

ENGAGING WITH INSIGHT OF A HIGHER ORDER

RECONCILING COMPLEXITY AND SIMPLEXITY THROUGH MEMORABLE METAPHOR

ANTHONY JUDGE

[Introduction](#)

[Higher orders of perfection?](#)

[Appreciation of higher orders of insight](#)

[Complementarity of manifestations of perfection](#)

[Re-cognition of higher orders of insight through "new thinking"](#)

[Representation, memorability and metaphor](#)

[Questionable metaphors of perfectibility meriting challenge](#)

[Greater insight through holiness?](#)

[Engaging with higher orders of insight](#)

[Antithesis and anathema: challenge of the "Satanic"?](#)

[Potential of mirroring in engaging with greater insight](#)

[References](#)

Introduction

This is an exploration of the process of encountering insight of a higher order -- or seemingly so. Understood in its most general terms, this could be an insight which explains everything (a [Theory of Everything](#)), a strategy which solves all problems (the Ultimate Panacea), an exemplar understood as embodying a higher order (a Leader, a Genius, a Master, a Guru, a Professor), or a totally transformative aesthetic experience (perhaps a Revelation). Also to be considered are the implications of possible higher orders of [artificial intelligence from supercomputers](#), as well as contact with [superintelligent extraterrestrials](#).

The assumption here is that the sense of higher order implies an extraordinary sense of perfection -- relative to one's current ordinary experience. How then to engage with the experience of perfection? How to "handle" it in practice? The challenge is of course charmingly illustrated by the encounter with an unusually attractive person -- an encounter which may mysteriously conflate all the above (as when falling in love).

The exploration is of current relevance to the extent that there is a degree of hope, if not anticipation, with respect to the emergence of an Ultimate Plan, perhaps articulated by an extraordinarily charismatic individual, perhaps in the light of some ultimate Theory of Everything. Any anticipation of a Messiah of some kind may however be mitigated by the possibility that the complexity of the proposal, and the simple terms in which it is presented, may obscure the degree to which it is fundamentally exploitative -- meriting alternative suspicions of the "Satanic".

The approach taken here is **not** to presume on the nature of any higher order insight. Rather the effort is to consider how it might be recognized as a "strange attractor" and the implications for how one might engage with it -- whether as an individual or as a group.

The specific concern is **not** with ideal strategies for world peace, persistent territorial or border disputes, divided nations, or controversial issues like climate change. Rather the concern is the characteristics of an ideal strategic plan, its sustaining philosophy, or the exemplars who might

articulate it -- but particularly whether or how these could be recognized, and how one might then engage with them.

This is an exercise in exploring the limits of what can be said about greater insight -- but without presuming to say anything from such a perspective. The value of doing so can be variously indicated (Gyorgy Doczi, [*The Power of Limits: proportional harmonies in nature, art, and architecture*](#), 2005; Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 1994).

Higher orders of perfection?

The examples above suggest various ways of understanding "higher", "order" and "perfection" -- presumably to be associated in combination with some special sense of "clarity", if not [*enlightenment*](#). Wikipedia indicates that "[perfection](#)" is actually used to designate a range of diverse, if often kindred, concepts. These concepts have historically been addressed in a number of discrete disciplines, notably mathematics, physics, chemistry, ethics, aesthetics, ontology, and theology. The focus here is on its recognition and comprehension -- and on the consequences of doing so -- but **not** on the process of achieving it. How is it to be recognized if encountered?

Theory of Everything: For anyone in quest of scientific or philosophical explanation, the emergence of such a theory would be a fundamental challenge. The implication of such a theory would evoke questions of:

- *credibility*: namely is the theory believable, whether in its own right, in the light of its provenance, or on the basis that it is accepted by a respected peer group? The attitude of any group of peers would constitute significant pressure, whether or not one found it credible otherwise. Especially challenging would be a situation in which one found the theory to be credible, despite its deprecation by peers. As with a theory of impeccable provenance, how to determine whether it is "really" credible -- without foregoing one's own critical capacity and accepting it "blindly"? Has it been satisfactorily proven -- or does it remain questionable? Will it be called into question by the future?
- *comprehensibility*: namely the very real challenge of whether one can comprehend the theory, acclaimed by others as a Theory of Everything. The point is well illustrated by the challenge of [M-theory](#). This can be comprehended by the very few at this time. It is also illustrated by the more complex forms of symmetry, a very particular form of perfection, as with the so-called [Monster Group](#) ([*Dynamics of Symmetry Group Theorizing: comprehension of psycho-social implication*](#), 2008). The latter notes that a mathematical "proof" -- confirming the existence of the Monster group -- takes the form of 10,000 pages spread across 500 journals.
- *coherence*: namely whether the theory does indeed offer a sense of greater integration. This might be framed in terms of a higher degree of connectivity between what had previously been experienced as disparate and fragmented. The sense of "higher" could then be understood in terms as being some how "meta" -- a meta-pattern about lower disparate orders of connectivity.
- *communicability*: namely whether the theory can be readily communicated to others, or by them to oneself. This criterion raises the intriguing question of a theory which one believes one understands for oneself, but cannot be meaningfully communicated to others. With the corresponding challenge of a theory which some others claim to understand but whose significance they are unable to communicate so that one could understand it for oneself.
- *applicability*: namely whether the theory is of any relevance in practice, despite being a Theory of Everything. Is this the challenge of [consilience](#), namely the principle that evidence from independent, unrelated sources can "converge" to strong conclusions?

With such criteria, and others, how are the "specs" of such a Theory to be imagined? What of the controversial arguments of [Gregory Chaitin](#) (*Meta Math!: The Quest for Omega*, 2006). More superficially, what might be the criteria for a model of a Theory of Everything, as separately explored (*Criteria for an Adequate Meta-model*, 1971)?

How might one live in an environment framed by an all-encompassing philosophy, or a Theory of Everything, that one did not understand -- especially if others claimed to understand it, or were suspected of doing so?

Ultimate Strategic Panacea: The challenge of governance, whether globally, nationally, or locally (or for oneself), could be seen as the quest for a strategic panacea -- a plan which really does address all the evident problems effectively. This can be imagined as a form of [Holy Grail](#), as separately explored (*In Quest of Sustainability as Holy Grail of Global Governance*, 2011), as the mythical elixir of [immortality](#), or as the [universal solvent](#) of alchemy. As with a Theory of Everything, this would imply issues such as:

- *credibility*: namely is the strategy believable, whether in its own right, in the light of its provenance, or on the basis that it is accepted by one's leadership or a respected peer group? The attitude of one's leaders and any group of peers would constitute significant pressure, whether or not one found it credible otherwise. Especially challenging would be a situation in which one found the strategy to be credible, despite its deprecation by peers. As with a strategy of impeccable provenance, how to determine whether it is "really" credible -- without foregoing one's own critical capacity and accepting it "blindly"? Has its feasibility been satisfactorily demonstrated -- or does it remain questionable? How might it be considered questionable by the future?
- *comprehensibility*: namely the very real challenge of whether one can comprehend the strategy, acclaimed by others as the Ultimate Solution. The point is well illustrated by the challenge of global strategies articulated by groups of the wise (such as the [Club of Rome](#), or the [Alpbach Forum](#)) or by the United Nations (as in the case of [Agenda 21](#) or the [Millennium Development Goals](#)). By whom are these held to be comprehensible at this time?. The challenge is also illustrated by the considerable length of documents required to articulate such strategies
- *coherence*: namely whether the strategy does indeed offer a sense of greater efficacy. This might be framed in terms of a higher degree of connectivity between what had previously been experienced as disparate and fragmented strategies "of lower order". The sense of "higher" could then be understood in terms as being somehow an overarching strategic framework for lower disparate orders of connectivity. Club of Rome Agenda 21
- *communicability*: namely whether the strategy can be readily communicated to others, or by them to oneself. This criterion raises the intriguing question of a strategy which one believes is viable, but one that cannot be meaningfully communicated to others. With the corresponding challenge of a strategy which some others claim to understand but whose significance they are unable to communicate so that one could understand it for oneself.
- *applicability*: namely whether the strategy is of any relevance in practice, despite being an Ultimate Panacea and a Solution for Everything.

Again, how should the design "specs" for such a Global Strategy be imagined, as may be separately discussed ([Imagining Attractive Global Governance: questioning possibilities and constraints of well-boundedness](#), 2013; [Imagining the Real Challenge and Realizing the Imaginal Pathway of Sustainable Transformation](#), 2007) ?

How might one live in an environment governed by a Global Strategy one did not understand -- especially if others claimed to understand it, or knowledge of it was restricted to an elite?

Exemplar of Perfection: Rather than being articulated otherwise, any sense of a Theory of

Everything (or of an Ultimate Panacea) could well be embodied in a person -- whether a Leader, a Genius, a Master, or a Guru -- of global, national, or local scope. Rather than an individual, such an exemplar could take the form of a group. As noted above, it might also include superintelligent extraterrestrials (James Jaeger, [*Superintelligent Extraterrestrial Technological Civilizations; Aliens, How Smart Are They? Future Watch*](#)). Also to be considered is future contact with [*supercomputer artificial intelligence*](#) (Nick Bostrom, [*Get ready for the dawn of superintelligence*](#), *New Scientist*, 5 July 2014), possibly understood in the form of a [*global brain*](#). The encounter with such an exemplar would imply issues analogous to those above:

- *credibility*: namely is the exemplar believable, whether in his/her own right, in the light of his/her provenance, or on the basis that (s)he is accepted by one's leadership or a respected peer group? The attitude of one's leaders and any group of peers would constitute significant pressure, whether or not one found the exemplar credible otherwise. Especially challenging would be a situation in which one found the exemplar to be credible, despite his/her deprecation by peers. How to determine whether (s)he is "really" credible -- without foregoing one's own critical capacity and accepting him/her "blindly"? Has the credibility been satisfactorily demonstrated -- or does it remain questionable? Will the qualities of the exemplar be called into question by the future?
- *comprehensibility*: namely the very real challenge of whether one can comprehend the exemplar, acclaimed by others as the Ultimate Leader -- even of the [*Messiah of Christianity*](#), the [*Messiah of Judaism*](#), or the [*Imam of Islam*](#), or analogues in other belief system. The point is well illustrated by the challenge of charismatic exemplars who are the focus of world movements, or perhaps by those recognized by major awards ([*Nobel Laureates*](#), [*Right Livelihood Laureates*](#), etc), or who may well be convened as gatherings of the wise (such as the [*Wisdom Keepers*](#), or the [*Lindau Nobel Laureate Meetings*](#)). By whom are these held to be comprehensible at this time? The challenge is also illustrated by the length of the many documents and lectures they require to articulate their world view.
- *coherence*: namely whether the exemplar does indeed offer (or embody) a sense of greater insight. This might be framed in terms of a higher degree of connectivity between what had previously been experienced as contradictory behaviours "of lower order". The sense of "higher" could then be understood in terms as being somehow an "an overarching framework for action" (as in the case of the Club of Rome's [*2052: a Global Forecast for the Next Forty Years*](#), 2012) -- integrating lower contradictory behaviours of more blinkered perspective
- *communicability*: namely whether the insights and modality of the exemplar can be readily communicated to others, or by them to oneself. This criterion raises the intriguing question of an exemplar whom one believes to be meaningful in some ultimate sense, but of a nature that cannot be meaningfully communicated to others. There is the corresponding challenge of an exemplar whom some others claim to understand but whose significance they are unable to communicate so that one could understand the exemplar for oneself.
- *applicability*: namely whether the behaviours exemplified are of any relevance in practice, despite being that of an Exemplar of Perfection.

How are the "specs" of a messianic exemplar to be envisaged -- especially given what has been variously framed by the prophecies of different religions?

How might one live in an environment under the influence of a singular charismatic exemplar whose nature one did not comprehend, or of whose existence one was not even aware?

Experiential modalities: The preoccupation here is with forms of insight encountered "externally", as indicated above. Other modalities variously valued are those experienced "internally". These include:

- Revelation, as most notably cited with respect to spiritual experience. The term is also applied to the creativity of intellectual discovery -- and most simply with the process of having an all-absorbing "bright idea".
- Sexual intercourse, upheld as consummation in a multiplicity of senses of perfect "union", experienced as embodying everything
- Drug-enhanced insight, as widely sought and the focus of experimentation. It may employ identical terms to those above, most obviously with respect to [oceanic experience](#) (*Enstoring through imagination, dreams, drugs and imbibing*, 2012)
- Death, when imagined as the encounter with insight of a higher order, merits consideration through metaphors suggestive of that insight (*Metaphors To Die By: correspondences between a collapsing civilization, culture or group, and a dying person*, 2013).

Appreciation of higher orders of insight

The pattern above can be fruitfully reviewed in the light of the distinctions made there.

Credibility: Irrespective of its comprehensibility, what makes for the [credibility](#) of any manifestation of a higher order of insight? The phenomenon, although extremely subtle, is central to leadership, politics, religion, business, and marketing -- as well as to any proposals for social change (James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility: how leaders gain and lose it, why people demand it*, 2011).

The nature and importance of credibility became only too apparent in the course of the recent global financial crisis -- partially engendered by dysfunctional "hope-mongering" ([Credibility Crunch engendered by Hope-mongering: "credit crunch" focus as symptom of a dangerous mindset](#), 2008).

Again, irrespective of comprehensibility, credibility is intimately associated with how belief is engendered and sustained. It is clearly dependent on a sense of coherence -- although this may be partially set aside through ignoring or transcending evident contradictions. The latter process is evident in the election of leaders -- exemplars? -- with a well-developed track record of contradictions, as in the case of Jean-Claude Juncker, Silvio Berlusconi, and the like. The process is even more evident in the case of the credibility of religious leadership -- as made evident through a succession of scandals, perhaps most notable in the case of gurus and the leaders of sects

Comprehensibility: Although use is readily made of "comprehension" and "understanding", the subtlety of the associated processes is far less evident as the consequence of any learning. Most obvious, naturally, is the comprehension of specific matters of tangible form. The issue is otherwise with respect to the intangible nature of "perfection" reflecting a "higher order of insight". Arguments may be made for the necessity of "years" of learning and experience before understanding can be recognized to have been acquired. How is "acquisition" then to be understood in relation to an intangible integrative perspective? How to understand when one has "got it"?

Mathematics, despite the elegance of some of its insights, may be especially challenging, as separately argued ([Dynamics of Symmetry Group Theorizing: comprehension of psycho-social implication](#), 2008). The matter is otherwise with respect to the quest for strategic appropriateness, however that is to be understood ([Comprehension of Appropriateness](#), 1986). The challenge with respect to exemplars is evident from the manner in which their insights are considered to be variously meaningful by different constituencies -- each likely to deprecate other exemplars, if only with respect to their comprehensibility and authority, however these may be interpreted. This is most obvious in the case of religions and the exemplars with which they are each associated.

A valuable analysis in mathematical terms has been made by Ron Atkin (*Multidimensional Man; can man live in 3-dimensional space ?* 1981), as reviewed separately with respect to incommunicability ([Social organization determined by incommunicability of insights](#))

Coherence: Clearly a high degree of coherence may be evident without this being recognized as

reflective of any higher order of insight. The associated degree of connectivity may simply be indicative of complexity -- with "everything connected to everything". Of greater significance is the manner in which the connectivity is ordered such as to offer degrees of [simplicity](#) through which suborders of complexity are somehow clustered and fruitfully interrelated -- indicative of a sense of "higher order".

There is then a degree of integration -- perhaps interpreted as integrity -- to the recognized coherence. As argued by biologist [Gregory Bateson](#) (*Mind and Nature; a necessary unity*, 1979, pp. 8-11).

The pattern which connects is a meta-pattern. It is a pattern of patterns. It is that meta-pattern which defines the vast generalization that, indeed, it is patterns which connect. And it is in this from this perspective that he warns: Break the pattern which connects the items of learning and you necessarily destroy all quality.

Of particular interest is the manner in which the coherence is associated with elegance, as separately discussed ([Enacting Transformative Integral Thinking through Playful Elegance](#), 2010). The point has been made by Bateson, in pointing out to a conference on the effects of conscious purpose on human adaptation as to why "we are our own metaphor":

One reason why poetry is important for finding out about the world is because in poetry a set of relationships get mapped onto a level of diversity in us that we don't ordinarily have access to. We bring it out in poetry. We can give to each other in poetry the access to a set of relationships in the other person and in the world that we're not usually conscious of in ourselves. So we need poetry as knowledge about the world and about ourselves, because of this mapping from complexity to complexity. ([Mary Catherine Bateson](#). *Our Own Metaphor*, 1972, pp. 288-289).

Related insights could be cited with respect to music and song, notably as illustrated by [overtone chanting](#). Especially intriguing is the use of sets of archetypes woven into dramatic tales and legends, as with those of the classical Greek deities or those of the Hindu tradition.

Communicability: Discussion of the above criteria points variously to the challenge of communicability. What methods might be envisaged to communicate a higher order of insight? This is a challenge variously addressed in education, training and public relations. The issue can be framed speculatively with respect to hypothetical groups endeavouring to communicate across centuries ([Minding the Future: thought experiment on presenting new information](#), 1980). The latter considered, for different cases: the dispatch problem, the reception problem, the action problem, the problem of reflecting on possible action. It concluded with the questions:

- Would you open the 'package' ? Are you sure ? Think a bit more.
- Would you expect anyone else to open it ? And then ?
- How would you go about 'opening' it to your understanding ?
- How different (change provoking) would it have to be before you could not afford to open it ?
- Would you send such a message if you had the means ? Do you have them?
- Could you send such a message if you knew what to put in it ? Do you know what to put in it?
- Do you believe that one or more such messages have been sent ? If so, what have you done about it ?
- If the basic concept of a 'sent message' is an 'imperfection', what other form of action can the originators take?

More generally the issue can be framed in terms of the cognitive constraints of any potential audience. The point is obviously highlighted by issues of [information overload](#) and constraints on

[attention span](#) (*Conceptual clustering and cognitive constraints*, 2014), These go beyond those of specific interest to professional advertising (*Investing Attention Essential to Viable Growth: radical self-reflexive reappropriation of financial skills and insights*, 2014).

To "how much" insight of a higher order can a person fruitfully respond? Is a form of "insight overload" to be recognized -- perhaps of a nature similar to [psychic numbing](#)?

Just how much (quality) attention time is required to respond fruitfully to any communication carrying a higher order of insight -- seconds, minutes, days, months, years? Can the matter be framed otherwise by interpreting the use of the [medium to be the message](#), following [Marshall McLuhan](#)? What role might Twitter play in such communication? Following Pope Francis, will the next Messiah tweet?

Potentially more intriguing is framing the challenge of explanation in terms of how one explains the insight to oneself.

Applicability: Fundamental from a different perspective is the relevance **in practice** of an insight which may well be of the highest order. The issue is evident in the manner in which the "pure" sciences -- presumably articulating such an insight -- deprecate those that are "applied". The reverse is evident in the distinction made between "practical" (namely concrete) and "abstract" (readily framed as useless).

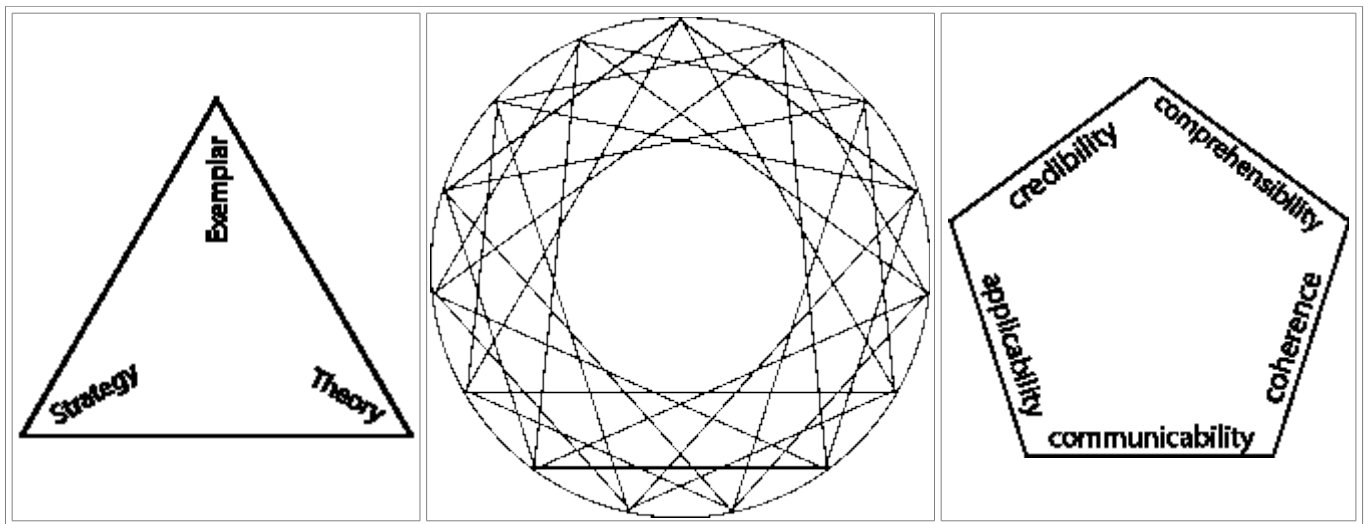
In strategic terms, applicability may be framed in terms of feasibility or viability. A particular understanding has been associated by [Edward de Bono](#) with [operacy](#). At the time of writing, commentators are noting that the recently released [Senate Intelligence Committee report on CIA torture](#) resulted in little, if any, "[actionable intelligence](#)" -- whatever the insights obtained.

The relevance and viability of any new [Renaissance](#) offers a way of framing applicability, as separately discussed (*Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007).

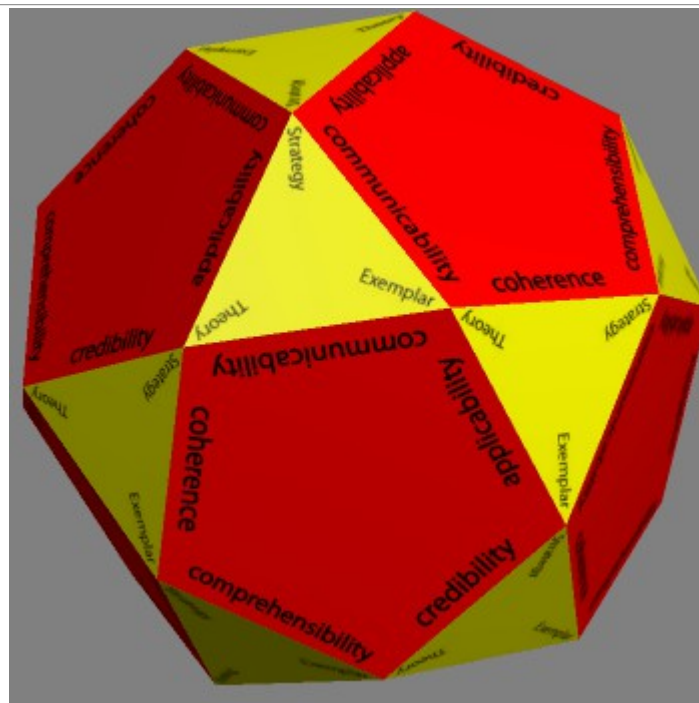
Complementarity of manifestations of perfection

There is a case for identifying forms which can usefully hold a relationship between the various categories identified above. Especially interesting are those which suggest how they might be best understood as complementary. How can perfection best be implied by a set of categories beyond a simple checklist -- as with the [99 Names of Allah](#).

Configurations variously suggestive of complementarity		
Manifestations of insight	Exercise combining left and right images in a two dimensional pattern	Criteria of insight



Exploratory exercise in combining the left and right-hand images above in a three-dimensional icosidodecahedral configuration



Re-cognition of higher orders of insight through "new thinking"

New thinking: Much is made of the need for "new thinking" with respect to a global civilization in crisis ([Richard A. Slaughter](#) (Ed.), *New Thinking for a New Millennium: the knowledge base of futures studies*, 1996; Edward de Bono, *New Thinking for the New Millennium*, 2000; William J. Williams, *New Thinking for a New Millennium: the processes and application of abstracting*, 2000). How is this concern related to the recognition of higher orders of insight? What new thinking is required to recognize new insight and to enable a new Renaissance?

The question is especially provocative when accompanied by any recognition that "there is nothing new under the Sun". This has the implication that such insight may be "under one's nose" -- did one but have the eyes to see it.

The challenge is evident from the oft-cited quotations of Albert Einstein:

- The significant problems we face can not be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.

- To repeat the same thing over and over again, and yet to expect a different result, this is a form of insanity.
- Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world

One lead is offered by the faint sense of any pattern of intuitions as to the nature of the insight -- a pattern potentially understood as facets of a configuration of which the elusive generative insight is the higher order focus. The intuitions may be understood in terms of glimpses, elusive harmonies, or the like. The ultimate challenge has been framed as hearing the [music of the spheres](#).

Special games: Such insight may be framed as elusively embodied or implicit in a game, as may be variously explored ([Playing the Great Game with Intelligence](#), 2013; [James P. Carse](#), [Finite and Infinite Games](#), 1987). The nature of such a game has been remarkably articulated by Nobel Laureate [Hermann Hesse](#) ([Glass Bead Game](#), (1943) where he comments:

I suddenly realized that in the language, or at any rate in the spirit of the Glass Bead Game, everything actually was all-meaningful, that every symbol and combination of symbol led not hither and yon, not to single examples, experiments, and proofs, but into the center, the mystery and innermost heart of the world, into primal knowledge. Every transition from major to minor in a sonata, every transformation of a myth or a religious cult, every classical or artistic formulation was, I realized in that flashing moment, if seen with truly a meditative mind, nothing but a direct route into the interior of the cosmic mystery, where in the alternation between inhaling and exhaling, between heaven and earth, between Yin and Yang holiness is forever being created.

These associations offer curious echoes to the elaboration of a "game of spheres" by [Nicholas de Cusa](#) ([De Ludo Globi](#), 1463), written as a contribution to both a literature and a practice of moral game-playing. This formed part of the tradition of the forgotten chess-like game [Rithmomachia](#) ("The Battle of Numbers" or Rythmomachy), which combined the pleasures of gaming with mathematical study and moral education. Intellectuals of the medieval and Renaissance periods who played this game were not only seeking to master the principles of [Boethian mathematics](#) but were striving to improve their own understanding of the secrets of the cosmos (Ann E. Moyer, [In The Philosophers' Game](#), 2001).

This was undoubtedly an inspiration to the magnum opus of Nobel Laureate Hermann Hesse, as noted by Todd R. Harris ([The Interplay of Opposites, the Language of Experience, and the Geometry of Ascent: a comparison of Hermann Hesse's "Das Glasperlenspiel" and Nicholas of Cusa's "De Ludo Globi"](#), 2001).

Insight recognition: More provocative is the sense in which the insight is associated with traditional exemplars ([Hidden Masters](#), and the like) -- or those, like Messiahs anticipated in the light of prophecy. More probable, as noted below, is the encounter with a supercomputer endowed with a high order of artificial intelligence.

Some such possibility can be explored further in terms of any encounter with hypothetical superintelligent beings, whether extraterrestrial or epiterrestrial ([Sensing Epiterrestrial Intelligence \(SETI\): embedding of "extraterrestrials" in episystemic dynamics?](#) 2013). How might humanity "recognize" the insights of a higher order that such aliens might choose to offer? The challenge can be more readily understood in terms of various educational contexts with which humans are familiar, namely educating:

- the mentally challenged
- those speaking only a foreign language
- those with antithetical beliefs and taboos, claimed by them to be of a higher order
- non-human species with an evident degree of intelligence

New empathy? Through the emphasis in this argument, equating "insight" with "thinking", readily obscured is the sense in which the "insight" may be intimately associated with [multiple intelligences](#), with emotional intelligence, and with new values. The imagined "new thinking" may be dependent on "new empathy" and other understandings of identity ([Authentic Grokking: emergence of Homo conjugens](#), 2003; [Encountering Otherness as a Waveform: in the light of a wave theory of being](#), 2013).

It could be readily imagined that the intelligence of superintelligent aliens might be characterized by a form of emotional intelligence with which values, currently unrecognized by humans, could be associated. Beyond efforts to formulate a [global ethic](#), why is it so readily assumed that a higher order of values is not required for the salvation of global civilization?

Paradox: Most intriguing is the sense in which any higher order of insight is essentially counterintuitive and characterized by paradox -- perhaps to be understood as a puzzle or a riddle (as in traditional tales). The arguments of [Nassim Nicholas Taleb](#) are of value in this respect ([The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable](#), 2007; [Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder](#), 2012).

The paradox can be framed in terms of a "cognitive twist" -- through which the world is effectively turned "inside out", as separately discussed ([Sphere eversion as guide to the cognitive twist of global introversion?](#) 2013). The symbol, in the form of the [Möbius strip](#) is fundamental to a related argument by [Steven M. Rosen](#) ([The Moebius Seed: a visionary novel of planetary transformation](#), 1985). It may be framed by reference to a neglected "netherworld", as mentioned below ([Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld](#), 2010).

Locked-in cognition: The question is how cognitive habits (of "in-the-box" thinking) are challenged by recognition of a higher pattern of order (Antonio de Nicolas, [Habits of Mind: an introduction to philosophy of education](#), 2000). These offer a reminder of the extent to which cognition can be "locked in" -- through a pattern of "subunderstanding" (Magoroh Maruyama, [Peripheral Vision: polyocular vision or subunderstanding](#), *Organization Studies*, 2004).

References to [lateral thinking](#), [thinking outside the box](#), and the use of Zen [koans](#) addresses this constraint -- especially the traditional collection of 48 in [The Gateless Gate](#).

Representation, memorability and metaphor

Memorability: There is a major challenge to insight of a higher order in that any "re-cognition" of it may only be temporary -- a momentary flash. This has been eloquently described in the fictional account by Nobel Laureate [Doris Lessing](#) of the encounter of a "development agent", from the benevolent galactic empire Canopus, with a person on a planet facing disaster:

To say that he understood what went on was true. To say that he did not understand -- was true. I would sit and explain, over and over again. He listened, his eyes fixed on my face, his lips moving as he repeated to himself what I was saying. He would nod: yes, he had grasped it.

But a few minutes later, when I might be saying something of the same kind, he was uncomfortable, threatened. Why was I saying that? and that? his troubled eyes asked of my face: What did I mean? His questions at such moments were as if I had never taught him anything at all. He was like one drugged or in shock.

Yet it seemed that he did absorb information for sometimes he would talk as if from a basis of shared knowledge: it was as if a part of him knew and remembered all I told him, but other parts had not heard a word. I have never before or since had so strongly that experience of being with a person and knowing that all the time there was certainly a part of that person in contact with you, something real and alive and listening -- and yet most of the

time what one said did not reach that silent and invisible being, and what he said was not often said by the real part of him. It was as if someone stood there bound and gagged while an inferior impersonator spoke for him. ([Re: Colonised Planet 5 - Shikasta](#), 1979, pp. 56-57).

This was quoted in the context of a discussion of the erosion of collective memory, critical of an overly optimistic Club of Rome report ([Societal Learning and the Erosion of Collective Memory -- a critique of the Club of Rome Report: No Limits to Learning](#), 1980).

With a new invasion of the Middle East underway at the time of writing, the point is succinctly made by the oft-quoted adage of [George Santayana](#): ***Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*** How is the survival of global civilization to be ensured if recent history is so readily forgotten?

Representation: It is in this light that the above-mentioned hypothetical scenarios with respect to *Minding the Future* (1980) merit revisiting. How may insight of a higher order have already been embedded in cultures highly vulnerable to forgetting? What are the viable holding patterns -- wisdom containers understood as vehicles for traversing time?

Curiously the issue is explored more attentively with respect to [seed banks](#) able to conserve plant genetic diversity for the future (beyond any nuclear holocaust), as with the [Svalbard Global Seed Vault](#). It is only speculatively, in relation to extended space travel to other solar systems, that the issue is considered with respect to preserving memetic diversity and cultural heritage over generations.

The issue can be discussed in terms of mnemonic triggers ([In Quest of Mnemonic Catalysts -- for comprehension of complex psychosocial dynamics](#), 2007). Examples worth considering, implying requisite connectivity and coherence, could be clustered as follows:

- symbols, including "stones" ([Rosetta Stone](#), [Philosopher's Stone](#)) and devices ([Holy Grail](#)) variously framed as of profoundly elusive significance, if only as metaphors
- circlelets of beads ([Designing Cultural Rosaries and Meaning Malas to Sustain Associations within the Pattern that Connects](#), 2000)
- pantheons (and the associated myths relating their deities)
- tales / fables / myths, notably those understood as teaching stories, or indicative of quests and exemplars, as in the case of [Mullah Nasruddin](#) (cf [Idries Shah](#), [Special Illumination: the Sufi use of humor](#), 1977).
- board games ([Sustainability through Magically Dancing Patterns: 8x8, 9x9, 19x19 -- I Ching, Tao Te Ching / T'ai Hsüan Ching, Wéiqí \(Go\)](#), 2008)
- rituals
- memorials ([Enstoning in memorials and monuments](#), 2012)
- tools of divination (*I Ching, Tarot*, etc) (["Divination" and "wisdom"](#), 2010)

Strange attractor: The possibilities above can be understood as implying a [strange attractor](#) with which any process of engagement is inherently mysterious ([Now as the Ultimate Cognitive Strange Attractor A continuing invitation "down the rabbit hole"?](#) 2014). As with the myth of the Holy Grail, there is a sense of panacea. This in turn might be combined with the alchemical myth of the [alkahest](#) as the universal solvent capable of dissolving any container designed to encompass and restrict it -- and, by extension, any "problem".

This myth can be fruitfully explored in terms of the current design challenges of a fusion reactor within which plasma has to be constrained in such a way that it makes no contact with the walls of its toroidal container ([Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing \(ITER-8\)](#), 2006)

Questionable metaphors of perfectibility meriting challenge

Questionable polarities: The various metaphors employed above, and in the title of this document (*Engaging with Insight of a Higher Order*), suggest a need to challenge their underlying assumptions and implications.

- *Higher vs Lower?* Use of higher is notably challenged as indicative of elitist discourse, especially by feminist scholars. It suggests a questionable ladder of progress up which people are encouraged to climb. "Up" is then unquestionably associated with "better". Potentially more interesting are the implications of "down", understood as indicative of more fundamental and grounded. Understood as "ascent", there is the question of whether it constitutes a form of escape from living reality, as separately explored ([*Clues to 'Ascent' and 'Escape'*, 2002](#)).
- *Insight vs Outsight?* Similar questions could be raised with regard to insight. Less used, outsight is the power or act of perceiving and understanding external things clearly. Use of both "in" and "out" may also be questionable with respect to the so-called [container metaphor](#). The nature of the container can itself be called into question in the light of the paradoxes of the [Klein bottle](#) in which inside and outside are indistinguishable ([*Intercourse with Globality through Enacting a Klein bottle: cognitive implication in a polysensorial "lens"*, 2009](#)).
- *Light vs Dark?* Whether insight or outsight, there is an implication of greater clarity or light -- with light itself being employed as a metaphor, as is most evident in the case of enlightenment. The alternative can also be fruitfully explored ([*Enlightening Endarkenment: selected web resources on the challenge to comprehension*, 2005](#)).
- *Order vs Orders?* Here the issue is whether order is necessarily singular or is necessarily multiple, as separately explored ([*Law and Order vs. Lore and Orders? Imagining otherwise the forceful engagement of singularity with plurality*, 2013](#)). Also questionable is whether the static structural implication is itself appropriate relative to a more dynamic understanding ([*Dynamic Transformation of Static Reporting of Global Processes: suggestions for process-oriented titles of global issue reports*, 2013](#)).
- *Engagement vs Detachment?* Is it to be assumed that some process of engaging is necessarily appropriate -- as can be questioned with respect to a degree of voyeurism in cultural and environmental tourism? Should the effort be made to "grasp" insight in some way, as questioned separately ([*Beyond Harassment of Reality and Grasping Future Possibilities: learnings from sexual harassment as a metaphor*, 1996](#)). Detachment is of course a modality cultivated in some forms of meditation, and may be variously envisaged ([*Paradoxes of Engaging with the Ultimate in any Guise: living life penultimately*, 2012](#)).
- *Perfection vs Imperfection?* This is especially interesting because of the implication that perfection is framed as a fundamental attractor, with imperfection as being something to be avoided to the extent possible, even to be "designed out". This can be explored in terms of remaindering ([*Social Remainders from Psychosocial Remaindering: review of current usage and implications*, 2011](#)). If only with respect to the challenge of waste disposal and recycling, the challenge is one of systemic integration ([*Reintegration of a Remaindered World: Cognitive recycling of objects of systemic neglect*, 2011](#)). It raises the question of whether a more inclusive understanding of perfection would encompass imperfection (Kevin Griffin, [*The Freedom of Imperfection*](#), *The Huffington Post*, 23 September 2011; Rob Preece, [*The Wisdom of Imperfection: the challenge of individuation in Buddhist life*](#), 2006). The point is partially made with respect to the seasons, comparing spring-summer as "perfection" to autumn-winter to "imperfection" -- a pattern echoed in any lifecycle. Rather than as a condition or state, perfection may then be better understood as a process. Such understanding is partially reflected in the Japanese world view of [wabi-sabi](#) centered on the

acceptance of transience and imperfection -- as one of beauty that is "imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete".

- *Extraordinary vs Ordinary*: Implied in the use of some of the terms above is that "insight of higher order" is extraordinary in a sense to be contrasted in some fundamental way with ordinary (every day) insight. This suggests that it is relatively exceptional and inaccessible -- even unique. This assumption can be usefully challenged by suggesting that all that makes it extraordinary is the common failure to recognize how ordinary and readily accessible it is -- did one but have the eyes to see. As has been variously articulated by mystics and others, the mystery lies in the extraordinary nature of the ordinary -- seen otherwise. Considered otherwise, as with the polarization above, the issue may be how to render the ordinary extraordinary, as well as rendering the extraordinary ordinary..

Although usefully challenged in this way, more understanding might be derived by variously challenging the questioning process itself. This approach could be characteristic of the Zen use of [*koans*](#), notably the collection known as the [*The Gateless Gate*](#).

Another approach would be by assuming that nothing meaningful could be articulated regarding higher orders of insight, as suggested by the theological process of [*apophasis*](#) (or "unsaying"), as separately discussed ([*Being What You Want: problematic kataphatic identity vs. potential of apophatic identity?*](#) 2008). This could take the form of a contrarian approach ([*Celebrating the Value of Deadly Problems Worldwide: planetary salvation in an era of inept global governance?*](#) 2008; [*Embodying a Hypercomplex of Unhygienic Nescience: questionable connectivity enabling apprehension of matters otherwise*](#), 2014).

Axes of preferential bias? The generalizations associated with the polarities above could be challenged by a more systematic exploration based on the assumption of cultural biases and preferences ([*Systems of Categories Distinguishing Cultural Biases*](#), 1993). This was the approach taken by the philosopher W. T. Jones ([*The Romantic Syndrome: toward a new method in cultural anthropology and the history of ideas*](#), 1961) who identified seven axes of methodological bias in the consideration of any matter -- appropriately extended here to understanding of higher orders of insight. The biases are:

- *Order vs Disorder*: Namely the range between a preference for system, structure, conceptual clarity, etc. and a preference for fluidity, muddle chaos, etc, as suggested by:
 - [*Nassim Nicholas Taleb \(Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder*](#), 2012).
- *Static vs Dynamic*: Namely the range between a preference for the changeless, eternal, etc. and a preference for movement, for explanation in genetic and process terms, etc, as suggested by:
 - [*Dynamic Transformation of Static Reporting of Global Processes: suggestions for process-oriented titles of global issue reports*](#) (2013).
- *Continuity vs Discreteness*: Namely the range between a preference for wholeness, unity, etc and a preference for discreteness, plurality, diversity, etc.
- *Inner vs Outer*: Namely the range between a preference for being able to project oneself into the objects of one's experience (to experience them as one experiences oneself), and a preference for a relatively external, objective relation to them, as suggested by:
 - [*Defining the objective ∞ Refining the subjective ?!: Explaining reality ∞ Embodying realization*](#) (2011)
 - [*Sphere eversion as guide to the cognitive twist of global introversion?*](#) (2013).
- *Sharp focus vs Soft focus*: Namely the range between a preference for clear, direct experience and a preference for threshold experiences, felt to be saturated with more meaning than is immediately present.

- *This world vs Other world*: Namely the range between preference for belief in the spatio-temporal world as self-explanatory and preference for belief that it is not and can only be comprehended in terms of other frames, as suggested by:
 - [Adhering to God's Plan in a Global Society: serious problems from a transfinite perspective](#) (2014)
- *Spontaneity vs Process*: Namely the range between a preference for chance, freedom, accident, etc and a preference for explanations subject to laws and definable processes, as suggested by:
 - [Nassim Nicholas Taleb](#) (*The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007).

These might then be "applied" to the criteria articulated above, giving rise to the pattern suggested by the following table.

	Credibility	Comprehensibility	Coherence	Communicability	Applicability
Order vs Disorder					
Static vs Dynamic					
Continuity vs Discreteness					
Inner vs Outer					
Sharp focus vs Soft focus					
This world vs Other world					
Spontaneity vs Process					

The criteria of any sense of "higher orders of insight" could also be challenged using the standard set of WH questions, as in the following table.

	Credibility	Comprehensibility	Coherence	Communicability	Applicability
Who? For whom?					
Why?					
Where? Whither?					
When? Whence?					
What?					
How?					
Which?					

Greater insight through holiness?

A classic approach -- notably in the East -- to self-reflexive coherence is through the circle, or wheel, as a metaphor. In such a case the polarities are held by the linear spokes which collectively define a curved circumference. Much can be made of the conceptual significance of any "emptiness" at the hub of such a wheel -- as in the classic quotation from Lao Tzu (*Tao Te Ching*):

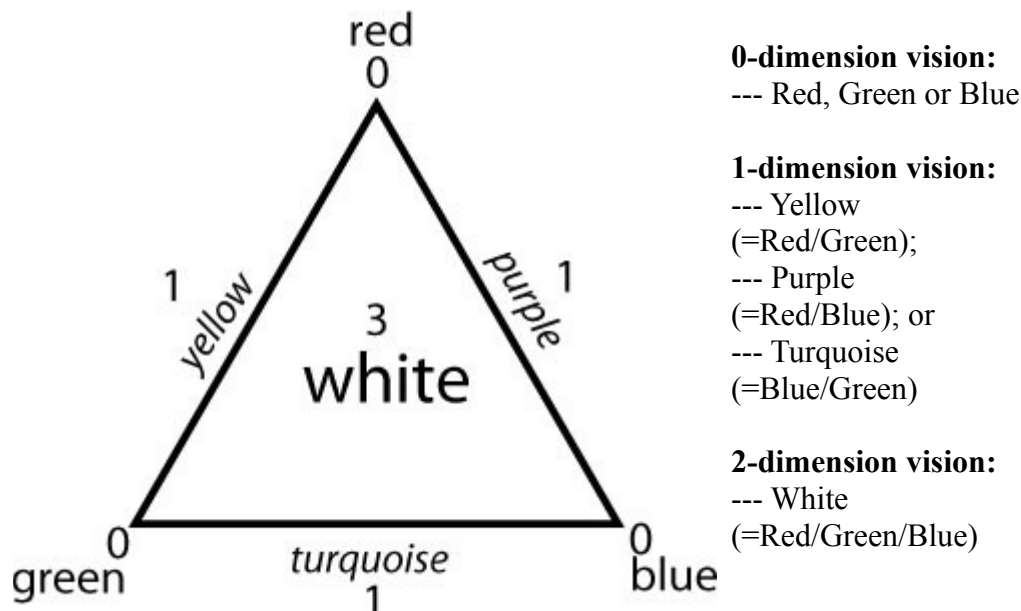
Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub.
It is the centre hole that makes it useful...
Therefore profit comes from what is there;
usefulness from what is not there.

Framing nothingness: Especially intriguing is the sense in which mnemonic catalysts (such as those above) may frame a central emptiness or hole -- consistent with current recognition of the significance of "nothingness" ([Emerging Significance of Nothing](#), 2012)".

Of relevance is the remarkable exploration by [Roberto Casati](#) and [Achille C. Varzi](#) (*Holes and Other Superficialities*, 1994) -- with respect to the borderlines of metaphysics, everyday geometry, and the theory of perception (as they summarize in the [entry on holes](#) in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). They seek to answer two basic questions: Do holes really exist? And if so, what are they?

Framing incommunicability and learning : The above-mentioned mathematical analysis of communicability and learning by Ron Atkin (*Multidimensional Man; can man live in 3-dimensional space ?* 1981) is effectively an analysis of holes in insight prior to any cognitive shift to greater insight. As noted separately with respect to incommunicability ([Social organization determined by incommunicability of insights](#)), this makes use of a simple colour triangle to illustrate the challenge.

The perceptual significance of this approach is well-illustrated by visual sensitivity to colours resulting from the three primary hues (red, green and blue). These may be represented on a simple triangle. Here the vertices (O-simplexes) represent the primary hues, the sides are twofold combinations (1-simplexes), and the combination of the three hues makes the central white (2-simplex).



Now to be able to see all the colours, including white, a person's vision needs to have the ability to function within the triangle as 2-dimensional "traffic" on that geometry, moving from location to location adjusting to the complexity of the geometrical structure which carries the visual traffic. If the person's vision is 1-dimensional, then white could not be perceived because the visual traffic of seeing is restricted to the edges and vertices only.

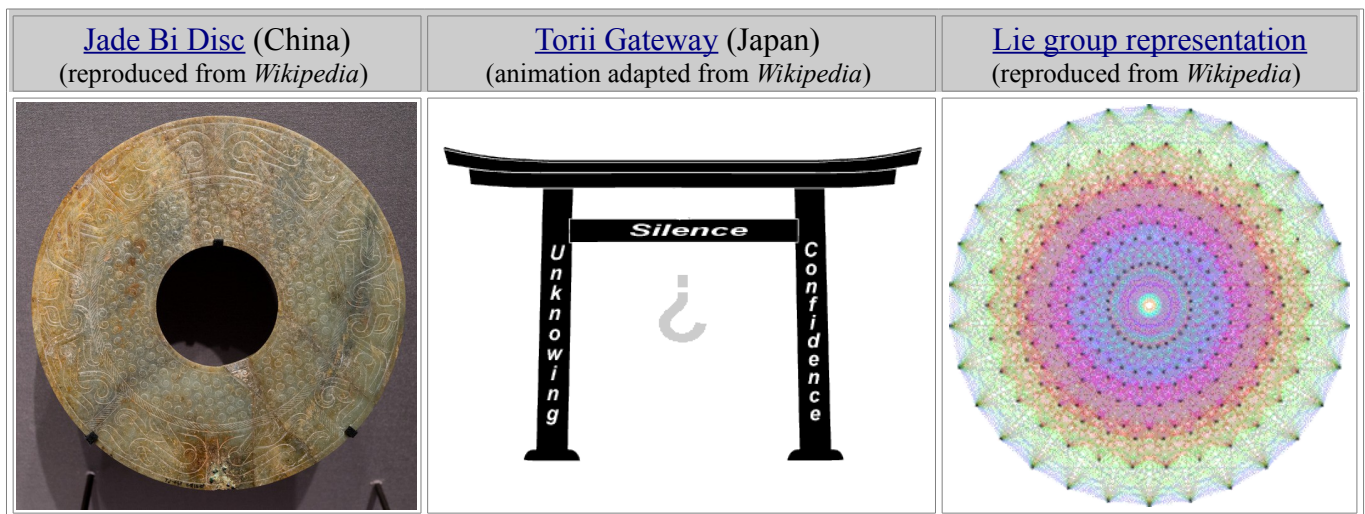
If the person's colour vision is O-dimensional, then it is restricted to the vertices. It can only see one vertex colour at a time and never a combination (as represented by an edge). If vision was 3-dimensional, it would allow traffic throughout the geometry, but would perceive other colours as well, calling for a fourth vertex (forming a tetrahedron) in order to contain the full range of combinations.

If the geometry represents insights instead of colours, then it would be expected that some would have O-dimensional comprehension (i.e. sensitive to isolated primary insights only). In this sense there is an irony in the way that opposing political factions each tend to identify with a particular primary colour as a symbol. Others may have 1-dimensional comprehension (i.e. only sensitive to binary combinations of primary insights). The latter would be unable to maintain attention to three

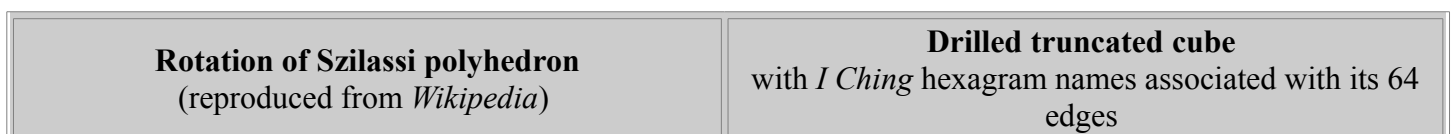
insights simultaneously in order to perceive the threefold combination (the central insight of higher order).

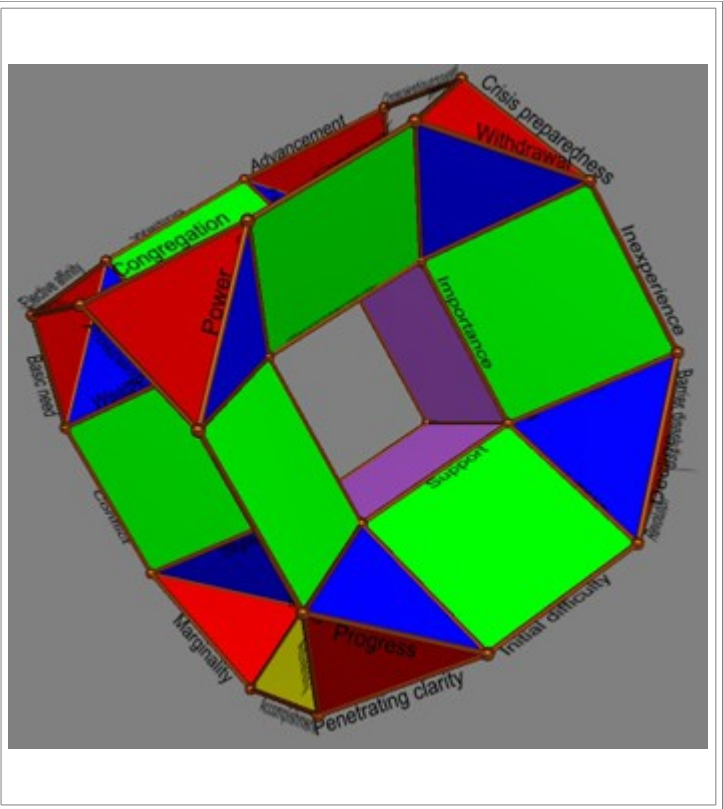
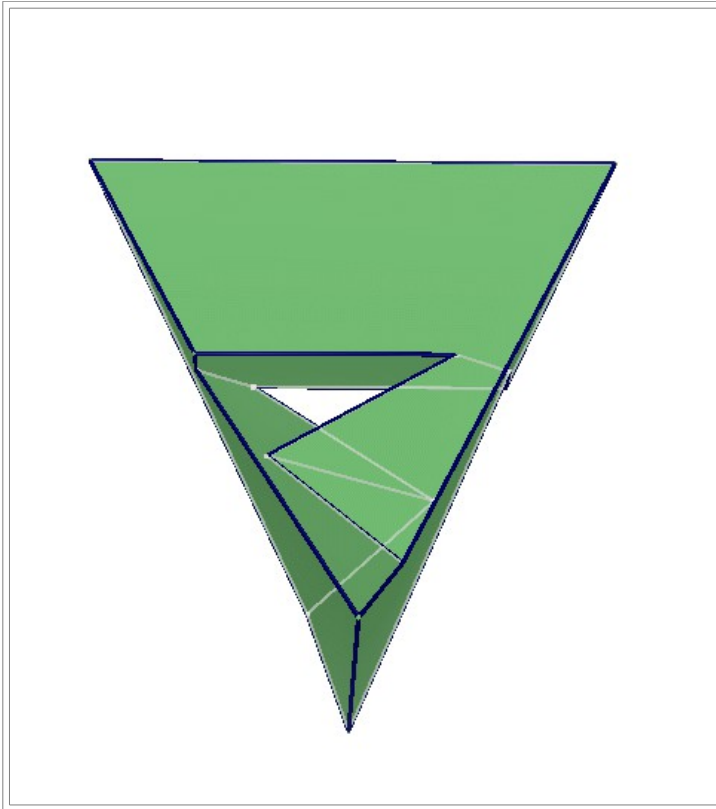
The threefold insight may then be termed a 2-hole in the pattern of comprehension and communicability amongst those involved. For 2-dimensional traffic however, the insight complex is coherent, comprehensible and well integrated. For the 1-dimensional traffic, it feels less secure as a whole, since the whole complex may only be experienced sequentially through a succession of experiences ("around the edges"). The shape of the whole may then be deduced but not experienced. For 0-dimensional traffic, the underlying insight of higher order does not exist, since experience is disconnected.

Framing a hole as an attractor: So framed the question could be asked as to how a hole could be most intriguingly framed as an attractor -- implying a higher order of insight without giving any specific form to it. Holes with which significance is associated are illustrated by the following.



The above images, and those which follow, are discussed separately with other examples ([Now as the Ultimate Cognitive Strange Attractor: a continuing invitation "down the rabbit hole"?](#) 2014; [Enabling Wisdom Dynamically within Intertwined Tori: requisite resonance in global knowledge architecture](#), 2012; [Imagining Attractive Global Governance: questioning possibilities and constraints of well-boundedness](#), 2013; [Implication of Toroidal Transformation of the Crown of Thorns: design challenge to enable integrative comprehension of global dynamics](#), 2011)





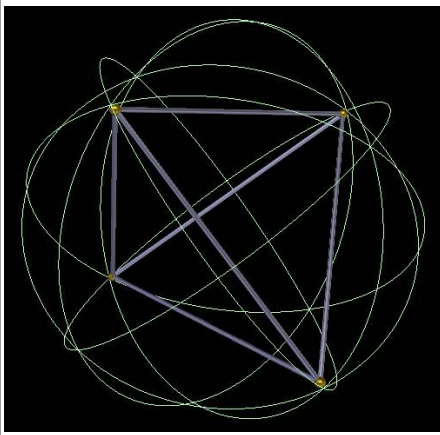
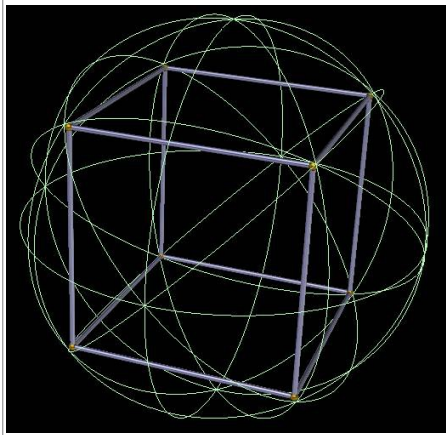
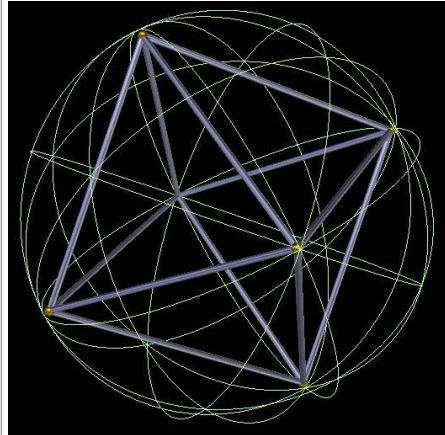
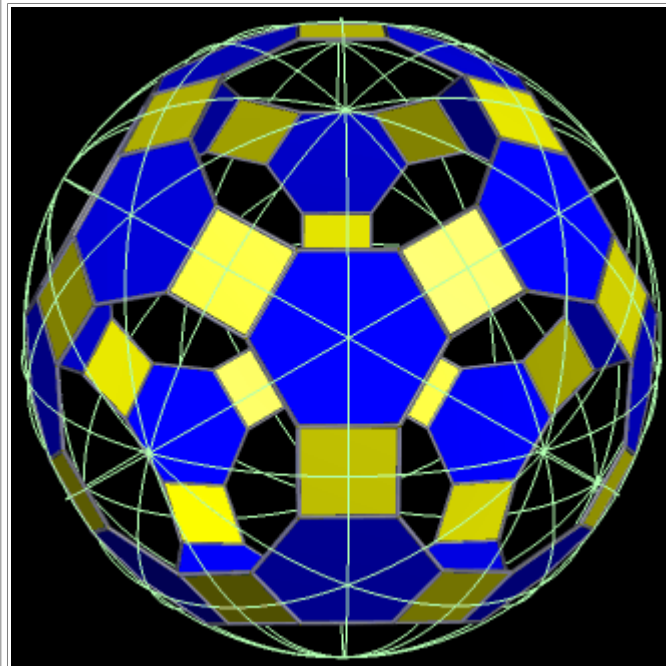
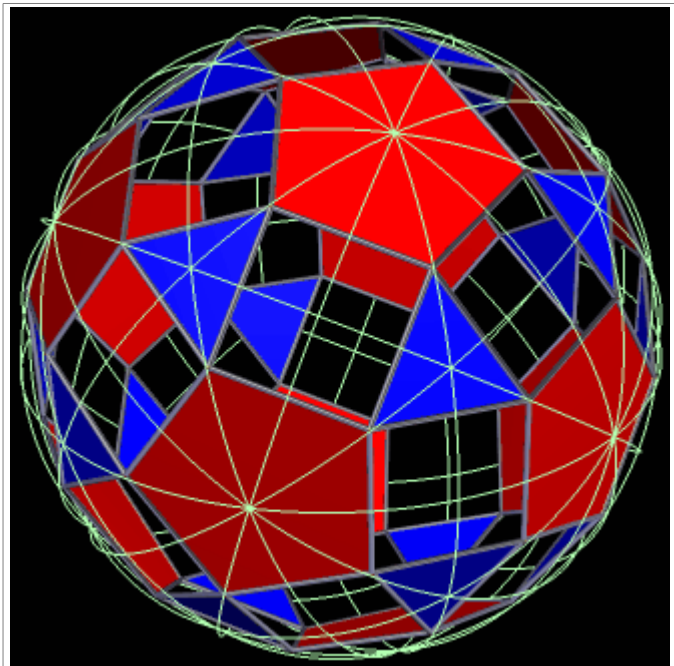
Framing insight through patterns of holes? There is a curious irony that English offers the ambiguity between hole, whole, and holy -- to the point of implying that any framing of a higher order of insight (as might be associated with holiness) may be inherently "full of holes" in various senses of the term. Are there holes of significance in the world views of those esteemed as holy?

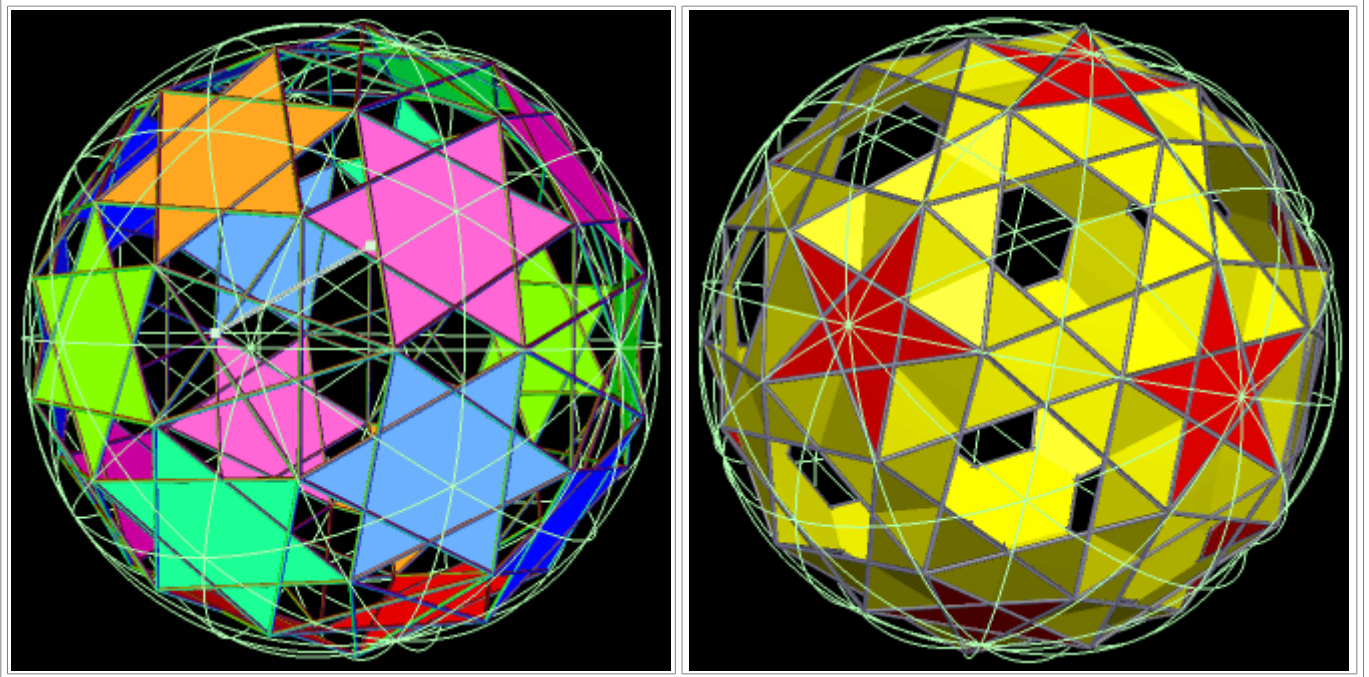
Holes configured to frame insight of higher order? Using the icosidodecahedron exercise above (animations below prepared using Stella Polyhedron Navigator)		
Criteria as holes	Configuration of holes	Manifestations as holes

Such exercises suggest that governance embodying insight of a higher order may -- ironically -- be best understood as a configuration of holes. This follows from previous arguments, extensively illustrated, with respect to polyhedral configurations ([Towards Polyhedral Global Governance: complexifying oversimplistic strategic metaphors](#), 2008). The irony is all the greater given the investment by government in "[cover-up](#)" strategies -- suggesting that the essential integrity of governance is necessarily "full of holes". The argument can be taken further with respect to silence ([Civilization as a Global Configuration of Silences: recognizing silence of a higher order](#), 2013).

It is Atkin (1981, 1977) who has hypothesized that the governance of a complex organization may

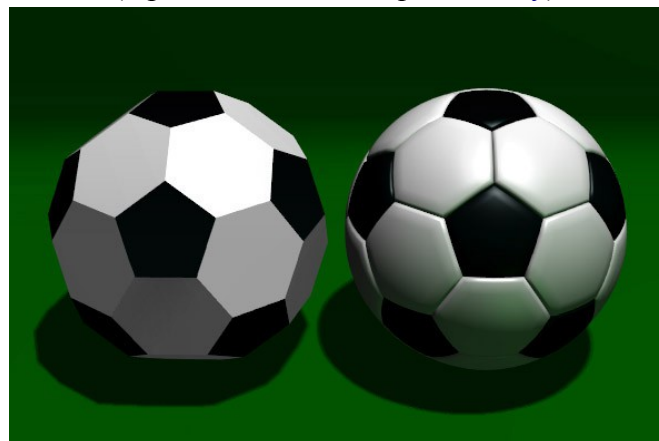
be dependent on the appropriate management of "holes" in the communication/comprehension process. He illustrates this with respect to the academic committees in a university and the insight to which they are respectively able to accord attention collectively

Simpler configurations of holes based on 3 of the 5 Platonic polyhedra		
Tetrahedron	Cube	Octahedron
		
More complex configurations of holes based on 2 of the 13 Archimedean polyhedra		
Truncated icosidodecahedron [62 faces, 180 edges, 120 vertices]	Rhombicosidodecahedron [62 faces, 120 edges, 60 vertices]	
		
Alternative configurations of holes based on a single Nonconvex Snub polyhedron		
Small snub icosicosidodecahedron (also called the holosnub icosahedron) [112 faces, 180 edges, 60 vertices]		
Highlighting 6-pointed star	Highlighting 5-pointed star	



The patterns of holes in the animations immediately above are especially interesting in the light of a separate exercise in configuring together the "incommensurable" 5-fold [Star of Islam](#) with the 6-fold [Star of David of Judaism](#). Both symbols appear on flags of the nations having those distinct faiths (*[Middle East Peace Potential through Dynamics in Spherical Geometry: engendering connectivity from incommensurable 5-fold and 6-fold conceptual frameworks](#)*, 2012). In that exercise the configuration was based on the [truncated icosahedron](#), one of the 13 Archimedean polyhedra. As noted there with respect to global governance, considerable irony lies in the fact that that polyhedron is characteristic of the white-and-black stitching pattern of the classic association [football](#) as shown below.

Comparison of truncated icosahedron with association football
(reproduced from [Wikipedia entry](#))



The higher order of insight required to transcend the Middle East cycle of violence may lie in the capacity to alternate between the two configurations of holes in the animations above. Consideration may of course also be given to insight from the wider range of polyhedra that can be are engendered.

Is there a requisite complexity to the pattern of holes -- potentially assumed to call for "cover-ups" -- to ensure viable global governance, otherwise presented too simplisitcally, as separately argued (*[Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy?](#)* 2011).

Engaging with higher orders of insight

Perfectibility? In addition to the questionable assumptions above, potentially more fundamental is that relating to the desirability or requirement for "improvement" on that obtaining in the present moment. The possibility of improvement is the theme of a classic text by [John Passmore](#) (*The Perfectibility of Man*, 1969). It is a theme of [Pierre Teilhard de Chardin](#) (*The Phenomenon of Man*, 1959; *The Future of Man*, 1964), who conceived the idea of the [Omega Point](#), namely a maximum level of complexity and consciousness towards which he believed the universe was evolving. Understanding of perfectibility can however be fruitfully challenged from a Buddhist perspective (Ines Freedman, *Embracing Imperfection*, Insight Meditation Center, 2010).

The challenge to assumptions descriptive of the attraction of such insight can be extended to "engagement" itself -- especially when understood as a metaphor deriving considerable significance from that of interpersonal relationships. Reflection can be considerably enriched in the light of associated terms: flirting, courtship, one-night-stand, life-long bond, marriage, intercourse. It can be further enriched by ongoing controversy over extra-marital and homosexual bonds, as separately explored (*Marrying an Other whatever the Form: reframing and extending the understanding of marriage*, 2013).

Reframing engagement: Processes of engagement can be variously explored and framed:

- Quest for a source of insight, as variously recognized with respect to the process of a [vision quest](#), a pilgrimage, the search for a teacher (or an ideal partner).
- Engaging with a teacher, whether within an academic context ([doctoral advisor](#)), within a conventional religious context ([spiritual director](#)), or with a master or guru ([discipleship](#))
- Engaging with a process, as variously framed:
 - within a craft environment, through stages of [apprenticeship](#)
 - within an academic context, through [academic degrees](#) and graduations
 - within a [spiritual discipline](#), through successive [initiations](#), as with being "[born again](#)" (*Varieties of Rebirth: distinguishing ways of being "born again"*, 2004)
- Framing the engagement
 - as acquisition of insight (as intellectual property) -- an attitude to be usefully challenged (*Beyond Harassment of Reality and Grasping Future Possibilities: learnings from sexual harassment as a metaphor*, 1996)
 - in relation to some form of "wisdom container" holding higher orders of cognitive connectivity appropriately
 - [Intercourse with Globality through Enacting a Klein bottle: cognitive implication in a polysensorial "lens"](#) (2009)
 - [Interweaving Thematic Threads and Learning Pathways: noonautics, magic carpets and wizdomes](#) (2010)
 - [Clustering Questions of Existential Significance](#) (2010)
 - [Configuring a Set of Zen Koan as a Wisdom Container](#) (2012)
 - as a process of embodiment and exemplification
 - [Embodying the Sphere of Change: reframing metaphors of the I Ching as a codification of the patterns of change](#) (2001)
 - [Psychology of Sustainability: embodying cyclic environmental processes](#) (2002)
 - [The Isdom of the Wisdom Society: embodying time as the heartland of humanity](#) (2003)
 - [Embodiment of Change: Comprehension, Traction and Impact? Discovering enabling questions for the future](#) (2011)
 - [Existential Embodiment of Externalities: radical cognitive engagement with environmental categories and disciplines](#) (2009)

- Preserving critical distance and identity in the face of some form of absorption, and any requirement for total surrender (as may be characteristic of manipulative sects and their programs)
 - [Paradoxes of Engaging with the Ultimate in any Guise: living life penultimately](#) (2012)
 - [Embodiment: A Way Round Pointlessness ?](#) (2012)

Hypothetical possibilities: A degree of consideration is appropriate to the following, given the expectations variously associated with them -- and the learnings they may offer as extreme case studies.

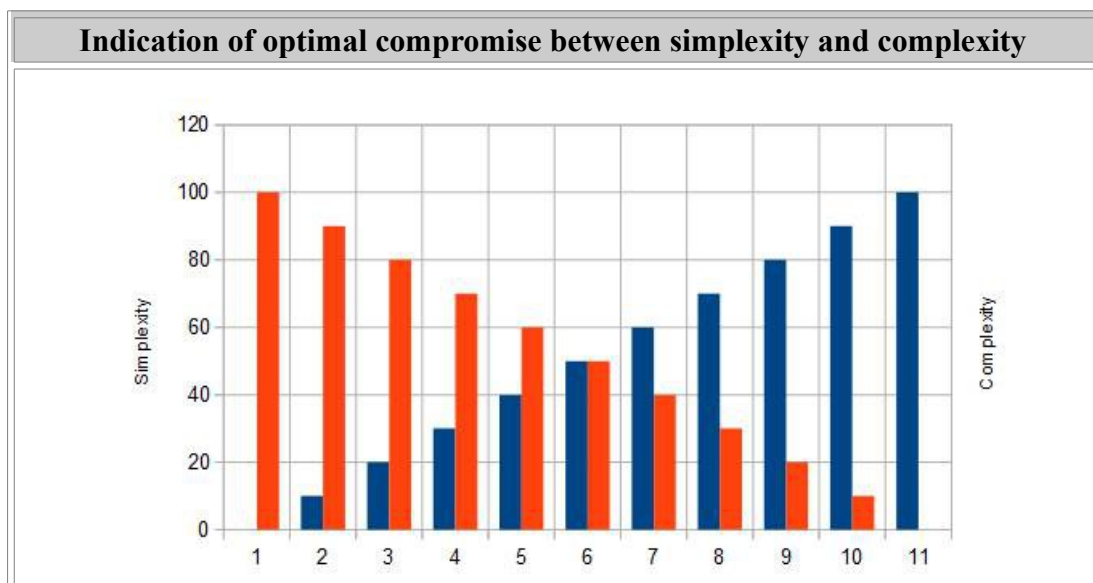
- Artificial superintelligence: Given the increasing dependence on computerization and artificial intelligence, the nature of any insight of a higher order might also be explored in terms of the human capacity to comprehend that insight. There is increasing probability of the encounter with a supercomputer endowed with a high order of artificial intelligence, as noted above ([Nick Bostrom, Get ready for the dawn of superintelligence](#), *New Scientist*, 5 July 2014).
- Extraterrestrial intelligence: A related possibility could be explored further in terms of any encounter with hypothetical superintelligent beings, whether extraterrestrial or epiterrestrial, as noted above ([Sensing Epiterrestrial Intelligence \(SETI\): embedding of "extraterrestrials" in episystemic dynamics?](#) 2013)
- Messiah: Considerable probability is attached by some to the imminent emergence of a Messiah, or analogues according to the prophecies of other religions -- with all this may imply for their believers as a transformative source of insight

Perspective of the source of insight: The process of engagement can be considered otherwise, from the perspective of whoever or whatever embodies the insight:

- [Cultural creatives](#) and the [supergifted](#): Various seeking ways to engage meaningfully with each other and with a world characterized by the less creative or the alternatively gifted
- Promoters of global plans: In their expectation of universally enthusiastic "buy-in" -- having ignored those who advocate alternatives ([Considering All the Strategic Options: whilst ignoring alternatives and disclaiming cognitive protectionism](#), 2009; [Framing the Global Future by Ignoring Alternatives: unfreezing categories as a vital necessity](#), 2009)
- Promoters of a theory (or philosophy) of everything: Faced with the challenge of what has been ignored and with those who disagree -- and have alternatives to promote
- Artificial superintelligence: Given the increasing dependence on supercomputers and artificial intelligence, how might these be designed (or learn) to enhance the capacity to respond to the more fundamental questions of a global civilization in crisis ([Superquestions for Supercomputers: avoiding terra flops from misguided dependence on teraflops?](#) 2010).
- Extraterrestrial intelligence: Given the evident challenge in human dialogue with any "other", how best to explore the manner in which superintelligent aliens might seek to engage meaningfully with humanity ([Distinguishing Patterns of Assumption in Dialogue with Aliens](#), 2000; [Writing Guidelines for Future Occupation of Earth by Extraterrestrials: be done by as you did?](#) 2010)
- Messiah: Faced with the challenge of interacting most fruitfully with a population attached to its beliefs -- as well as what to do with those who do reject the insight offered. The challenge can be speculatively explored ([Strategic Briefing for the Messiah: based on professional insights from preemptive news and image management](#), 1999).

Simplicity vs Complexity: As highlighted by the subtitle of this document, a fundamental challenge lies in finding a balance between the "complexity" appropriate to a higher order of insight and the "simplicity" necessary for its comprehension and communicability. Credibility and applicability are dependent on both extremes. The following schematic is indicative of the challenge

at either extreme -- detracting from the other. A compromise is required -- perhaps more readily recognized through presentation of the schematic as a dynamic.



Antithesis and anathema: challenge of the "Satanic"?

Demonization: As noted above, recognition of insight, held to be of higher order by some, is likely to evoke criticism from other perspectives. This may even question the insight using the same criteria identified above. The criticism may go further in claiming the proposed insight to be fundamentally misleading -- and even deliberately so. This tendency may extend to [demonization](#) -- framing the insight as the "work of the devil" in some way. This is especially if it calls into question interpretations of sacred scriptures embodying spiritual revelations of the past -- claimed as valid for eternity. Recognition of the emergence of a Messiah by some will in all probability be matched by a Satanic counterframing by others.

Analogies to this process are evident in response to creativity in the sciences and the arts. Whereas insights with spiritual implications may be defined as "evil" -- requiring whatever sanctions are deemed appropriate -- communities of science or the arts tend to restrict their response to character assassination, shunning and exclusion ([Knowledge Processes Neglected by Science: insights from the crisis of science and belief](#), 2012)

Implication of elites: A highly-publicized example is offered at the time of writing by release of the US [Senate Intelligence Committee report on CIA torture](#), otherwise known as the CIA Torture Report. This presumably to be appreciated as an instance of insight of higher order. As the person with one of the highest positions in the chain of command overseeing the use of the techniques criticized by the report, Vice-President [Dick Cheney](#) commented succinctly ([Dick Cheney Says Report Faulting CIA Interrogation Is 'Full of Crap'](#), NBC News, 11 December 2014; [Dick Cheney Says Senate Torture Report Is 'Full of Crap'](#), Time, 10 December 2014).

Another example is offered by the [World Economic Forum](#) (WEF) with its specific commitment to "improving the state of the world" -- in contrast to the [World Social Forum](#) whose agenda it deplores. The latter frames the WEF agenda as being the cause of global crisis rather than of any remedial strategy. There is a case for speculating how such dynamics might be transcended ([All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony?](#) 2007).

Stealth and deception: Concerns regarding the so-called Torture Report highlight the extent to which any higher order of insight might well be inextricably related to forms of stealth and deception through which strategic advantage is ensured. These characteristics are admired at the highest levels of game playing, as in chess and go -- and especially in negotiation and marketing.

They are evident from arguments that the focus should have been on a 2009 report of the US [Senate Armed Services Committee](#) (WashingtonsBlog, [The Big Torture Story Everyone Is Missing The Media Is Focusing On the WRONG Senate Torture Report](#), Information Clearinghouse, December 2014). The point made was presented succinctly at the time by Dan Froomkin ([Torturing for Propaganda Purposes](#), *White House Watch*, 22 April 2009):

Despite what you've seen on TV, torture is really only good at one thing: eliciting false confessions. Indeed, Bush-era torture techniques, we now know, were cold-bloodedly modeled after methods used by Chinese Communists to extract confessions from captured U.S. servicemen that they could then use for propaganda during the Korean War. So as shocking as the latest revelation in a new [Senate Armed Services Committee report](#) may be, it actually makes sense -- in a nauseating way. The White House started pushing the use of torture not when faced with a "ticking time bomb" scenario from terrorists, but when officials in 2002 were desperately casting about for ways to tie Iraq to the 9/11 attacks -- in order to strengthen their public case for invading a country that had nothing to do with 9/11 at all.

Just torture? It could even be said that the original inspiration for enhanced interrogation in Christian societies derived from the procedures of the Christian [Inquisition](#) in "putting people to the question" through the so-called [water cure](#) -- clearly a precursor of CIA use of [waterboarding](#). The heretics and witches of the Middle Ages have been replaced by jihadists, but the methods of the so-called [Hammer of the Witches](#) (1486) have seemingly changed little -- although facilitated by recent academic research, as separately documented by [Alfred W. McCoy](#) ([Top universities aided CIA torturers: researched effective methods](#); [A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror](#), 2006). The current debate would seem to be falling into the pattern through which so-called [just war](#) was articulated (Shunzo Majima, [Just Torture?](#) *Journal of Military Ethics*, 2012).

Exploitative insight: Such considerations clarify the extent to which there may be significant reluctance to give form to any higher order of insight -- or rather that that the insight may be primarily appreciated for its exploitative value. A degree of deception may then be considered as characteristic of the highest order of insight -- as in marketing.

There are concerns that those with the greatest strategic capacity may be the primary purveyors of ignorance -- reframing higher orders of insight to their particular ends. This is consistent with systematic [dumbing down](#) of the population to elicit consent, as variously argued by [Noam Chomsky](#) ([Manufacturing Consent: the political economy of the mass media](#), 1988; [Elites Have Forced America into a National Psychosis to Keep Us Embroiled in Imperial Wars](#), *AlterNet*, 2 December 2014; [America, the World's Leading #1 Terrorist State](#), *AlterNet*, 3 November 2014).

Such arguments are also consistent with the concerns of conspiracy theorists regarding the existence of a parallel [secret government](#) -- a so-called [deep state](#) governed by [deep politics](#) -- constraining any recognition of orders of insight through which crisis could be resolved more fruitfully. Such suspicions have been reinforced by recent [global surveillance disclosures](#) and the associated funding ([Snowden leaks intelligence 'black budget' to Washington Post](#), *Al Jazeera*, 29 August 2013). The arguments are further extended by conspiracy theorists to recognition of secretive [Illuminati](#) -- necessarily reflecting a higher order of insight.

In the light of the above, it is instructive to consider a briefing that might be given to those of "Satanic" persuasion ([Strategic Briefing for Satan: based on professional insights from preemptive news and image management](#), 1999). This speculative exercise was undertaken as a counterpart to that elaborated for a Messiah (as noted earlier).

Potential of mirroring in engaging with greater insight

Complementary demonization of greater insight: The interrelated speculative briefings for the Messianic and the Satanic (above) help to clarify the challenge of perception -- to the extent that a Messiah may be recognized as Satanic, and vice versa. Those responsible for the CIA torture program naturally perceive themselves to be defenders of the highest American values, as with governments complicit in that initiative in defence of Western values. This pattern is of course evident in the relation between torturers and jihadists. Each would claim to be employing insight of the highest order to achieve their ends.

Enantiidromia: More curious is the sense in which those responsible for the torture program were inspired by behaviours in other societies purportedly upheld as abhorrent. It is extraordinary the extent to which democratic societies have been inspired by the methods of torture and surveillance in non-democratic societies. Is this to be seen as a strange combination of: [*Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery*](#) and [*Assume a virtue if you have it not?*](#)

Sonali Kolhatkar ([*Ferguson Is Baghdad Is New York Is Kabul: our wars abroad are mirror images of the war at home*](#), *Common Dreams*, 12 December 2014)

Whether on the streets of Baghdad or Ferguson, soldiers and militarized police forces have historically enforced control, not law. Behind the prison walls of Guantanamo and Texas, some authorities have tortured and brutalized rather than interrogated. They have not protected nor served; they have attacked and killed. They have not gathered intelligence; they have violated people's humanity.

The process of embodying the values and insights of a previously abhorred opponent is usefully described through the drama of [*enantiidromia*](#). If abhorred characteristics are deemed to be associated with a netherworld, somehow mirroring the world inspired by insights of the highest order, the even larger challenge for greater insight would seem to be to engage with (and encompass) what is otherwise systemically neglected ([*Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld*](#), 2010; [*Embracing error and the netherworld*](#), 2014).

Mirroring: There is continuing debate regarding the manner in which the "other" functions as a challenging mirror from which further insight may be derived. ([*My Reflecting Mirror World: making my World Summit on Sustainable Development worthwhile*](#), 2002; [*Looking in the Mirror -- at Josef Fritzl ? Global conditions on reflection*](#), 2009; [*Burkha as Metaphorical Mirror for Imperious Culture?*](#) 2009). It is readily accepted that one may take on the characteristics of an exemplar of higher insight. This may be variously advocated according to tradition ([*Imitation of Christ*](#); [*Attaining Buddhahood*](#)).

The question calling for greater insight is how to step "through" the mirror in the spirit of various legends ([*Stepping into, or through, the Mirror: embodying alternative scenario patterns*](#), 2008; [*Mirroring of self and other: enjoyment "through" the world*](#), 2011).

Mirror testing for a higher order of insight? The distinctiveness of the human species, notably justifying its exploitation of other species to its own ends, has been defined in terms of a mirror test (or a mark test). Also termed "[*mirror self-recognition*](#)", such recognition in an ordinary reflecting mirror is a common psychological test of both intelligence and of maturity.

It might however be hypothesized, following from arguments by various authors (Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: a necessary unity*, 1979; [*Henryk Skolimowski, The Participatory Mind: a new theory of knowledge and of the universe*](#), 1994; Werner J. Sattmann-Frese and Stuart B. Hill. *Learning for Sustainable Living: psychology of ecological transformation*, 2007) that there is a degree of implicit mirroring to be collectively discovered as the key to insight of a higher order. The case is argued separately ([*Radical Cognitive Mirroring of Globalization: dynamically innning the unquestioningly outed*](#), 2014)

The argument has been developed separately from the potential perspective of aliens of greater intelligence ([*Self-reflective Embodiment of Transdisciplinary Integration \(SETI\) the universal criterion of species maturity?*](#) 2008).

Is there a tendency for people to be cognitively trapped, much as the primate relatives of humanity are trapped -- challenged as they are with respect to mirror self-recognition? As perceptively indicated from the perspective of the policy sciences by [Geoffrey Vickers](#): *A trap is a function of the nature of the trapped (Freedom in a rocking boat: changing values in an unstable society, 1972)*.

Mirroring what is not there? The process of mirror self-recognition -- notably as observed in primates -- involves some preliminary effort to see what is "behind the mirror". The assumption is made that there is an "other" there. Is this the trap in which science is caught at this time -- as might be perceived by extraterrestrials? Self-consciousness, when it emerges, is associated with the assumption that what is reflected by the mirror is oneself.

Curiously the mirror is indeed indicative of what is "there" -- in objective terms. The mirror of course fails to offer any sense of what is "not there", namely the identity with which any emergent insight of higher order is associated -- necessarily only to be understood in subjective terms.

References

Ronald H. Atkin:

- Mathematical Structure in Human Affairs. Heinemann Educational Books, 1974
- Combinatorial Connectivities in Social Systems; an application of simplicial complex structures to the study of large organizations. Birkhauser, 1977
- Multidimensional Man: can man live in three dimensions? Penguin, 1981
- The Methodology of Q-Analysis Applied to Social Systems. *Systems Methodology in Social Science Research*, 2, 1982, pp 45-74 [[abstract](#)]

Gregory Bateson. Mind and Nature; a necessary unity. Dutton, 1979

James P. Carse. Finite and Infinite Games. Ballantine Books, 1987.

Roberto Casati and Achille C. Varzi:

- Holes and Other Superficialities. MIT Press, 1994
- Insurmountable Simplicities: thirty-nine philosophical conundrums. Columbia University Press, 2008

Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman. Manufacturing Consent: the political economy of the mass media. Pantheon Books, 1988

Edward de Bono. New Thinking for the New Millennium. Penguin, 2000

Antonio de Nicolas. Habits of Mind: an introduction to philosophy of education. Lightning Source, 2000 [[review](#)]

Gyorgy Doczi. The Power of Limits: proportional harmonies in nature, art, and architecture Shambhala, 2005 [[summary](#)]

Martin Foss. The Idea of Perfection in the Western World. Princeton, 1946

Reuben Hersh. Experiencing Mathematics: What Do We Do, when We Do Mathematics? American Mathematical Society, 2013

William B. Irvine. Aha: the moments of insight that shape our world. Oxford University Press, 2015

George Lakoff and Rafael Núñez. Where Mathematics Comes From: how the embodied mind brings mathematics into being. Basic Books, 2000 [[summary](#)]

W. T. Jones. The Romantic Syndrome: toward a new method in cultural anthropology and the history of ideas. Martinus Nijhoff, 1961 [[summary](#)]

James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. Credibility: how leaders gain and lose it, why people demand it. Jossey-Bass, 2011

Hilary Lawson. Closure: a story of everything. Routledge, 2001 [[summary](#)]

Magoroh Maruyama. Peripheral Vision: polyocular vision or subunderstanding. *Organization Studies*, 25, 2004, 3, pp. 467-480 [[abstract](#)]

Alfred W. McCoy. A Question of Torture: CIA Interrogation, from the Cold War to the War on Terror. Holt, 2006

John Passmore. The Perfectibility of Man. Liberty Fund, 1969 [[text](#)]

Michael A. Sells. Mystical Languages of Unsayings. University of Chicago Press, 1994

Henryk Skolimowski. The Participatory Mind: a new theory of knowledge and of the universe. Penguin/Arkana, 1994

Richard A. Slaughter (Ed.). New Thinking for a New Millennium: the knowledge base of futures studies. Routledge, 1996

Nassim Nicholas Taleb:

- The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable. Random House, 2007
- Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder. Random House, 2012

David Tall. How Humans Learn to Think Mathematically: exploring the three worlds of mathematics. Cambridge University Press, 2013

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin:

- The Phenomenon of Man. Harper Perennial, 1959
- The Future of Man. Image, 1964

Geoffrey Vickers. Freedom in a rocking boat: changing values in an unstable society. Penguin, 1972

William J. Williams. New Thinking for a New Millennium: the processes and application of abstracting. Pentland Press, 2000