21 August 2009 | Draft

Us and Them: Relating to Challenging Others

patterns in the shadow dance between "good" and "evil"

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Written on the occasion of the requirement by the International Association of Athletics Federations for a gender test of many weeks, to determine whether the record breaking athlete Caster Semenya was female or male -- or possibly both, or neither, thereby creating a major issue for passport and other official identification.

Introduction

Curiously there is a prevailing primitive sense that those most central to the dysfunctional dynamics of the world can be distinguished in terms of binary logic as "us" and "them". "Us" are necessarily the "good guys" acting appropriately, whether the criterion is economic growth, profitability, sustainability, advance of knowledge, peace-keeping, democratic values, spiritual insight, etc. "Them" are necessarily the "bad guys" frustrating and undermining such worthy initiatives. This logic most explicitly drove US foreign policy in the formation of the Coalition of the Willing in response to 9/11.

The logic continues to be fundamental to such ongoing conflicts as: Israel-Palestine, developers-conservationists, "clashes of civilization" (Afghanistan, etc), "axis of evil" (North Korea, etc), interfaith discourse by which "right" and "wrong" are defined to isolate the "unbelievers" (Catholicism and others, Judaism and others, Islam and others, etc). The phenomenon is evident in the "two culture" conflict between science and the humanities -- in which, for example, the latter may be simply framed as misguided or deluded by the former. It is as fundamental to the relation between governmental and nongovernmental bodies, as it is to that between profit-making and nonprofit-making bodies. It is inherent in the impoverished relationship between "mainstream" and "alternative" worldviews, or between the formal and the informal (ie "black") economies (*Interacting Fruitfully with Un-Civil Society the dilemma for non-civil society organizations*, 1996).

It is also reflected in male-female relationships, especially when any discrimination is associated with such conflicts (Afghanistan and the burkha, etc). It is obviously fundamental to relationships based on colour and typically defined in binary terms (as under the *apartheid* regime). Ironically "colour" is used to distinguish the political extremes of right and left between which similar dynamics prevail. In each case there is little question who are the "good guys" and who are the "bad guys" -- depending on the group with which the observer is identified, especially when detachment is not an option, as with the Coalition of the Willing (*You are either with us or against us*) -- and the declaration to that effect by Hillary Clinton (2001), currently US Secretary of State..

In endeavouring to respond to such conflicts, the main strategy envisaged is to convert the "bad guys" into acquiring the values and behaviours of the "good guys". In terms of any negotiation, this is the classical *Getting to YES: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (1981). The "good guys" are those "in agreement", who "sing from the same hymn sheet"; the "bad guys" are "off programme". Again the difficulty is that each "side" is engaged in precisely that strategy by means that may be most questionable to the other in seeking to

increase their negotiating power and winning the "battle for hearts and minds". This is exemplified by the use of inhumane weaponry and suicide bombing in the Iraq-Afghanistan arena -- exacerbated by "enhanced interrogation".

The other side is readily labelled as fundamentally, if not diabolically, "evil" -- with a degree of implication as to the (ev)angelic nature of those opposing its initiatives. There is no question of any degree of significance or legitimacy to the views of the other. All would in fact be wonderful if the other could be assimilated or, if necessary, eliminated.

Any implication that there is a degree of moral equivalence is itself seen as verging on treachery, betrayal and subversion, as argued prior to "Abu Ghraib" by Jeane Kirkpatrick (*The Myth of Moral Equivalence*, 1986) -- later US Ambassador to the UN. However such an understanding of "equivalence" itself assumes a binary logic in which the scales of justice are as two-dimensional as conventionally depicted. Where the condition involves multiple dimensions, any measurement of equivalence becomes more subtle and nuanced -- as notably recognized in understandings of "poetic justice".

And yet, as is to be seen at the time of writing, the question has emerged as to the possibility of dialogue with the Taliban -- even the possibility that they might be brought into a viable government in Afghanistan. This is an instance in which the completely negative framing is nuanced, possibly by a dubious logic of convenience: "talking with the good Taliban", etc. Essentially missing from any such "back channel" pragmatism (Track II diplomacy), whether cynical or not, is a framework within which the values of the other can in any way be seen to be respected. This is particularly striking when a "primitive" force, readily recognized as the antithesis of "universal" values, has remained essentially unconquered despite the application of historically unprecedented military resources over nearly a decade.

The concern in what follows is how it might be possible to highlight a pattern of intermediary conditions between the unquestionably absolute good of "us" and the unquestionably absolute evil of "them". An inspiration for such a pursuit might be Pogo's classic: *we have met the enemy and he is us*. However the challenge is to render explicit what might otherwise be encompassed and conflated within the experiential mystery of otherness as explored by Martin Buber (*I and Thou*, 1923) and others (*"Human Intercourse": "Intercourse with Nature" and "Intercourse with the Other"*, 2007). Clearly such laudable insights have not yet been adequate to the challenge -- notably in the Middle East.

As noted by Noam Chomsky (*Chomsky: What America's 'Crisis' Means to the Rest of the World*, *Boston Review*. 10 September 2009):

> There is too much nuance and variety to make such sharp distinctions as theirs-and-ours, them-and-us. And neither I nor anyone can presume to speak for 'us.'

Three potentially interrelated approaches of potentially requisite complexity are tentatively explored below: taxonomies of dramatic situations, systematic elaboration of binary coding, and the mathematics of periodicity as evident in the Periodic Table.

Taxonomies of dramatic situations

It could be argued that the spectrum of dynamics of relationships between "us" and "them" is reflected to a fairly high degree in literary explorations and folk tales. These are necessarily obliged to recognize the subtleties through which protagonists play out their relationships over time -- beyond any initial binary stand off. They encompass and hold a higher degree of complexity which is only recognizable, if at all, as implicit in the binary condition. They include dynamics such as enantiodromia -- perhaps embarrassingly evident in the manner in which the USA and Russia have progressively taken on each other's characteristics and borrowed each other's narratives, however much this may be denied.

A fictional plot is the sequence of interrelated events arranged to form a logical pattern and achieve an intended effect. The classic approach to organizing the dynamics of such plots is that of Georges Polti (*The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*, 1916) who endeavoured to categorize every dramatic situation that might occur in a story or performance -- building on the earlier work of Carlo Gozzi.

Jon Adams (*Plot Taxonomies and Intentionality*, *Philosophy and Literature*, 32, 1, April 2008) considers that most of these thirty-six situations are so vague as to admit almost any plotline, and certainly with too many plotlines as to successfully serve as boundaries. In trying to capture the widest range of variables, the categories become hopelessly labile. Adams argues that:

> Organising literature into any classificatory scheme is an attempt to achieve something like the coherence that the natural sciences have achieved -- in chemistry and physics with the composition of the Periodic Table, and in biology with Linnaean classification. Much of science's epistemic prestige is rooted in the enormous success with which they have organised and categorised their subject of study. In searching for mechanism and pattern, the natural sciences proceed confidently from the belief that those mechanisms and patterns exist to be discovered, and that (relatively) simple rules underlie the manifest complexity of natural phenomena.
>
> Unfortunately, the study of literary fiction has no such security. There are two senses here in which we can talk of literature being patterned. At the micro-level, we have the question of whether individual works can be thought of as internally patterned.... Even so, if this sort of centre cannot be found in the individual work, it may yet obtain between works. In other words, *The Cantos* or *Finnegans Wake* may yet occupy nodal roles in a larger system, within which they acquire a previously unrecognized unity and order. This type of organization is something the individual author is obviously in a much less suitable position to control. Nonetheless, mapping out this larger, macro-level order is a task that literary criticism might want to take on.

It is well recognized that there are (unfortunately) many approaches to such clusterings of plots, as mentioned by Cecil Adams (*What are*

the seven basic literary plots? The Straight Dope, 24 November 2000) and by David Edgar (*How Plays Work*, 2009). A 12 volume compilation was producd (Frank Northen Magill, et al., *Masterplots: 1,801 plot stories and critical evaluations of the world's finest literature*, 1976/1996). Variously appreciated sets include (see convenient listing):

- **Two:** Aristotle distinguished comedy and tragedy, reducing the number of plots to two. Tobias (2003) acknowledges that the 20 he identifies can also be reduced to two: "plots of the body" and "plots of the mind."
- **Three**: The number of plots identified, semi-comically, by William Foster-Harris (*The Basic Patterns of Plot*, 1959).
- **Seven:** Christopher Booker (*The Seven Basic Plots: why we tell stories*, 2005)
- **Nine**: The number of plots identified by John Carroll (*The Western Dreaming*, 2001).
- **Thirteen**: Wallace Hildick (*Thirteen Types of Narrative*, 1970)
- **Nineteen**: The basic effects underlying all magic tricks as identified by Dariel Fitzkee (*Trick Brain*, 1944), considered, with associated works, to be one of the major contributions to the theory of magic. The number and types continue to be disputed.
- **Twenty:** The number of basic, major plots or more effective (Ronald Tobias, *20 Master Plots And How to Build Them*, 2003; Tennessee Screenwriters Association, *Twenty Basic Plots*, 2002). Two of them are recognized as occasionally combined. Tobias considers that many of the 36 identified by Gozzi and Polti are no longer used ("because they seem hopelessly out of date"). These are now widely used in the education of creative writing.
- **Thirty-one**: The set of narrative functions (or narrative units) of dramatis personae, as identified by Vladimir Propp (*Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 1928). He argued that the limited number of functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled.
- **Thirty-six:** The number of plots, as identified by Carlo Gozzi and elaborated by Georges Polti (*The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*, 1916; also accessible from *The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*, *Gordian Plot*)
- **Forty-five**: A set of identified archetypal, mythic cross-cultural plot characters, male and female, and their typical reactions to situations (Victoria Schmidt, *45 Master Chracters*, 2007)
- **Sixty-nine:** An estimate of the total number of basic story lines allegedly identified by Rudyard Kipling, regarded as a major "innovator in the art of the short story"

As Jon Adams indicates these might be considered as variously aspiring to be an artistic version of the Periodic Table. However, in the light of the history of the evolution of that table, the various proposals might be understood as particular "takes" or understandings of a complex underlying pattern of periodicity that continues to be a focus of exploration in the relevant sciences (J. W. van Spronsen, *The Periodic System of Chemical Elements; a history of the first hundred years*, 1969; Eric R. Scerri, *The Periodic Table: its story and its significance*, 2006).

The question is whether these enable a richer understanding of the relation between "us" and "them" -- if an attempt was made to describe the dynamics of such relationships as a form of narrative, rather than being locked into a binary box. No classic western, or other good-guy/bad-guy movie, would get away with the simplifications of discourse through which the political conflicts of the current period are articulated. Represented as such, they are indeed inherently boring. There is only so much the media can do to sustain interest (and ratings) with framing the good guys as purely angelic and the bad guys as unredeemably demonic. According to the distinction of Aristotle, this can only then be seen as either tragedy or comedy -- if not a tragi-comedy.

The argument here is that such frames could be used to categorize the conditions and dynamics of the currently ongoing conflicts which call for richer insight -- commensurate with the expectations of media audiences around the world and the eternal enthusiasm for good stories, especially those enabling individual and collective learning. What lessons with regard to engagement in "us-and-them" dynamics are to be derived from the skills acquired by creative writers with respect to "common denominators" of plot development, such as those advocated by Tobias (2003)? How do such common denominators reflect the challenges of conflict and tension which, paradoxically, it is typically sought to eliminate in conflict resolution?:

1. *Tension must be the fuel***:** whether in the form of conflict, frustrated intention, or blocked movement
2. *Tension is created through opposition:* with the antagonist thwarting the protagonist, a distinction being made between local tension (rejection of relationship) and *long lasting tension* (a behavioural pattern which engenders rejection); the tension mayu be internal or external.
3. *Tension has to grow as opposition increases***:** progressively increasing in intensity through serious conflicts to a climax**.**
4. *Change needs to be the point of the story*: meaningful events should engender change, notably in the personality or behavioural patterns of those centrally engaged in them.
5. *When something happens, it has to be important***:** otherwise it should be omitted from the development of the plot, since an excess of secondary plotlines dilutes the central tension.
6. *The causal should appear casual:* Although a plot requires that important new events emerge as a result of cause-effect relationships, their emergence is more effective to the extent that it is more natural.
7. *Blind luck is not used as a plot element***:** the plot needs to develop in a world created with its own coherent set of rules, such that there is a reason for when something happens, rather than happy coincidence or a miraculous event out of context.
8. *The central character performs the central action of the climax:* the final transformation is then highlighted as a condition of no return.

Is it such considerations which are now the unfortunate focus of "spin" and news management? Is governance increasingly to be framed as developing dramas amd plotlines for media consumption? (cf *Gorbachev: Dramaturge ?! Participative Democracy vs. Participative Drama -- lessons on social transformation for international organizations from Gorbachev*, 1991).

Systematic elaboration of binary coding

The standard binary coding, as originally inspired by the elaboration of the classical Chinese system of trigrams and hexagrams, offers another way to approach the relationship between "us" and "them". This is inherently much more systematic. In that system the basic distinction is denoted by the use of a "broken" and an "unbroken" line -- named as representing the principles of *yin* and *yang*. However in exploring the elaboration based on this distinction it is most relevant to recall the insight of Xavier Sallantin (*L'épistemologie de l'arithmetique*, 1976). That is the assumption projected onto any such coding as to whether "broken" is to be positively valued as "good" (etc) or negatively valued as "bad" (etc). This assumption is contextual to the coding system and prior to any further consideration of it. It determines how the coding system is to be read. Clearly the coding system can then be read in one of two ways, depending on the preferred reading or some prior unconscious bias.
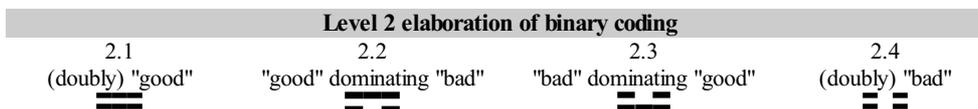
Arbitrarily, for example:

- "unbroken" might code for "us", the "good guys", with "broken" as code for "them", the "bad guys" -- here "unbroken" has associations to principled, etc. with "broken" implying relative weakness
- alternatively, "broken" might code for the "good guys" (implying an open society, coexisternce of alternatives, etc), with "unbroken" coding for the fundamentalist rigidity of the "bad guys"

Using the first alternative, the coding system could then be elaborated as follows.

| Level 1 elaboration of binary coding |
|:---:|
| "good" (="Us")   "bad" (="Them") |
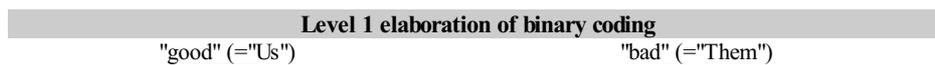
Obviously a great deal is projected metaphorically onto this arbitrary coding, notably (by extension) to issues relating to gender and sexuality. The consequences of the arbitrary coding are therefore potentially fundamental. Matters become more complex, allowing for a wider range of interpretations, if the coding is now elaborated to a Level 2, rendering explicit aspects that were effectively implicit in Level 1.

Level 2 elaboration of binary coding			
2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4
(doubly) "good"	"good" dominating "bad"	"bad" dominating "good"	(doubly) "bad"

Here the conditions 2.2 and 2.3 are used to highlight well-recognized situations :

- 2.2: where the "good guys" are exerting a dominant influence, despite being undermined by the "bad guys"
- 2.3: where the "bad guys" are exerting a dominant influence, despite the valiant struggle of the "good guys"

Of course 2.1 implies a comfortable cocoon of "just us" -- all unquestionably good -- recognizing that elsewhere may prevail a situation of "just them" -- all bad. A more complex pattern may exist at Level 3.

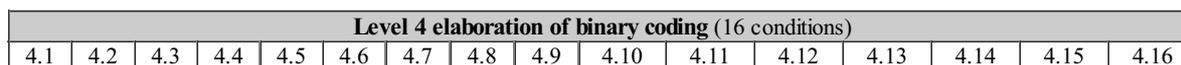| Level 3 elaboration of binary coding							
3.1	3.2	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8
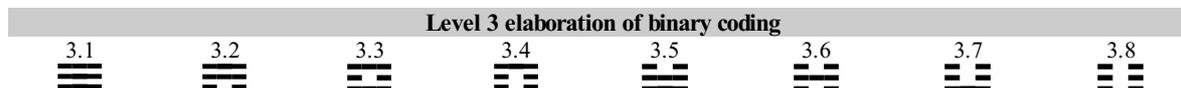
In this range of conditions, yet more complex situations are recognized between the extremes of (triple) "goodness" or "badness", in which the conditions of "goodness" or "badness" emerge and combine more surreptiously. The eight conditions are those identified as fundamental to Chinese philosophy as the *ba gua*. Of course inability to distinguish eight such conditions would mean that Level 3 was collapsed into Level 2, or even into Level 1 (in the mindset of the Coalition of the Willing and of the crudest cowboy movie).

The subtlety of the distinctions at Level 3 may then be understood as of a kind with those of the 7 to 9 narrative plots noted above:

- **Seven:** Christopher Booker (*The Seven Basic Plots: why we tell stories*, 2005)
- **Nine**: The number of plots identified by John Carroll (*The Western Dreaming*, 2001).

The elaboration may of course be continued to Level 4, by the addition of a further line, whether indicative of "good" or "bad".

Level 4 elaboration of binary coding (16 conditions)															
4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.10	4.11	4.12	4.13	4.14	4.15	4.16

The subtlety of distinctions is then of a kind involved in those of the following sets of narrative plots mentioned above:

- **Thirteen**: Wallace Hildick (*Thirteen Types of Narrative*, 1970)
- **Nineteen**: The basic effects underlying all magic tricks as identified by Dariel Fitzkee (*Trick Brain*, 1944).
- **Twenty:** The number of basic or major plots (Ronald Tobias, *20 Master Plots And How to Build Them*, 2003; Tennessee Screenwriters Association, *Twenty Basic Plots*, 2002). Two of them are recognized as occasionally combined. Tobias considers that many of the 36 identified by Gozzi and Polti are no longer used ("because they seem hopelessly out of date")

Again the elaboration may be continued to Level 5, by the addition of a further line.

Level 5 elaboration of binary coding (32 conditions)
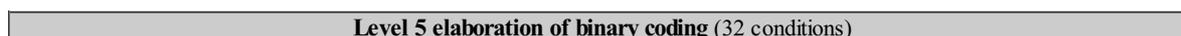
The distinctions made at this level are of a kind with those made with respect to the following sets of narrative plots:

- **Thirty-one**: The set of narrative functions (or narrative units) of dramatis personae, as identified by Vladimir Propp (*Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 1928).
- **Thirty-six:** The number of plots, as identified by Carlo Gozzi and elaborated by Georges Polti (*The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*, 1916)

It is a 6-line hexagram which distinguishes the 64 conditions of the classical Chinese scheme of the *I Ching*. Of particular relevance to this exploration of the dynamics between "us" and "them" is that this scheme has been understood as a way of distinguishing situations in patterns of change -- and has been valued in governance for that reasons. It is much more elaborate than any used in the western-dominated strategic thinking of global society.

Level 6 elaboration of binary coding
(64 conditions: alternative tabular representations; circular representation)

These distinctions are of the same order as the 69 basic stories allegedly identified by Rudyard Kipling according to Tobias [*original reference not located*]

In the *I Ching* and its commentaries the distinctions between these conditions are explained through extensive use of metaphor.

The question here is of course whether the metaphorical language through which such conditions are explained can be reframed to be of relevance to any relation between "us" and "them" -- between the "good guys" and the "bad guys". Specifically, does such a pattern allow all Israeli-Palestinian situations to be appropriately positioned -- always recognizing the alternative readings which each would give to the pattern in terms of who is "us" (and "good") and who is "them (and "bad")? The same is of course true in the USA-Taliban standoff.

This commentary on the *I Ching* coding is necessarily brief and purely indicative. As a system on which many have commented over centuries, far more insightful perspectives can be brought to bear on the matter. Perhaps a relevant question is why such possibilities are not explored, given the bloody stupidity which continues to characterize the ongoing dynamics between "us" and "them". These are dynamics in which we all play our roles and occupy conditions (of which we are largely unconscious) in reinforcing those dynamics -- and the vicious cycles of violence that our collective mindset is supposedly unable to break (*Dysfunctional Cycles and Spirals: web resources on "breaking the cycle"*, 2002).

Some more extensive explorations of these possibilities include:

- a version of the above elaboration methodology framed in terms of polarization (*Discovering Richer Patterns of Comprehension to Reframe Polarization*, 1998)
- adaptation of the interrelated set of *I Ching* insights to policy-related concerns (*Transformation Metaphors -- derived experimentally from the Chinese Book of Changes (I Ching) for sustainable dialogue, vision, conferencing, policy, network, community and lifestyle*, 1997) -- with a degree of coherence provided provided by a "map" linking the associated "stories" (*Interrelationships between 64 Complementary Approaches to Policy-making*, 2007)
- *Associating metaphor with formal representation: the I Ching of Chinese culture* (2009)
- highlighting levels of comprehension challenge (as above) between confusing simplicity through implication and confusing complexity through explication (*Distinguishing Levels of Declarations of Principles*, 1980)

Periodic table of relationships between "us" and "them"?

As noted above, the struggle to detect order in an elusive pattern is well-highlighted by the history of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements -- and the continuing struggle regarding understanding and representation of that pattern of qualitative properties in the light of more sophisticated understandings of relationships from mathematics (Denis H. Rouvray, et al, *The Periodic Table: Into the 21st Century*, 2005; *The Mathematics of the Periodic Table*, 2005). The synthesis represented by that table is upheld as one of the most fundamental achievements of science.

It is no wonder that there is an array of assertive proposals regarding the spectrum of plots characterizing human relations. The historical (and continuing) debates regarding the numbers of chemical elements in groups, or their attribution to such groups, provides an admirable indication of the nature of such a process of distinction in pursuit of some form of closure. Ironically the challenge is one shared by both the "two cultures".

In a related exploration (*Periodic Pattern of Human Knowing: implication of the Periodic Table as metaphor of elementary order*, 2009), the cognitive challenge of comprehending distinctions in a complex pattern was addressed in the light of the structure of the Periodic Table. That exercise followed from a more general concern previously explored (*Representation, Comprehension and Communication of Sets: the Role of Number*, 1978; *Patterns of N-foldness; comparison of integrated multi-set concept schemes as forms of presentation*, 1984; *Examples of Integrated, Multi-set Concept Schemes*, 1984).

In exploring the possibility of a "periodic pattern of human knowing" reference was made (in an annex) to the associated understandings from the *I Ching* as a periodic pattern in its own right (*Towards a Periodic Table of Ways of Knowing -- in the light of metaphors of mathematics*, 2009).

Possible mapping of "us-and-them" relationships

With the focus here on "us-and-them" relationships, the question is whether there are insights to be obtained by confronting:

- the groups of distinctions of narrative plots as holding insight into what relationships are held to be meaningful in the tales by which people are entertained and engaged -- but which offer a sense of reality to the extent that they dramatise value-based

existential choices in the dance between "us" and "them". Arguably the "attractiveness" of a tale is intimately related to the dynamics of its function as a strange attractor, as explored elsewhere (*Human Values as Strange Attractors: coevolution of classes of governance principles*, 1993)

- the conditions distinguished in the *I Ching*, at different levels of elaboration, as described through metaphoric mini-tales -- which retain a sense of the challenge of "us-and-them", especially in relation to decision-making
- the cognitive clusterings, in terms of qualitative attributes, of elements in the Periodic Table -- held to be credible and meaningful in explaining relationships between "distant" elements in the table

The question worth exploring is whether the sets of distinguished narratives map usefully onto the *I Ching* (as suggested above) or onto the Periodic Table, if only as mnemonic devices (cf *In Quest of Mnemonic Catalysts -- for comprehension of complex psychosocial dynamics*, 2007).

Important to any such exploration is the recognition that the sets are not set in stone. As noted above, two distinctions may be collapsed in any given case, or one may be added. The classic exploration of the challenge of such distinctions is that of cognitive psychologist George Miller (*The magical number seven, plus or minus two: some limits on our capacity for processing information. Psychological Review*, 63, 1956, pp. 81-97) -- one of the most cited papers in psychology.

Furthermore, although there may be a degree of agreement on the number of elements in any one set, the qualities so distinguished by different authors may differ. This is typical of the early struggle with the Periodic Table -- and continues to this day with consideration of possible extensions to it. The challenge is partly a cognitive one, appropriate to the existential nature of the encounter between "us" and "them" -- what makes a cluster credible.

Possibility of an "eightfold way"?

The group most fundamental to the *I Ching* and the Periodic Table is that of 8. Bearing in mind what might be signified by Miller's "plus or minus 2", the three sets of narrative plots distinguishing "us-and-them" relationships at this level (as noted above), offer the following.

"Eightfold masterplots" Derived from various listings of masterplots (notably that at *Everything2*)		
7+1 "core plots" of Denis Johnston	John Carroll (*The Western Dreaming*, 2001)	Conflict (narrative) (*Wikipedia*)
Unrecognised virtue at last recognised (*Harry Potter*)	The Virtuous Whore (*Pretty Woman*)	(Wo)man vs. nature: (*Moby Dick*)
The fatal flaw (*Hamlet*)	The Troubled Hero	(Wo)man vs. (wo)man: (*Silence of the Lambs*)
The debt that must be paid (*The Pied Piper*)	Salvation by a God (*Old Testament*)	(Wo)man vs. the (wo)environment (just kidding, jeez): (*Joe versus the Volcano*)
The love triangle (*Le Morte d'Arthur*)	Soulmate Love	(Wo)man vs. machines/technology: (*The Golem*)
The spider and the fly (Labyrinth)	The Mother	(Wo)man vs. supernatural: (*Dracula*)
Boy meets girl, plus obstacles (*American Pie*)	The Value of Work (*Animal Farm*)	(Wo)man vs. self: (*Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Hyde*)
The treasure taken away (loss, sometimes followed by search)	Fate	(Wo)man vs. god/religion: (*Priest*)
The irrepressible winner (added to accommodate *Indiana Jones* and *Forrest Gump* of the world)	The Origin of Evil (Most creation myths)	.
.	Self-Sacrifice (*Muriels' Wedding*)	.

Of interest within any eightfold symmetry in the *I Ching*, or the Periodic Table, are the narrative plots distinguished at the level of (approximately) 4x8 (noted above).

31-36 "Masterplots"	
31 narrative functions of dramatis personae (Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 1928).	36 plots identified by Carlo Gozzi; elaborated by Georges Polti (*The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*, 1916)
Absentation:: A member of a family leaves the security of the home environment for some reason.	Supplication (Persecutor, Supplicant, Power in Authority Whose Decision is Doubtful) (*Antigone*)
Interdiction: An interdiction is addressed to the hero ('don't go there', 'don't do this')	Deliverance (Unfortunate, Threatener, Rescuer) (*Roots*)
Violation of interdiction: The interdiction is violated (villain enters the tale).	Crime Pursued by Vengeance (Avenger, Criminal) (*Les Miserables*)
Reconnaissance: The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance.	Vengeance Taken for Kindred Upon Kindred (Avenging Kinsman, Guilty Kinsman, Remembrance of the Victim, a Relative of Both) (*Not Without My Baby*)
Delivery: The villain gains information about the victim. and now seeks a pays off	Pursuit (Punishment and Fugitive) (*Road Runner*)

Trickery: The villain attempts to deceive the victim to take possession of victim or victim's belongings	Disaster (Vanquished Power, Victorious Enemy or Messenger)
Complicity: Victim taken in by deception, unwittingly helping the enemy.	Falling Prey to Cruelty or Misfortune (Unfortunate, Master or Misfortune)
Villainy / Lack:: Villain causes harm/injury to family member; alternatively, a member of family lacks something or desires something	Revolt (Tyrant and Conspirator) (*Gladiator*)
Mediation: Misfortune or lack is made known; hero now discovers the act of villainy or lack	Daring Enterprise (Bold Leader, Object, Adversary) (*Jonathan Livingston Seagull*)
Beginning counter-action: Seeker agrees to, or decides upon counter-action.	Abduction (Abductor, Abducted, Guardian) (*The X-Files*)
Departure: Hero leaves home;	The Enigma (Interrogator, Seeker, Problem) (*The Matrix*)
First function of the donor: Hero is tested, interrogated, attacked etc, preparing the way for his/her receiving magical agent or helper (donor)	Obtaining (Solicitor, Refusing Adversary) or (Arbitrator and Opposing Parties)
Hero's reaction: Hero reacts to actions of future donor (withstands/fails the test, frees captive, reconciles disputants, performs service, uses adversary's powers against him)	Enmity of Kinsmen (Hatred or Reciprocally Hating Kinsmen)
Receipt of a magical agent: Hero acquires use of a magical agent	Rivalry of Kinsmen (Preferred Kinsman, Rejected Kinsman, Object) (*GATTACA*)
Guidance: Hero is transferred, delivered or led to whereabouts of an object of the search	Murderous Adultery (Adulterers, Betrayed) (*Fatal Attraction*)
Struggle: Hero and villain join in direct combat	Madness (Madman, Victim): (*Fight Club*)
Branding: Hero is branded (wounded/marked)	Fatal Imprudence (The Imprudent, Victim or Lost Object) (*Les Liasons Dangereuses*)
Victory: Villain is defeated	Involuntary Crimes of Love (Lover, Beloved, Revealer) (Wilde)
Liquidation: Initial misfortune or lack is resolved	Slaying of Kinsman (Unrecognized Slayer, Victim)
Return: Hero returns	Self-Sacrifice for an Ideal (Hero, Ideal, Sacrificed)
Pursuit: Hero is pursued	Self-Sacrifice for Kindred
Rescue: Hero is rescued from pursuit	All Sacrificed for Passion
Unrecognized arrival: Hero unrecognized, arrives home or in another country	Necessity of Sacrificing Loved Ones (Hero, Beloved Victim, Necessity)
Unfounded claims: False hero presents unfounded claims	Rivalry of Superior and Inferior (Superior, Inferior, Object) (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*)
Difficult task: Proposed to the hero	Adultery (Adulterers, Deceived) (*Madame Bovary*)
Solution: Task is resolved	Crimes of Love (Lover, Beloved)
Recognition: Hero is recognized	Discovery of the Dishonor of a Loved One (Discoverer, Guilty One)
Exposure: False hero or villain is exposed	Obstacles to Love (Lovers, Obstacle)
Transfiguration: Hero is given a new appearance or healed	An Enemy Loved Beloved (Enemy, Lover, Hater) (*Romeo and Juliet*)
Punishment: Villain is punished	Ambition (Ambitious Person, Thing Coveted, Adversary) (*Macbeth*)
Wedding: Hero marries is rewarded/promoted (ascends the throne)	Conflict with a God (Mortal, Immortal) (*Jason and the Argonauts*)
.	Mistaken Jealousy (Jealous One, Object of whose possession he is jealous, Supposed Accomplice, Cause or Author of the Mistake)
.	Erroneous Judgement (Mistaken One, Victim of Mistake, Cause or Author of Mistake, Guilty Person)
.	Remorse (Culprit, Victim or Sin, Interrogator)
.	Recovery of a Lost One (Seeker, One Found)
.	Loss of Loved Ones (Kinsman Slain, Kinsman Spectator, Executioner)

What is exceptionally interesting about the periodicity of the Periodic Table is that it is not a "mechanical" repetition of groups of 8, as is characteristic of the *I Ching*. As discussed separately (*Possible cognitive implications*, 2009), the manner in which the Periodic Table breaks out of simplistic patterns is suggestive of a fruitful distinction between "superficial" comprehension and "deep" learning -- with the former potentially modelled by "outer" shell development and the latter by "inner" shell development, and with the former needing on occasion to await for completion of the latter before progressing further.

Cognitive or memetic "vitamins"?

Tables of distinctions such as those above raise the question of who is capable of making and appreciating such distinctions. The point however is that such distinctions are readily recognized in popular culture through appreciation of the situations and evolution of dramatic plots.

This highlights the question of whether the detection of some sets of narrative plots is especially sensitive, within the pattern as a whole, to qualities analogous to the outer or inner transition elements. In any attempt at mapping, this might, for example, be the case of the:

- **Nineteen**: The basic effects underlying all magic tricks as identified by Dariel Fitzkee (*Trick Brain*, 1944), considered, with associated works, to be one of the major contributions to the theory of magic. The number and types continue to be disputed.
- **Twenty:** The number of basic or major plots (Ronald Tobias, *20 Master Plots And How to Build Them*, 2003; Tennessee Screenwriters Association, *Twenty Basic Plots*, 2002). Two of them are recognized as occasionally combined. Tobias considers that many of the 36 identified by Gozzi and Polti are no longer used ("because they seem hopelessly out of date")

Again it should be stressed that the issue is not the "reality" of such distinctions "in reality" but rather whether the human mind, even across cultures, tends to detect and distinguish categories in sets of a size preferred size -- perhaps due to particular constraints on memory and its facility for "chunking" information. However, even with ca. 20 categories of familiar plot situations, the mind is much challenged to remember the set as a whole and to name the categories in that set.

With respect to the set of approximately 20 -- the most widely cited -- it is therefore intriguing that much has been made of the mapping of vitamins onto the system of the *I Ching*. The 20 different amino acids used by living cells to encode proteins are directly encoded for protein synthesis by the standard genetic code. A number of authors have explored the relationship between the coding system of *I Ching* hexagrams and amino acids (*Archetypal otherness -- "DNA vs. I Ching"*, 2007). Potentially more interesting is the possibility of "cognitive vitamins", with the requisite variety of Level 6 to encode for a healthy, sustainable psycho-social system (cf *Deficiencies in the information diet*, 2008).

Distinguishing patterns in strategic games between "us" and "them"

The narrative language of "plots" suggests the possibility of mapping ongoing dynamics in the case of US-Taliban, Israel-Palestine, etc onto such a Periodic Table. Ironically, any movie dramatisation of those conflicts effectively has to pick out plot elements from the above tables in order to render the movie meaningful as attractive entertainment -- however tragic the storyline. The classic dramatic moment of George Bush's "Mission Accomplished" maps neatly into such a table, for example.

This highlights the extent to which audiences have an innate capacity to grasp distinctions which are typically collapsed in "us-and-them" discourse purveyed as responsible diplomacy within the international community. There is little trace of the capacity to make such distinctions within that community. Do "bloodless categories" make for "bloody conflict"?

Of related relevance in the narratives which refer to deity under some form is the extent to which such conflicts are of course driven by faith-based issues, irrespective of the secular pretensions of the international community. Curiously such discourse ignores the categories which may be in large part responsible for driving the conflict. To what extent, for example, does reference to "God" or "Allah" figure in US foreign policy discourse with "them"?

One potentially relevant classic Chinese perspective is that of the 36 stratagems (Gao Yuan, *Lure the Tiger Out of the Mountains: the 36 stratagems of ancient China*, 1991; Harro von Senger, *The 36 Stratagems for Business: achieve your objectives through hidden and unconventional strategies and tactics*, 2005). It would be interesting to explore the possibility of any mapping of these stratagems onto the dramatic situations of Polti.

Such a perspective is also partially offered through transactional analysis as an integrative approach to the theory of psychology and psychotherapy. It is notably focused on the analysis of interpersonal games (necessarily "us-and-them"), namely as a series of transactions that is complementary (reciprocal), ulterior, and proceeds towards a predictable outcome. Such games are often characterized by a switch in roles of players towards the end. Games are distinguished as:

- First Degree Games, socially acceptable in the players' social circle.
- Second Degree Games, that the players would like to conceal, though they may not cause irreversible damage.
- Third Degree Games, that could lead to drastic harm to one or more of the parties concerned.

The originators of transactional analysis imply a degree of comprehensiveness in encompassing the set of games people play (Eric Berne, *Games People Play: the basic handbook of transactional analysis*, 1964; Claude Steiner, *Scripts People Live: transactional analysis of life scripts*, 1974). The latter title is echoed by the subsequent wortk of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980). However there appears to be no comprehensive listing or organization of such games or metaphors. In a previous exercise an attempt was made to interrelate such a gameplaying perspective with insights from the Periodic Table and from the *I Ching* (*Cardioid Attractor Fundamental to Sustainability: 8 transactional games forming the heart of sustainable relationship*, 2005).

Mining global cultures for narrative wisdom

Understood as a project exploring the possibility of mapping sets of narrative elements, beyond those identified above, there is a case for determining to what extent other popularly known sets could enrich the exercise. Possible sources include:

- Jataka Tales: A set of 547 Sanskrit poems adapted to a number of Asian cultures

- **Panchatantra**: Sanskrit animal fables in verse and prose that has proven to be significant in its adaptation into a number of cultural versions. It has been argued that humans can assimilate more about their own habitually unflattering behavior if it is disguised in terms of entertainingly configured stories about supposedly less illustrious beasts than themselves.
- **Aesop's Fables** (*Aesopica*)**:** A collection of fables credited to Aesop with a variety of cultural adaptations. A current online collection records some 655, indexed in table format, with indication of associated morals.
- **Nasrudin tales** (Nasreddin): A legendary Sufi mystic claimed as their own by many nations of the Near, Middle East and Central Asia. More than 600 tales exist recounting his actions and comments. These have been described as illogical yet logical, rational yet irrational, bizarre yet normal, foolish yet sharp, and simple yet profound -- typically expressed with great simplicity.

Of relevance to the argument here is a classic Nasrudin tale -- when someone shouted to him from the opposite side of a river: "Hey! how do I get to the other side?", Nasrudin replied "You *are* on the other side!"

There is a case for integrating such folk wisdom, appropriately "organized", from across cultures currently in conflict in order to frame a larger space of discourse -- however this might be achieved. In terms of the metaphors implict in such understanding, a strong case for exploring them has been made by Susantha Goonatilake (*Toward a Global Science: mining civilizational knowledge*, 1999). A fundamental question is why such "jewels" or "nuggets" are so widely and popularly valued over centuries -- in comparison with the injunctions of modern governance and the enjoinders of various other authorities empowered by newfound skills of "spin"..

A related proposal has been made for the use of poetry in cultures where it is still popularly valued (*Poetic Engagement with Afghanistan, Caucasus and Iran: an unexplored strategic opportunity?* 2009; *Strategic Jousting through Poetic Wrestling: aesthetic reframing of the clash of civilizations*, 2009). More appropriate even would be to elicit the emergence of such interaction through open source web technology (cf *Participative Development Process for Singable Declarations Applying the Wikipedia-Wikimedia-WikiMusic concept to constitutions*, 2006).

A challenge for the future is to determine how items of "wisdom", as variously understood, can be fruitfully interrelated and configured to constitute a larger pattern. The issue is one of cognitive cybernetics -- of determing necessary checks and balances (as feedback loops) and learning pathways. This goes beyond the pioneering effort of Victor S M De Guinzbourg (*Wit and Wisdom of the United Nations: proverbs and apothegms on diplomacy*, 1961) published by the United Nations. An indication in this systemic direction is the effort of cybernetician Russell Ackoff (*The Art of Problem Solving: accompanied by Ackoff's Fables*, 1978).

Dancing with a shadowy other

A related approach to reconciling the Periodic Table with the *I Ching*, in terms of contemporary strategic issues, is that building on the classic insight of the notorious poem of Donald Rumsfeld as US Secretary of Defense (*Unknown Undoing: challenge of incomprehensibility of systemic neglect*, 2008). This deals with the challenge of the "unknown unknowns" which tends to be a theme in any narrative and is fundamental to the expectations of "us-and-them" relationships and their current embedding in vicious cycles of violence. In the strategy of the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq, insurgents offered an ideal shadowy foil on which "evil" could readily be projected without challenge. They constituted a prime source of the unknown and ensured that the outcome of any strategy was equally unknown.

A shadowy other is also well represented by the traditional use of the burkha by Muslim women in Afghanistan -- a justification for any action liberate them. This justification is in process of replication in France where wearing the burkha is considered unacceptable by its president -- in a society that has provided recent leadership in equating various degrees of nudity with freedom. The irony of the efforts of western missionaries to equate the decency of indigenous peoples with their use of clothing has been lost. This process is offering a powerful illustration of how the space of multidimensional dialogue is effectively collapsed into a Level 1 prohibition of the burkha as a symptom of "evil". It demonstrates the inadequacy of the "scales" by which justice is depicted as inadequate to more complex considerations. (cf *Burkha as Metaphorical Mirror for Imperious Culture?*, 2009).

The cognitive reduction of variety is well-illustrated through the metaphor of a piano keyboard that provides for music across a range of octaves. The music can be simplified, "barbarically", to a single octave (Level 3) for which there are black and white keys. In a further act of barbarism, it could be reduced to playing only the "white" keys -- framing the "black" keys as "evil". It is by such processes that highly unstable dysfunctional situations are engendered, when distinctions vital to sustainability at one level are collapsed through apprehension at a lower level -- an exercise in "subunderstanding" (Magoroh Maruyama, *Polyocular Vision or Subunderstanding? Organization Studies*, 2004).

This raises the interesting question as to whether the future will explore the possibility of moving beyond a binary system of ajudication (guilty or not-guilty) to one with a a wider spectrum of pleas and outcomes -- currently significant in the major scandals of the release on compassionate grounds of the "Lockerbie bomber" and of the gender verification of a South African athlete. Curiously, in dealing with threat and danger from the unknown, like other countries the USA distinguishes a 5-level Defense Readiness Condition (DEFCON). This is a measure of the progressive postures of activation and readiness of the armed forces. As an intermediary distinguishing capacity between Level 2 and Level 3 (above), it is fortunate that the range of distinctions has progressed beyond Level 1-- although this level presumably governs many processes of engagement with those are appropriately turbaned to fit the profile of a potential insurgent in Afghanistan.

It is curious that Level 1 distinction capacity is so widely reinforced in competitive sports involving the engagement of opposing parties (football, tennis, etc). Again it might be asked whether the future will develop ball games in which four parties oppose each other in pairs across the same terrain (as in bridge), with whatever degree of collaboration this may involve to render the result more interesting. Could six parties, or eight (variously coloured), play across a terrain in this way -- using different balls and goals (or sharing them).

The commitment to Level 1 modalities is only too evident in parliamentary governance -- with a majority government and an opposing

minority, each equating its own policies with "good" and those of the other as "evil". This dangerously simplistic pattern collapses any richness potentially associated with the various policy commitments of a multi-party system. It is believe that "agreement" with the majority and "disagreement with the "minority" is the essence of democratic government.

Analysis of the viability of an ecosystem -- the dance between the species in nature -- demonstrates the extent to which it is dependent on a much wider range of relationships between parties. An analysis by Edward Haskell (*Generalization of the structure of Mendeleev's periodic table*, 1972) suggested an eightfold pattern (*Periodic coaction coordinate system*, 1984): symbiosis, synnecrosis, commensalism, amensalism, parasitism, prédation, allopathy, allotrophy. These processes are all recognizable in "us-and-them" relationships (if only as metaphors) but are not explored as features of the requisite variety of sustainable systems (*Comprehension of Requisite Variety for Sustainable Psychosocial Dynamics*, 2006).

As previously discussed (*Governance through Metaphor*, 1987), whilst sport, whether in the intricacies of American football or the subtleties of cricket, can provide a rich source of metaphors, the question remains whether such metaphors offer the variety and the richness appropriate to governance of complex societies. It is possible that Japanese skills in governance are superior, at least within their own culture, precisely because they draw on metaphors of greater depth and richness. These points also raise the question as to the best methods for enabling students to acquire access to metaphors which will be valuable to them subsequently in strategic decision-making. Sport and military service may in this sense have greater relevance than poetry.

Martial arts, catastrophe and metaphorical geometry

Eastern martial arts tend to distinguish eight "directions of unbalancing" (*kuzushi* in Judo and Kendo) -- consistent with a Level 3 insight. These may be associated with eight compass directions (in two dimensions) in which an opponent may be moved so as break their balance. In three dimensions they might be understood as the eight corners of a cube within which the fighter is centered. In Aikido these eight directions are understood as ways to move one's body (*Unsuko*), to move one's opponent (*Kuzushi*), or to throw one's opponent (*Tsukuri*). The eight directions and five postures (above) have been combined in different martial art traditions through movements, techniques, "energies", "gates", "stances" or "powers" (cf Michael P. Garofalo, *Thirteen Postures of Taijiquan: Eight Gates and Five Directions*, 2005). There is a fundamental recognition of the shadowy nature of the dance with the opponent (Michael P. Garofalo, *Cloud Hands Taijiquan and Qigong Guides, Bibliographies, Links, Resources*).

A special advantage of Japanese culture, for example, lies in the blending of martial arts (aikido, kendo, etc) with poetics, philosophy and the aesthetics of the tea ceremony, as exemplified by bushido as a whole approach to human and social development (cf *Ensuring Strategic Resilience through Haiku Patterns: reframing the scope of the "martial arts" in response to strategic threats*, 2006). with respect to narrative functions, it is therefore interesting to note the comment by Marvin A. Carlson (*Theories of the Theatre: a historical and critical survey from the Greeks to the present*, 1993) highlighting the possibility of a formal mathematical approach to such matters:

> Articles on mathematical analysis of theatre by nine Romanian mathematicians and aestheticians consider the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of drama through strategies derived from system theory, cybernetics, and the computer sciences, as well as from the mathematical fields of graph theory, combinatorics, logic, code theory, probability, game theory, and formal languages. (p. 494)

Carlson notes that in his introduction, Solomon Marcus (The Formal Study of Drama, *Poetics*, 6, 3/4 December 1977) suggests that the typology of catastrophe theory, as proposed by Rene Thom, as a promising tool for the analysis of drama and theatrical plotting that involves "gradual evolutions having discontinuous, abrupt effects". It has long been recognized that in drama, particularly the tragedies of classical antiquity, the catastrophe is the final resolution in a poem or narrative plot, which unravels the intrigue and brings the piece to a close.

It might be suggested however that the 8 different "unbalancings" distinguished in martial arts could each be formally associated as "catastrophes" with plot dynamics at Level 3. Stephen Watt (*Postmodern/Drama: Reading the Contemporary Stage*, 1998) argues:

> ...as Thom explains, "in the theory of catastrophes...one attempts to describe discontinuities that may occur in the evolution of a system" Catastrophe, then, connotes an overturning or change, an unpredictable behavior or trajectory -- not necessarily disastrous change brought about by polarity or opposition. Scientists call this "jump phenomenon," a sudden change of equilibrium, a "phase transition, for instance, like water solidifying into ice". For the observer this appears to be a "sudden and substantial change in the properties of the system" being observed. Postmodern narrative, for many critics, forms one such system. For Baudrillard catastrophe theory explains how the *un*natural phenomena of modern life *might* be overturned and how evolutionary "jumps" from one "equilibrium point" to another *might* occur. (pp. 137-138)

Such considerations highlight the need to explore more appropriate ways of mapping "us-and-them" interactions beyond the conventional geometry of the football field -- as a metaphoric terrain on which dominance can be aggressively sought and domination resentfully accepted. The possibility of more complex geometries, and their comprehension, is considered elsewhere (*Metaphorical Geometry in Quest of Globality: in response to global governance challenges*, 2009). The "catastrophes" of relationships, like waves, can only be adequately portrayed in dimensions greater than that of a 2-dimensional terrain.

Given the extent to which intellectual endeavour is bedevilled by the Level 1 framing of "two cultures", current preoccupation with the failure of economics that engendered the financial crisis of 2008 merit consideration of its status "between" these cultures as explored by Donald N. McCloskey (*Economics: Art or Science or Who Cares?*, *Eastern Economic Journal*, 1994) -- with reference to the above considerations:

> The first news is that the "art-science" distinction beloved by late-nineteenth century British writers is hard to defend. No one who has looked closely at the matter over the past quarter century has found seams in the universe that distinguish Art from Science. The linguist Solomon Marcus, for example, wrote a paper in 1974 called *Fifty-two Oppositions between Scientific and Poetic Communication* in which he tried to drive a wedge between what gets written in the *Eastern Economic Journal* and what gets written in Poetry. No go. Both use metaphors. Both are rational and irrational, explicable and ineffable, persuasive and expressive. Marcus did what amounts to an analysis of variance, and found as much variation within as between science and (poetic) art.

McCloskey then continues:

> The physicist Tullio Regge remarked to Primo Levi [*The Periodic Table*, 1975], the chemist and writer, *I liked the sentence in which you say that the periodic table is poetry, and besides it even rhymes....* Levi responded, *The expression is paradoxical, but the rhymes are actually there.... To discern or create a symmetry, 'put something in its proper place,' is a mental adventure common to the poet and the scientist....* Attempts to distinguish art and science do not seem to work, though from the best workers. Thomas Kuhn noted truly that *we have only begun to discover the benefits of seeing science and art as one.* But then he tried out a distinction anyway.

It is not irrelevant to the argument here that McCloskey "transitioned" from male to female in 1995 at the age of 53 -- and is a recognized advocate for the rights of persons and organizations in the LGBT community, perhaps to be considered an appropriate example of Level 2 as a "quadrilemma" (Paula Rodriguez Rust, *Transgendered Bisexuals: an identity quadri-lemma*, Society for the Study of Social Problems, 1998).

Another such example, at the time of writing, is the challenge to the International Association of Athletics Federations of the gender of the record breaking athlete Caster Semenya -- possibly female, male, both, or neither? (Larry Greenemeier, *Caster Semenya and the issue of gender ambiguity*, Scientific American, 21 August 2009; *An Intersex Perspective on Caster Semenya*, 28 August 2009).

This "quadrilemma" clearly has implications for the Level 1 assumptions built into official population registration and statistics worldwide -- a challenge whose proportions are likely to increase (cf Deborah Cadbury, *The Feminization of Nature*, 1997). Curiously reports indicate that it is now for the athlete to provide proof of her femininity -- potentially contrary to the fundamental human right regarding presumption of innocence. The world operates on the assumption that people are unambiguously either male or female -- and notably institutionalizes such understanding in toilet facilities, sport, religious practices and salaries. Disguising the extent and varying degrees of gender ambiguity exemplifies the failure to recognize a more general challenge, as argued above.

Ross Tucker (*Caster Semenya's sex in doubt*, The Science of Sport, 19 August 2009) makes the point that:

> ...even genetic testing cannot confirm male or female. In fact, it is so complex that to do proper sex determination testing, you have to take a multi-disciplinary approach, and make use of internal medicine specialists, gynecologists, psychologists, geneticists and endocrinologists. I am afraid that dropping your pants is not proof at all.

Does this not suggest that a potentially time-consuming "multi-disciplinary approach" may well be appropriate whenever Level 1 simplifying assumptions are made -- notably in conflict situations -- or when gender equality is sought in a board room appointment? What is to be learnt from the little known challenges of intersexuality, as highlighted by the Organisation Intersex International for example and the suggestions offered by such as David T. Ozar (*Towards a More Inclusive Conception of Gender-Diversity for Intersex Advocacy and Ethics*, 2006)? Given the variety of forms of intersexuality, and their incidence worldwide, does the widespread effort to suppress recognition of such distinctions (as "abnormalities" requiring "corrective surgery") offer a powerful metaphor of cultural inability to recognize and handle non-dyadic distinctions in a wide variety of circumstances?

More provocatively, given that Semenya has a testosterone level three times that of a "normal" woman [more], should such an indicator in future be appropriate to adjustment of amy salary differential prejudicial to a woman? Is a person incarcerated in Guantanamo necessarily either "guilty" or "not-guilty"? Is the gendering of prisons itself problematic, especially when homosexual intercourse is common, although denied (David Batty, *Transsexual prisoner wins move to women's jail*, The Guardian, 4 September 2009). Should people be called upon to prove unambiguously that they are not terrorists or a danger to society?

Conclusion

The three seemingly disparate threads explored can be understood as having a common feature in that each is concerned with a systematic approach to transactions, whether in narrative, as a form of change (the *I Ching* as the *Book of Changes*), or that between chemical elements. They might together be understood generically as offering pointers towards a periodic table of games or a periodic table of gameplaying.

It is appropriate to ask whether the proposed exercise in interweaving disparate insights from narrative, the *I Ching* and the Periodic Table is meaningful or totally inappropriate. Part of the answer lies in why it is considered far more appropriate to base foreign policy (and its bloody military enforcement) on the primitive binary logic of "us" and "them" -- arguing that "our civilization" is existentially challenged by "theirs", with the codicil that "their's" must necessarily be "evil" (because "our's" is unquestionably "good"). Such a perspective, characteristic of competing faiths, is even held to be non-negotiable.

Another answer might be framed as a methodological cognitive dilemma of Scylla and Charybdis and how to navigate between them. One cautionary articulation, from communication of mathematical complexity, is that of Anna Sfaard (*Steering (dis)course between metaphor and rigor: using focal analysis to investigate the emergence of mathematical objects*, 2000; *Disabling Numbers: on the secret charm of the numberese and why it should be resisted*, 2009).

One of the possible merits of a Periodic Table approach to learning is that it is indicative of a way in which one might consider levels of discourse, even possibly related to periods of learning. The basic "us-and-them" logic after all bears a remarkable similarity to the dynamics of dialogue in the first years of childhood -- which, however charming, tend to be tedious to any mature media audience. What categories of "us-and-them" relationships are associated with greater collective maturity and how do they emerge? The more complex patterns noted above are readily recognizable in most plots that are meaningful to adults. Why do they not figure explicitly in diplomatic discourse -- set in a context of a pattern of potential relationships? Is diplomatic discourse essentially childish?

A Periodic Table also offers a more comprehensive approach to "positive" and "negative" than is evident in the typical use of the former to characterize "good" initiatives in contrast with their contrary (*Being Positive Avoiding Negativity: management challenge of positive vs negative*, 2005).

Framed as above, does a Level 1 mindset predispose strategic thinking to the "targetting" of any other, whether in a male-female relationship or with respect to potential enemies? In the latter case, understandably, such targetting readily takes the form of missiles, metaphoric or otherwise (*Missiles, Missives, Missions and Memetic Warfare: navigation of strategic interfaces in multidimensional knowledge space*, 2001). More curious from such a perspective, given its role as the earliest human tool, "club" continues to be a favoured term for groups concerned with governance (whether local or global). What then is implied by "clubbing together"?

The limitations of a Level 1 framing are also to be seen in the tendency to develop the language of governance in terms of the geometry of polarization (*Coherent Value Frameworks: Pillar-ization, Polarization and Polyhedral frames of reference*, 2008). The taking of "sides" implied by "us-and-them" then precludes exploration of more complex frameworks (*Towards Polyhedral Global Governance: complexifying oversimplistic strategic metaphors*, 2008).

Cognitive scientist George Lakoff (*The Political Mind: why you can't understand 21st Century politics with an 18th Century brain*, 2008), in a widely syndicated comment (*The PolicySpeak Disaster for Health Care*, August 2009) addresses the question of why Barack Obama has mishandled the health crisis, despite previously demonstrating considerable expertise as a policy communicator. Even within the USA, eminent commentators now refer to Obama's health proposals as "evil" -- an ironic "internalization" of the binary foreign policy approach. Lakoff argues that policy makers tend to focus on lists of issues and Obama fell into the trap of doing so.

Previously Obama had demonstrated success in offering a coherent underlying idea interrelating such disparate issues -- meaningful as such to wider audiences. The issue with regard to "us-and-them" binary logic is the manner in which it reinforces the inadequacies of policy think at a time when integrative coherence is called for. This is the argument for sets of metaphors, holding complexity, configured within a Periodic Table respectful of learning processes in society. Is there the faintest possibility that binary logic may be precluding detection of subtler possibilities than the "two state" solution for the Middle East -- of which, ironically, the challenges of intersexuality may offer a valuable metaphor?

Of course it can be appropriately argued that the framing of the above argument (and that of Lakoff?) itself falls into the trap of binary logic. This highlights the challenge of paradox and necessary self-reflexivity which should be appropriately drawn into such considerations -- as with the alternative readings of any coding system.

The challenge of necessary reflexivity has been explored in some detail with respect to what may eventually prove to be the ultimate "us-and-them" encounter, namely that with extraterrestrials about which so many express both hope and fear (*Self-reflective Embodiment of Transdisciplinary Integration: the universal criterion of species maturity?* 2008; *Communicating with Aliens: the Psychological Dimension of Dialogue*, 2000). A far more concrete example, at the time of writing, is a new US strategic focus in Afghanistan to eliminate opium production as the primary source of finance for insurgency [more]. Such unreflexive Level 1 targetting fails to recognize that necessarily it is the consumption of such drugs in the USA which is the ultimate source of that funding -- a cycle better understood within a Level 2 framework.

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