Introduction

The following exploration uses as its point of departure a much-cited "strategic" poem presented by Donald Rumsfeld as US Secretary of Defense. The cognitive categories of the poem, and what was omitted, are used to elaborate various ways of ordering strategies -- possibly in the form of "periodic tables".

Deliberate use is made of Chinese traditional perspectives on such matters, notably in their relationship to governance. The point stressed is that there is a need for a paradigm shift to alternation between patterns of strategies, and interpretation, rather than depending on the possibility of finding a single pattern of strategies -- lacking the requisite variety for the complexity of the challenges of the times.

Incomprehensibility within existing analytical frameworks

In recent years a range of incidents have been widely publicized as incomprehensible in their violence or seeming irrationality. They include school shootings, suicide bombings, the cycles of violence in the Middle East, and the riots in Greece following a police shooting in 2008. With respect to the latter, Costas Douzinas (What we can learn from the Greek riots, The Guardian, 9 January 2009) argues that it is time to understand the insurrection as the response of those who feel invisible to the political system:

Few events in recent Greek history have created such a plethora of anxious but inadequate interpretations. Many, often contradictory, causes have been put forward: economic (unemployment and neo-liberal economic measures), political (persistent corruption and failure of education), cultural or ideological. But the most prominent reaction of commentators has been incomprehension mixed with incredulity. No political organisation directed the insurrection, no single ideology motivated it, no overwhelming demand was put forward. The persistent question, "What do the kids want?" often led to the conclusion that the events were not political because they could not be integrated into existing analytical frameworks. What seemed to unite the protesters was a refusal: "No more, enough is enough." A stubborn negativity characterised the insurrection. Is this a new type of politics after the decay of democracy?....

The insurrection can be recognised as an event of radical change only retrospectively, if the rules of political recognition and participation are re-arranged. This depends on those who, after the end of the insurrection, will uphold the possibility of changing the rules of what counts as political. This is the challenge the Athens rising poses to Europe.

The challenge of this comment lies in the asserted "incomprehensibility" associated with inability to integrate current events into existing analytical frameworks. Assertions of "incomprehensibility" are a continuing feature of the crises across the Middle East. They would also seem to have characterized the financial crisis of 2008 and its emerging economic consequences in 2009. Curiously its
incomprehensibility has been determined as being the primary reason for the rejection of the EU Reform Treaty by the Irish people in 2008 (Post Lisbon Treaty Referendum Research Findings, September 2008).

Whilst there is much to regret with regard to "incomprehensible violence", perhaps more incomprehensible and regrettable is the cognitive impoverishment out of which such processes are addressed and through which remedies are sought.

It is in this context that it is appropriate to explore the strategic highlighting offered by Donald Rumsfeld with respect to the "known unknowns". To the extent that inappropriate responses to the supposedly unknown reinforces uncontrolled vicious cycles, the question is what is the learning context that would enable such cycles to be "broken" (Dysfunctional Cycles and Spirals: Web Resources on "Breaking the Cycle", 2002)?

**Strategy through poetry**

The former US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld continues to be cited for his prescience in strategic and security circles due to his succinct articulation of the challenge of what may be known with any confidence in a world of increasing uncertainty. His formulation famously took the form of a "poem" — on The Unknown — presented during a Department of Defense news briefing on 12 February 2002. The insight has been most recently used in the analysis by Nathan Freier (Known Unknowns: Unconventional 'Strategic Shocks' in Defense Strategy Development. Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, November 2008).

It is presented on the left below. An adapted version of that "poem" is presented here on the right -- on The Undoing -- with due apologies to Donald Rumsfeld.

![The Unknown](image)

![The Undoing](image)

The "poem" on The Undoing is presented here on the occasion of publication of the conclusion of an 18-month investigation by the bipartisan United States Senate Committee on Armed Services to the effect that Rumsfeld's approval of aggressive interrogation methods in December 2002 was a direct cause of abuses that began in the Guantanamo Detention Camp and spread to Afghanistan and Iraq. They culminated in the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal in 2003, where Iraqi detainees were found to have been forced into naked pyramids, sexually humiliated and threatened by dogs (Ed Pilkington, Senators accuse Rumsfeld over abuse of detainees, The Guardian, 12 December 2008; Greg Miller and Julian E. Barnes, Rumsfeld blamed in detainee abuse scandals, Los Angeles Times, 12 December 2008; David Morgan, Senate report ties Rumsfeld to Abu Ghraib abuse, Reuters, 11 December 2008).

However, in relation to knowing about the occurrence of torture at Guantanamo Bay, Donald Rumsfeld had firmly declared on 2 March 2006:

> We know that torture is not occurring there. We know that for a fact. We have enormously responsible people who are managing that situation. (Secretary Rumsfeld Radio Interview with the Jerry Agar Show, U.S. Department of Defense)

This assertion may in future be compared with the much analyzed statement by Bill Clinton: "I did not have sex with that woman" (Sex, Lies and Impeachment, BBC News, 22 December 1998). Both would seem to be associated with issues explored by Paul Ormerod (Why Most Things Fail: evolution, extinction and economics, 2005) and Karen A. Cerulo (Never Saw It Coming: Cultural Challenges to Envisioning the Worst, 2006). At a press conference, the UK Tory Party leader David Cameron stated: "We are debating something that we didn't do, we weren't going to do and even if we did do it, would have been undone" (Times Online, 22 May 2007).

In the light of the above, the following adaptation of both variants of the "poem" might therefore be appropriate, especially given the absence of feeling or compassion associated with the intervention by the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq and Afghanistan -- and the disproportionate number of deaths resulting from the Rumsfeld-inspired strategy.

![The Unfeeling](image)
Given the historically unprecedented allocation of resources to the military intervention strategically framed by such thinking, there is a case for exploring the insights it offers into the possibility of subtler and more appropriate strategies. The case is further reinforced by the review by Nathan Freier (2008) of the "failure of imagination" that has been a widely recognized as characteristic of strategic development. He introduces his analysis with the statement:

Defense analysis and strategy are inherently reactive. Historically, defense strategy development and planning have demonstrated three critical flaws. For too long, they have been overly reactive. Corporately, they have lacked sufficient imagination. And, as a result, both have been vulnerable to surprise. Recent history indicates that defense strategy and planning fail to be sufficiently predictive. When they do venture into prediction, it often comes as linear extrapolation of contemporary challenges, adhering too closely to current convention. These are artifacts of defense conservatism, finite resources, and Bureaucracy 101.

Whereas Freier's focus is on defence, these observations might be seen as applying with equal (if not greater relevance) to other global strategic issues with more general security implications, including food, employment, water, energy, climate, etc.

### Strategic learning

Aside from any personal responsibilities of Rumsfeld and his colleagues, or the particular consequences of their actions, there is therefore scope for imaginatively applying the first two "poetic frameworks" -- knowledge and action -- to the complex of crises with which society sees itself as faced. It is perhaps curious that, from a strategic perspective, any question of "feeling" is normally set aside; even "ethics" (however engendered and justified) cannot rightly be said to involve feeling or an experiential sense of compassion -- however much ethical failure is experienced as "unfeeling" and even highly painful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic domains</th>
<th>The Unknown</th>
<th>&quot;Population&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Climate&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Finance&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Growth&quot;</th>
<th>The Undoing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>known knowns</td>
<td>deliberately increased (unchecked)</td>
<td>deliberately accepted (emissions, etc)</td>
<td>deliberately undertaken (indebtedness)</td>
<td>deliberately ensured (unchecked)</td>
<td>knowingly done</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>known unknowns</td>
<td>capacity to manage resource overshoot</td>
<td>sustainability of global warming (sea-level rise)</td>
<td>appropriate risk-level of speculative investment (subprime, etc)</td>
<td>appropriateness of measures to sustain (at all cost)</td>
<td>unknowingly done</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unknown knowns</td>
<td>possibility of extreme social unrest (revolution, etc)</td>
<td>possibility of climatic collapse (Gulf Stream, etc)</td>
<td>possibility of sustained global financial collapse</td>
<td>possibility of sustained global economic recession</td>
<td>knowingly undone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unknown unknowns</td>
<td>impact of unforeseen surprises</td>
<td>impact of unforeseen surprises</td>
<td>impact of unforeseen surprises</td>
<td>impact of unforeseen surprises</td>
<td>unknowingly undone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above exercise can only be tentative but does usefully highlight a spectrum of possible considerations. The focus on "undoing" (or "unmaking") highlights action taken, whether deliberately or inadvertently, that endangers or undermines complex systems -- causing them to be "undone" or to "unravel" in some way. It is notably a consequence of systemic neglect -- action taken irresponsibly without heed for possible consequences, as foreseen by the Precautionary Principle. At its most general level it corresponds to what Gregory Bateson (Mind and Nature: a necessary unity, 1979) terms breaking the "pattern which connects":

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 from this perspective that he warns: "Break the pattern which connects the items of learning and you necessarily destroy all quality."

**Descriptors:** The descriptors are unfortunately somewhat clumsy -- hence the advantage of the poetic form. Alternatives might have been included (perhaps using "unconscious" in addition to "unknown", and "unmaking" in addition to "undoing"), but this would increase the complexity of the table. The inversion of the word order in pursuit of a degree of succinct clarity, notably with the addition of the "unfeeling" variant (as in Figure 2), therefore necessitates a degree of reflection which may be appropriate.

**Row of "unknown knowns" / "knowingly undone":** Commenting on the original poem in relation to the table, Robert Daoust (personal communication) notes that this row is in fact absent from the pattern of poem. He argues that this is morally significant. There are things we know without knowing that we know them, well described by Michael Polanyi as tacit knowledge. Polanyi's emphasis on "tacit knowing" suggests that the descriptors of all rows might have fruitfully used such a process emphasis.

For Daoust, it is arguably in our attitude toward those things that moral character is most candidly revealed. The most classical form of
denial is probably "unknown knowns", the associated complicity of silence, and the things "knowingly undone" (the "hot done things"). "We didn't know", said those suspected of implication in the Shoa -- we didn't know that we knew (so pervasively, tacitly) and therefore we didn't do what we did… For Daoust this seems highly relevant to the question of "political" sense perception raised in current strategic references to the "elephant in the room".

Studies about blindsight (and also deaf-hearing, numb-sense, etc.) and affective blindsight might then be significant, as with the capacity to "turn a blind eye" to issues that may then be said to be "unknown", of which the incidence of "extraordinary rendition" offers a number of examples. Such matters relate to notions of "deniable culpability" and the manner in which it is used to provide impunity to those responsible for questionable initiatives -- as so admirably demonstrated in the case of Rumsfeld and his colleagues.

This argument is especially relevant to the absence from the "unfeeling" variant of the poems of any reference to things that are "knowingly unfeling" -- as is the case with torture. This missing dimension is perhaps usefully recognized by Barton Gellman and Jo Becker (The Undoing of the Geneva Conventions: pushing the envelope on presidential powers, Washington Post, 25 June 2007) and is well documented by Philippe Sands (Torture Team: Rumsfeld's Memo and the Betrayal of American Values, 2008).

More generally this row is relevant to the attitude of humans to other species in the environment, as vigorously articulated by animal rights groups.

Row of "unknown unknowns / unknowingly undone": This corresponds to the issues highlighted by Nassim Nicholas Taleb (The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable, 2007). It is also associated with the law of unintended consequences (notably recognized by neoconservatives as more significant than those intended). The financial crisis of 2008 offers a striking example. The table as a whole might be understood as a fruitful way of framing the issues highlighted by Thomas Homer-Dixon (The Upside of Down: catastrophe, creativity, and the renewal of civilization, 2006) following those highlighted by Jared Diamond (Collapse: how societies choose to fail or succeed, 2005).

**Strategic domains:** It is of course the case that the selection of four "strategic domains" presented in the table is itself controversial. In conventional terms, the financial system and the economic system are those which are currently seen as the principal immediate priorities. Climate is conventionally seen as vital, but not immediate. Population is not a matter of public debate -- as reviewed elsewhere (Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge: incommunicability of fundamentally inconvenient truth, 2008).

The four systems selected are however intimately interlinked, including population. As the latter study noted, in a global economic system, dependent for its viability on economic "growth", currently it is only by effectively encouraging an increase in the population that market growth and low cost productivity can be ensured -- irrespective of the neglected impacts on climate change (Climate Change and the Elephant in the Living Room, 2008).

It is therefore appropriate that "finance" and "growth" should be clustered together as "conscious" collective initiatives, and that "climate" and "population" should be clustered as "unconscious" collective initiatives (especially in the light of their consequences), in the spirit of the argument of John Ralston Saul (The Unconscious Civilization, 1995).

**Unrecognized strategic implications of paradox and logical fallacy:**

The Rumsfeld poem has the great merit of pointing towards the need for more fruitful recognition of the challenges of what are otherwise readily assumed to be straightforward logical approaches to strategically relevant knowledge. The degree of incoherence and inconsistency underlying what is otherwise expected to be "comprehensible" calls for acknowledgement if more appropriate forms of understanding are to emerge.

One helpful review of the challenges is provided by John Woods (Paradox and Paraconsistency: conflict resolution in the abstract sciences, 2003). He notes that in a world plagued by disagreement and conflict, it might be expected that the exact sciences of logic and mathematics would provide a safe harbour. In fact, however, these disciplines are rife with internal divisions between different, often incompatible systems -- a situation explored more generally by Nicholas Rescher (The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity, 1985). As Woods notes, there are apparently intractable disagreements in logic and the foundations of mathematics. Woods himself worked on conflict resolution strategies for intractable disagreements in questions of public policy through the research group on Fallacies as Violations of Rules for Argumentative Discourse (of the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study).

Paradox might be understood as undesirable and regrettable, especially in methodologies upheld as a standard of rigour. But in his award-winning study, Etienne Klein (Conversations with the Sphinx: paradoxes in physics, 1996) takes as his point of departure the recognition by modern physics of the inadequacy of common sense in the construction of theories and the understanding of certain experimental results. As he notes with respect to fundamental physics:

> In contrast to the everyday world, it opposes the extraordinary to the ordinary, difficult concepts to classical archetypes, astonishing descriptions to cozy appearances.

Whilst it might be assumed that such thinking merely constitutes a form of armchair indulgence in a real world faced with real and bloody conflict, it is appropriate to recognize that the development of ever more destructive weapons of mass destruction emerges from such disciplines -- whose development is typically funded by government institutions such as that headed by Donald Rumsfeld.

If global strategy (in its military manifestations) is dependent on thinking of such paradoxical nature, it is then appropriate to ask whether requisite governance thinking for the future should necessarily be consciously based on more "astonishing descriptions" in contrast with the convenience of "cosy appearances". The desirability of this is strongly suggested by the above-mentioned references to the
"incomprehensibility" of popular reactions to simplistic governance. As argued by Etienne Klein (1996):

We need to bear in mind that science relies on the open character of the enterprise that enables it to call in question its own structures of thinking. Paradoxes are an integral part of its approach, which means that they should not be regarded as simple accidents along the way, which could be routinely avoided by greater attention or care. Paradox is intrinsic to the fabric of science. It is paradox that, by liberating habits of thought, provides orthodox reasoning with its dialectic.

Given the challenge to global civilization arising from its dependence on non-renewable energy resources, and the global security issues that are likely to result (Russian gas, etc), a similar argument might be made with respect to dependence on developments in fundamental physics to derive new sources of energy, as exemplified by the recent launching of the ITER nuclear fusion project. In this case fruitful outcomes are dependent on theoretical developments that are even more incomprehensible. Worse still, as documented by Peter Woit (Not Even Wrong: the failure of string theory and the continuing challenge to unify the laws of physics, 2006), the approach to this fundamental theoretical challenge is "flawed" in ways that constitute a strange metaphor of that faced by a global governance arguably dependent on its fruitful outcome.

Just as fundamental physics has had its reasonably successful Standard Model since 1975 so might be said to be the case of global governance through the international community. Just as the Standard Model left a number of key questions unanswered with respect to a much-sought, powerful, all-encompassing Theory of Everything, so the inadequacies of global governance have become evident, notably in the light of 9/11 and the unresolved problematic issues associated with any form of humanitarian intervention (Middle East, Dafur, etc). It is therefore interesting to recognize the status of the development of "superstring theory", and its total lack of any success in going beyond the Standard Model, as a fruitful metaphor of the total lack of any success in moving beyond the "standard model" of global governance. This is sustained by an international rule of law, articulated in a network of treaties and informed by a universal understanding of human rights -- all much-challenged in practice (cf Worldwide Governance Indicators; Universal Human Rights Index; Human Development Index; Democracy Index).

As documented by Peter Woit (2006), the dominant "superstring theory" of fundamental physics actually refers not to a well-defined theory but rather to the unrealized hopes that one might exist. Such unrealized hopes might similarly be said to dominate thinking regarding the possibility of global governance. Superstring "theory" in fact makes no predictions, not even wrong ones. It is in fact this very lack of falsifiability that has allowed it to not only to survive but to flourish. Woit highlights the refusal by physics to challenge the conventional thinking that sustains this controversial situation, exemplified by an unwillingness to evaluate honestly the arguments for and against string theory in its many co-existing manifestations. Again this offers parallels to the situation in the case of global governance, most recently highlighted by the response to the global financial crisis of 2008.

John Woods (Paradox and Paraconsistency: conflict resolution in the abstract sciences, 2003) provides an insightful framing of post modern logcal developments governing current understanding of objectivity and realism relevant to both domains:

One of these developments is a tolerant and substantial pluralism that has taken root and flourished in logical theory. This pluralism relates significantly to the toleration of it. The greater the latter, the more the former does damage to presumptions of objectivity and realism. The greater the latter, the greater the likelihood that theoretical rivalries will be interpreted in such ways that conflict resolution does not matter -- or even that it would be a misplaced thing to try to bring off. The other historical development is what could be called the received view of the signifiance of the paradoxes, on estimates of the damage done by them, and on the general character of strategies for set theoretic and semantic recovery. This too... puts in a false light objectivity and realism in mathematic and formal semantics. (pp. xi)

Etienne Klein (Conversations with the Sphinx: paradoxes in physics, 1996) also notes how the challenge applies beyond the sciences by referring to the study of "cotton-wool language" by François-Bernard Huyghe (La Langue de Coton, 1991) who points out that:

...diplomats and other politicians are increasingly using a watered-down language whose few and hence inflated words no longer have any true meaning; a consummate consensural language that panders to the taste for tautology and disables contradiction; a discourse which has an answer to everything because it says practically nothing; a language unanswerable because it churns out propositions that leave so much room for interpretation that listeners are free to hear what they hope for. In other words, a language so all-inclusive that it gives no chance to paradox -- and here there are grounds for unease, we must confess. (p. 85)

In such a context it is therefore entirely "comprehensible" why so little insight is drawn from the work of the above-mentioned research group on Fallacies as Violations of Rules for Argumentative Discourse, or that of John Woods on conflict resolution strategies for intractable disagreements in questions of public policy. Whilst the challenge of a Theory of Everything may be framed as the most exciting intellectual puzzle for humankind, that of global governance might be seen as that most essential to its survival. It would appear that the poorly acknowledged inadequacies of both enterprises are evidence of a degree of cognitive complacency and of a complicity in the inadequacies of comfortable conventional thinking. There is therefore a case for exploiting the problematic framework offered by Rumsfeld in the light of the subtle riches of a non-western culture -- one which has explicitly integrated the paradoxical challenges of comprehension of complex subtleties into an unusually comprehensive cognitive system designed with governance in mind.

**Strategic patterns in terms of knowing, feeling and action**
Paradigm shift: from a single pattern to alternation between a set of patterns

Conventional practice seeks desperately for a single invariant pattern of categories through which strategic reality can be articulated. The models that are produced and promoted in support of strategic development exemplify this tendency. Given the fact that different constituencies have preferences for different models, which may be variously fashionable, there is a case for recognizing the need to engage through a plurality of stakeholders using a variety of models.

The desirable paradigm shift at this time may therefore involve a recognition of how distinct models are used and in what ways they can relate to each other. Etienne Klein (Conversations with the Sphinx: paradoxes in physics, 1996) helpfully highlights the challenge:

> We have seen that the concept of paradigm is connected with that of consensus. It is the doxa of scientists, the highest common factor of their convictions. Aided by habit and success, every new theory gains in authority, becomes a doxa, and eventually becomes established as a very subdued version of the upheavals that installed it, even if it sometimes takes a while to circulate.... Doxa becomes orthodoxy. If it grows too rigid, it may degenerate into dogma, and the paradigm turns into a machine for manufacturing new prejudices. As it degenerates, it deadens critical vigilance and wears down reservations... It is only once prejudices have begun to flourish that new paradoxes can provoke a crisis of the paradigm....

> Every prejudice is a potential paradox because paradoxes are defined by the prejudices they contradict, for instance during a confrontation with experience... paradoxes are former prejudices, prejudices former paradoxes. In this context, alternation is the name of the game. (p. 93-4)

The various patterns presented above, that may serve as alternative ways of interrelating strategic initiatives, therefore raise the question of how many such patterns exist and whether any understanding of "sustainable development" is dependent on the ability to shift appropriately between them. **Is it indeed the case that every particular arrangement of strategies lends itself to interpretation otherwise -- and requires such interpretation to hold a more complex dynamic reality?**

Minimally this then points to the vital importance of recognizing a four-phase approach to many terms that are conventionally only considered in a two-phase, binary manner in which one is framed as "good" in some way and the other as therefore "bad". Recognized as a quadrilemma according to Kinhide Mushakoji (Global Issues and Interparadigmatic Dialogue, 1988), the four phases may be represented as:

- Condition A ("knowing", "doing", "feeling")
- Condition Not-A ("unknowing", "undoing", "unfeeling")
- Condition A-and-Not-A
- Condition Neither-A-nor-Not-A

This would correspond to both the classical Vedic insight of Neti Neti (Not this, Not that) and to the first insight of the Tao Te Ching:

> The Tao that can be told
> is not the eternal Tao
> The name that can be named
> is not the eternal Name.

In the proposed new strategic emphasis on "soft power" by the Obama presidency, through the foreign policy initiatives of Hillary Clinton, the challenge is then to move beyond the binary logic of the Clinton and Bash presidencies -- perhaps best exemplified by: "If you are not with US, you are against US". In precluding other conditions, such a false dilemma (as with "guilty vs not-guilty"), even suggested that any "abstention" in a UN Security Council vote on controversial issues was as meaningless as that implied with respect to any failure to support the "war on terrorism". Soft power might then be exemplified by the art of working with the third and fourth conditions -- most notably in the Middle East.

Those conditions would seem to offer considerable opportunity for moving "out-of-the-box", beyond the agonizingly intractable strategic dilemmas framed by the first two conditions: employment/unemployment, health/illness, knowledge/ignorance, development/environment, resources/scarcity, tolerance/intolerance, etc. Ironically, navigating the subtle ambiguities of the latter conditions is most familiar, at every level of society, in the experiential dilemmas of affective relationships, especially of a romantic nature.

The patterns presented certainly evoke the possibility of interpreting them otherwise. For example, the four arrangements presented in Figure 3 give rise to other insights if the convention of reading the hexagrams from top to bottom is reversed. This is also true of circular arrangements where it is a convention (and a decision) as to whether they are read "top-out" or "top-in" (see Interrelationships between 64 Complementary Approaches to Policy-making, 2007).

Comprehending the nature of any such shift is facilitated by:

- **web based animations**: A number of animations for a given arrangement are provided by Steve Marshall (Yijing Hexagram Sequences, 2005). Various other experimental animations are also available (Animation of Classical BaGua Arrangements: a dynamic representation of Neti Neti, 2008; Sustainability through Magically Dancing Patterns: 8x8, 9x9, 19x19, 2008; Dynamic Exploration of Value Configurations Interrelating traditional cultural symbols through animation, 2008).
The "philosophical", cognitive and strategic challenges of "unknowing", the potential for governance offered by in relation to doing and undoing, is that offered by snoring. Is it the case that the paradoxes implicit in Rumsfeld's "poem" point to an aesthetic possibility for responding to the "incomprehensible" tragedies engendered by conventional strategic thinking? Etiene Klein (Conversations with the Sphinx: paradoxes in physics, 1996) uses aesthetic language to acknowledge the drama of cognitive tragedy with which some new engagement is urgently required:

In the desperate quest by governance for "harmonious" relations (as they are so frequently termed), there is therefore a case for taking seriously the cognitive organization of music, given its universal appeal. The case has been well-argued by Ernest G. McLain (The Myth of Invariance: the origins of the gods, mathematics and music from the Rg Veda to Plato, 1976), notably with respect to related preoccupations of Antonio de Nicolas (Meditations through the Rg Veda: four-dimensional man, 1978). The unique feature of an epistemological approach grounded in tone, and the shifting relationships between tones, has been expressed by de Nicolas in the following terms:

Therefore, from a linguistic and cultural perspective, we have to be aware that we are dealing with a language where tonal and arithmetical relations establish the epistemological invariances... Language grounded in music is grounded thereby on context dependency; any tone can have any possible relation to other tones, and the shift from one tone to another, which alone makes melody possible, is a shift in perspective which the singer himself embodies. Any perspective (tone) must be "sacrificed" for a new one to come into being; the song is a radical activity which requires innovation while maintaining continuity, and the "world" is the creation of the singer, who shares its dimensions with the song. (p. 57)

Further possibilities for unconventional exploration

Although seemingly irrelevant, perhaps the most readily "comprehensible" articulation of the interplay between knowing and not-knowing, in relation to doing and undoing, is that offered by snoring (Snoring of The Other: a politically relevant psycho-spiritual metaphor? 2006). It might be considered especially relevant given the manner in which it is recognized as undermining relationships.

The potential for governance offered by poetry, music and song is explored in:

- The Charge of the Light Brigade: revised in celebration of current global strategic management initiatives (2008)
- All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony? (2007)
- Ensuring Strategic Resilience through Haiku Patterns: reframing the scope of the "martial arts" in response to strategic threats (2006)
- Structuring Mnemonic Encoding of Development Plans and Ethical Charters using Musical Leitmotifs (2001)
- Poetry-making and Policy-making: arranging a Marriage between Beauty and the Beast (1993)
- Aesthetics of Governance in the Year 2490 (1990)

The "philosophical", cognitive and strategic challenges of "unknowing", "undoing" and the "negative arts" are also variously explored in:

- Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society: speculations towards the development of cures and preventive measures (2008)
- Happiness and Unhappiness through Naysign and Nescience: comprehending the essence of sustainability? (2008)
- Liberating Provocations: use of negative and paradoxical strategies (2005)
- Being Positive Avoiding Negativity: management challenge -- positive vs negative (2005)
- Enlightening Endarkenment: selected web resources on the challenge to comprehension (2005)
- Twistedness in Psycho-social Systems: challenge to logic, morality, leadership and personal development (2004)
- Seven Deadly Sins of Fundamentalism: assessing memetic weapons capability of neoconservatism (2004)
- Global Strategic Implications of the "Unsaid": from myth-making towards a "wisdom society" (2003)
More bluntly, future-responsive societal learning makes it necessary for individuals and organizations to embrace error. It is the only way to ensure a shared self-consciousness about limited theory to the nature of social dynamics, about limited data for testing theory, and hence about our limited ability to control our situation well enough to be successful more often than not.

Appreciation of current ignorance
Charles Darwin. The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals, 1872
Our present subject is very obscure and it is always advisable to perceive clearly our ignorance

Negative Capability
(John Keats, Negative Capability, 1817)
Capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts
without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.

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[More "poems"]

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