

Preface

This book is a sequel to my book “Emergent Information”. Both contributions seek to highlight a paradigm shift as profound as any in the history of humankind. This shift is in the making and would boost scientific and everyday thinking onto a new level if fully realised: it requires nothing short of a radical revolution to master the global challenges that are existential threats to the thriving and survival of the human race. The key to participating in a trajectory that promises to prolong the social evolution of humanity is to acknowledge that systems long for what I call the Logic of the Third. This refers to two leaps. The first is a real leap onto the level of co-operation within one common overarching system, which is to be established as soon as the complexity of challenges exceeds the complexity of singular non-co-operative systems. The second is an ideational leap onto a meta-level of knowledge, which is to be newly-created by human informational agents in anticipation and orientation for the first, real leap.

The first book discussed three fundamental building blocks of the new paradigm, that is, Praxio-Onto-Epistemology (POE) as a philosophy, an Evolutionary Systems Theory (EST) based on POE, and a Unified Theory of Information (UTI) based on EST. The second book brings these blocks to fruition in the context of the current “social”, social information and social information technology and elaborates on a framework of three more concrete building blocks: a Critical Social Systems Theory (CSST) based on EST, a Critical Information Society Theory (CIST) based upon CSST and UTI, and a Critical Techno-social systems Design Theory (CTDT) based upon CIST.

This approach contemplates a Science of Transformation that is necessary to scientifically base future political decisions designed to implement a Great Transformation – the techno-eco-social transformation into a Global Sustainable Information Society. That society takes on the role of the real and concrete utopia today. Departing from a mathematical term, transformation has become a term whose meaning has been eclipsing and contextualising any other problem worth solving. Hence transformative imperatives for a shared humanity.

As with the first book, I focussed on consistency of an integrated approach, not on lengthy matters of contention. My goal was to keep the text concise while adding tables to explicate the red thread and figures to illustrate the meaning of theoretical thoughts. I formulate methodological principles that should be helpful for further research in the wake of the new paradigm.

Going beyond the first book was an adventure equally joyful and fascinating as writing that book. I owe thanks to many new as well as old peers and friends for eye-opening discussions. I learned much from scholars in the field of social and human sciences whom I had the chance to get to know. Let me mention my several-years-long collaboration with Margaret S. Archer, Pierpaolo Donati, Douglas V. Porpora, Colin Wight, Philip S. Gorski, Tony Lawson, Emmanuel Lazega and Jamie Morgan. I connected with colleagues elaborating convivialist ideas, in particular Edgar Morin, Wilfried Graf, Frank Adloff and Werner Wintersteiner, and I had an intensive discussion with Chantal Mouffe. Though I have known him from literature since the days of my studies, I only met philosopher of science Mario Bunge personally in the last decade and I am grateful to him for his straightforward support of my research endeavours. He passed away at the age of 100 in 2020. I met Hans-Jörg Kreowski, with whom I enjoy a productive collaboration in critical perspectives on computer science. I am thankful to Peter Crowley for his expertise relating to the UN family when dealing with ICTs for global citizens, global dialogue and global governance. I was able to share ideas with Sarah Spiekermann(-Hoff) with regard to the ethical alignment of ICTs. With regard to the study of information, I am thankful for stable collegial relationships with Kun Wu, Yixin Zhong, Mark Burgin, Gordana Dodig-Crnkovic, Joseph Brenner and Kang Ouyang just to name a few.

Of course, I have remained in touch with colleagues from different fields whose acquaintance was already important for my first book, among them Rainer E. Zimmermann, José María Díaz Nafría, Klaus Kornwachs, Rafael Capurro, Robert K. Logan, Christian Stary, Pedro C. Marijuán, Yagmur Denizhan, Iryna Dobronravova, Yurii Mielkov and Dail Doucette. I regret very much the death of John Collier in 2018, with whom I had a years-long exchange and co-operation. Finally, I thank Michael Stachowitsch for tightening up the English text. This list is, of course, not exhaustive.

The message of the book is this: scientific rigour can manifest humanity's underlying disposition to usher in a new, third step in anthroposociogenesis and to correct the outdated logics that has hampered its unfolding to date. It is imperative to roll back imperial intentions, intransigent interests and idiotist identities. And it is entirely reasonable to assume that this lies within the human potential.

Wolfgang Hofkirchner, Vienna, March 2022