/open,” “blissful/saintly,” “enlightened,” p. 260).

Reading chapter 12 on subjective states, one starts to sense that this (and the following) dimension are of particular importance to the author for personal reasons, and that these insights are the product of his own inner growth process. In fact, he does share some biographical and family background in this regard: “During most of my adult life, I have been followed by a sense of tragedy, a subtle but pervasive sadness… (…) the aching heart became the main engine of my life’s work” (p. 6). So while he has a whole backpack of deep difficult experiences here to draw on, that have apparently not been adequately addressed by other/integral models, Hanzi also concedes that “these fields have yet to produce a systematic theory of development equaling the MHC” (which, as mentioned above, he considers as the most scientifically reliable model, p. 249).

Different from the stage descriptions in the first two developmental dimensions of the model, there is no comparable description of the 13 states, either from personal experience, literary accounts or other sources. Moreover, Hanzi suggests that one can only really understand states that one has experienced oneself (p. 272). This, of course, not only makes it difficult to come up with “objective” scaling and modeling strategies regarding the different states. The author limits himself to the assertion that “even if my scale isn’t proven, it is certainly testable: you would need to device a way of measuring physiological correlates and perhaps peoples’ self-described experiences” (p. 395, fn. 129). In any case, the question remains open, on which grounds the 13 state model has been built by the author. Has “Hanzi” himself – or people he draws on – actually experienced the full spectrum that he so clearly (yet vaguely) lays out in his book? Or, since at some point, he admits that he hasn’t, do they come from “common sense,” single intuitive examples, or solid scientific research? Based on his own premises and standards at least, it becomes close to impossible to verify Hanzi’s model of 13 subjective states empirically.

But anyway, let’s assume they were meaningful categories. Because we need them to understand the fourth fundamental dimension of Hanzi’s model, the idea of a spectrum of states that a person has experiential access to, which he refers to as “depth.” Even though Hanzi claims that the four dimensions are independent of each other, depth obviously has an immediate relation to subjective states. He conceives depth as a product of the range (and thus number) of subjective states that one has experienced out of the above described spectrum. The more states an individual has experienced, the greater their psychological depth. Depending on whether one’s experience includes more of the lower or more of the higher states, Hanzi speaks of “dark” versus “light” depth. Just like for states, he stresses that “we are generally only capable of recognizing the forms of depth that we have developed ourselves” (p. 298). At the same time, the empirical basis of the emergence of this dimension of the model remains unclear.
Again, one senses that not only is conveying this dimension particularly dear to the author, but also that the depth chapter is likely written on the basis of some deeply transformative personal experiences, including ones of existential suffering of his own and people he knows. For instance, he points out that “a lot of the less-than-fully-functional people in society tend to out-depth most of us (…). Broken and crazy people, for all their limitations, often live in greater worlds; they have walked to hell and back. A lot of them just stumbled on their way back” (p. 288). This theme is touched at various occasions. Examples include experiences from the main Hanzi author’s family and the observation (apparently also based on personal experience) that a therapist should possess at least the same depth as their client in order to be able to help them (p. 288).

Considering the passion with which Hanzi explores this dimension (“depth as beauty, mystery and tragedy;” “only a sense of tragedy can drive us to work for the wretched of the earth: loving until it hurts (…), only broken hearts can save the world” (p. 293), it is safe to say that adding this dimension to next-stage modelling is one of the core foci and concerns of the book.

The importance of depth is additionally stressed by the fact, that Hanzi equates depth with wisdom (“wisdom is great depth, plain and simple,” p. 302). At the same time, a whole chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the idea of wisdom – if not the whole body of wisdom research. As far as the latter is concerned, Hanzi’s positions resemble those of his discussion of the “holistic” developmental models: The research in the field uses different approaches or doesn’t consider his own dimensions, hence it’s worth nothing: “The wisdom people haven’t done their homework (…), they haven’t figured out exactly what they are talking about;” wisdom is “a crap variable” (p. 300). And unfortunately, Hanzi again combines his critique with broad and cloudy judgements about a number of other writers, for instance Eckhart Tolle (“kind and wise, but poorly educated and not very clever,” p. 302, 278), to mention only one example. Unfortunately, the author does not explain how he arrives at his evaluations of specific people’s developmental stage, level of depth etc., but seems to call upon the reader’s trust in (his, Hanzi’s) common sense: “Social theory is where science and common sense meet” (p. 20).

Despite these weaknesses – and notwithstanding the difficulty of measurement – the depth category can be considered as the most original idea in the Hanzi model. Moreover, in this regard, the author’s particular interest seems to be to redefine the interrelations between the four dimensions, more precisely, to have state and depth acknowledged as equally – or even more – important than structural cognitive and cultural development. While development is a goal in all four dimensions in order for individuals to mature Hanzi’s own preference is on what he calls the inner dimensions, i.e. state and depth (“if I had to choose, I’d go with state,” p. 348).

He gives multiple examples of people with high depth despite low complexity, as if to point out that what is commonly appreciated as an indicator of personal development in integral circles, namely cognitive and/or ego development, is only part of the story. On the one hand, this preference seems to imply that people whose personality profiles show high depth (i.e. wisdom, life experience etc. or spiritual development) are of particular “value” for society and thus, should be given more appreciation, regardless of their cognitive complexity. On the other hand, Hanzi rightly points out that development generally requires a benevolent environment and, ideally, a minimum quality of state (high states “have lasting impact on our overall psychological development,” p. 275). So the fact that relatively high/positive/happy states can be brought about quite easily through some sort of support or “nudging,” opens up a worthwhile field of activity for Hanzi’s metamodern politics.
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and society: “Just imagine how differently society would function if many more of us were in higher states a larger portion of the time” (p. 270).

Altogether, Hanzi suggests a model that combines the four dimensions – and even allows high depth to “outweigh” low complexity in a person’s overall developmental profile: “If we are roughly correct, all of these four dimensions should correlate strongly with people's value memes; in fact, they should together make up the value meme, more or less” (personal communication). In the book, Hanzi therefore introduces the new concept of “effective value meme (evm)” which he defines as “a kind of average between your complexity, code, state and depth” (p. 310). In other words, the higher one scores in each dimension, the higher one’s evm.

Obviously, the term “development” takes on a different meaning when we turn from structuralist stages to inner states, and Hanzi himself does concede the difficulty of measuring the latter. What he does not spell out at all though is how the four dimensions can actually be translated into one overall indicator or category. While the idea that an individual can have low complexity and high depth is very plausible, it is not made very clear, how “these four dimensions work together to generate overall patterns” (the evms). The book leaves open, what those patterns might look like in practice, and how they could be meaningfully modelled on a higher, more complex level, beyond just summarizing and adding up someone’s scores in each individual dimension (p. 174).

In view of the relation between states and stages, Hanzi himself just states that they are related, but don’t predict each other (p. 270), and that “states are more volatile and easier to affect than stages of cognitive complexity (p. 271). So far, these things are well-known, not least from Wilber’s work in this area – with which Hanzi does not seem to agree with though: “Wilber’s model comes closest to understanding these issues. He speaks of two kinds of development: one of spiritual states and one of cognitive stages. But his model (called the Wilber-Combs lattice) is still spaghetti” (p. 173). Eh…?!

General Comments

This, together with a couple of sometimes very harsh critiques of other authors and their models lead us to some final, overall comments on The Listening Society.

The book is definitely inspiring reading to anyone interested in integrally informed politics and probably a long overdue wake-up call for postmodernists, with its convincingly laid out claim that “there is no safe political position” (p. 151) and that it’s time for postmodernism to face its own inner contradictions. It also contains convincing pieces of analysis when it comes to reinterpreting the evolution of political governance and socio-economic conflicts over the past 2-3 centuries (finally an integrally informed sociologist!), as well as numerous worthwhile ideas helping to conceive ways for transcending the left-right divide and other challenges of metamodern/integral politics (p. 45). Part of the more concrete sections is Hanzi’s description of the Danish political party Alternativet (The Alternative) which is trying to put elements of these new approach to politics into practice since 2013 (chapter 5).

At the same time, what some have considered a “refreshing” strength (namely “that the ideas of the books are robust but not so carefully fine-tuned as to amputate capacity for impact,” see Hilary
Bradbury’s recent review on the Metamodern mailing list) also appears to come with some noteworthy weaknesses. I will point out three of them below.

First, the choice to depart from more a conventional tone and style in favor of what Hanzi calls “sincere irony” can be understood and justified by the declared purpose of the book. However, in my reading, the text does not always walk its talk when it comes to displaying a “listening” attitude towards other contributions to the broad field of metamodern, developmental, integral and other streams of research. When talking about other authors (i.e. developmentalists and wisdom researchers), Hanzi often takes a rather judgmental position, instead of paying credit where credit is due. In this sense, I didn’t particularly experience Hanzi’s book as a “listening” exercise; his universe does not demonstrate the proposed “youniverse” that sees and appreciates everyone else’s efforts. Despite repeated self-ironic confessions à la “we are probably, after all, mistaken” and his explicit “ironic smile at our own self-importance,” Hanzi’s overall tone comes across as just a bit overconfident. It sometimes also recalls discourses around making one’s own tribe “great again” – by bashing other communities, in this case, the integral one, for example. Notwithstanding its ironic stance and its legitimately provocative call for action, the book could display a somewhat healthier degree of sincere scientific humility which, IMHO, can also be seen as an indicator of personal and spiritual development.

For instance, while Hanzi is very explicit about his own model (and the metamodern perspective) being the best and “most powerful theory” currently available for explaining the world (“only the Metamodern value meme can see the world with a sufficient sobriety,” p. 332) and about his favorite MHC as being the most scientific and consistent possible methodological approach for this endeavor, he dedicates much less space to other systems than the MHC. Quote: “We don’t really have to bother with going through the other theories of adult development; I should only briefly point out that they don’t really work…” (p. 346). At the same time, he tends to remain rather vague about the “weak spots” of other theories, often failing to back up broad claims.

Sometimes, this raises questions as to the author’s understanding of the respective models. Take for instance Hanzi’s claims about Robert Kegan’s and Susanne Cook-Greuter’s personal cognitive stage and depth based on the design of their theories. He claims that they are functioning at the (MHC) systematic level, because “they both insist upon putting development into one scale which is one-dimensional, and driven by one central logic (one system, rather than several systems with differing properties).” While it may be true that the “tendency to view everything as ‘ONE system’ is a hallmark of systematic stage thinkers”, there is no distinction between the person and their model, let alone a proper analysis of personal stage. While I myself only intuitively doubt Hanzi’s evaluation, a colleague who has personally worked with both Kegan and Cook-Greuter more intensively, gave the following comment: “I don’t think either of them is inherently at the systematic level, they both display too much subtlety, nuance, compassion, humor and so on to just see things that way. At the same time, what a person who only reads their text sees is their ‘performance’ in relation to the text they read. Given that most of what they might read is aiming to describe and outline a theoretical model, it could appear at this level. So in such a case, it appears the author is conflating performance in a specific context with the person, and this is dangerous” (personal communication).

Hanzi then goes on to claim that “both do, however, have greater depth and state than most of us” and that “people who are higher in depth and state than in their complexity and code” – what
does this mean, actually? … “are often tempted towards a ‘holistic’ view because you feel that there is more to the world than your mind can explain (….), and this tends to pressure the mind to accept magical beliefs” (personal communication). He then gives one (disputable) example each for what he thinks is a magical belief, and ends on the assertion that what he has diagnosed as an imbalance of depth and stage (connected with magical beliefs) “is the most common imbalance in integralists.” He further states, that the (non)belief “in magic is a major difference between integralists and metamodernists.” And according to Hanzi, of course, it’s the “integralists” who believe in magic while the metamodernists don't, because they “find such beliefs pathological as they can and will curtail any healthy expression of higher stages unfolding in society at large.” Aha.

Second, as to the empirical grounds of Hanzi’s own model, what we find is quite far away from the MHC’s high and clean measurement standards, when it comes to those dimensions that he brings in on top of existing integral models. This is partly due to the fact that inner dimensions such as state and depth are considerably difficult to explore, let alone to measure in any intersubjectively verifiable way. The author is well aware of this weakness (“I don’t have the data to prove it,” p. 337). And while he does mention possible methodological avenues to get a hold of these dimensions (such as in-depth interviews or brain analysis), there is no sign in the book that he has actually engaged in any of the proposed methods, even with regard to a limited number of cases, to test if any of them are helpful in the context of the model. All we get is the confession that “parts of the book are based on arguments and generalizations that you must weigh and consider with your own rational and emotional faculties, much like the arguments of other social theorists” ….

Finally, connected to the first critique, it often remains less clear than it would be desirable, how the proposed new model or meta-system relates to previous, existing ones – and what, therefore, is actually the new aspect or insight (except combining 4 dimensions two of which remain theoretical). For the developmental stages, Hanzi draws heavily on Michael Commons’ MHC (for cognitive stage) and on Spiral Dynamics for what he calls “cultural code.” For the latter, he uses a few new stage names, but does not propose any essentially new contents, let alone empirical data that would suggest modifications to either of these models. When it comes to his understanding of “inner dimensions” and the relations between states and stages, which appears to be a crucial issue to him, there is no discussion of Wilber’s zones, and the Wilber-Combs lattice is, as it were, ridiculed as “spaghetti” (whatever this means). Furthermore, the fact that Hanzi does not provide any graphic illustration of his model (beyond some tables on individual sub-dimensions), but keeps it exclusively textual and thus, linear (-ironic!), does not make it easier for the reader to buy into his specific overall construct of effective value memes.

So, coming back to my initial question about the essence of metamodernism as presented in The Listening Society, and about how it is similar to or different from “integral,” the answer has not become clearer. I by all means appreciate the momentum that the book has generated among a broader circle of interested readers in the direction of transformative perspectives for politics and society. (For the moment, the discussion about it seems to be led mainly by male intellectuals though). At the same time, I would still describe it as one interpretation – or (the beginning of an) application of integral ideas to these domains (more of that comes in volume 2), maybe also a translation of “integral” for wider postmodern audiences, which is of value of course. I see few substantially new ideas or concepts though, that have not somehow been present in the writings of other integral authors before. Yet, I do see a powerful vision, a strong sense of urgency to “get
these things out into the public,” and I see a growing community of engaged readers, followers and co-creators who seem to have the willpower – or, in Hanzi’s words: “the balls” – to go forward behind the flag of metamodernism and implement a next generation of political leadership and citizenry. This by itself, cannot be overestimated.

References


Reviewed by Verna DeLauer

Many environmental practitioners are aware of the role Aldo Leopold played in the environmental movement in the mid-20th century. Leopold was a forester, a professor, a conservationist, and a writer known most notably for his book, *A Sand County Almanac* (1966). This book in particular brought to light the interrelationships between humans and land as well as the moral responsibility incumbent upon us to honor those relationships.

Leopold’s “land ethic” is an expanded definition of the notion of “community” to mean that caring for one another or for the land are not two separate processes but are intrinsically linked. With the threat of a climate emergency looming, this enhanced framing of “community” is desperately needed to create global solutions. Leopold also stressed that caring is often the result of understanding, feeling, and experiencing. Leopold’s vision was for people to have open dialogue about the land to conserve it for future generations. While water is a part of the land ethic, is it important enough to stand on its own? Should water be at the center of the community from which all else flows?

An integral water ethic is the topic of *Loving Water Across Religions* by Elizabeth McAnally. Her book is educational and a call to action. Specifically, she says, “Recognizing that the amount of water on Earth is finite demands a shift in values; humans need to learn to regard water not as a resource to be exploited but as a source of life to be cared for” (p. 5). I believe her aim is to bring attention to the global water crisis and provoke empathy for water itself through explanations of the intricate ties between some of the world’s religions and water. She examines water through the perspectives of Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism, ending her book with a secular approach to embodying a water ethic.

According to McAnally, our global water crisis manifests in the way we exploit our water resources in some areas of the world and in the way millions of people lack access to clean water and appropriate sanitation services in other parts. In other words, while water covers 70% of earth, 3% of that is freshwater and even less is potable, or water that can be made available to people. Water use around the world has increased. Increased use coupled with threats from climate change leads to even more vulnerable water security in areas of the world already experiencing water stress.

Water is a social issue. Our experiences and connections to water differ around the world. A water ethic would mean acknowledging not only our own reliance on water but others, even non-

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humans, reliance on it too. McAnally is asking us to rethink our relationship to water from one of utilitarian to one of interdependence; from instrumental to intrinsic. Can we feel love for water?

McAnnally’s approach to a relationship with water would cultivate the subjective experience of water rather than water as a resource, a commodity, a source to be managed and objectively studied. She calls for conversations about water to transcend economics, politics, and science. Valuing water through an integral water ethic lens would acknowledge that ecological problems cannot be addressed without also examining social and cultural interconnections. McAnnally points to the intersection of religion and ecology as being ripe to tackle the complexity of today’s problems, such as the water crisis. By making explicit the many ways that different religions relate to water, religious and environmental scholars, leaders and advocates can collaborate on future solutions. She focuses on Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

She states that reflecting upon baptism helps us reconnect to our relationship with water. According to McAnnally, baptism is a “central ritual of Christianity” (p. 51). Because water is a cleansing element, it metaphorically, also cleanses one’s soul. Water used in baptism and water used in other elements of a church service is water blessed by a priest, or holy water. The “material substance” of water is just as important as the symbology of water (Robinson, 2013). Protecting the material substance of water is a moral endeavor. In seeing water as part of God’s creation, one’s relationship to water reflects their relationship to God. In helping Christians see these connections, McAnnally advocates for more attention paid to one’s own responsibility to nature.

McAnnally draws from a range of thinking by philosophers and theologians in building her thesis throughout the book. She references ecotheologian Larry Rasmussen’s work as it builds off of the existentialist philosopher, Martin Buber’s I-Thou and I-It types of relationships. These perspectives argue that we must shift our perspective of water to include the subjective. If water is simply a resource for humans, we may forget or ignore its intrinsic value as part of God’s creation. She quotes Pope Francis who says that we must understand that the world is God’s loving gift and that we realize and care for our interconnectedness.

Her chapter on Hinduism aims to more explicitly connect science and religion. Commitment to scientific inquiry and loyalty to religion can work together to protect water resources. The Ganges River is worshipped as a Goddess. The metaphor of river as Goddess is part of an integral water ethic where water fosters love. Whereas her chapter on Buddhism advocates for the Bodhisattva2 within to do one’s part in water conservation; She refers to this as Ecosattva. Or, instead we might think of water itself as a bodhisattva, nourishing us, cleansing us, giving us life.

Loving Water Across Religions ends with two chapters that offer both practical and philosophical guidance to implement some of the book’s main ideas. She says, “An integral water ethic considers water to be not merely a resource for human ends but a sacred source of life… An integral water ethic supports the cultivation of love and compassion for water and for all who suffer from the global water crisis; in doing so it promotes relating to water as a loving and compassionate being” (p. 155). To realize this ethic, we should try to be fully conscious of the ways we interact with water - in the shower, at the beach, at the sink, and as we quench our thirst. From a religious

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2 A Bodhisattva is “someone who is full of love and compassion for all human beings, generating awareness of the suffering of others (including non-humans)…and striving for their well-being.”
perspective, water is sacred and as a result, we should honor, respect, and love it intrinsically and for its nourishing qualities.

McAnally offers contemplative practices for practicing and nurturing an integral water ethic. From simple actions such as being mindful as we drink a glass of water to a more involved meditation, the practices offered can be used within schools, community groups, and places of worship. I tried one practice called The Bowl of Tears (Macy, 2012) with my early morning environmental studies undergraduate class. Students begrudgingly followed me from our warm classroom to the chilly shore of Pearly Pond. We are fortunate to have our own body of water as the backdrop for our small campus up on a hill. Yet, do many of us fully experience the pond in the way that McAnally’s integral water ethic suggests? We drive by the pond, kayak in it, fish from it, and get our drinking water from it, yet, do we love it? Do we have empathy for it? Are we interested in protecting it? Do we see it as sacred? I asked my students and myself these questions as we started the contemplative practice. I asked a student to go to the pond and fill a bowl of water and to place it on the ground in the middle of our class circle. The bowl, I said, represents the tears of the world. As we stood around it, I asked the students to walk to the bowl of tears and place one hand inside if they felt compelled. As they ran the water through their fingers, I asked them to imagine a feeling of love for water and of empathy for those who are suffering from a water crisis. At first, no one moved. I began the practice myself to nervous smiles and averted gazes. We waited. Then one student said, Ok, I’ll do it. Within minutes all 28 students’ hands were wet. They needed the support of one another to support water. Rather than religious devotion, commitment to community and need for acceptance guided the practice that day. I asked for a volunteer to dump the water back into the pond now that we all had felt it. We walked to the shoreline and watched quietly as one student poured the water into the pond. As she turned back to the class, I saw tears in her eyes.

References


Reviewed by Marilyn Hamilton

Book Review - Overview

*The Future Has Other Plans* has been dedicated to “heritage managers who sensed there was a better way to plan but weren’t sure how to get there.” However, it could be a very useful guide for other kinds of planning professionals who might count themselves in the private sector as developers or in the public sector as civic managers or city planners or as managers in civil society/third sector.

The authors McCool and Kohl have structured their book to give the reader a logical but satisfying path through the realities of both natural and cultural heritage projects. The authors use a mixed metaphor of a (Scharmer-style) U path down the left-hand side of an iceberg of challenges, shipwrecks and messy problems through the shift-point at the bottom of the iceberg U and up the right-hand side into the light of a new paradigm reframing practices toward an holistic/integrally-informed approach to planning.

Part 1 introduces the reader to the realities that professional conservationists face as they operate under three major worldviews: Traditional, Modern and Premodern. This part should resonate not only with the experienced project leader but may horrify the less experienced heritage change agent, as the authors share their professional and life experience from natural and cultural sites around the world. Thus, their reviews of what has been, what is and what longs-to-be is well-informed, clearly described and often keenly illustrated.

Part 2 consists of four chapters, each exploring one of the integral quadrants for the benefit of:

- the Manager’s Mind (Chapter 5)
- the Manager’s Well-Being, Behaviour and Skills (Chapter 6)
- the Collective Influences on Planning (Chapter 7)
- the Institutions that Serve Heritage Sites (Chapter 8).

These are followed by Chapter 9, that summarizes the journey just completed and lays out the Holistic Planning strategy that the authors propose addresses the many barriers explored in Part 1 by applying the learnings of Chapters 5-8.

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As noted below the structure of the book could be strengthened by making Chapter 9 into Part 3 and dividing it into 2 or 3 separate chapters. This would make the journey back to the light less overwhelming and more likely to be adopted.

The book has 2 “ends” – opening with a note of contextualing from the editor and an appreciative Foreword from a valued peer, Ron van Oers, Vice Director of World Heritage Institute of Training and Research in Asia and the Pacific (under the auspices of UNESCO), and closing with an Epilogue tabling the differences between Conventional Planning and Holistic Planning.

Part 1

Part 1 gives the history of Heritage Planning that arose out of Modernism in the 1800’s with many good intentions of those who sought to manage sites of value – but as the authors see in retrospect were very much influenced by the views and values of colonialism and the scientific empirical methodologies. Starting with the unexpected sinking of the Titanic as a major illustration of the shortcomings of these approaches (and the source of their iceberg metaphor), they note the problems that arose from inappropriate methodologies that has dogged the profession all the way to the 1960’s. One of the examples they repeatedly come back to is Yellowstone National Park – whose management is still addressing the impacts of early violations to natural heritage planning (e.g. removing predators) and recent incursions of humans into its borders (e.g. with snow mobiles).

McCool and Kohl explain the original intentions and many shortcomings of Rational Comprehensive Planning (RCP) and Technical Rationality (TR) and the many sites to which it has been applied around the world – generally with the same ineffective outcomes that result from top-down methodologies, applied with shallow to no attempts at participation and frequent disrespect to local cultures and life conditions. They offer many examples of “shipwrecked plans” from World Heritage sites and observe that if they are rampant under the management of that high-profile institution, they run rampant in many other protected places.

The authors go on to bemoan that the evidence of systemic failure in heritage management that has been denied, ignored, rarely analysed and infrequently researched. Therefore, the same RCP-style processes are being repeated around the globe, without clients or funders realizing they have a track record of failure around the world. The authors take a courageous stand in pointing out this as a grievous (if not unforgivable) oversight in their profession that wastes resources, negatively impacts cultures and intended beneficiaries but keeps the profession (and professionals) funded and in business.

The authors have designed a format to add value to their narrative by creating a scheme of commentary boxes:

- Tables & Figures – to convey data, relationships, information and statistics
- Outside the Box – to show how planning could operate differently
- Toolboxes – to offer tools for effective implementation (like Mind Mapping)
- Inside the Box – to show new approaches that are working in other environments
- Fire Box – tracking the four Learning Loops
Another daring structure that the authors provide that links all 3 parts of the book is their exploration of single, double, triple and quadruple loop learning. This emphasizes their proposition that managers need to be supported by learning at all 4 levels. Further, they recognize that this developmental approach to expanding management capacity may take many years – which few funders are committed to enable. This information is deeply explanatory (and why we dive to the bottom of the U) but also deeply disturbing as the authors are not in a position to offer a solution that can readily change planning cycles that seem to be locked into one- or two-year spans. However, at the end of Chapter 9, they get close to revealing the embedded pattern of relationships that could continue to hold this stickiness or if released into the holistic paradigm release them into holistic connections. With Table 9.3 they relate and compare the qualities of the three main actors in an intervention: Heritage Community, Technical Assistance, Donor.

The authors are skilled storytellers and generally respectful academics, documenting their points with relevant literature references that support their points. They quote all the right sources from other discourses making them available to this specialized one.

I am appreciative of the range of discourses that they tapped to support their arguments – from architecture (Schon and Argyris), to systems thinking (Kuhn, Meadows, Senge, Wheatley et al), to adult learning theory (Kegan & Lahey), leadership (Ackoff), city planning (Friedman and Jacobs), to biology (Jared Diamond), to their own professions as conservationists (Pedersen). They have also drawn effectively on the Integral literature starting with Wilber, but also embracing Hochachka, McIntosh, Martineau and Brown. They bring in powerful quotations from Maalouf and reference Centers for Human Emergence Netherlands and Global – but curiously omit to include in their References Spiral Dynamics’ authors Beck and Cowan (SD) and references for Graves which are clearly implied in many aspects of their commentary (from Graves’ quotation of “allowing people to be who they are”; to rewriting quotations from Maalouf by replacing SD descriptors with “Traditional”, “Modern,” “Post-Modern”; to their recognition of the importance of life conditions that underlie Graves and SD approaches such as their discussion of conformance and performance). Other authors that I am curious that they omitted from references are Esborn-Hargens (editor of the Journal of Integral Theory and Practice and co-author with Zimmerman of “Integral Ecology”) – all contemporaneous with Brown whom they cite at length. These are academic niggles – but relevant to the credibility of this narrative.

The authors introduce a way to describe the worldview that is not working for heritage managers with the acronym PLUS (predictable, linear, understandable, stable). This then becomes contrasted with their proposition of a different mental model that captures the way the world really operates as DICE (dynamic, impossible to completely understand, complex, ever-changing). (The reviewer is curious why the authors did not choose the more commonly used VUCA acronym (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) which seems to capture the same qualities and thereby connect their approach to similar explorations in the discourse of other sectors?)

However, McCool and Kohl offer an incisive critique of a very widespread approach to strategic analysis, using SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). They critique the process as generally non-participatory, aimed at only short-term strategic elements with little or no consideration of emergence. Moreover, they go on to critique power dimensions and remind the reader of the contexts of power that the manager is subject to in making decisions, creating teams and implementing plans.
Even before we enter the Integral Chapters the authors make us aware that managers need to be well apprised of the importance of values because they not only impact the process of management but the outcomes of humans and non-humans (like elephants) in heritage sites. Likewise, they emphasize that learning for managers ought to be paramount, ubiquitous and continuous.

Before delving into the individual chapters focused on the Integral Quadrants, Chapter 4 offers a comprehensive and adept explanation of the key characteristics of the Integral Model including discussions of: states, stages, lines, types and quadrants. If the reader is already integrally informed, this chapter could be skipped – but for the novice to Integral discourse this chapter is invaluable and well illustrated with tables and examples. It finishes with a good explanation of Levels, drawing on Wilber, Brown and McIntosh to provide descriptions so that the manager can recognize themselves, peers, clients, funders and cultures. The chapter concludes that the “Integral Map Points Us Toward Possible Futures for Heritage Management” with the reassuring quotation from Ken Wilber that “if you study this Integral Map … it begins to make room …in your soul for all the parts of you that were disowned …[and] even makes room for those who did the disowning.”

Part 2

With this encouragement, the authors then launch 4 chapters that provide a flotilla of integral lifeboats to explore a full AQAL approach to a holistic planning process.

In Chapter 5 they unabashedly support the criticality of “minding the mind”; the value of interior realities with a concise summary of “Forces that Influence Planning Implementation” from the perspective of first person “I”. Without pulling punches they cover Perceptions, values and attitudes, Beliefs knowledge and expertise, Intentions and Cognitive Capacities. While doing this they leave the “hooks” in the table for the future chapters to cover the perspectives from “It, We and Its” – which should help the reader build on their understanding and insights of the evolving Integral Model. While showing the value of the mind-based psychological approach to planning (and how and why it is so often omitted), the authors also point to the barriers caused by its omission and the triteness of glossing over vision statements created with “glued together” concepts instead of taking the time to delve deeply into discovery through authentic participation. They do not give the benefit to the intervener of swift report production and rapid project completion because they have seen that when a plan is shifted to the responsibility of the intervener it will not be supported, owned or likely succeed. Such action punishes the target project twice – once through wasting financial resources that pay such an intervener and secondly with the loss of the many resources to the community who may suffer real loss from the intervention and achieve no gain.

In Chapter 6, the authors reach back to the lessons shared from Chapter 5, and point to strategies that integrate the “I” interior perspective to the “It” exterior perspective. They point out in Toolbox 6 strategies for making training stick – identifying the importance of the learning process (and not just content), self-directed learning, prior learning, integrating new learning with past understandings, and support networks.

The reviewer was struck by the “learning by doing” modelling outlined in the chapter – characterized by this statement “every meeting we have is a sample of the future that participants
can expect to come”. The chapter values the role of skilled facilitation – but primarily the kind that leaves participants capable of managing their own plans and not becoming dependent on interveners, nor bogged down. The examples of One Sky and Hochachka’s experience in Nigeria offer enlivening models of practice that can be emulated. This chapter includes explorations of facilitation processes (that relate to Chapter 7 and could also have been discussed under the “We” banner) and allows the authors to point to the issues of power and capacity development in the hands of those who are mature versus those whose maturity makes them a danger to all.

This brings us to Chapter 7 where the topic is the Collective Mind or Culture and how they emerge from the ways we share values, ethics, visions, paradigms, mythology and legend. This chapter is full of stories that make the reader sit back and gasp (like the killing of the albino moose; how that impacted an indigenous tribe in Nova Scotia; and how difficult it is to make any restitution in such circumstances).

This chapter explores the collective methodologies that have become widely known under the “Art of Hosting” banner (not referenced by the authors – but described severally) with enthusiasm for their capacity to engage participants in meaningful ways. The authors do an excellent job in marrying the philosophical underpinnings of these approaches from collective consciousness/noosphere, to complexity science and Bohmian dialogue – showing why and how they can change the whole tenor of engagement. They also point to the impact the collective mind has on the management systems that can be built. They re-open the failings of TR and RCP and as they set out the kind of leadership, and structures of information needed, they open up into networks and communities of practice that bring the methodologies full circle back to the necessity of continuous and shared learning in community. They fire these ideas with fire itself, describing the clash of paradigms related to forest fires in natural heritage sites and the long battle to learn how Nature herself plans life in cycles. This is a very long chapter with examples coming from all 4 quadrants (on a meta level) that include Lean Practice in Manufacturing, Non-Violent Civil Disobedience, Military Debriefings and Research Networks. So, regardless of the reader’s background the examples ground the value of this quadrant in real-life practice.

The authors want to make this point decisive as the Lower Left quadrant has so often been omitted in traditional planning and RCP and TR. The chapter finishes with an appreciation of storytelling and by adding the third loop to the learning model – the one that revisions and modifies the vision.

In Chapter 8, we arrive at the final Lower Right Quadrant of Management Institutions that influence heritage sites. We look at Institutions, Policies and Technologies – set out in Table 8.1 in comparison with all the other 3 quadrants. The authors emphasize that this quadrant is generally the most familiar to the planning community because they tend to use the lenses of 3rd person science and organizations to design and intervene on heritage sites. Government agencies aka bureaucracies are critiqued for their generally Modernist operating principles (and/or Post-Modern shadows). They cite Brown’s research in reviewing eight books on sustainability to find the preponderance of Lower Right perspectives gave the narratives a very biased outlook. The authors call for innovation in this quadrant and offer strategies gleaned from the businesses who have created “safe spaces” away from the dominant gaze for innovation and experimentation. The authors argue for the value of the four “concurrent, interacting, fundamental perspectives.”
state that such a new model would not just be “interesting …[but] eminently practical.” They offer strategies for involving the Lower Right quadrant in balanced and interactive ways. An example is how they explore “Friends of Heritage Sites”. They suggest, “A friends group is an institutional arrangement (LR), informed by shared community values about heritage (LL), that increases a site’s capacity (UR), based on personal affinities and reinforces understanding and positive attitudes among visiting audiences (UL).” (p.217)

They take the time to explore whole new ways that plans can be formatted, suggesting they are a “means of arriving, not a destination”; that they should focus on commitments and not mere recommendations; recognize that they are collective works; that they should be offered in multiple modes from scenarios, to art, stories, videos; to non-scientific audiences (as well as scientists). Finally, they bring back their DICE acronym and herald plans that can be as flexible and imaginative as a DICE world demands. The issue of power is then re-engaged, and we are reminded that planning is about power – through decision making, agenda setting and shaping needs. But we are also pointed to the emerging power of networks that connect people, interests, plans and forces for change. They admit that their advocated approach to holistic planning redistributes power (and by doing so may create resistance amongst those who hold power before an intervention commences). But as an act of encouragement, Chapter 8 adds the fourth learning loop where the modification of core purpose and values enables a full cycle to be mapped (that, for example, in the case of forest fires is not just reconceiving policy but a whole life perspective (p. 234)).

This brings us to the last Chapter 9, and back into the light after surviving both left and right sides of the iceberg U-shaped journey. This chapter is both long and intense and would be better treated as Part 3 of the book and broken into several chapters. To get the most out of this chapter I would recommend reading it as if it were Part 3 in 2 or 3 chapters.

In their first section, they use a Kegan-Lahey table to summarize the journey from stating a goal, to identifying behaviours that counteract the goal and hidden commitments that compete with the goal. This helps them understand resistance to change and go on to identify shadows. And it sets the authors up to outline the principles of their Holistic Planning approach – one that transcends and includes both Modernism and Post-Modernism. Table 9.1 summarizes it as an AQAL Process with the 4 preceding chapters exploring the I, It, We, Its processes that care for stakeholders, trains people in their own wellbeing and health, facilitates dialogue and creates plans that recognize all 4 perspectives in institutions that operate systemically.

In the next section “Definition and Principles of Holistic Planning”, their exploration of Holistic Planning is effectively Deep, Clear, Wide and High (to cite Sean Esborn-Hargens). They admit it takes (significantly) more time than the older forms of planning but in taking the time up front, they contend that implementation will not only be possible but sustainable because consensus is achieved. Moreover, the authors recognize that not all leadership is the same (e.g. Traditional and Warrior styles) and each must fit the appropriate situation. This can enable traditional knowledge to complement scientific knowledge and open the door to everyone being a knowledge holder and everyone having the potential to learn. Even Technical Assistance can be recalibrated through the Integral model to support stakeholders in each quadrant to optimize performance. Borrowing from
Martineau’s example that not everyone has to be integrally informed to be effective contributors, the chapter calls forth a Holistic Planning team that is:

- Multiperspectival
- Legitimate amongst constituents
- Enthusiastic and capable of implementing holistic solutions
- Include at least one champion of the protected area
- Transdisciplinary

Their guidance offers such teams detailed practices, reminiscent of Action Learning or Action Research cycles, focused on continuous learning that emerge communities of practice.

The last section of this chapter provides an Evaluation Framework by quadrant with the three main actors in an Intervention: Community, Technical Assistance, and Donor – each with a template for Indicator, Baseline and Progress. This provides a succinct method for adaptive learning.

This chapter claims the right to set out what the book has been working towards from the Introduction – namely a new way of Holistic Planning. It completes the case with Table 9.4, comparing Holistic Planning to Conventional Planning. These headings effectively summarize the whole approach and give the reader a satisfying grasp of the whole book. (This section might even be more effective if it formed the lead into Chapter 9 (or Part 3 of the book if it is re-published) because the reader receives a very clear picture of Holistic Planning as a result of the comparison.)

- Worldview
- Forms of knowing
- Dimensions of Reality
- Participants
- Power
- Planners Role
- Endgame
- Planning Frequency
- Community Involvement
- Metaphor for Planning
- Planning Investment
- Document Format.

**Conclusion**

Throughout *The Future Has Other Plans*, the authors seek not only to inform readers, but also inspire them by opening and closing each chapter with quotations from multicultural storytelling literature that entice and amplify the points they are making. The reviewer encountered many favourites but this example is the quintessence of what they have accomplished: “*If you want to build a ship, do not drum up people to collect wood and do not assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.*” (Antoine de Saint-Exupery)
The Future Has Other Plans definitely makes the reader long for Holistic Planning as the only sensible way to honour, care for and steward our valuable natural and cultural heritage. I recommend it to planners in all fields as a seminal reference for planning with an Integral Paradigm.
The Body as Vehicle for Transformation


Reviewed by Shameeka Smalling

The Body Is Not an Apology (TBINAA) is Sonya Renee Taylor’s contribution to the world of transformation through the power of radical self-love. In this powerful work, she discusses body shame and its oppressive impact on our bodies while telling us that we can in fact reclaim our natural intelligence, what she calls radical self-love. The book is not about self-help but frames the chapters and sections with radical reflections and unapologetic inquiries that ask the reader questions meant to move them onto a trajectory from body shame and guilt, past self-acceptance, to radical self-love. The ultimate goal is global transformation; her framework embraces both individualism and societal relationships through an intersectional and systems lens.

The Body is Not an Apology was first a poem, then a global movement before being born into a book. Sonya Renee Taylor is a black, queer, feminist, poet, educator, thought leader, and Founder and Radical Executive Director of The Body is Not an Apology, a digital media and education company that focuses on radical self-love as the vehicle for social justice and global transformation. With over one million followers in 140 countries, TBINAA has a vast global audience, which means the book’s audience is inclusive of all members of society. Taylor rejects the duality of academic work and self-help book, using inquiry to educate and, hopefully, help the reader to transform. It successfully illustrates how we, the readers, may have come to body shame and how it impacts us in society and provides the tools to change our thinking to that of radical self-love, reclaiming our natural intelligence and eventually transforming the world/finding liberation.

The Body is Not an Apology starts chapter one, Making Self Love Radical, by shaping the conversation around the ontology that we all have a body and articulates the intersectionality of the body. According to Taylor, all oppression is enacted through the body, therefore liberation from body shame and judgment begins with radical self-love. This is through the Three Peaces, peace with not understanding, with difference, and with your body. In chapter two, Shame, Guilt and Apology – Then and Now, she introduces us to the anatomy of body shame in ourselves and society through body shame origin stories, the Body-Shame Profit Complex (BSPC), and Body Terrorism. This discussion transitions to the crux of the book in chapter three, Building a Radical Self-Love Practice in an Age of Loathing, making peace with your body. Taylor explains that “living a radical self-love life is a process of de-indoctrination” (p. 59) and introduces a process of “thinking doing being”. Taylor then describes the movement from individual to transformational radical self-love with the Four Pillars of Practice- taking out the toxic, mind matters, unapologetic

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action, and collective compassion. In chapter four, A New Way Ordered by Love, TBINAA moves from the individual to societal impact. She discusses implicit bias through the analogy of speaking French, and circles back to in-group-out-group bias, which she introduces earlier in the book. Taylor states, “we must deconstruct body terrorism in ourselves and others to dismantle the systems and structures of body terrorism” (p.81). According to Taylor, this personal transformation will lead to world transformation. In the fifth and final chapter, Radical Self-Love Toolkit, Taylor houses the ten toolkit pieces under the four pillars of practice. Of note is that she uses these practical tools to teach us to love our bodies, and therefore others, more. Finally, Taylor acknowledges that for her, the answer to what liberation looks like is for every human to live in radical self-love.

Dozens of books exist about self-love; however, there are only two books on radical self-love: The Body is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love, and Radical Self-Love: A Guide to Loving Yourself and Living Your Dreams (Darling, 2016). Gala Darling is widely known as the self-love guru and her book promises to be a tool for people to find their way to self-love. The book is designed to help the reader love themselves first and moves on to loving others, and then provides tools for self-love in the final chapter. The books do not focus only on the individual but delve into the complexity of relationships with others. The Body in Not an Apology is distinct in that the conversation is multidimensional; it is about dismantling body shame through radical self-love and using that radical self-love to love others enough to begin dismantling oppressive systems.

The book is self-described as “a global movement guided by love.” Taylor uses the body-shame origin stories to initiate the conversation about our relationship with difference. Through her definition and description of body terrorism the discussion of body-shame and the Body-Shame Profit Complex become much more significant. It demonstrates that society is one of laws that oppress bodies of all types through body terrorism. It gives an individual a lens into how loving themselves more can lead to being a contributor to a better society. The reader can expect to move toward radical self-love, and this will in turn lead to better treatment of others, which moves from the individual to the systemic lens of “a more just and compassionate world” (p. 56). Transitioning from body shame to radical self-love means looking at systems that oppress the body and disrupting them.

On the surface, the Body is Not an Apology is about body empowerment. But the book also addresses the fact that oppression is enacted and held within the body. This is relevant to the discourse Resmaa Menakem engages in My Grandmother’s Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies (Menakem, 2017). Like the trauma that Menakem says lives within black, white, and blue bodies, in her own way Taylor argues that oppression is a somatic experience. In recent years, the Black Lives Matter Movement, issues of police violence against black bodies, school shootings, all speak to terror that is lived and experienced within the body. TBINAA is a transformative read specifically because it defines and describes body terrorism for the reader. The urgency of violence in today’s society speaks to the need for this book now.

The Body is Not an Apology interested me because of my research on the concept of holding space. Multiple definitions exist for holding space. According to transnational Black feminist, Farah Tanis (n.d.):
To hold space is to be present and contain the immediate and continuous energetic shift created when another breaks with silence. It is being there, present for another. It is to act as a stand, bear witness, create and sustain physical and emotional safety, and to nurture trust at the same time.

This definition, which comes from a transnational Black feminist perspective, speaks to the space that is held for healing. Another definition of holding space is “walking alongside another without judgment or attachment to the outcome. We don’t try to fix or control we just are in the moment with them” (Plett, 2015). It is creating an energetic container for emergence, growth, development, expansion, healing, transcendence, and manifestation of ideas to occur. Holding space is a needed element in all healing. When we engage radical self-love, we are increasing our capacity to love others, which in turn increases our capacity to hold space. This can help create transformation in individuals and organizations, but to hold space for others we must first hold space for ourselves, and that begins with loving oneself. I looked for books on loving the self before, but they did not feel transformational to me. Reading about radical self-love in TBINAA, it hit me like an epiphany. I needed to re-evaluate my self-concept and how to engage my body. It brings me back to my work in holding space. As I answered the Unapologetic Inquiries and unpacked my body shame, it increased the capacity for holding space within my own body. This book, by working on an individual and systemic level, gave me tools for my research around holding space. It also brought me back to me something that was elusive, that “we know that the answer has always been love” (Taylor, 2018, p. xiii). TBINAA is a tool to use love within my own research and work and I believe this book will help any reader to do the same.

References

Lost in Rumi


Reviewed by Jonathan Reams

As I was finishing writing my dissertation (Reams, 2002), I searched for an opening quote that could capture the essence of my admittedly fuzzy and even non-academic ambitions with that project. After considering a wide range of inspiring quotes from the leadership and or consciousness literature I was focused on in my dissertation and feeling dissatisfied, I turned to the poetry of Rumi and opened my dissertation with:

>You knock at the door of reality,
shake your thought-wings, loosen your shoulders,
and open
(Rumi, 1997, p. 200)

As I revisit this snippet of Rumi now 18 years later, I am struck by the layers of invitation the passage evokes. I aimed in my PhD to explore the subtler, transpersonal, transrational aspects of knowing and being and how to evoke them and impact our capacity for leadership. It was easy to get lost in this territory, as familiar markers, or even the concept of markers, or of concepts, all faded as the process of knocking at the door of reality, shaking loose of thoughts and stepping into the opening that emerged.

My attraction to the mystical, or transpersonal and such has been a thread throughout my life inquiry and writing. The idea of getting lost, or being in the cloud of unknowing (Wolters, 2018) and resting in a sense of the ineffable has always held an attraction. At the same time, a mental curiosity, a desire to know, (I appear to score as a 5 in the Enneagram), understand and explain things is also a driving energy in my life. Thus, my penchant for writing about things that are difficult to capture in words.

Over time, poets have been the ones to achieve this best, and while I certainly have no talent in this area, nor especially gone into reading much poetry, (I did dig into William Blake and other Romantic era poetry at one point in my undergrad studies), I do have an appreciation for how

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Reams: Lost in Rumi

poetry can open up these subtler spaces, evoking portals into the deeper realities of life. It is from this frame of reference that I have approached Marman’s (along with his colleagues) work of creating an opening into the deeper works of Rumi.

In the Hidden Teaching of Rumi, Marman, along with his colleagues Khalvati and Shafei, take the time to educate the reader into these hidden teachings, step by step initiating us into the layers of mystery Rumi reveals. The opening page sets the tone: “I tell you a story that can’t be spoken, and I hide it from observers when I say it” (Marmon, et al., 2019, p. v). This is typical of Rumi’s approach – to be speaking of what can’t be spoken and hiding it in plain sight. This means there is a type of riddle, or koan presented to us that requires unlocking. This unlocking can come, I believe, through two main roads. One is that of experience, adequatio or having the personal experience(s) required to know what Rumi is pointing to.

The second is scaffolding, or bridge building and it is this approach that Marman and colleagues use. In the introduction they describe how Rumi is not asking us to just ‘think outside the box’ or watching how our beliefs limit us. They point to “lenses of perception” (Marman, 2015, 2018) that are deeply subconscious ways of seeing (I’m reminded of Bonnita Roy’s (2006) reference to the term ‘view’ instead of ‘perspective’ as a way of pointing to something deeper). This is a way of orienting us as readers, preparing us for the journey.

Each chapter begins with parallel text laying out one of Rumi’s poems in Farsi and English. This is followed by commentary, sometimes general, sometimes unpacking the poem line by line. The opening commentary continues the theme described above.

Reading Rumi’s poetry is like chasing fleeting images that change before our eyes and flow from one to another. We become lost as we try to follow his twists and turns. This is exactly what Rumi is trying to teach us: How to lose ourselves as we follow something that is alive with beauty and love. (p. 39)

The flow of this commentary starts out carefully, guiding us slowly and surely into unlocking meaning hidden in the poem in focus. This brings us to a point where we can begin to see that Rumi is not merely spouting random, free association lines that have no clear connection to each other, as many of his interpreters have presented him. Each poem is a whole in itself. While the narrative source may jump from Rumi to his beloved teacher Shams of Tabriz, the meaning hangs together.

Marman and colleagues take the time in some chapters to bring up references to historical details that provide context and clues about specific incidents that Rumi is referring to. They also weave in references to Rumi’s discourses (more on these later) that all provide more clues and weave the lens we can use to unlock the hidden meaning even further.

Then, as the book goes further, the commentaries shift gear. We no longer receive a line by line unpacking of the poems, but move into a set of commentaries that take us even deeper. In some

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2 Farzad Khalvat and Mitra Shafaei both grew up reading Rumi’s poems in Farsi and were able to contribute their firsthand native speaker’s knowledge of the language, as well as the depths of their own experiences with Rumi’s works, to the translation and commentary project.
ways, the poems focused on later in the book are more obtuse, the meaning requiring more connections to clues that need to be unpacked both from within the poem itself and from historical or other reference points. Yet the reward is even greater, and we come into view of a profound insight into an esoteric aspect of spiritual teaching.³ No spoilers here, you’ll need to read it for yourself to find the treasure.

Closely linked to this project, is Marman’s earlier *It is What It Is. The Personal Discourses of Rumi*. This project was something Marman began in the late 1970s, going through layers of revision as he encountered new friends, colleagues who grew up with Rumi in Farsi and his own growth, all of which enabled deeper layers of meaning to be revealed. The over three decades journey shows itself in the quality of the translation as well as in the precision of the commentary.

Rumi’s discourses are less known than his poetry. However, they provide an equal depth of invitation into the subtle realms. The chapters here follow a similar pattern, with a translation of the discourse into English and then some commentary. The proportions are different here, as the narrative form of the discourses provides easier access to much of the meaning.

All in all, there are 71 of these discourses. I took them as bedtime reading over a period of a few months, taking one at a time only on evenings when I felt receptive to the opportunity being presented. I have studied a number of discourses of this nature as part of my own spiritual practice and found these discourses, despite the 700 years of time and cultural distance separating me from them, to be highly impactful.

In many chapters, Rumi tells stories or parables that are as amusing to read as they are instructive. The layers of meaning are present in relation to the layers of being we listen with, as Marman says in his commentary: “Our human self hears and enjoys his stories, but he is also speaking to the deeper part of Self that recognizes there is nothing conventional or traditional in anything he says” (Marman, 2010, p. 138).

It is this “deeper part of Self” that likes to get lost. Lost from the mind and its limitations. Lost from the whims, push and pull of emotion. Lost from the biases that come with the human senses and consciousness. It is in this sense of losing the limitations of conventional forms of human perception that makes getting lost a worthy endeavor and opens us to the essence of our being. Getting lost in Rumi is an invitation to not only lose ourselves in his poetry, but to lose our selves entirely and fall into a vast ocean of being.

References


³ You can also find an interview with Marman by Jeffrey Mishlove in his *New Thinking Allowed* series here https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=109&v=3xKXPraDILQ&feature=emb_logo. As well, Marman has a website collecting his published works; http://spiritualdialogues.com/author/dmarman/. Among the items is a talk *It’s All Poetry. Lessons From the Spiritual Path* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xI_mFViQcx0&feature=emb_logo from an evening in Toronto Canada for the Rumi community there.


