8th March 2008 | Draft

**Where There is No Time and Nothing Matters**

**Cognitive Challenges at the Edge of the World**

This is a sequel to *In Quest of Optimism Beyond the Edge -- through avoidance of the answering process* (2008) highlighting and giving focus to various themes of that commentary in the light of travels in Tasmania during completion of its final version. Subsequent to that journey, this commentary was further informed by the publication of a new study by James Boyce (*Van Diemen's Land*, 2008) and the historic apology on 13th February 2008 by the Government of Australia to the Aboriginal peoples of Australia.

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**Introduction**

Given the arguments of the initial paper, this exploration uses "Van Diemen's Land" and "Tasmania" as metaphors through which to highlight the challenge of any complex, polarized, psychocultural dynamic. This is seen as applying both to collective memory and to the dilemmas of (negative) pessimism and (positive) optimism of collective strategic initiatives. The exploration endeavours to use information about those places to constitute a script that can be "read" in a different key, or as a key to a more general (meta) pattern of how we as humans tend to think and engage in relation to any complex and largely unknown "other". The contrast is exemplified here by that between "White Man's Dreaming" and "Black Man's Dreaming" -- also used here as metaphors. Van Diemen's Land was used as a penal colony from 1803. Its name was changed to Tasmania in 1856, some three years after the final convict ship arrived. Convicts and their children constituted the majority of the population for decades thereafter in contrast with anywhere else. It was a convict society.

"Tasmania": In numerous respects modern Tasmania is an idyllic place (cf Richard Busch, *Australia's Best Kept Secret*, National Geographic Traveler). It promotes itself as the "Natural State", the "Island of Inspiration", and the "Island of Rejuvenation" -- owing to
You'd be hard pressed to find a warmer, more soulful and more humane place than Tasmania.

These optimistic, edenic images favoured by visitors may however conceal unresolved difficulties to which those of Aboriginal descent are sensitive, as noted by Greg Lehman (The Trouble with Paradise. Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies):

"...Tasmania is more than a place, it's an idea, a potent one, where it presents certain fundamentally Australian themes in their most concentrated and focused form. (Martin Flanagan, The hunt for Tasmania, in The Age, 14 August 1999, p 4)

Tasmania is a place in which elements of Australian life become intensified, where tendencies move to inescapable consequences, battle-lines are more clearly drawn and the moderate or partial becomes extreme. (Margaret Scott, Uneasy Eden: Peace and Conflict in Rural Community, The Tasmanian Peace Trust, 1997)

The Tasmanian journey that is the theme of the annexes to this paper is therefore used to elicit a (meta) context and identify the complexities of the associated cognitive dynamics of Res extensa vs Res cogitans (as highlighted in the initial paper). The comments below with respect to the annexes briefly indicate the relevance of the details in the annexes to the argument but are primarily used to highlight the wider cognitive implications of the metaphors associated with "Van Diemen's Land".

"Edge of the World": Tasmania is associated with (early) notions of the Edge of the World. However, as recently as 1994, Australia (of which it is a part) was famously described by its Prime Minister, Paul Keating, as the "arse-end of the world" -- raising the question as to the metaphorical location of Tasmania at the present time. As an "edge" it is also explored here as a three-fold metaphor. It may be a leading or cutting edge where new insights and wisdom emerge, including responses to challenges (as implied by the The Edge Question of 2007 discussed in the initial paper). However it may also be "at the end of the road, beyond the last telephone pole", or the ultimate edge over which untreatable and unassimilable products are dumped -- the ultimate sink.

These different associations together call for a reframing of the spatio-temporal context for individual and collective identity. In terms of the implied spatio-temporal topology, the "Edge of the World" is then as much at the "Centre" as anywhere else.

Entanglement of fact and fantasy: The following argument is neither an exercise in objectivity nor in fantasy. Rather it is about the collective reality that emerges from the entanglement of fact and fantasy -- and the nature of the collective significance that may emerge beyond such polarizations as the collective "imaginary". It might be well-described by the titles of studies such as that of Christopher Bollas (The Shadow of the Object: psychoanalysis of the unthought known, 1987) or that of Adam Phillips (Side Effects, 2006). It might be read as a mix of art, artifice and artefact evoking a range of dramatic themes, roles (collective subpersonalities) and psychoactive processes by which the imagination is engaged as a context for action.

The relationships between Van Diemen's Land and Tasmania discovered through that journey, and their implications, are articulated in the annexes. The insights and learnings triggered by that material are articulated in this document which builds on argument in the initial paper (In Quest of Optimism Beyond the Edge -- through avoidance of the answering process). In using "Van Diemen's Land" and "Tasmania" as metaphors to highlight the challenge of any polarized psychocultural dynamic, the three annexes focus on:

- Interweaving Demonic and Daimonic Associations in Collective Memory (Annex A): Use of Van Diemen's Land as a metaphor to explore contrasting demonic and daimonic associations, repression of collective memory and refiguration of the other through fantasy, notably regarding its Aboriginal peoples.
- Memory Challenges at the Edge of the World (Annex B): Uses a symbolic journey through Tasmania to highlight issues of collective memory, amnesia and remembrance, notably of its Aboriginal peoples
- Importance of Nothingness and Emptiness through Happening and Mattering (Annex C): Clarifies a range of meanings and strategic implications for the phrase 'where there is no time and nothing matters'. Relates 'nothingness', as central to alienation, with other philosophic and religious understandings, including meaninglessness, emptiness, insignificance, irrelevance and unimportance -- whether from sociopolitical or spiritual perspectives.

Complementary "dreams"? The optimism embodied in modern Tasmania as superficially experienced might be understood as the fruit of "White Man's Dreaming" -- although appropriate perspective on it is perhaps only accessible in the complementary light of "Black Man's Dreaming". It is "White Man's Dreaming" that is exemplified by the responses to The Edge question (discussed in the initial paper).
and other studies (cf Patrick A van der Duin and Dap Hartmann, Young Dreamers: an explorative study on how techno-starters look to the future, Journal of Futures Studies, 12, 2, November 2007). The question is what exemplifies the "Black Man's Dreaming" at this time? What is the significance of each to the other?

From such a perspective this exploration might be considered an exercise in mythosociology or mythopoiesis -- as they function as precursors to autopoiesis and social transformation. At the time of writing, the relevance of myth has been dramatically highlighted by Serbian film director Emir Kusturica on the occasion of the massive protests in Belgrade on 21 February 2008 against the declared independence of Kosovo. He stated that he disagreed with the Hollywood-style myths cultivated about Kosovo, did not however object to other people living their chosen myths, but strongly argued for the right of Serbs to live their founding myth centered on Kosovo.

Every dominant group has a "Kosovo" with which its sense of identity is intimately (and "unreasonably") associated -- although others may see it to have been misappropriated, ignoring the significance of their own claims.

Experimental structure: The document, with its annexes, is also an experiment in presentation (cf Forms of Presentation and the Future of Comprehension, 1984).

Since this exploration is relatively lengthy, readers primarily interested in fact-based insights to be drawn from Tasmania might choose to focus only on Annex A and B. This overview document (linked to their content) indicates more general insights to be drawn from them. Annex C is an exploration of the central experiential function of "nothingness" in many psychosocial domains, the linking thread in the argument (as indicated by the title of this document). The Conclusion interrelates these various threads, highlighting both theoretical opportunities and strategic implications. It could be read first to determine whether the annexes merit attention.

This overview document is used primarily to highlight cognitive implications and learnings to be drawn from a concrete situation at an edge (as articulated in Annexes A, B and C) -- namely from a geographical journey thereby used as a means of anchoring the significance of a pattern of cognitive relationships. The geographical journey is thus used to hold, "re-cognize" and "re-member" a cognitive "pattern that connects" (as advocated by Gregory Bateson, Mind and Nature: a necessary unity, 1979). This may be understood both as painting or projecting a cognitive pattern onto the canvas of a geographical journey and as discovering an emergent pattern through the process of that journey -- if only as an indicative fantasy through which to embody the insights of the initial paper of which this is a sequel.

The approach is in sympathy with the arguments of Michael Schilz (Form and Medium: a mathematical reconstruction, Image [&] Narrative, 6, 2003) who challenges the adequacy of argument presented on the planar surface of conventional text. He argues in favour of writing in a space that connects the level of first-order (operand) and second-order (operator) observations, namely a torus. Operationally, distinctions written on a torus can subvert their boundaries and re-enter the space they distinguish, turning up in their own form [more] (see discussion in Beyond the plane: form and medium in terms of the calculus of indications, 2006). Hence the merit of reflecting on the topological space appropriate to re-presenting optimism in time to the light of memory and various forms of dreaming.

This concern with the adequacy of form is echoed in that of Mudrooroo (aka Colin Johnson and Mudrooroo Narogin) who holds the Chair of Aboriginal Studies at Murdoch University (Perth). With respect to a genre, such as "academic study" or "fantasy", Mudrooroo (Writing from the Fringe, 1990) notes that genres:

... have developed as a European way of categorising works of literature. In themselves, they are ways of manipulating the text so that the reader is led from an intuitive to a logical response to the work. Not only this, but the Aboriginal writer is led to believe that there are fixed categories of literature to which he or she must conform. If we as writers accept this we, in effect, dilute the Aboriginality of our work.

Arguably this is true of the "originality" of any work -- thereby endangering the requisite degree of "craziness" recognized as necessary in the much-quoted statement by physicist Niels Bohr in response to Wolfgang Pauli: "We are all agreed that your theory is crazy. The question which divides us is whether it is crazy enough to have a chance of being correct. My own feeling is that is not crazy enough."

(Trueman Dyson, Innovation in Physics, Scientific American, 199, No. 3, September 1958).

With respect to Mudrooroo's approach, Gerry Turcotte (Re-mastering the Ghosts: Mudrooroo and Gothic Refigurations. 2003) explains:

The texts, therefore, are redolent with contradistinction - they are contra/dictions: against utterance. Similarly, the project of Empire has been both explicit and indirect, admitting to its totalitarian vision of colonisation, and yet simultaneously couching this desire/design within a rhetoric of, dare one say, missionary purpose, of colonising for the good of the colonised. This double vision is expressed through many of the narratives which Mudrooroo invokes in his novel. In The Unknowing Mudrooroo reveals the hidden, he enacts the unperformed, he declares the unspoken.

Of Master of the Ghost Dreaming (1991), Turcotte says 'the novel resonates with the rhythms of a different Australia and a different mental universe.' (as discussed in Annex B).

Such considerations are assumed here to be at least potentially relevant to unconventional understandings of time within "White Man's Dreaming" (as with the temporal topology discussed in the initial paper) and within "Black Man's Dreaming" exemplified by the Aboriginal Dreamtime.

The question here is whether "Van Diemen's Land" and "Tasmania" can now be read as a kind of musical score with two staves. It raises the question of how patterns of information are selected and highlights the challenge of cultural groupthink (Groupt think: the Search for Archaeoraptor as a Metaphoric Tale, 2002). As with "Tasmania" and "optimism", the argument may not be what it seems -- as with
Shakespeare's famous comedy *Much Ado About Nothing* (1600).

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**Traumascape -- of the "White Man's Dreaming"?**

After noting that "the convicts' hell was, thank God, a human creation alone", the study by James Boyce (*Van Diemen's Land*, 2008, p. 3) focuses on:

> the tension produced by siting the principal gaol of the empire in what proved to be a remarkably benevolent land. It sees this paradox to be at the heart of early Tasmanian history, and to have important implications for the nation as a whole.

As he notes later, "the beauty of the land was widely contrasted with the ugliness of its humanity", citing a report that "the inhabitants are like a set of vultures" (p. 157).

**Port Arthur:** Tumarkin's study focuses on the embodiment of these extremes and paradoxes in *Port Arthur* which, as a notorious secondary penal settlement, had been described by Robert Hughes (*The Fatal Shore: a history of the transportation of convicts to Australia*, 1787-1868, 1987, p 400), as "our Paestum and our Dachau rolled into one" -- also described as "hell on earth" (*Marcus Clarke, For The Term of His Natural Life*, 1874), with its mass graves on an Island of the Dead. It is also the site of the worst non-indigenous massacre in Australia in the twentieth-century.

The argument below relates to Tumarkin's point that:

> As a fantasy of escape from domination and, simultaneously, as a very embodiment of that domination. As a way of extruding and isolating social evil. We need Port Arthur. More generally, we need Tasmania just like Europe needed Terra Australis from the sixteenth century onwards, its "geographic unconscious", the Fifth Continent, one of the last places beyond the edges of the known world.

**Psychological sink:** The question is how humanity *needs* its "Port Arthur", serving such a function for its "Tasmania", as the latter does for its "Australia", and the latter for the world as a whole -- especially given the challenge of locating its "edges". Tumarkin refers to the recognition by Peter Hay of the need to use Tasmania as "Australia's psychological sink -- a repository for all the displaced insecurities and cankered guilt that lurk behind the veneer of uneasy Sydney (et cetera) worldliness" (*Port Arthur: Where Meanings Collide, Island*, 1996). The larger question relates however to current efforts with respect to anxieties regarding the "degeneration and impending doom" of the world as a whole -- through generalization of Tumarkin's argument:

> For over a century now, Tasmania has, in turn, performed a similar service for mainland Australia -- repeatedly serving as a container of our unconscious anxieties and fantasies, a warden of the Antipodean curse. From the sixteenth century onward, the carving out of the Fifth Continent, the Antipodes, allowed for a sense of degeneration and impending doom to be physically cast out of the European imaginary and contained elsewhere.

**Traumascape:** Tumarkin's approach is to reframe "Port Arthur" as a traumascape, namely:

> a timeplace materially and discursively bound by traumatic repetitions... As a different kind of place, it demands different kinds of ideas about survival, trauma, memory and the effect of trauma on landscape and local community. These different kinds of ideas have a direct bearing on public policy measures and governmental involvement in the short and long-term recovery process. Furthermore, to call Port Arthur a traumascape is to point to the pragmatic and discursive significance of the mythology of haunting and traumatic repetitions woven around the place, and to suggest that this mythology may be implicated in certain colonial and postcolonial projects of national self-legitimation.
Given the many candidates for the world's current "Port Arthur" -- of which Guantanamo Bay might be an exemplar -- the challenge is to understand their significance in relation to the cultivated optimism of a larger context for which such "hell holes" are a "sink". They are a concentrator of repressed trauma and polarization. Such optimism would however obscure that far more complex reality -- including a degree of denial -- that it is appropriate to explore.

**Self-reflexivity**: Such considerations raise the question as to the extent to which self-reflexiveness is vital at this time -- to avoid the trap of repeating history within some new, but equally unfortunate, context (cf Hilary Lawson, *Reflexivity: the post-modern predicament*, 1986). The relevant device explored here is the use of metaphor as a means of understanding the tendency to create "Tasmanias" as vehicles for optimism by skilfully repressing consideration of the "Van Diemen's Lands" from which they emerged. Of particular interest is the tendency for "Tasmanias", whether as worldviews, belief systems, or "theories of everything" (emerging from particular disciplines) to need to create "Van Diemen's Lands" to which to export phenomena that they are unable to integrate or process. And, having so incarcerated them, to subject them to treatment supposedly inconsistent with the enlightened principles of "Tasmania" -- even to the point of ensuring a degree of "termination with prejudice".

**Terra cognita vs Terra incognita**

**Terra incognita**: The historical focus of maps of centuries past was necessarily on the known world (*terra cognita*), it being impossible to map that which is unknown (as so unfortunately demonstrated by the *Encyclopedia of Ignorance*, 1978). However the edge of the known can be recognized as a boundary, permitting what lay beyond to be labelled as *terra incognita*. Rumours regarding the opportunities and dangers were necessarily exacerbated by the lack of hard information -- beyond the edge.

Tasmania was one of the final regions to appear sketchily on maps as *terra incognita*. Much to the irritation of the Aboriginal inhabitants of Australia for many thousands of years, its so-called "discovery" continues to be attributed to Captain James Cook in 1770. But of potentially far greater contemporary significance was his disobedience of his instructions with respect to "a Continent or Land of great extent" thought to exist in southern latitudes:

> You are also with the Consent of the Natives to take possession of Convenient Situations in the Country in the name of the King of Great Britain; or, if you find the Country uninhabited take Possession for his Majesty by setting up Proper Marks and inscriptions, as first discoverers and possessors. ([Secret Instructions to Lieutenant Cook, 30 July 1768](#)[text])

On 22 August 1770, he declared the coast of Australia to be a British possession without endeavouring to obtain such consent, despite having noted that it appeared to be inhabited. His observations along the coastline formed the basis for Britain's decision to establish the colony at Botany Bay in 1788.

**Terra nullius**: Cook's failure to even attempt to gain the consent of the natives began the legal fiction that Australia was waste and unoccupied despite what is now acknowledged to be over 40,000 years of continuous human occupancy (cf *Aboriginal Heritage*). Legally this is understood as *terra nullius*, meaning "nobody's land" ("empty land"), applying the general (eurocentric) principle of *res nullius* to real estate or property -- which is therefore available for possession by the finder.

Cook's actions resulted in failure to accord humanity to Aborigines, subsequently to be widely considered and documented as "subhuman" (notably by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*). They were only to achieve citizenship rights in 1967 [more]. A measure of the brutality of this tragedy is documented in the Prime Minister's historic *apology* of 13 February 2008 (see also *List of Massacres*).

Significantly, however, this avoids addressing the underlying issue of dispossession. The apology is for the so-called "stolen generations", not for the "stolen land" nor for other "stolen property" according to (eurocentric) concepts of property. Australia is now the only OECD country that does not have a treaty with its indigenous peoples. [more]

**Tabula rasa**: Less evident in the framing of Australia as *terra nullius* was the assumption that it was empty of significant memories. As a form of *tabula rasa*, it became the template onto which the pattern of ignorance of its European discoverers could be freely and fully projected. There is a curious symmetry with the "super-stition" of divinity (as *Quetzalcoatl*) projected onto Hernán Cortés by the Aztec ruler Montezuma in 1519 -- an assumption to which Cortés opportunistically acceded. Like Cook, Cortés deliberately disobeyed the orders of his superior.

On a supposedly well-mapped and completely known world, and thanks to satellite surveillance, *terra incognita* would now appear to have been eliminated. Whilst this takes little account of the wild regions (where terrorists supposedly have their lairs) or of the deepest regions underground, the challenge of *"terra incognita"* has been transferred to other planets, solar systems and galaxies -- and their possible inhabitants. There is of course the possibility that the latter may see themselves as having some prior claim (as duly registered absentee landlords within some "universal" legal system), on an Earth from which they may have absented themselves only briefly (on their timescale).

"Aborigine" vs "Latecomer": The term Aborigine, meaning "first or earliest known, indigenous", is known to have been applied since 1789 to the indigenous peoples of Australia. Such logic suggests the application of "Latecomer" to those who arrived later. Or perhaps, better still, in terms of *diffusion of innovations theory*, a spectrum of inhabitants should be distinguished between the "Early adopters" through to "Late adopters".

**Res cognita**: The challenge of the physical globe or other astronomical bodies may be usefully seen as a metaphor for the more general challenge of known things (*res cognita*) in contrast with unknown things (*res incognita*). The latter continue to exist -- if only as the challenge of learning for the young -- and to be engendered through innovations in the reality of which many may be ignorant, whatever their suppositions (or even superstitions).
**Devaluation**: Does every cognitive world and belief system necessarily have a boundary and therefore an "edge"? Does each feel free to despatch explorers who "discover" other domains (in *Terra incognita*) -- proceeding to claim possession of them (as *Terra nullius*), irrespective of the views of those who claim to be its inhabitants? Are the latter, for whom those spaces are where "they move and have their being", are then reframed as effectively "subhuman" and to be marginalized?

Is there then a tendency to use such isolated regions of cognitive space as a form of "penal colony"? There is of course the ironic possibility that this pattern will be repeated with access to other planets. As envisaged by science fiction, penal planets may prove to be a solution to the dramatic rise in the prison populations of the world -- especially if the inmates are convicted following the criminalization of dissent. \\ 

**Interweaving Demonic and Daimonic Associations in Collective Memory**

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**Annex A**

-- Demonic associations and demonisation
-- Unusual, unsayable, unsaid, untruth -- and denial
-- Prefiguration: Tasmania as strategic pioneer in the treatment of dissent and otherness
-- Daimonic associations: imaginative, aesthetic, inspirational or spiritual
-- Refiguration of "the other" through fantasy

This annex explores the demonic associations of Van Diemen's Land as it contrasts with the daimonic associations through which it may be reframed.

**Demonic associations and demonisation**: This preoccupation regarding Van Diemen's Land raises the question of who are to be considered the "Vandemonians" of today in relation to the optimism explored in the **initial paper**. The most obvious example is provided by those convicted as criminals (given the the proportion of the population they now represent). But of greater interest are those now framed as a threat to security -- especially as it is extended to include any form of dissent or disagreement with authority, notably "terrorists".

However, metaphorically, this consideration may be extended to any mindset that offends against convention, namely that is considered "criminal" or "evil" from the perspective of some worldview -- whether or not it is recognized as an authority outside its own domain. This also includes those exploring "alternatives" to dominant worldviews. An extensively documented study of this phenomenon has been provided (Krisnan Ramaswamy, Antonio de Nicolas, Aditi Banerjee, Eds., *Invading the Sacred: an analysis of Hinduism studies in America*, 2007). Many relevant considerations have been explored by George Lakoff (*Women Fire and Dangerous Things: what categories reveal about the mind*, 1987).

The Annex notes how the total abomination of homosexuality amongst prisoners proved to be a factor for reform in Van Diemen's Land that was at least as important as any concern about the brutality of their treatment. Curiously, at the present time, such historical moral outrage does not translate into outrage at the severe incidence of rape in predominantly male institutions (penal, education, military) -- with a tendency to see it as an appropriate part of the learning ("toughening") experience or a legitimate form of punishment for the weak.

**Unusual, unsayable, unsaid, untruth -- and denial**: As discussed elsewhere (*Global Strategic Implications of the "Unsaid": from myth-making towards a "wisdom society"*, 2003), the question raised by these examples in Tasmania is what remains unsayable or unsaid in any optimistically presented worldview -- especially in the light of the vast amount of information that remains "classified"? How is this processed and what are the effects of denial? The challenge of being "in denial" is now widely recognized with respective to strategic proposals and is notably exemplified by widespread demonisation of "negativity" (*Being Positive Avoiding Negativity Management challenge of positive vs negative*, 2005).

**Prefiguration: Van Diemen's Land as strategic pioneer in the treatment of dissent and otherness**: The question raised here is the extent to which procedures adopted in Van Diemen's Land model the procedures adopted by worldviews, belief systems and movements of opinion to treat any "other" that they may encounter (*"Human Intercourse": "Intercourse with Nature" and "Intercourse with the Other", 2007)*. Of particular interest is the parallel recognized between the Port Arthur of Van Diemen's Land and Guantanamo Bay of the present day. But the question is the possibility of recognizing the "Guantanamo Boys" of worldviews other than those of geopolitical systems -- notably to include those of the sciences and religions. Why do psychosocial systems, as currently conceived, need such "sinks" and "hell holes"?

Could the many features and dynamics of Van Diemen's Land (listed in **Annex A** then be used as a model through which to simulate the colonial mindset? But, more generally, could it be used to simulate the relationship between a "cognitive empire" and the "sink" it needs for its psychosocial sustainability and the competitive expansion of that empire?

Given the arguments made elsewhere for a ludic approach to strategy development, notably in *role playing games* (*Playfully Changing the Prevailing Climate of Opinion: climate change as focal metaphor of effective global governance*, 2005), what might then be the cognitive analogues to:

- categories such as: convict, Aborigine, church, evil, prison, torture, caste system, paupers, Little Englander, etc
- Vandemonians, variously understood as: "stealth consumers", trivial dissidents, survivors, homeless ("travellers"), unemployed, or "ordinary people" adapting
- category blurring, conflict of categories, "category miscegenation", or perhaps "memetic miscegenation"
- processes such as: encroachment, framed as justifying any violent response to "outrageous" resistance to it, and the forcible removal of children for more appropriate education


- procrastination with respect to any expression of apology or any remedial compensation
- resilience under conditions of penury and injustice through withdrawal into the wilderness

Given the arguments made for recognition of an adaptive cycle in cultures and civilizations by Thomas Homer-Dixon (The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization, 2006), how could such a simulation be used to explore the adaptive cycle in a belief system, whether ideological, religious or otherwise? Issues of relevance include:

- relationship between controller and controlled as explored by Edward Haskell (Full Circle: The Moral Force of Unified Science, 1972)
- dynamically complex relationships
- catastrophes in cultural and knowledge systems, anticipated as "revolutions" by Thomas Kuhn (The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 1962)
- requisite resilience, notably as exemplified by some processes in Vandemonian society
- characteristic cyclic phases and framings: "idyllic", "hell hole", repression, "triumph of Little England" values, termination with prejudice, corruption, resistance, unusual mixing (miscegenation, jailer/convict, homosexuality)

**Daimonic associations: imaginative, aesthetic, inspirational or spiritual:** The phenomena noted here in Tasmania point to the extraordinary ways in which conventional worldviews may be reframed to compensate for their limitations in encompassing the reality with which people find themselves obliged to deal. In particular the examples point to the manner in which people are dependent on forms of creativity -- possibly recognized as "muse" or "daimon" in other settings and cultures.

Especially interesting is the extent to which "muse" may be understood as a poem or a song, on which one may muse -- and which inform policy-making in some way. In that respect a belief system may be understood as a pattern of resonant aesthetic associations (Poetry-making and Policy-making: arranging a marriage between Beauty and the Beast, 1993; A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic? 2006). The challenge then lies in the ability to "carry" such a pattern -- as partly recognized in the ability to "carry a tune". It is within such a delicate dynamic framework that "spirits" might be expected to be variously recognized -- even a "national spirit" or the "spirit of the times".

**Refiguration of "the other" through fantasy:** The role of fantasy in reframing the reality of Van Diemen's Land is explored in the light of the remarkable commentary of Gerry Turcotte on the writings of Mudrooroo. The latter refigures the experience of Aboriginal peoples through vampirism on the part of settlers from afar. Given the importance of vampire fantasies in the media experiences sought by, and of the remarkable commentary of Gerry Turcotte on the writings of Mudrooroo, published almost exactly a century later, should speak to a similar millennial terror, though articulated in a specifically Australian context.

As noted by Turcotte:

If Stephen Arata is correct when he argues that Dracula, published in 1897, articulated a fin de siècle fear of 'reverse colonization', how fitting that Mudrooroo's The Undying, published almost exactly a century later, should speak to a similar millennial terror, though articulated in a specifically Australian context.

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**Patterns of word associations indicative of a range of distinctions between Tasmania and Van Diemen's Land in collective memory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Combinations of possible word associations</th>
<th>VDL (Van Demon's Land)</th>
<th>TAS (Tas-mania)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complexity (depressive) &quot;negative&quot; pessimism</td>
<td>Dynamic Dissension Disequilibrium</td>
<td>&quot;The&quot; Theoretical Temporary Token</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Dionysian&quot;</td>
<td>Dubious Dreaming</td>
<td>Anglicised Authorized Alternative Authentic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Apollonian&quot;</td>
<td>Demonic</td>
<td>Solution Society Story Short-term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disordinate Destructive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Europeans&quot; &quot;terra cognita&quot;</td>
<td>Strategic and business interests (timber, hydro); encroachers</td>
<td>Social elites and &quot;Little Englanders&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Convicts&quot; &quot;terra incognita&quot;</td>
<td>Homeless, convict descendants, homosexuals (&quot;black economy&quot;)</td>
<td>Marginalized, disempowered, unemployed (at the &quot;end of the road&quot;, beyond the last telephone pole)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Aborigines&quot; &quot;terra nullius&quot;</td>
<td>Feral people, ghosts and vampires (hauntings), subversive aesthetics (&quot;beyond the fringe&quot;)</td>
<td>Wilderness heritage, &quot;interpretive trails&quot;, bushwalking and trekking, nature appreciation, Aboriginal descendents romanticized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory holders</td>
<td>Suppressed memories (&quot;underground&quot;)</td>
<td>Expressed memories (as advertised and promoted to evoke optimism from tourists)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Memory challenges at the Edge of the World

See Annex B

-- Symbolic journey -- to the Edge of the World

-- Dubious associations -- with the "Centres of the World"

-- Amnesia at the Edge of the World -- a key to unrealistic optimism?

-- Mnemonic devices for collective remembrance

The concern here is with how collective memories are held or lost and the implications for societal coherence as explored elsewhere (Societal Learning and the Erosion of Collective Memory: a critique of the Club of Rome Report: No Limits to Learning, 1980). Just because some suffer from memory loss (forms of collective Alzheimer, etc.), does not mean that the collective memories are not held elsewhere in other forms.

Symbolic journey -- to the Edge of the World: As noted above, a journey through Tasmania is used here as a template through which to frame a pattern of associations. As an explanatory device, such a journey might be framed like that of climbing a mountain, as exemplified by the classic account of the surrealist novelist René Daumal (Mount Analogue: a novel of symbolically authentic non-euclidean adventures in mountain climbing, 1959).

However, at a time when humanity is being "pushed to the edge" by one or more dominant mindsets, the location and nature of that edge can be fruitfully brought into question -- playfully, as argued elsewhere (cf Playfully Changing the Prevailing Climate of Opinion: Climate change as focal metaphor of effective global governance, 2005).

Since Tasmania was long framed as the "edge of the world" and offers a location so named, it is a useful exercise to explore the relation of such an "edge" to any supposed "centre" (of the "world"). Specifically the question is the pattern or pathway of associations connecting the two and enabling a journey between them. The challenge for the disadvantaged is typically framed as one of navigating from the edge to the centre, for those at the centre it is a question of being at (or cultivating) an edge or, alternatively, of retiring from the centre to an edge (in an effort to be more centered).

It is therefore of great interest to offer stories -- connecting the dots of a cognitive journey -- that reframe the relationship between edge and centre in order to provide a more comprehensive coherence to experience. This may take the form of epic works sustaining a sense of cultural identity -- a great song that weaves together characteristics of a culture. It may be understood as a connecting pattern of sacred songlines (in Aboriginal terms) possibly of the noosphere (Cultivating the Songlines of the Noosphere, 1996), possibly to be embodied in hyperlinks within the "world wide web" (Sacralization of Hyperlink Geometry, 1997).

Dubious associations -- with the "Centres of the World": It is of great interest (as further explored in Annex C) to note the unconventional spatio-temporal topology relating any "edge of the world" to its "centre". This is clearly very challenging with respect to any worldview for which its "edge" is conveniently remote, if not a synonym for remoteness and a frontier with an "edge" to any supposed "centre" (of the "world"). Specifically the question is the pattern or pathway of associations connecting the two and enabling a journey between them. The challenge for the disadvantaged is typically framed as one of navigating from the edge to the centre, for those at the centre it is a question of being at (or cultivating) an edge or, alternatively, of retiring from the centre to an edge (in an effort to be more centered).

Amnesia at the Edge of the World -- a key to unrealistic optimism? Tasmania offers a framework within which to observe the phenomena of repudiating the past relating to Van Diemen's Land, repression of associated memories (as exemplified in the so-called Great Australian Silence), a special focus on "Lest We Forget" (exemplifying the process of selective remembrance), highlighting the challenge of collective memory (exemplified by that of Aboriginal remembrance).

The question however is how this pattern undermines a coherent response to the challenges of a global society -- especially, again, in the light of the proportion of information that is now classified. Ironically this might now be seen as commensurate with the proportion of the population that is incarcerated. What proportion of information do worldviews and belief systems need to suppress in some way in order to sustain their optimism, coherence and sense of viable identity? Given such avoidance of larger and more complex reality, to what extent are current worldviews then to be understood as unrealistic?.

Mnemonic devices for collective remembrance: A variety of devices may of course be used for this purpose. The concern is whether these devices enable what might be termed, from a cybernetic perspective, "1st order" remembrance, namely remembrance of that which it is convenient to know (whose validity it is inappropriate to question), irrespective of its impact on the situation elsewhere about which we are ignorant. The latter might be incorporated into a more inclusive "2nd order" remembrance -- liberated from the implicit demonisation cultivated in relation to that of the "1st order". More challenging is the ability to address the issue of self-reflexive remembrance, associated with the failings of the preferred mindset -- possibly to be understood as remembrance of a "3rd order".

These issues may be considered in Tasmania in relation to historical and war memorials and the selectivity they celebrate. This suggests a comparison between such commemorative stones (of the "White Man") and the sacred sites (of the "Black Man"). As "sacred geometry" both are vulnerable to desecration, if they are allowed to exist. Especially intriguing is the complementarity between such mnemonic devices, particularly where they mark the "edge of the world" and a spiritual "centre" of it.

A fundamental mnemonic device across cultures is of course the emblem or totem, however it is borne. In this respect the Black Swan has played a curious role in the history of Van Diemen's Land and Australia. This is especially ironic given a recent study by Nassim Nicholas Taleb (The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable, 2007). This recognizes that, whilst people (including potential leaders) are increasingly well informed, it is not clear that information alone is sufficient to respond effectively to the foreseen challenges and to those that may emerge unexpectedly, especially when framed within an optimistic context.

"Black Swan theory" is concerned with the incidence of large-impact, hard-to-predict, and rare events beyond the realm of normal expectations. Taleb regards many scientific discoveries as Black Swans -- "undirected" and unpredicted. He names the 11 September
2001 attacks as an example of a Black Swan event. Ironically, although an important totem for the Aborigines of Tasmania, the arrival of the Europeans is clearly to be understood as a Black Swan event -- of proportionately far greater import for those people, given that they were exterminated in consequence.

The challenge for the future -- for any belief system -- is how to design mnemonic devices that enable the kind of vigilance essential to preparedness for Black Swan events. Such a device clearly needs to embody a pattern of resonant associations. This might be understood aesthetically as a poiesis in anticipation of the autopoiesis of psychosocial transformation that any adequate resilient response requires.

Indicative designs might be sought in the development of memory gardens, palaces and theatres (Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 1966). The mnemonic value of *mandalas* might be considered. In that respect the 2D *enneagram* is of some interest, especially where each node recalls the need for a distinct grammatical form -- as potentially required for "singing the land" in Aboriginal terms (cf Jill Stuabington, *Singing the Land: the power of performance in Aboriginal Life*, 2007). Curiously in resonance with the latter, and reflecting the requirement for self-reflexivity (mentioned earlier) is the recently recommended participative approach to foresight (Barbara M. Bok, *Experiential Foresight: participative simulation enables social reflexivity in a complex world*, Journal of Futures Studies, November 2007).

The enneagram is also of interest given its embodiment into the 3D icosahedron by management cybernetician Stafford Beer (*Beyond Dispute: the invention of team syntegrity*, 1994). On this matter a relevant is that of Andrew Pickering (*The science of the unknowable: Stafford Beer's cybernetic informatics*, Kybernetes, 2004, 33, 3/4, pp. 499 - 521), given its focus on a cybernetic ontology of unknowability and becoming -- a stance that recognizes that the world can always surprise us and that we can never dominate it through knowledge.

**Import of Nothingness and Emptiness through Happening and Mattering**

See Annex C

-- Varieties of nothingness and emptiness
-- Questionable understanding of emptiness and nothingness
-- "Mattering" and "Happening"
-- "Nothing" emerging through combinations of "mattering" and "happening"
-- Dynamic complexification: integration of "no time"
-- Emergence of "nothing": creating "cognitive shelters"
-- Emergence of "nothing": globalization as exemplar
-- Emergence of "nothing": "import" of significance
-- Polarization and the dynamics of nothingness

This annex endeavours to interweave the range of themes evoked above, notably in terms of their significance for the questions raised in the initial paper. It focuses on the paradoxes of the cognitive challenge they imply and their operational significance for any global strategy with which people may identify.

Metaphorically this challenge may be partly highlighted by the motto of the iconic "centre" of Tasmania: "where there is no time and nothing matters" (as discussed above in relation to Annex A) -- as it may need to be both contrasted with any remote "edge" (as implied above) and informed by seemingly counter-intuitive understandings of time, nothingness, and matter currently explored at the frontiers of physics (again as discussed in the initial paper). The follows from a theme of the initial paper on the illusory nature of time (Amanda Gefter, *Is time an illusion? New Scientist*, 1 January 2008).

The embodiment of "nothing" in form ("mattering") and in process ("happening") is understood here as "importing" "nothingness" or "emptiness" through recognizing and enactivating patterns of associations. The terms in the title are intended to be ambiguously interpreted with respect to the transformation of "nothingness" into "somethingness", in the sense that each has both a tangible and an intangible sense, pertaining to matter (form) and to significance.

The exercise, as implied above, is necessarily a challenge to adequate representation -- justifying the serendipity of being able to make experimental use of "Tasmania" as a metaphor to hold the complexities in question. In this sense it is useful to consider the exercise as one of "playfully" questioning the complexity of that edge, notably for reasons argued elsewhere (*Playfully Changing the Prevailing Climate of Opinion: climate change as focal metaphor of effective global governance*, 2005; *Humour and Play-Fullness: essential integrative processes in governance, religion and transdisciplinarity*, 2005).

A specific concern is the implication for sustainability and its comprehension (*Psychology of Sustainability: embodying cyclic environmental processes*, 2002), especially as suggested by "Waldheim" as the embodied focus of sustainable nature conservation with its associated cognitive challenge "where there is no time and nothing matters".

**Varieties of nothingness and emptiness**: Commonalities are explored here in relation to death, alienation, emptiness in relationship, boredom, economics and finance, politics, society, philosophy (metaphysics), religion (cosmology), spirituality (meditation), qi (ch'i), "hearts and minds", physics (cosmology), and aesthetics.

**Questionable understanding of emptiness and nothingness**: The point is stressed that an appropriate understanding of nothingness and emptiness precludes the possibility of statements of adequate form and subtlety about any condition prior to their emergence. In this sense nothingness is indeed about a form of unknowing -- prior to such a form or any sense of priority.

"Mattering" and "Happening": A distinction is made between:
"mattering" in the sense of acquiring significance, importance, value or becoming memorable, namely the belief that one makes a difference in the lives of others (discussed with respect to qi, weapons of mass destruction, and suicide)

"happening" in the sense of a dynamic, in contrast with some form of stasis (discussed with respect to physics, monetary systems, drama and death)

Emphasis is placed on their experiential recognition, preceding any conventional labelling and categorization.

"Nothing" emerging through combinations of "mattering" and "happening": The concern here is with the highly valued art of "making something out of nothing". The ways this might be understood, in the light of the above nuances and examples, are explored in relation to the four-fold distinction between "nothing mattering", "nothing happening", the "mattering of nothing" and the "happening of nothing". These distinctions are related to the res extensa and res cogitans that were a focus of the initial paper.

Of obvious interest in a more general context is how such forms of nothing frame such situations as the condition and experience of the marginalized, the unemployed (whose identity may be defined and distorted in relation to something happening), and encounters with ex exemplars and the wise. How do these enable reframing of a traumascape?

Given the central role that "nothingness" seems to play, why, when and how do we collectively:

- enable the "mattering of nothing"?
- forget the "mattering of nothing"?
- re-cognize the "import" of nothingness?
- re-member that importance?

Dynamic complexification: integration of "no time": In relation to the core concern of this exploration, "where there is no time and nothing matters", the time dimension is introduced in a 12-fold complexification of the 4 combinations above. This highlights the emergence (or absence) of the action-enabling pattern of connectivity.

This offers a framework for reflection on the experiential connectivity of "past" with "present" -- and with the "future", as explored elsewhere (Presenting the Future: an alternative to dependence on human sacrifice through global pyramid selling schemes, 2001; Engaging Macrohistory through the Present Moment, 2004). The co-presence in collective memory of "Van Diemer's Land" and "Tasmania" exemplify the challenge (as explored in Annex A and B).

Emergence of "nothing": creating "cognitive shelters": In the light of the above, here the argument explores any comprehensive cognitive system, or belief system, as a form of "cognitive shelter". The design and construction of such a shelter is successful to the extent that it encloses emptiness. The space so enclosed then serves as a habitat in which people "move and have their being". The nothingness of such space, necessarily initially absent, is effectively "imported" within a framework which thereby gives significance to that emptiness.

Emergence of "nothing": globalization as exemplar: It is further argued that the much discussed phenomenon of "globalization" may be considered as the "mattering of nothing". From one perspective it recalls the phenomenon of the "economic bubble" and the process of "talking up" speculative ventures. From another it might be experienced as an exercise in emptiness, especially when it is recognized as contributing directly to destruction of livelihoods. In many respects it is essentially intangible, whatever the subtle erosion of acclaimed traditional values.

Emergence of "nothing": "import" of significance: The title of this annex (Import of Nothingness and Emptiness through Happening and Mattering) is used to imply a double significance to "import". As a cognitive process, it may be understood either as attaching significance (importance) to a pattern of associations or as importing that pattern into consciousness in some way -- possibly by "connecting the dots" and enactivating that pattern. In terms of res cogitans, it is the process of importing associations and embodying them into a previously non-existent pattern.

Given the concerns of this paper, "import" might then be usefully seen as a creative exercise in "making something out of nothing" -- of "making nothing matter". This may be understood in terms of the "re-cognition" of aesthetic resonances through which the meaningful "happening of nothing" is enabled. It is the establishment of connectivity -- presumably echoed by synapses within the brain. On the other hand, Gregory Bateson's insight:

> 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. (Mind and Nature: a necessary unity, 1979).

highlights the implications of the "export" of nothingness and meaninglessness -- through "breaking the pattern that connects" -- warning that: "Break the pattern which connects the items of learning and you necessarily destroy all quality." Here "export" is recognized as a process complementary to that of "import" as used above.

Polarization and the dynamics of nothingness: Using the apparently discriminative distinctions made above regarding the relative cognitive qualities of the various combinations of mattering and happening of nothingness, the argument for more complex representations of their relationship is made. Specifically the tabular or matrix representation used in Annex C is considered inadequate in comparison with "wrapping" such representation into the the form of a torus (at least). This is notably seen as necessarily more appropriate to the dynamics between the different cognitive functions associated with the various cognitive manifestations of nothingness -- and the sustainability of psychosocial systems, whether individual or collective.

Given the proactive engagement with polarization, one approach to its divisive nature is through their configuration, effectively as a form of cognitive shelter (Spherical Configuration of Categories to reflect systemic patterns of environmental checks and balances, 1994;
Configuring globally and contending locally; shaping the global network of local bargains by decoding and mapping Earth Summit inter-sectoral issues, 1994). Another is to treat them metaphorically as features of a complex stringed musical instrument (Polarities as Pluckable Tensed Strings: hypercomprehension through harmonics of value-based choice-making, 2006). Coherence then lies in the melodies that may be played and the sense of identity they sustain (Emergence of Cyclical Psycho-social Identity: sustainability as “psyclically” defined, 2007).

Conclusion: Transforming the Edge of the World through Voiding the Centre

See Conclusion
Interrelates the different threads explored above and in the annexes in response to issues raised in the initial paper (In Quest of Optimism Beyond the Edge -- through avoidance of the answering process).

References

See separately

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