



laetus in praesens

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My Reflecting Mirror World **making my World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002)** **worthwhile**

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This paper is a contribution to reflection on viable strategies for sustainable development on the occasion of the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002)

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Introduction

To what extent is the world around me merely a mirror of my very own successes and failures in world governance -- in governing 'my world'? It may indeed suit me to hold the world at arm's length -- as an object with its own dynamics quite beyond any responsibility of mine. And there may be many ways that this can be understood to be a useful, healthy, minimally presumptuous, perspective.

But there is some value in reflecting on the ways in which every thing I encounter in 'the world' is engendered by me. This may be especially useful with respect to the values I attach to phenomena of the world -- whether rain is 'good' or 'bad', for example. But there are ways in which it is also the case with respect to how I organize and group features of the world -- whether those I perceive as part of 'my people' (tribe, ethnic group, peer group, etc) or those most definitely not ('aliens', etc). There are ways in which people with whom I regularly interact carry significance which derives primarily from what I project onto them -- as the psychotherapeutic professions spend much time in demonstrating. And of course, physicists delight in pointing out how objects like a 'table' (which are particular configurations of atoms) acquire the shape on which we agree through a very complex process. Hence the interest in the social construction of reality.

The approach taken here assumes that the challenge of the times may be associated more with **how** they are understood rather than **what** they are understood to be -- more with how they condition, and are determined by, thinking and less with the effects they appear individually to produce. This is my challenge in making my experience of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) worthwhile.

Challenges to governance of my world

Clearly I have to discover imaginative ways to deal with:

- some 200 countries and territories claiming different degrees of sovereignty in my world -- what does such 'sovereignty' imply in relation to me in functional terms?

- a multitude of intergovernmental and nongovernment institutions and networks claiming some form of relatively unique functional competence in my world -- what is this 'competence' in relation to my own?
- a significant number of multinational corporations and business networks, and their national counterparts or agents, in my world - - what is this 'business' that they are performing on my behalf?
- personalities and VIPs of varying degrees of charisma and power in my world (eg Bush, Hitler, Mandela, Pol Pot, Mother Teresa, Berlusconi, Dalai Lama) -- what is this 'charisma' and 'power' in relation to me?
- elite groups and networks supposedly operating behind the scenes in my world (Club of Rome, Bilderberg, CIA, KKK, elite meetings) -- what does 'elite' and 'secret' mean in relation to me?
- several hundred religions claiming moral and ethical authority over the values applicable in my world -- why have I engendered so many distinct 'religions'?
- a range of criminal networks and activities influencing decision-making at every level of society -- what is 'crime' and what function is it performing for my world?
- several hundred intellectual disciplines, deploying thousands of models, through which I am strongly encouraged to view the phenomena of my world -- what are these 'disciplines' and who are the 'intelligent agents' I have engendered to acquire knowledge through them?
- thousands of problems touching upon every aspect of my world -- what are these 'problems' that are so so closely related to suffering in my world?
- thousands of strategic plans of action and policies in response to the problems of my world -- are these simply wish lists I have engendered to give me a sense of engagement and to assuage my conscience?

All these phenomena play off against each other in ways that make coherent understanding increasingly problematic for me.

Problems of my world

The following paragraphs are developed from an earlier paper (*Opportunity: reframing problems through metaphors*)

My world as a whole is beset by a range of problems about which I repeatedly express my incapacity to provide a response. I have effectively delegated responsibility for such action to others to whom I have attributed greater power.

It is useful to challenge the thinking trap of "problem-solving". The approach to problems may then be reframed by asking myself what a problem is "trying to tell me" -- or, better still, is the problem as understood in effect a metaphor for something I would prefer not to understand? From this perspective "institutionalized" problems may in effect be a sort of metaphorical euphemism -- a package which it is better not to unwrap. Problems are not only nasty in themselves, they are also nasty in what they imply about myself -- however much I endeavour to occupy the moral high ground as a disinterested change agent, victim or innocent bystander.

Consider the following prominent problems in my world:

1. **Poverty:** I am exposed to a great deal of poverty in my world -- and I consider myself relatively impoverished compared to many. My concern about poverty tends to focus on objects that I do not have -- even when I do not need those things to enable me to achieve a degree of well-being. Somehow my well-being is intimately related to things that I do not have -- even when I have most of the things that many in my world only dream of having. And of course, once I obtain the things I feel I am lacking, I find that there are other things that I lack which still define me as poor in my own eyes. Is it possible that what I, and my world, really suffer from is some poorly diagnosed chronic poverty of the spirit?
2. **Hunger** (including malnutrition): I am constantly hearing that millions of people in my world are threatened with death by starvation. I am able to keep this challenge at a distance -- despite the pictures in the media -- but it is a constant drain on my spirit. All is definitely not well. Is this problem signalling the existence of a subtler and more widespread form of deprivation -- a malnutrition of my psyche and a spiritual hunger which I am even less capable of addressing? This would be consistent with my concern about the artificiality and superficiality of experience offered in the emerging "information society" or "global village" -- and with the desperate attempts to increase the level of "realism" by increasing the quantity and degrading quality of violence portrayed in the media. Do I now need a 'murder-a-night to feel alright'? What does this say about my sense of superiority towards the public hangings in times gone by? To what extent is my imagination appropriately nourished at this time -- despite the surfeit of imaginative material available? What are the foodstuffs and vitamins of the spirit? What is the nourishment for the spirit that I am unable to cultivate and harvest? Is this a skill now lost to my world?
3. **Disease** (and pain): There are many kinds of disease in my world with many suffering chronic pain. Beyond the physical pain are the many forms of mental illness, stress, neurosis and personality disorder -- especially in the 'industrialized' parts of my world. Why am I so unhealthy? The many types of disease are useful indicators of the different ways in which I tend to fail to come to terms with my world -- and of the remedies that I seek as appropriate. Why, for example, do I invest so much in supporting the curiously dysfunctional dynamics of a pharmaceutical industry and a medical profession that are so well-nourished by disease? The question is whether such diseases are effectively diseases of my imagination and of my imaginal deficiency. To what extent is the illness and pain in my world a consequence of my inappropriate thinking and framing?
4. **Substance abuse** (including drugs and alcohol): Surely the substance abuse in which I engage is signalling a desperate need on my part for different modes of thinking, feeling and experience than those encouraged by a society I have created for myself -- now governed by antiquated thinking patterns which have been only too effectively institutionalized in "acceptable" modes of work and leisure? Again, since many that I have set up as role models in key positions in such institutions also use drugs or alcohol "to relax", what should I be learning from the level of stress -- and schizophrenia -- at which the prevailing mode of thought is

requiring them to function? Is my substance abuse not effectively offering a remedy for the imaginal deficiency and mechanistic patterning characteristic of "acceptable" individual and collective behaviour? And consequently would not substance abuse become less necessary if my society acknowledged more imaginative opportunities? What is the incidence of substance abuse in the other cultures of my world whose languages make very extensive use of metaphor? To what extent is it useful for me to perceive my relation to the prevailing thinking pattern as a form of "addiction" -- a habit that I do not know how to kick?

5. **Unemployment** (including underemployment and absenteeism): Unemployment is a major concern in my world. It is no longer fruitful to argue that a significant proportion of unemployment is simply due to laziness, reluctance to learn new skills, lack of initiative or lack of opportunities. Is it possible that the prevailing mode of thinking, that I encourage, is inhibiting my peoples' ability to imagine new forms of action of value to others, encouraging many to perceive existing employment opportunities as worthless both to themselves and to others, as well as impoverishing the manner in which they consider what to do with their lives? Is unemployment telling me that much of the work on offer in my society is not worth doing -- and that much which is done is pointless? This would certainly be consistent with many criticisms of the consumer society and of industrial exploitation of the environment. Perhaps it is also saying that what I value doing, or am obliged to do, is not appropriately valued (as "work") in an economic system that I have allowed to be governed by an inadequate mode of thinking. This would certainly be consistent with the debate about the economic value of housework. Contrasting employment with recreation (as opposed to unemployment) is somewhat ironic in that unimaginative leisure opportunities are increasingly incapable of offering "re-creation". Is the level of unemployment also indicating that I really do not know to what I could usefully and meaningfully devote my resources? Worse still, is it indicating that I have dissociated the challenges to human society from opportunities for "work" because of the way such challenges are perceived within the pattern of thinking that I have allowed to prevail?
6. **Ignorance** (including functional illiteracy): Is the level of ignorance, even in my 'industrialized countries', telling me that much of the knowledge on which that judgement is based is not worth learning? This concern has certainly been expressed in debates about existing curricula. Is it suggesting that for their psychic survival my people are educating themselves along pathways that are not considered meaningful, or indicative of intelligence, within the pattern of thinking that I have allowed to dominate? This is suggested by the immense resources devoted to music and to "alternative" therapies and belief systems. Is it suggesting that my people feel deprived of an imaginal education, faced with the formal (even rote) learning so frequently considered most appropriate (especially "to the needs of industry")? This is suggested by the enthusiasm for graphics, cartoon books, science fiction, fantasy and the archetypal portrayal of cult figures of the music industry. Is my concern with the ignorance of many, including myself, concealing the fact that those to whom I have attributed most expertise and power are really quite ignorant about how to navigate through current and future crises -- an ignorance compounded by my incompetence?
7. **Homelessness**: Many people in my world lack adequate shelter. Is the lack of appropriate shelter, even in my 'industrialized countries', indicating that, with the current pattern of thinking that I have allowed to prevail, I am ineffective in my ability to provide, construct, or acquire cognitive and affective frameworks to shelter my people appropriately from the turbulence of the times? This would be consistent with concerns about alienation in modern society. It would also follow from the recognition that many traditional frameworks and belief systems have been torn down or discredited. Even where my people are well sheltered, it is often in houses or apartments that reflect an impoverishment of architectural imagination -- as reinforced by unimaginative building regulations and construction economics. Is my imaginal life so impoverished by the media that I engender that the ability to provide a hospitable "interior decoration" for my psyche has been degraded? Have I lost the ability to understand how to create 'hearth' and 'home'?
8. **Wastage** (including environmental degradation): Is my insensitivity to the processes of wastage and pollution, for which I am personally responsible, signalling the existence of an indifference to the "salubrity" and 'sanitation' of my imaginative life? This would be consistent with the concern expressed by some of my non-western cultures and constituencies at the indifference to "spiritual purity". There is little consensus on what is or is not healthy for the psyche -- just as I am no longer clear, with the increasing extent of pollution, to what extent which foodstuffs are safe. The depletion of natural resources associated with wastage calls for reflection on the possibility that my western-inspired culture is depleting its psychic resources in ways that I have yet to understand? Can the imaginative resources of a culture be depleted to a point of "bankruptcy" and how can such resources be conserved and "recycled"? Do empires fall through imaginative failure?
9. **Crime** (including corruption): A major criticism of my development aid process is that the resources are diverted away from those most in need, despite agreements to prevent this. Various forms of bribery or "commission" are a common feature, even in my 'industrialized countries'. In any position (and notably in intergovernmental agencies), my appointees endeavour to obtain perks and privileges for themselves, for relatives or for friends -- whether this is limited to pilferage of office supplies, extended into the imposition of a "socially acceptable taxation" (or "sweetener") on any transactions which they control, or developed into a full-blown criminal activity. What can I learn from this degree of self-interest and the associated rule-breaking propensity? Is this an indication that my people cannot survive within the mechanistic regulations which emerge from the current pattern of thinking I have engendered -- or at least choose not to do so, and feel free not to do so when possible? This would be consistent with the admiration for people 'who can get things done' despite the rules, because they are capable of imagining more subtle opportunities. To what extent is corruption associated with a more creative world view -- as reflected in the term "creative accounting"?
10. **Inequality and injustice**: Inequality is a major feature of my world and is a source of much protest. The few are privileged in relation to the many. But this inequality seems indeed to be a reflection of my own attitudes, for I do indeed treat some features of my environment as of greater significance than others -- and would not know how to do otherwise. I am indeed partial in my

preferences, notably with respect to the attention that I accord to one person rather than to another. This treatment may indeed be said to be unjust. But how could I give attention equally to everyone, if only because of my obvious handicap in being confronted more frequently by the few that are near me -- in contrast to the many that are elsewhere, who might rightly complain to be unjustly treated in consequence? Is there some more fruitful way of responding to those who are apparently less significant to the dynamics of my world -- and of responding less enthusiastically to those who seem to make my world more meaningful?

11. **Immorality:** There are many standards of ethics and morals in my world -- and various efforts to form them into a universal standard. They are put forward as guidelines for behaviour that would be minimally harmful. And yet my various proponents of such different value systems continue to engage in the bloodiest conflicts in defence of their respective frameworks of 'harmlessness'. What are these competing frameworks that I engender? Why are the universal frameworks so unmeaningful to those who identify with more specific frameworks? Why is no universal framework that I have engendered an adequate vehicle for the diverse individual and collective identities in my world? Why do such frameworks somehow negate the diversity that I would claim to value?
12. **Unproductivity:** A prime concern is with economic productivity and the relatively unproductive nature of my 'developing' countries and regions -- all according to monetary criteria. My 'countries' are now traumatized by the need to increase productivity and 'market share' in competition with each other. This is considered to be a healthy characteristic of my world -- although clearly the hope that any country could increase its market share, as more countries become productive, is clearly illusory in the extreme. It is also curious that the more productive countries need less productive countries in order to remain competitive. Given the extent to which many in my world are having to become reconciled to being 'unemployed', and therefore 'unproductive', it is unclear why I have to be so convinced of the vital importance of productivity -- or why I have to tolerate such a degree of frenetic activity in my world. Is it so impossible for me to engender a more graceful way of sustaining the movement of energies within the world?
13. **Insecurity (and violence):** Concerns about personal and collective security are a major feature of my world. Many have reason to fear violence from others. Why is it that I entertain myself so frequently by exposure to dramatized representations of such violence -- which are so characteristic of the products of the cultures of my world, especially as reflected in the media? Why is it that security is so closely associated with boredom and that risk is so closely associated with feeling alive? Do I engender violence in my world to inject a sense of life and risk -- whatever the price? Why is it that I can tolerate the exposure of some to high levels of violence and insecurity -- perhaps deploring it, but certainly without evoking any effort to remedy the situation? Does the insecurity of others, and the violence exacted upon them, obscure from my awareness my own profound sense of insecurity and the violence that I so casually need to do to others, if only through my agents?
14. **Nuclear proliferation:** Many have pointed to the degree of risk associated with proliferating nuclear power stations and weaponry. A chain of accidents could trigger complete disaster to life on my planet. Is this some form of ultimate existential risk with which I choose to stimulate my world and my sense of reality -- in order, paradoxically, to feel alive? Does the nature of the risk carry learnings that would be of most value to a more insightful mode of life?
15. **Degradation of the environment (including ecosystems and species):** There is widespread recognition that the environment of my world is being severely degraded and may well be close to collapse. Ecosystems and species that I have engendered are being annihilated by those whose livelihoods depend upon them. Healthy ecosystems are being 'poisoned' by lethal pollutants, genetically modified organisms, and introduced species -- that somehow I accept. How is it that, despite lip service to the contrary, I am so tolerant of this process? Is it that my ability to be conscious of the full richness of biodiversity is highly constrained? Consequently is the loss of this or that ecosystem (or species) essentially irrelevant to the dynamics of the reduced ecosystem (with its minimal range of species) of which I am most directly aware? Is this somehow a measure of my own impoverishment -- reflected in the concrete jungles that are increasingly the habitat of my awareness? How is it that I have lost any sense of the irony of importing exotic species (provided that they behave) to populate artificial niches in such concrete habitats? Worse still, how is it that my conceptual framework attaches no sense of the importance to the dynamics of species in the wild, rather than to those restrained in pots or cages -- or by enclosures or chains? What degree of self-mockery do I celebrate with a dog kept on a leash?
16. **Over-exploitation of energy resources:** A great deal of energy is necessary to keep the industrialized parts of my world operating coherently. Basically I unashamedly use any energy I can get -- and without regard to whether there is enough for the neighbours and children that I have engendered. I am extremely reluctant to impose any constraints on that lifestyle and the sense of identity that it sustains. However I am dimly aware that there are other parts of my world -- from which a significant proportion of my energy is obtained -- and that they cannot possibly achieve the energy intensive lifestyle on which the coherence of my daily life depends. I am also dimly aware of the highly problematic situation I am creating for future generations. Unfortunately I am effectively a vampire -- with an unrestrained tendency to flatulence.
17. **Disinformation and spin:** My world is now almost entirely governed through media spin. Any conceivable viewpoint can be solicited from the highest authority -- appropriately rewarded -- including denial that there is any spin. Whilst only a proportion of the 'evidence' is now obtained through biased research, bribery or torture, I no longer engender any authority to be trusted to distinguish 'truth' from 'lie' in my world. Consequently all authoritative pronouncements I engender are now suspect. Ironically those who benefit most from such spin now despair at the lack of collective trust in their affirmations.

18. Water shortage:

19. Uncultured:

I can configure such problems into seats at a kind of shadowy 'roundtable' that effectively underlies every meeting such as my Johannesburg summit. Each such shadowy figure has its particular role to play out in my psychology [see [diagram](#) linking to [roles](#)].

Reframing my "overpopulation" problem

The following paragraphs are developed from an earlier [paper](#).

The previous section provides an integrative focus that is absent when these problems of mine are projected away from me onto 'the world', where mutually exclusive perspectives retain some measure of credibility. But, however valuable, it is not sufficient for me just to see my problems in a new light. The key question is whether they enable some new approach to them. The ultimate test is the case of "overpopulation", which seems to be at the origin of many of the problems outlined above.

Are there more fruitful ways of comprehending the issue of overpopulation -- given the range of ways I have engendered for minimizing this as a 'problem' :

- Overpopulation as a non-problem
- Opposition to birthrate reduction
- Opposition to contraception
- Opposition to discussion of sexual relationships
- Political evasion of the issue

Because of all the above factors, my reflections about the "overpopulation" issue take place through euphemism and indirection. Use of sexless, sanitized categories like 'family planning' to refer to an extremely charged issue makes it questionable whether my thinking has been inappropriately constrained -- if I have any real intention to respond to the problem in a more innovative manner. The sanitized terms, which are in effect euphemisms when they are not deliberate avoidance mechanisms, can be viewed as a sort of "metaphorical dissociation"-- using metaphors to distort perception of the problem. Paradoxically, the sexless quality of "family planning" impedes any imaginative response by me to the issues involved -- especially to those aspects exacerbated by the media, given the natural interest in sex. This sexless quality is rendered even more unrealistic given the widespread use of sexual metaphors in informal discussion.

The question with which I am apparently unable to deal is how the tremendous amount of psychic energy articulated (however inappropriately) by this metaphor is related to the "fertility" issue. Is it that the use of this basic metaphor for "doing" or "being done to" channels -- as a form of sublimation -- some of the energy that would otherwise go into sexual intercourse? The contexts in which the metaphor is used must certainly feedback onto the perception of sexual intercourse.

The challenge of "family planning" and "contraception" is that these are essentially processes of "not-doing" and as such do not excite imagination in my world -- except for those I have engendered who are inclined to philosophies of inaction (and action through inaction). It is questionable whether the metaphors for such processes are sufficiently meaningful in competition with the richer sexual metaphors. It could be argued that the "contraception" issue involves only the prevention of sexual intercourse, not the prevention of sexual relations, and therefore does not detract from the energy of sexual relations. This brings into focus the core issue of whether "contraception" calls for any modification in my attitude to sexual relations in order to be successfully implemented by those gripped by a variety of powerful metaphors of sexual relations. Specifically is there a possibility of discovering metaphors that would enable those in my world to articulate their attitudes to sexual relations in a manner consistent with the objectives of "family planning"?

The social conditions of my world are widely characterized by turbulence, insecurity, savage competition for resources, deprivation and the like. The privacy and intimacy of sexual intercourse creates an environment in which those I have engendered can experience a sense of security, caring and personal value, whilst at the same time offering them opportunities for imaginative self-expression and enjoyment away from the censure of wider society. It is a world in which they have a real (if brief) opportunity to fulfil their desires, to experience a sense of personal integrity and to repair the psychic damage suffered in daily life.

But, as a metaphor, this private "world" also encodes many of the problems and dilemmas of the "sustainable development" of my wider society -- the macrocosm mirrored in microcosm. It is a world in which one partner may seek to dominate and subjugate the other, a world of resources which may be exploited until they are depleted beyond any measures of conservation, and a world in which the frustrations of wider society may be given a new, and often crueler, focus -- often without any court of appeal. The shared intimacy may decay into alienation.

It is into this world that my "family planning" initiatives endeavour to insert "contraception". But little is said concerning the implications for the psychic life of those concerned. The matter tends to be discussed and described using plumbing metaphors, in "practical, down-to-earth" terms. And undoubtedly this may be totally appropriate for those of unimaginative temperament who believe that problems can be "fixed" with an appropriate device -- or for those who are so desperate that they will use anything provided it works in practice.

It is not clear that this approach is appropriate to others in my world, and especially to those for whom contraception acquires some symbolic significance. In this sense it is useful to consider how contraception can function as a metaphor. The danger is that I encourage its use in ways that result in a form of 'conceptual contraception'. Understanding its potential, and limitations, as a metaphor may suggest other approaches:

(a) Preventing, or aborting, completion of a process: With the increasing mechanization that I have brought to my understanding of society, and the increasing fragmentation of fields of activity, there are few integrative processes of which

people I have engendered are personally aware. The processes to which people are exposed in society are increasingly embedded in bureaucratic procedures, manufacturing cycles or information systems. Most processes are subject to "production deadlines" - including academic research. There are few opportunities for process completion, which it could be argued is vital to the psychic integration of the individual. Even in manufacturing there is increasing recognition of the merit of allowing people to personally complete a process (eg assembly of a car). For those for whom the significance of the sexual process is not limited to the act, but includes the socio-biological consequence (and possibly religious implications), to what extent does contraception become a metaphor for a restraint which is increasingly intolerable in an alienating society?

How is contraceptive technology to be understood in the light of Heisenberg's observation that the purpose of technology is to arrange the world so that people do not have to experience it?

(b) Reproduction and impotence: Reproduction is a basic purpose of sexual intercourse. But in how many ways are my people currently able to reproduce themselves, and how many of these are increasingly frustrated in the modern society I have allowed to emerge? People can, for example, feel that they are reproducing themselves by impregnating an individual or group with a pattern of ideas -- possibly to be passed on to future generations. To a lesser degree, but with more immediate impact, my people "produce" themselves before an audience. Indeed professional performers, especially before mass audiences, describe this process in explicitly sexual terms -- even as 'better than sex'. Similar arguments might be made for the plethora of documents so creatively produced -- creating the 'document overpopulation' acknowledged as information overload. Such forms of reproduction (harmonics to the sexual process) are either increasingly unavailable to many or of decreasing significance -- to the point that people experience a sense of impotence. To what extent then does this place an unconstrainable burden on the physical process that used to compensate for this inadequacy in some measure?

(c) Rechanneling sexual energy: Does contraception have no effect on sexual energy and the way it is channelled in my world? It can easily be argued that it is a liberator of sexual expression. It is less clear how it affects the quality of that expression. It is possible that exploring the limitations of the "channel" metaphor (see Lakoff and Johnson, 1980 on the conduit metaphor), and that of contraception in relation to it, might suggest a more appropriate approach. The use of such mechanistic metaphors inhibits recognition of less polarized insights into the movement of sexual energy (such as through diffusion or resonance processes, for example). The standard argument that access to a television at home reduces fertility needs to be reviewed in this light. What function is the television exploring and how is it affecting the imaginative life in relation to the need to fulfil sexual desires? Is the television an example of a wider class of opportunities for the movement of sexual energy that obviates the need for sexual intercourse in my world? What is the function of dance and partying in this respect? Do these suggest the existence of processes which are metaphorically equivalent to intercourse, but diffused beyond the confines of the switch metaphor (making-it, or not)?

(d) The "developer mentality" of family planning: The community of international development agencies I have engendered seldom questions the attention to the "developer's" view of development -- by which land, for example, is "developed" when it is "cleared" of unproductive trees and wildlife, drained of unnecessary surface water, and segmented by access roads permitting construction of any required buildings. In arguing for greater literacy for women, UNICEF indicates that four years of schooling enables women to plan smaller families, to space the children for the better welfare of all, and to make use of preventive health care. It is quite unclear what effect the rationality of such procedures has on the imaginative life of those who accept them, and whether any resistance to them arises from a repugnance analogous to that of "romantic" conservationists towards the initiatives of developers. To what extent is psychoanalytical expertise used in population programmes?

As with the other problems, discussed earlier, it might then be possible for me to move on to the metaphoric implications of the global dimensions of "overpopulation" in my world. Somehow the proliferation of the human species I have engendered has become an absolute good. The action of any inhibitory feedback mechanism has itself been inhibited. What an ironic confusion I have made of 'aid', contraceptive 'aids' and the proliferation of AIDS. The same phenomenon may be seen with the proliferation of information and products -- and any form of creativity. I should be able to explore all such processes as metaphors of a human attitude in which withholding or holding back is inhibited. This suggests the need to discover attractive metaphors for "withholding".

Organizing my world

My basic difficulty is that, in responding to over-population and the other problems above, I tend to be trapped into very particular perspectives. Essentially, rather than finding ways of responding more closely to the reality of my world, I tend to be persuaded by efforts to organize my world in ways that reflect preferences for organizing my mind into rather simple sets of logical categories -- and then populating those categories in ways unrelated to the reality and dynamics of my world as I tend to experience it. As has often been remarked, my world is not organized in a way that matches the organization of my university faculties -- it is somewhat more complex, despite assumptions to the contrary.

Typically I have little resistance to the construction of more buildings -- irrespective of the land that is used in the process, or the ecosystems that are degraded as a consequence. Buildings are simply reflections in concrete of simple sets of categories in my mind. They stack (into housing units and high rises) and nest neatly (in building complexes) -- and paths of communication can easily be developed between them. The same is true for roadways and rail links. It is especially true for the facility with which land and rivers can be concreted over to avoid having to deal with the messy inconvenience of earth. Such construction ensures that water flows in a controlled manner along logical pathways according to my more simply defined needs. The fact that my logical decisions may subsequently result in dangerous flooding because of the removal of apparently unnecessary buffers can easily be set aside. And, given the increasing shortage of surface land, why do I not give more attention to living below the surface -- surely more practical than the

attention given to creating space habitats? My thinking seems to be deeply flawed.

I tend to adopt a similar pattern of thinking in relation to the biological diversity of the environment. There may well be several million species of plants and animals in my world -- as some of my 'intelligent agents' report. However I have great difficulty in distinguishing more than a handful in practice -- although I can sometimes appreciate their differences in photographs and documentaries. How they relate to each other within ecosystems and food webs is not something about which I am particularly conscious. As a consequence, I must confess that I find it extremely difficult to worry in practice about the fate of most species of which I only have the faintest awareness -- although I am willing to subscribe in principle to the value of their preservation. However I do recognize that since I engendered these species, the current rate of loss might well be understood as being like the dangerous loss to my body of nerve endings and sensitivity -- of which I am barely aware. Essentially, and at a great rate, I am losing sensitivity to my environment through the vast array of sensors to which I saw fit to allocate a detection role in my environment. At what stage this will dangerously affect my muscular coordination remains to be discovered -- although I may by then be too disoriented to notice.

As with my simplistic concerns with the biological environment, I have taken the same approach to the systems of the atmosphere, hydrosphere, and geosphere. In each case I focus on the immediate value to me of air, water and earth -- and how that can be enhanced. Typically I have used every possible means to manipulate water courses and aquifers to my immediate advantage, whether damming them, concreting their banks, polluting them, or simply destroying them completely through diversion and over-exploitation. To the extent possible, I have done the same with the air using weather modification techniques -- of which global warming may well turn out to be the ultimate form. As to the earth, again I have literally moved mountains, dug canals and cut tunnels. In all cases I have engaged in these activities in response to what seemed logical in the short-term and irrespective of the cautionary words of those sensitive to longer time cycles, or of those who attach non-economic value to such natural features. Curiously I have encouraged this instrumentalist attitude with respect to my peoples' bodies -- with much piercing, cosmetic surgery, and other artificial 'enhancers'.

I have essentially bought into a process which ideally would remove the 'whether' from 'weather' -- with a simplistic tendency to label rain as 'bad' and sun as 'good', and little understanding of the pleas of farmers on whose products my peoples depend. I have bought into processes that eliminate undomesticated species as pests -- thus losing the songbirds (even though they may be the canaries of my psychological mine) and birds whose value is now lost to me (such as herons, owls and eagles) except in romanticized tales or as totemic symbols of collective identity. I express surprise at the hidden proliferation of rats to numbers rivaling the human population. I accept the organization of space to preclude natural springs or waterfalls -- for which I engender unimaginative artificial emulations, or encourage commercialization of those that remain elsewhere.

Strangely my efforts to eliminate species inimical to man (eg snakes, sharks, vultures, wolves, rats, vampires, tigers, cockroaches, leaches, etc) have resulted in their multiplication within human society as metaphors. This is also true of species denigrated by humans (eg worms, chickens, sheep). People now encounter 'snakes' and 'wolves' daily in their dealings with each other -- to say nothing of 'vampires' widely celebrated in movies (with other 'monsters' from prehistory such as 'dinosaurs'). Whilst the original physical carrier is on the point of disappearing, the dynamics they embodied are flourishing and evolving -- now carried by human behaviours. It is unfortunate that just as ecologists are learning about the systemic function of even the most disparaged species, humanity's ability to engender their metaphoric analogues has been restricted to those same disparaged species, whether predators or scavengers. Is this how I am now foreseeing the management of psychic waste and necessary culling?

My management failure

There are various ways in which I could describe my failure to manage my world more appropriately:

- **Cooking:** in these terms, I seem to have trapped myself in a rather limited range of cooking styles -- using a limited range of ingredients -- and with little ability to appreciate alternatives. Furthermore, my preferences are indeed for food products that depend on extensive use of fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and a variety of growth enhancers. I have of course become skilled in distancing myself from any awareness of the processes by which animals are slaughtered. I am indifferent to the environmental costs of making exotic foodstuffs available to me year round.
- **Gardening:** in these terms, I seem to opt for stylized boring gardens with little variety and a tendency to use of artifacts for enhancement. The gardens tend to be decorative rather than functional. The need for co-planting of different species for their mutual health is of quite secondary importance. Animal species (with their less predictable and invasive dynamics) tend to be very unwelcome and actively eliminated -- unless they have some function in pollination. Exotic species may well be favoured over local species -- even if they are dependent on constant care for their survival.
- **Team sports:** in these terms, our team can not really be said to have got its act together. I, for one, am continually 'dropping the ball'. There is no real sense of what the different team members need to do to support each other to achieve any collective goal I might envisage in collaboration with others. Often team members act like isolated individuals in pursuit of personal glory. Our collective goal may even be limited to trashing any opposition -- rather than seeking to enhance the quality of our interaction. In fact my world epitomizes multiple personality disorder.
- **Parenting:** in these terms, I cannot say that I have performed my parental duties well. In fact my children might even be seen as having an increasing tendency to delinquency in reaction to my simplistic frameworks of values and order. To the extent that my world is a product of consorting with another, here too I have handled such relationships with far less insight than is appropriate to the challenge. There is indeed much that I could learn from 'family values' -- as my Confucians argued long ago.
- **Dramaturge:** in these terms, all I can say is that I have produced a really bad play -- however instructive it may be for my

future. The play is so bad that it is not clear how to learn from it in order to improve my skill. As with the traditional peasant response: 'If I wanted to get there, I would not start from here'. My dramatic skills seem to rely on cliches highlighted by violence and various forms of melodrama with little ability to provide a vehicle for a subtler message -- which I would anyway tend to find boring and of limited interest.

- **Vehicle control:** in these terms, as driver or pilot of some kind of vehicle (automobile, horse, spaceship, hanglider, etc), again it is clear that new skills are called for.
- Art creation...
- Military / combat...
- Computer program / network operation...
- Engine maintenance...

Context

A basic question is why I should in any way be concerned about 'my world'? Whether or not my management of it is poor, why should I even strive to improve those parts of it beyond my immediate environment?

In these terms:

- What is the constant sense of 'need to' or 'should' that I experience -- the 'still, small voice'? Where does the imperative come from? Where does the sense of 'caring' come from?
 - a sense of implication?
 - a sense of future threat?
 - a sense of responsibility?
 - a sense of 'been there', and 'know what it is like'?
- To whom am I addressing my concerns and recommendations for action -- who is the addressee? For whom am I engaging in this way -- on whose behalf? Who do I think that I am representing? Who am I kidding in my exhortations?
- What is the accompanying sense of failure and disempowerment? Where does the disempowerment come from? Do I need some analogue to Viagra to enhance my capacity to respond to my world?

Where does the fragmented bittyiness come from? The *Whole Earth Catalog's* cover affirmed that: "We can't put it together; it is together". Why do I not experience my world as together? Why do I buy into arguments, by personalities that I engender, that reinforce my fragmented experience and fail to recognize the ecosystem which sustains them and from which they emerge?

Interface management

It could be argued that I am faced with two extreme challenges:

- **Without:** namely the problems of my world. These can so predominate that they are all I have time for. As in Plato's cave, I am attentive only to what appears on the screen and it is with that that I have to juggle constantly -- my nose is pushed right up against it so that my sense of perspective is lost ! This is the objective reality which is the preoccupation of most of the groups, institutions and 'intelligent agents' that I have engendered in my world.
- **Within:** namely reconciling the many pressures I experience within. These can so predominate that again they are all I have time for. My outer world loses any sense of reality. This is the problem of those I have engendered that are increasingly seeking psychotherapeutic help

Much more intriguing is the interface between these two realities and how I manage it. It is like working with two very different epistemological frameworks between which I have to provide some form of existential bridge. I tend to live on the bridge despite its instability and ambiguity. This interface zone is like the battlefield of Dharma that is the theme of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

At this interface, there is constantly the question as to whether I am:

- 'in the world', in some way 'explicated' by it and an actor anchored in its dynamics that define me, or
- a 'world-maker', in some way 'implicated' in its emergence but anchored elsewhere (an 'alien' within it, but not of it)

The fundamental ambiguity of this bridge, and how I position myself on it, is itself a kind of template for the degree to which I am impelled to 'build' bridges between other categories and sectors that I am 'obliged' to identify. The incommensurability of categories may be a major challenge to my bridge-building capacities. However, it is such construction which integrates the sectors that I engender -- for whatever reason. Indeed the 'incommensurability' derives largely from my repeated efforts to comprehend subtlety at too low a level of dimensionality (necessitating such apparent fragmentation). It precludes recognition of the natural integration only apparent at higher dimensionality. Being a 'flatlander' is always more convenient.

Such inter-sectoral gaps impel me to do other things . The relative solidity of sectors tends to encourage a form of lability or liquidity between them -- experienced in practice as emotion which may well be vitally refreshing. I can endeavour to channel such emotion in various ways -- canals, dams, etc. -- notably to 'irrigate' and enliven the solid sectors.

**** [medit] *** PCB

Again this can be seen as two contrasting modes in an interactive dance:

- discovering and developing the environment 'without', through 'projects' that assume an established geography (engendered by me through a more fundamental -- 1st order? -- projection)
- being 'discovered' by the environment through the ways in which it mirrors new facets of mine

These together emphasize the question of whether I am a source of instrumental action on the environment or an object of environment pressures. Life, and my sense of being alive, is at this risky interface. But my identity and sense of being alive is easily 'masked'. The dynamic intimacy and sense of deeper meaning is easily 'frozen' into a mask that can terrify me, mocking my inability to recall how I relate to the coherent reality it represents and from which it emerges.

The tragic ease with which any such sense of greater aliveness is 'quenched' was a continuing early pursuit of the prolific author [Colin Wilson](#). The challenge is how I can reframe my sense of reality to enable my identity in this heightened mode. This might be understood as the challenge of configuring the separate sectors noted above. It is exemplified by the design criteria of a 'magnetic bottle' to contain nuclear plasma without it being 'quenched' by such a container. Only then can 'fusion' take place [[more](#); [more](#)]. A gentler (but isomorphic) image is the configuration of metaphors encoded by the circular arrangement of the *I Ching* hexagrams [[more](#); [more](#)]. Here the preoccupation is expressed in terms of containing *ch'i*.

The ongoing, reciprocal relationship with outer reality, however, remains essentially untouched [[more](#)]. The hope might be that I am so changed by the work on the 'world within' that the "world without" is also transformed in sympathy -- or at least the relationship between them. This image, fantasy, or expectation is a central one in Jungian psychology and might be called "The Rainmaker Image.". It is based on the following story, told by the sinologist, Richard Wilhelm (translator of the Chinese classic, the *Secret of the Golden Flower*):

Richard Wilhelm was in a remote Chinese village which was suffering from a most unusually prolonged drought. Everything had been done to put an end to it, and every kind of prayer and charm had been used, but all to no avail. So the elders of the village told Wilhelm that the only thing to do now was to send for a rainmaker from a distance. This interested him enormously and he was careful to be present when the rainmaker arrived.

He came in a covered car, a small wizened old man. He got out of the car, sniffed the air in distaste, then asked for a cottage on the outskirts of the village. He made the condition that no one should disturb him and that his food should be put down outside the door. Nothing was heard of him for three days, then everyone woke up to a downpour of rain. It even snowed, which was unknown at that time of year.

Wilhelm was greatly impressed and sought out the rainmaker, who had now come out of his seclusion. Wilhelm asked him in wonder: "So you can make rain?" The old man scoffed at the very idea and said "of course" he could not. "But there was the most persistent drought until you came," Wilhelm retorted, "and then -- within three days -- it rains?"

"Oh," replied the old man, "that was something quite different. You see, I come from a region where everything is in order, it rains when it should and is fine when that is needed, and the people also are in order and in themselves. But that was not the case with the people here, they were all out of Tao and out of themselves. I was at once infected when I arrived, so I had to be quite alone until I was once more in Tao and then naturally it rained!"

Rainmaking in Joburg: making my Rio+10 worthwhile

Where is the Joburg within? It is that place to which I can travel with some effort (and at some cost) with which I associate significance. It is like going on a pilgrimage to a place, shrine, or person that has a reputation as a place of change and transformation. It may well be a place of paradoxical extremes and contrasts. But, once there, the experiences, although extraordinary, leave me wondering how to grok the secret of the transformational Holy Grail about which others are so ecstatic. For it is also a place requiring fruitful interaction with others -- who are sharing the journey. The 'quest' depends for its fruition on the creative way in which I configure the significance embodied in the companions that I engender on that journey. But I can easily suspect a case of the 'Emperor's new clothes' -- because the dynamics there may well involve much talk about change and transformation, leaving me with the nasty, sneaky worry that I do not really feel significantly transformed -- whatever I, or my 'others', claim. But it is true that I can console myself with the symbolism of having been there ('I was at Rio in 1992') and can be acknowledged as an 'agent of change'.

In seeking to 'make rain' in Joburg, I have to be really careful not to get trapped in the process of making declarations and plans for others to implement (moving on from *Agenda 21* to *Agenda 2002* -- from twenty-one to twenty-two). In endeavouring to configure the significance of my companions on this quest appropriately, I of course have to engage in networking -- but I have to take care that this does not become a frenetic substitute for grounding the awareness necessary to 'make rain'. What kind of networking weaves the environment to bring the rain -- and what inhibits it? In what way do the conditions of my 'closed sessions' at Joburg resemble those the old Taoist considered necessary in closetting himself in a separate hut -- until the rain came? What did he do in the hut to get things into appropriate order?

A real challenge is what I bring to Joburg as 'my way' and the imperative of that truth, and how alienating is it to my 'others' who come 'armed' with their own truths -- and their own 'targets'? What is this 'my way' imperative? How does this relate to the insight of the old Taoist called to make rain for the village? How do I recognize that 'my way' needs to be reframed in the light of the Taoist precept that 'The Way that can be named is not the Way'? And how can I structure the dynamics of my relationships with my 'others' engaged with me on this quest?

Whilst acknowledging the insight provided by Jungian psychology (and its successors) to framing the **individual** quest, there seems to

be little insight from those sources on the **collective** quest as required in 'Joburg' -- and on how my 'others' all mesh their respective Joburgs.

Joburg is of course the place where a balance is to be sought between my incommensurable preoccupations with 'development' and 'environment'. Curiously the focal crisis of 'global warming' may perhaps be best understood in my world as resulting from the way in which the unbalanced initiatives that I engender (my 'industrialization' and instrumentalism) result in an exponential increase in knowledge in every field. This is a form of enlightenment that is inadequately absorbed in practice and essentially makes me 'overheated'. Ironically such inappropriate knowledge is indeed characterized by the kind of 'hot air' that is produced in large quantities at any Joburg as a form of collective flatulence -- the 'greenhouse gases' of my inner world.. The other feature of my Joburg is the degree of denial associated with such flatulence, especially when the biggest 'farther' I have engendered in my world does not dare to be fully represented in Joburg.

The other feature of my Joburg is of course that in immediate proximity is a place that exemplifies the consequences of the failure of rainmaking -- a place suffering the tragic consequences of drought -- namely 'Zimbabwe'. This is a place where I was never able to resolve the imbalance between the skills and greed of the few and the needs and inadequacies of the many. The result was that I transformed a 'liberator' into a 'dictator' that took draconian measures in the name of unfulfilled principles and exacerbated every other problem described earlier. Zimbabwe is the exemplar of what may happen to most of my world if my quest to Joburg fails. Unknowingly, and even irrationally perhaps, I may engender draconian measures in my world in the name of selected principles -- without having discovered how to balance them appropriately against other principles that I occasionally hold to be vital.

Mirrors of my world

The mirror is a common metaphor across cultures and centuries for reflecting on the nature of mind in my world. For the critical tradition of literature, M H Abrams (*The Mirror and the Lamp; romantic theory and the critical tradition*, 1953) focuses on 'two common and antithetical metaphors of mind, one comparing the mind to a mirror-like reflector of external objects, the other to a radiant projector which makes a contribution to the objects it perceives. The first of these was characteristic of much of the thinking from Plato to the eighteenth century; the second typifies the prevailing romantic conception of the poetic mind.'

In discussing the 'changing metaphors of mind', Abrams notes that in any period, the theory of mind and the theory of art tend to be integrally related and to turn upon similar analogues, explicit or submerged. According to the mirror metaphor:

... the inventive process consisted in a rassembley of 'ideas' which were literally images, or replicas of sensations, and the resulting art work was itself comparable to a mirror presenting a selected and ordered image of life. By substituting a projective and creative mind and, consonantly, an expressive and creative theory of art, various romantic critics reversed the basic orientation of all aesthetic philosophy... Coleridge saw the mind as growing into its precepts...and thus was able to envision the product of artistic genius as exhibiting the mode of development and the internal relations of an organic whole.

The mirror is similarly an ancient symbol for the deepest functions of the human mind in the Buddhist tradition that I have engendered. On an ordinary level, a mirror is something used to see an object. When looking into a mirror, it is not the object itself that is observed, but it is seen clearly. Use of a mirror draws attention to **how** observation is being made rather than **what** is being observed. There is less investment in the object. This reduces the tendency to see things as fixed or solid and encourages other understandings. Thus, the very simple metaphor of a mirror can propel us toward insight and compassion more effectively than paradigms and theories.

As a Taoist, Chuang-tzu (ca 300 BC) made frequent use of the mirror metaphor to illustrate the dispassionate nature of the sage who reacts to nature without ever acting for his own advantage:

The perfect man uses his mind like a mirror: he neither accompanies things nor goes before them; he responds to them without clinging to them. This what makes him capable of dealing with all things without being tainted by them...The mind of the sage is quiet, it is the mirror of heaven and earth and reflects the whole multiplicity of things.

In the *Huai-nan-tzu* (a collection of philosophical essays, ca 200 BC), the Tao itself is compared to a perfectly clear mirror in which everything can be clearly seen. In Indian tradition the *Lankavatra-sutra* (one of the principal sources of inspiration for the Ch'an school of Buddhism) likens the perceiving consciousness to a mirror reflecting images that it mistakes for real objects. The mind reflects itself in objects that it has itself created, like images in a mirror. Others compare the lack of cognitive clarity to a dusty mirror unable to reflect clearly the face which gazes into it. Paul Demiéville (*The Mirror of the Mind*, 1947) reviewed the range of ways the mirror metaphor is used in Chinese, Indian and Christian thinking across the centuries. He concluded:

To some, reflections in a mirror serve to illustrate the unreality of the phenomenal world. to others, on the contrary, the clear mirror is like the absolute, reflecting back to man his ideal image. Or again, the mirror's property of faithfully reflecting objects without being touched by them is compared to the detachment of the sage, who apprehends reality in an impersonal immediate manner. These are in short the two aspects of a mirror, the one active, the other passive.

Luis Gomez (*Purifying gold: the metaphor of effort and intuition in Buddhist thought and practice*) comments on Demiéville's conclusion as follows:

...those who assume that the object of religious, aesthetic or intellectual apprehension is somehow innate in the apprehending subject tend to assume at the same time that the act of apprehension is direct, abrupt, effortless. The most common metaphor

employed by the advocates of this type of position... is the mirror as symbol for the mind: both are *innately* pure, both are able to know (or reflect) clearly, *passively*, and *integrally*. The opposite view would then propose that the object of religious esthetic, or intellectual apprehension is not innate, and that the act of apprehension is indirect and gradual, the result of dedicated self-cultivation.

The centuries of dialogue between the 'sudden' and the 'gradualist' approaches in Chinese thought was notably triggered by two very simple contrasting poems based on a mirror -- by Shen-hsiu (606-706) and Hui-neng (638-713) in the *Platform Sutra* [texts] -- and whether it needed 'cleaning'.

In my world, as discussed above, there is an interplay between these different understandings. I am indeed reflected in the phenomena and problems that I have engendered to constitute my world, like images in a mirror -- I am mirrored by the world. This is in sympathy with the Tibetan tradition of Vajrayana Buddhism, in which a renowned female master of the eighth century (757-817), Yeshe Tsogyal, approached enlightenment not as a matter of transformation, of ascent, or even of final attainment. Rather her approach rested squarely on learning how to fully inhabit the conviction that her **awakened nature was continually reflected (and thus findable) in all structures and phenomena**, bar none. Thus her path to enlightenment and her enlightenment merged inseparably in the theme of living life as enlightenment [more; more]. She is now a key figure in articulating understanding woman and the female in Buddhism [more].

Configuring the mirrors of my world

Yeshe Wangmo and Anna Cox have developed a workshop methodology (*The Eight Mirrors*) in the light of the memoirs of Yeshe Tsogyal. For them, this understanding emerges through interaction with a configuration of eight mirrors named: Source and Intention, Manifestation, Outer World, Inner Journey, Oneness Awareness, Attainment, Integration, and Completion. The function of eight mirrors is also described in the *Shurangama Sutra* [more].

The tantric ritual of the great Bliss Queen, symbolizes -- in the form of a nonverbal iconographic stance or gesture identified within an act of creative imagination -- the already enlightened nature of the mind that is simultaneously empty and filled with positive potential. The figure of Yeshe Tsogyal embodies nondichotomous subjectivity; her ritual evokes an imaginative bridging of the polarities: 'active/passive', 'naturally full/empty of inherent existence' [more].

For much more mundane purposes, Edward de Bono has produced several management methodologies as 'frameworks for thinking'. These stress the complementarity of six totally contrasting perspectives: *Six Thinking Hats* (1987) and *Six Action Shoes* (1991). These books deal with what he has called "operacy". This is the skill of action, of getting things done and making things happen -- which he equates with literacy and numeracy. They build on a well-publicized series of his earlier books dealing with creative approaches to problem-solving, notably in corporate policy-making environments. According to de Bono (1991), the metaphoric framework of six thinking hats has been adopted by many major corporations around the world. It is also used increasingly in education. As de Bono points out: "The six hat method has been widely accepted because it is simple, it is practical, and it works. It actually changes how thinking takes place in meetings and elsewhere: instead of the usual to and fro arguments it makes it possible for people to have constructive discussions." (1991, p. 4).

The six pairs of action shoes develop the action dimension of the thinking associated with the six hats. The method in both cases is simple. Using the hat metaphor, in a meeting there is an imaginary repertoire of six thinking strategies associated with six hats of different colours. A discussant may choose to put on one of the hats, or be challenged to take off a hat of a particular colour. Alternatively all participants may agree to make use of a hat of a particular colour to clarify a particular dimension response to the issue under discussion. De Bono's hats involve participants in a discussion in a type of mental role playing:

- White hat: An objective look at data and information.
- Red hat: Legitimizes feelings, hunches, and intuition.
- Black hat: Logical negative, judgement, and caution.
- Yellow hat: Logical positive, feasibility, and benefits.
- Green hat: New ideas and creative thinking.
- Blue hat: Control of the thinking process. (1987) [more; more]

It is regrettable that the relationship between the mutually antagonistic schools of Tibetan Buddhism ('Black Hat'; 'Red Hat', *Nyingma*; 'White Hat', *bKa-rgyud*; 'Yellow Hat', *Gelug*; etc) is not presented as such a configuration to clarify the complementarity of their insights and practices -- which could be so appropriately reflected in a mandala. The same might however be said of varieties of Christianity or of the Catholic religious orders.

It is curious that the astronomers of my world have now discovered the need to develop complex configurations of mirrors to explore the depths of space in order to understand the nature of the universe. One of the most modern even uses 8 mirrors. The NASA space telescope, called the Chandra X-ray Observatory (launched in 1999) allows scientists to obtain unprecedented X-ray images of these and other exotic environments to help understand the structure and evolution of my universe. At the heart of the telescope system is the High-Resolution Mirror Assembly. Since high-energy X-rays would penetrate a normal mirror, special cylindrical mirrors were created. The two sets of four nested mirrors resemble tubes within tubes. Incoming X-rays graze off the highly polished mirror surfaces and are funneled to the instrument section for detection and study. They are the largest and smoothest mirrors ever created. [more; more].

A feature common to the mirrors of Buddhism and those of astronomy is the recognition that only through an array or configuration of mirrors can faint subtle, or faint, signals be detected and brought into meaningful focus. In both cases the individual mirrors each have a distinct orientation. The optical requirements of those of astronomy have been very extensively studied. The use of an array of metaphorical mirrors of the mind, in the case of Buddhism, suggests an understanding of the challenges of interdisciplinary and inter-

sectoral understanding that my western world has yet to recognize. The plethora of symbols favoured in their rites by many schools of Buddhism (or other religions for that matter) might also usefully be understood as potential mirrors.

Governance through metaphor

A useful way to understand a single mirror in a set is as a category or detector of some kind -- clustering information in the light of its orientation. Those of Buddhism are each associated with a particular subject matter, so that the set is in some respects a comprehensive (or universal) classification system. The set enables me to capture and focus the complete spectrum of insights to allow me an integrated understanding.

This need for 8 mirrors articulated in my Buddhist thought can be compared with the 8 'houses' into which the 64 *I Ching* hexagrams are clustered. Traditionally these are represented in a circular configuration and distinguished by the primary trigram by which they are named: Creative, Receptive, Arousing, Keeping Still, Abysmal, Clinging Joyous, and Gentle. Within the *I Ching* framework they therefore represent an 8-fold clustering of all patterns of change and transformation.

Traditionally the *I Ching* was valued as a guide to the challenges of governance, notably by the Emperor of China. There is therefore some merit in considering its value in enabling me to order my world in response to the problems I have engendered (see above). Of great interest in the case of the *I Ching* is that it is not a 'mechanical' system even though it uses a binary notation. However some do endeavour to use it like a casino 'fruit' machine. It embodies the fundamental challenge of understanding fundamental categories, especially those set in paradoxical opposition to one another. Governance of my world is beset by such strategic dilemmas -- of which the reconciliation of the incommensurables 'development' / 'environment' is a prime example in the case of Joburg.

The *I Ching* inhibits any facile comprehension by me of mechanically defined categories and their relationships. It achieves this by 'defining' such categories allusively through metaphor -- often metaphors relating to polarities or dilemmas of governance -- although these metaphors may also prove to be traps for the unwary. In fact the *I Ching* could be considered as a way of classifying metaphors through which I might understand my world.

With apparently the utmost simplicity, the *I Ching* sets out to represent dilemmas and polarities -- and their relationships -- using a binary coding system. It therefore depends on the users involvement as to the meaning that is proving to be a dilemma. This can be represented by the simplest binary distinction ('1 vs 0', or 'unbroken line vs broken-line'). At its most basic, it offers metaphors through which to look at a simple polarity like development / environment. The metaphors might be: 'dark / light'; 'negative / positive'; 'inner / outer'; 'male / female'; 'down / up'; 'right / left'; 'elder / youth'; etc. At this level these may be considered isomorphic.

Within Chinese culture great importance has been associated with the polarity 'sudden / gradual', for example. This is not without its significance for approaches to 'sustainable development' (in terms of the need for immediate radical change vs the possibility of gradual change) (see Peter N Gregory. *Sudden and Gradual: approaches to enlightenment in Chinese thought*, 1987) [[excerpts](#)] [[more](#); [more](#)].

'Sustainable development': configuring divergent understandings

The art of the *I Ching* is that, although it offers metaphors for understanding a polarity, it encourages movement of thought beyond the often fruitless confrontation of seemingly intractable opposites. It therefore suggests ways of thinking in terms of a 4-fold division, rather than a 2-fold division, by effectively offering a way of classifying any 4-fold metaphors -- such as: 'father / mother / son / daughter'; 'spring / summer / autumn / winter'; 'earth / air / fire / water'; 'north / south / east / west'. In contrast with the 2-fold metaphors, these may suggest a healthier pattern of relationship and transformation between the polarities implicit in each 4-fold set.

The 'sustainable development' of my Joburg could benefit from reframing the relationships between 'development' and 'environment' in this way (as is partially the case in some geopolitical distinctions between 'north' / 'south' / 'east' / 'west'). The 4-fold set would be represented by the binary coding system as 4 'digrams' (combinations of 2 lines that may be unbroken or broken):

- development over development (a typical 'industrial' perspective)
- development over environment (development in support of the environment: making financial profit from pro-environment perspective)
- environment over development (environment as a context for development: green alternative perspective)
- environment over environment (a typical deep ecology perspective)

This approach has been extensively explored in a separate paper on *Interrelationships between 64 Complementary Approaches to Sustainable Development* (<https://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs/devching.php>)

Any global concern in my world tends to become fragmented into contrasting aspects, ideologies, belief systems, or contrasting schools of thought [[Judge, 2001](#)]. From any one perspective, there is necessarily very little recognition of their complementarity and the need to explore their configuration to highlight this. In the case of 'sustainable development', these perspectives -- through their different representatives at my Joburg -- immediately undermine any articulation of a global perspective that ensures effective implementation. As a consequence, the very concept of sustainable development tends to become unsustainable.

It is intriguing that even amongst those who most aspire to a universal perspective, little attention is given to why these mutually antagonistic facets develop, or to how the complementarity of these facets is to be understood as the basis for any emergent universal system. The tendency is for the proponents of each distinct 'universal' system simply to declare other perspectives to be 'wrong' or 'misguided' [[more](#)]. It is a prime characteristic of schools of philosophy, in natural opposition to each other in my world, to fail to embody any such opposition within their respective systems. They only do so at the most primitive level (as with articulation of a category of 'evil' in the case of religions, or 'rejectionists' in the case of proponents of globalization).

The most interesting exception is the *Brahmajala Sutta*, the very first text in the *Sutta Pitaka* of the Pali canon and one of the important discourses spoken by the Buddha. It is "the discourse on the all-embracing net of views". The aim of this discourse is to elaborate on a "net" of all possible views (opinions, beliefs, philosophical ideas, speculative thought). It encompasses a net of sixty-two cases capturing all the speculative views on the self and the world [more]. The discourse describes the situation out of which each view arises and shows how the speculative views and philosophies hold man in bondage to the cycle of birth and death-in misery and sorrow. (Bhikku Bodhi, *The Discourse on All-Embracing Net of Views: the Brahmajala Sutta and its Commentaries* , 1978).

Self-possession and governance

The art of governing a world that I engender -- and which engenders me -- may well be to frame the situation in terms of a cycle of expiration and inspiration:

- expiration in which I engender the world through patterns I imagine, impose and reify
- inspiration in which I reel in the threads of what I engendered and the learnings from their interplay

But there is more to it than just 'breathing'. For the process to 'work':

- the stages of the cycle must balance through a rhythm
- the rhythm needs to be neither too long nor too short
- both inspiration and expiration need to be sufficiently 'deep' to encompass my world

The challenge of 'encompassing' my world is how to touch its every aspect, whether in giving it form or drawing in that form -- a problem well-recognized by democratic politicians in relating to their constituencies. Like biological forms at every stage of evolution, the art is to distribute 'oxygen' to the cells in order to sustain their development. Constraints on this process may force the emergence of new forms.

The art of governance, like that of breathing, may perhaps best be understood in terms of a self-sustaining torus. Kenneth James Michael MacLean points to speculative work, by Arthur Young and others, on the torus as a model of consciousness:

The geometric shape used to describe the self-reflexive nature of consciousness is the torus. The torus allows a vortex of energy to form which bends back along itself and re-enters itself. It 'inside-outs', continuously flowing back into itself. Thus the energy of a torus is continually refreshing itself, continually influencing itself. [more]

Like a smoke-ring, it maintains its form through the cyclic movement at each point of its circumference. A torus thus offers an interesting metaphor of self-possession -- with an empty, or virtual, centre [more]. Arthur Young's insights into this have been represented as a hypersphere [more].

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