

943 The Fourth Filter *(this is an edited version of my blogs 943)*

After I wrote (blogs 941, 942) about the Fifth Filter, I had some thoughts about the Fourth Filter, the filter humans have overcome, that lead to the stage we are at: We have conquered the world, we dominate all other species and we exploit the planet for ever-dwindling resources. So, all that's left for us is to overcome the Fifth Filter, i.e. not to destroy our environment, not to kill ourselves off with war and not to build Artificial Intelligence (AI) that becomes more intelligent than ourselves and decides at some point humans could possibly endeavour to limit their capacities ... that this is not desirable ... hence it's best to eliminate humanity. The point here of course is that since we do not observe aliens it is quite likely there are no aliens in our galaxy. Why? Because they didn't overcome the Fifth Filter. So the thought that comes to mind is that it probably is just not likely that any civilization - including ourselves - is able to deal with the challenges posed by the Fifth Filter: Once a civilization has begun on the path of technological evolution, once they have engaged in their industrial revolution ... indeed, once they have begun mass-agriculture, there is no stopping technology. The process will inevitably lead to climate change, the destruction of the environment, the development of war-technology that is all-destructive and AI & robotics that are uncontrollable. Should humans beat the odds and overcome the Fifth Filter there is a likely scenario awaiting our descendants: In centuries to come humans indeed would learn intergalactic travel. As they explore planets in other solar systems of our galaxy, they are likely to come across ruins of other civilisations that had come to stage four, but failed to overcome the Fifth Filter. Our galaxy is 13.5b years old, Earth 4.5b years. Humans populated Earth just 200,000 years ago, the industrial revolution began 200 years ago. It indeed is quite possible that in the history of the galaxy there have been civilizations that have come and gone without being in our own timeframe and without having been able to contact us, or be detected by us, before they fell victim to an event described by the Fifth Filter (or an asteroid collision). But here is a thought: How about a civilization that did overcome the Fourth Filter ... but then neither overcame the Fifth Filter nor fell victim to it, i.e. they did not self-destruct. What if a civilization somewhere in the galaxy eschewed the temptations we have fallen victim to? Consider the Amish - a branch of humanity that will not destroy the environment, nor self-destruct with warfare, nor develop malicious robots. In Australia Aborigines have populated the continent for some 60,000 years, they lived in unison with nature, with their own rules and laws. Technology has not taken over their lives. They were not peaceful but their limited technology ensured they could not extinguish themselves. They respect the environment and they look after the land when allowed to do so. They indeed have overcome the fourth filter and were not in danger of being consumed by the fifth, the Great Filter. What if they had been left alone? How many civilisations are there in our galaxy that are at a similar stage? But in control of their destiny and not in danger of falling victim to their own technological prowess. You and I will never know, but it sure is a tantalising question.