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## Tomorrow, Who Will Govern the World?

### Commentary on Jacques Attali's "Demain, qui gouvernera le monde?"

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## Introduction

The author of *Demain, qui gouvernera le monde?* (2011), [Jacques Attali](#), has every reason to be considered an authority on the subject of his new book. Aside from having held many positions in relation to national and international governance, as an academic he has been an extremely profile author on a wide range of relevant subjects, including *A Brief History of the Future* (2006), *La crise, et après?* (2008) and *Survivre aux crises: 7 stratégies* (2009). It may therefore be assumed that he knows full well whereof he writes. In relation to the book, Attali has been interviewed by Jean-Christophe Nothias (*Tomorrow, Who Will Govern the World*, *The Global Journal*, 3 May 2011).

The theme indicated by the title is clearly of wide concern, especially in the midst of a variety of crises which have demonstrated very clearly the relatively limited competence of governments and other institutions. However, from the perspective of this somewhat critical review, it is the title which is the most interesting feature of the book -- namely the questions it raises, and those it fails to address. Rather than a review in the conventional sense, the following therefore uses Attali's endeavour as a basis for "re-viewing" and reframing the question of the title and the issues it raises.

The paradigm within which the book appears to have been articulated is well-represented by the image on the cover of the French paperback edition. It is of a conventional symphony orchestra. The following criticism is made from a perspective which contrasts that image with one of the winner of the Eurovision Song Contest. The two images were used in an earlier comment on the occasion of the 3rd Annual Conference organized by the [Global Governance Group](#) of the [New School of Athens \(NSOA\)](#): Theme: *Making Global Governance Work: Lessons from the Past. Solutions for the Future* (Athens, 2008).

<b>Fig. 1: Contrasting caricatures of "harmonization" in governance?</b>	
Reproduced from <i>Governing Civilization through Civilizing Governance: global challenge for a turbulent future</i> (2008)	
Fig. 1a: <b>Top-down "static" vision?</b> "explicit imaginary"	Fig. 1b: <b>Bottom-up "non-static" vision?</b> "implicit real"

	
<p>EU "non-Constitutional" <a href="#">Reform Treaty</a> (ratified under questionable conditions of "democratic deficit") suppressing reference to the <a href="#">EU anthem</a> (Beethoven's <i>Ode to Joy</i>)</p>	<p><a href="#">Eurovision Song Contest</a> Winner (Athens, 2006) Elected overwhelmingly through a record Europe-wide popular "democratic process" (Lordi's song <i>Hard Rock Hallelujah</i>)</p>
<p>If aesthetic harmony (notably musical lyrics) offers a way forward, possibilities might include: <i>A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?</i> <i>All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony?</i></p>	

Briefly it might be said that a defect of Attali's approach (as explicitly symbolized by the cover image, similar to that on the left above) is that it necessarily takes little account of the mindset which might be more closely associated with the image on the right. The argument which follows here, as in the earlier comment relating to those images, does not especially favour the latter, rather it raises the question of how that worldview might be taken into account. The various riots of the "[Arab Spring](#)" (2011), together with those which have surprised England at the time of writing, suggest that a larger or more fundamental framework is required.

In arguing the point through a musical metaphor, there is an irony to the following criticism in that Attali himself in a previous study, to which he makes no reference, specifically indicated that cultures articulated their social organization through the musical structure favoured in the immediate past (*Noise: the political economy of music*, 1977). Thus he specifically relates the currently favoured pattern of organization to that of classical Western music. His current argument, with respect to "tomorrow", should then at least take account of the pattern of music currently favoured by the voters of the future -- as indicated to some extent by the second image.

The questionable relevance of Attali's symphonic understanding of governance merits reflection in the light of a bipartisan report by the [Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs](#) (Princeton University), titled *Forging a World of Liberty Under Law, US National Security in the 21st Century* (2006), notably proposes a charter for the establishment of a "concert of democracies".

It is within this context that new understanding of how "who" is to be understood could prove to be vital to the sustainability of future governance.

## Appreciation

Attali's study offers a very useful review of the range of historical approaches to "world" governance, with chapters on:

- First governments of the world
- Cities of Men, Cities of God (1st to 12th century)
- First mercantile governments of the world (1300-1600)
- First Antic government of the world (1600-1815)
- First governments of the whole world (1815-1914)
- Grandeur and decadence of the the American government of the world (1914-2011)

He then provides a summary of the current state of governance of the world, in a chapter with sections on:

- the conscience of the human species
- the values of the world
- the world government: the third G2 (namely the USA and China)
- the world rule of law
- world multilateral bodies
- international treaties without corresponding bodies
- informal intergovernmental bodies
- private formal bodies (including the Vatican)
- world informal bodies (NGOs)
- belief in a secret world government (by conspiracy theorists)

Attali continues with a chapter on "Tomorrow, world anarchy" as a means of exploring why the above array is less than effective. He includes the following sections:

- world government of the market
- serial financial disorder
- unchecked population growth
- serial regional wars
- shortage of basic commodities
- destruction of nature
- potential destruction of life by an asteroid

- nature of life in 2030
- "double green": namely a convergence of fundamentalist religion and ecology

In a penultimate chapter, Attali provides a useful review of the possibilities for an ideal government of the world as variously imagined and proposed. He introduces his concluding chapter by noting that without a major crisis a supranational government will never be instituted. He argues that the forces in place see no reason to change anything whatsoever -- and even if they wished to do so, they will be decreasingly able to do so. He therefore focuses on a pragmatic approach to the current situation with 10 concrete proposals:

- Develop the federal integrative process
- Recognize the *raison d'être* of humanity
- Develop great vigilance to potential threats
- Ensure respect for existing international law
- Progress project by project: "mini-lateralism"
- Merger of the UN Security Council and the G20
- Institute a Chamber of Sustainable Development
- Institute an Alliance for Democracy
- Ensure availability of resources for governance of the world
- Institute a global forum as an Estates General of the World

Whilst the book includes an index of names of individuals cited, it has no subject index other than that provided by the table of contents. This makes it more difficult to identify specific topics included or omitted.

## Asystemic governance

Most curiously the array of "bodies" (*instances*) identified by Attali does not include multinational corporations, nor international organized crime. The bodies he chooses to name are necessarily a subset of a much larger array of bodies. His approach would seem to be essentially asystemic with little appreciation of the "ecology" of the international system. This is composed of tens of thousand of international bodies profiled in the online *Yearbook of International Organizations* of which he is seemingly completely unaware (even though a French edition was financed by the [Agence pour la Francophonie](#)). Symptomatic of his asystemic approach is the lack of reference to the connectivity (in its technical sense) of this vast network of bodies, as registered in that continuing process of documentation.

It might be said that Attali's appreciation of "governance" excludes any insight from how an ecosystem is known to function. This is strikingly epitomized by the currently catastrophic [die-off of bees](#) on which agriculture is significantly dependent. What might be the "bees" significant to global governance? Especially intriguing in using this metaphor is the vital function of bees in pollination. It might then be asked how "cross-pollination" and "cross-fertilization" are to be appropriately achieved in processes of governance -- especially given the recognized tendency to "silo thinking" characteristic of "incestuous" institutional systems.

More interesting is why this question is of no relevance to his analysis and worldview. Has he simply indulged in a cherry picking of bodies he identifies as "important"? Would this correspond to the mindset of those in agriculture who neglected the consequences of bees dying? How about worms? Is this a heritage of the traditional reactive approach to governance -- neglect everything "small" as "negligible" until its impact is registered -- deploring riots and other excesses as "incomprehensible" and "unjustified" in failing to follow "due process" (as has been evident in recent rioting worldwide and the political reactions to it).

However as commentary on the range of international actors has long shown, the categories Attali uses are simplistic -- and overly respectful of questionable academic and administrative preferences, appropriately to be challenged as effectively obsolete and no longer "fit for purpose". A simplistic approach may be justified for editorial reasons, but these then effectively reinforce the manner in which institutional categories are much challenged by reality in practice, especially through the many hybrid and borderline cases calling any conventional system of categories into question (*International institutions: diversity, borderline cases, functional substitutes and possible alternatives*, 1978).

The point is made even more strongly with respect to emergent social organization enabled by the internet (as discussed below). If the systemic complexity is too much of a challenge for a review such as Attali produced, then the nature of this challenge merits appropriate mention with regard to the governance of the world of tomorrow. It is appropriate to note that, with a respect to a much smaller subset of "problems", the Club of Rome significantly gave recognition to the "world problematique" through its report on *Limits to Growth* (1972).

The asystemic perspective is also evident in the seemingly simplistic appreciation of "problems" with which the array of actors is variously concerned. As with the bodies profiled in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* (as mentioned above), these have been profiled over decades in the online *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*. What is the system of "problems" for which "governance" is required? Who registers the nature of that system and how is its complexity rendered comprehensible to those engaged in governance? What "problems" fall through the institutional "safety net" and how are they to be detected? Who "authenticates" recognition of a problem?

This asystemic criticism may be extended to the vast network of "strategies" variously implemented, articulated, advocated or envisaged by the range of constituencies active in the social "ecosystem". Again these have been profiled in the online *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*, emphasizing, as with the "problems" how one impacts on another.

These remarks imply that the level of analysis regarding future governance, as exhibited by Attali, could usefully shift beyond a methodology which corresponds to the intellectual and procedural comfort zones of existing bodies and disciplines -- in the light of their

demonstrated inadequacy in the face of the emerging challenges of governance. Succinctly phrased, Attali's overview exhibits very little indication of the need to think "out-of-the-box" -- a requisite long recognized by those who argue for "paradigm shifts" and "new thinking".

His pragmatic excuse for any such failure would be to claim that those comfortable with the existing system will only allow for a modest degree of "tinkering". His recommendations might then be caricatured as an effort to "rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic" -- however radical that may appear to some.

## Governance through frozen categories

**Future challenge to categories:** With regard to simply rearranging conventional categories -- "re-arranging the deck chairs", Attali's exploration seemingly avoids any sense in which such categories might be called into question -- as the internet has significantly done. His study ignores the extent to which social and conceptual organization based on such "categories" has now been variously by-passed in the lived and working realities of many. People may choose to function within those frameworks and to attach credibility to them, but millions do not. Attali may assume that this "by-passing" is irrelevant to governance, and this may be the reality for some -- but not for others. He fails to address this issue which was succinctly highlighted in a classic quote by The emergence of an increasingly delusional nature of any international legal consensus has been succinctly expressed with respect to the neocon strategy of governance, as presented by Ron Suskind (*Without a Doubt*, *The New York Times*, In The Magazine, 17 October 2004) following an exchange he had with an aide in the decision-making circle of President Bush:

The aide said that guys like me were "in what we call the reality-based community," which he defined as people who "believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality." I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. "That's not the way the world really works anymore," he continued. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality -- judiciously, as you will -- we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do."

The current approach of the Tea Party movement is consistent with challenging what amounts to a "Washington Consensus" on appropriate governance discourse (*Cultivating Global Strategic Fantasies of Choice*, 2010).

**Nature of a "category":** Such questions highlight the role of collective imagination and inspiration and how they may reframe and focus attention. What indeed is a "category" or "concept" and how may the insight with which they are associated best be organized? Is it not highly probable that creativity will challenge conventional rigidity and inflexibility, just as the internet challenged UNESCO's mandate for global responsibility in the organization of knowledge?

**Nature of the "future"?** In an honourable exercise in reflecting on the future, Attali offers a valuable review of how this has been done in the past. The question is whether the "future" is a category which can usefully be "unfrozen". There are of course many ways to comprehend the future. The simplest merely requires a mechanical adjustment to the calendar date -- a process often as suspect as the fraudulent adjustment of the mileage counter on an automobile. The future may be decomplexified by simply making commitments in a scheduler of some kind -- in 1997, there were already international meetings scheduled for the year 2015. Such scheduling, as with the "futures market", is a projection of present thinking onto the future and implies no cognitive challenge or innovation.

How does the future emerge into the present? How does potential become actuality? What are the cognitive traps associated with phrases such as: "where does the future come from" and "the far-distant future"? How are present initiatives established as future realities? Why does past understanding appear so quaint from the present and what does this say of present understandings that are taken so seriously now?

Such questions are as puzzling for the individual as they are for planetary society -- if not more so. As safety nets erode, who has a "guaranteed future"? Much is made of future technology and changes to social systems. Far more elusive is any transformation in the way people relate to what they consider reality. As Peter Drucker once said, the most profound and unforeseen changes over a generation are those associated with changes of values -- completely reframing how things are comprehended. And yet it is such changes in the quality of understanding which are part of the individual maturation experience. Sadly they are also the changes which introduce communication gaps between the generations. And what does such change imply for a "global ethic"?

There are curious constraints associated with use of the modern calendar to demarcate future periods. Its essential linearity is a trap. More social change can occur in a brief period than occurs over long periods of years. For an individual, falling in love, a mystical revelation, a major career challenge, a creative insight, or a disabling accident, can all reframe the linear calendar in psychological terms for which non-linear mathematics would provide more appropriate understanding. For those who favour cyclical understandings of time, some form of perigee and apogee might be useful markers.

**"Constants"?** There is a sense in which Attali appears to articulate the possibilities for future governance in terms of some analogue to the set of [physical constants](#) by which physical reality is supposedly determined, according to physicists. However physicists, science fiction, and constructors of alternative virtual worlds freely explore the possibility that these constants may not be as "constant" as the past century has tended to imply. Are there then, yet to be discovered, psychosocial analogues to [universal constants](#), [electromagnetic constants](#), [atomic and nuclear constants](#), and [physico-chemical constants](#)? Social innovation may benefit from such inspiration in giving form to new modes of interaction. Will the governance envisaged by Attali be simply marginalized by such innovation?

Does this argument apply notably to "values"? Is there not a case for recognizing the possibility may be experienced otherwise, if only in the future, as separately argued (*Freedom, Democracy, Justice: Isolated Nouns or Interwoven Verbs?*, 2011; *Topology of Valuing*:

*dynamics of collective engagement with polyhedral value configurations*, 2008).

Given the importance attached by Attali to the future role of "the market" in governance of the world, is there not a possibility that this too will come to be understood otherwise, if only by some? Curiously, given Attali's own background as first president of the [European Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#), and given the financial crises since 2008, there is no implication that the "confidence" on which the financial markets are based may also be imagined otherwise -- especially to the extent that individuals lose confidence in "governance", "promises" and "guarantees" -- so readily abused (*Abuse of Faith in Governance*, 2009; *Primary Global Reserve Currency: the Con? Cognitive implications of a prefix for sustainable confidality*, 2011). What may "governance" come to mean in a creative, innovative future? What bodies anticipate such innovation -- if only with respect to scenarios and voting systems?

Attali's strong argument in avoiding the ideal and the imaginative is that those in power will have none of it. The argument has a measure of validity but again is undermined by the uptake of internet technology -- even by those same governments, but especially by their citizens. There is therefore the possibility that Attali's pragmatic recommendations will indeed be implemented but that the real innovation in governance will effectively occur "elsewhere" -- whether conceptually or organizationally -- in another "dimension", as artificial worlds, like [Second Life](#), presage.

## Deconstructing "Tomorrow, Who Will Govern the World"

In the light of the apparently asystemic nature of Attali's approach, and as a preamble to any further critique, there is a case for exploring the terms in the challenging title of his book -- which may well appear under some other variation when finally published in English.

**Governance of "tomorrow":** Use of this term implies a somewhat limited view of the future -- as being a moment or limited period in time when there is a need to engage appropriately with the emerging challenges over time and in relation to the longer term (*Strategic Embodiment of Time: configuring questions fundamental to change*, 2010; *Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy? Towards engaging appropriately with time*, 2011).

Is the governance of tomorrow "for tomorrow" and future generations? Is it "for yesterday", in fulfillment of potentials which past generations have enabled? Or is it "for today" in cultivating responsibility essential for sustainable development?

Tomorrow is not necessarily "another day" as the saying goes -- especially in terms of the responsibility of government beyond simply reacting in a fire-fighting, crisis-management mode, as is typically the case "at present". However it is also necessary to recognize the extent to which many are obliged to live "day by day" with little sense of "what tomorrow may bring". This is certainly true of the millions challenged by circumstances -- obliged to live as though "there is no tomorrow". It is also true of the many unchallenged by resources but experiencing existential challenges and depression. However the nature of "tomorrow" may well be creatively reimaged and reframed by certain philosophies and worldviews in terms of the need to live "in the moment" rather in relation to the future (Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now: a guide to spiritual enlightenment*, 1999; Jay Dixit, *The Art of Now: six steps to living in the moment*, *Psychology Today*, November 2008).

How are such possibilities to be reconciled? (*Engaging Macrohistory through the Present Moment*, 2004; *Presenting the Future*, 2001)

**Governance by whom?** Attali of course focuses specifically on the question of "*who*". However it is useful to recognize the range of alternative hypotheses regarding future governance of the world. These might include:

- **prophesied governors:** Attali himself mentions [Messiah](#) of the Jewish tradition. Many also attach significance to the return of Christ, to the [Mahdi](#) of the Islamic tradition, to the [Maitreya](#) (Mirokou) of the Buddhist tradition, to the [Pahana](#) of Hopi tradition, to the [Great Monarch](#) of Catholic tradition, and to the [Saoshyant](#) of Zoroastrian tradition. It has been argued that these entities are one and the same. There is of course also the possibility of others claiming to be such and held to be such -- as also prophesied
- **extraterrestrial civilization:** This possibility has been the subject of extensive speculation, given the possibility of some such contact (*Writing Guidelines for Future Occupation of Earth by Extraterrestrials*, 2010)
- **artificial intelligence**, following the rapid development of the worldwide network of computers -- variously described in terms of a [global brain](#) or [planetary consciousness](#) -- and potentially associated with a [technological singularity](#), as notably articulated by [Ray Kurzweil](#)
- **Gaia**, understood as a self-regulating expression of life, an entity that humans are defined through as a species of the planet, notably articulated as the [Gaia hypothesis](#) by [James Lovelock](#) and [Lynn Margulis](#). Gaia may be understood as acting effectively as the "governor of last resort" by comparison with a [lender of last resort](#).
- **secret government:** Also specifically noted and deprecated by Attali as being argued by conspiracy theorists
- **various "complexes" and conspiracies:** It is appropriate to include mention of the [military-industrial complex](#) highlighted by President Eisenhower.
- **a global "rule":** Attali notes the role of the "rule of law". Other "rules" may be envisaged, especially in a world of faith-based governance -- and as suggested by efforts towards a [Global Ethic](#) or even by the UN's [Global Compact](#). Environmental and resource constraints may require some such rule.

This focus on "who" suggests the merit of considering the relevance of what could be considered co-dependent questions in the set of "WH-questions" in relation to future governance of the world and its potential catastrophes (*Conformality of 7 WH-questions to 7 Elementary Catastrophes: an exploration of potential psychosocial implications*, 2006):

- **when** is governance of the future to become apparent? Possibilities are already evident to a degree in the futures markets. It might be assumed that international treaties, of which Attali sites a small subset, constitute a way governing the future -- although he does not make it apparent how these together constitute a system of law which could be systematically explored to detect loopholes and inconsistencies with a view to proposing how that system as a whole might be progressively developed --

discarding inadequacies. Contracts can of course be seen as a way of governing the future.

Far more problematic is the pattern of political promises and manifestos in terms of which expectations are framed -- potentially to be cynically abandoned when convenient or faced with reality. Again little effort is made to look at this pattern systematically. Attali explicitly distinguishes between "ideal" but impossible forms of governance and the "pragmatic" possibilities which are the focus of his recommendations. In relation to "tomorrow" however, when might particular ideals become feasible, if not necessary. Should a menu of possibilities not be envisaged extending into the future rather than focusing on what might well be described as merely medium term options?

- **where** is the government of the future to be located, given the symbolic importance attached to their architecture. Obvious examples of the issues to be resolved, which Attali fails to address, are offered by the [location of European Union institutions](#). Especially relevant is the continuing controversy, frustration and unwarranted cost of the regular movement of the European Parliament between Brussels and Strasbourg. More provocative are the questions raised by the appropriateness of the current location of the UN HQ in New York, as speculatively discussed (*Merits of Moving the UN HQ to Baghdad*, 2003).

In response to such practical issues, the possibilities and potentials of locating the governance of the future in cyberspace merit consideration (*The Challenge of Cyber-Parliaments and Statutory Virtual Assemblies*, 1998).

- **what** might be the nature of governance in the future, especially in a knowledge-based society? What is to be "governed" from a systemic perspective in the light of the many insights from the range of relevant disciplines applied to other control situations? One possibility, recognizing the how information is imaginatively reframed, is to understand governance as the emergence and movement of metaphors (*Governance through Metaphor*, 1987).
- **which** mode of governance might be appropriate and how, more generally, are decisions between policy and strategies possibilities to be made in the future in response to the challenges which the future may present? (*Varieties of decision-making arenas and styles*, 1995; *Decision-making: Guiding Metaphors and Configuring Choices*, 1991)
- **how** is governance to be enabled in a knowledge-based society, especially in the light of insights from cybernetics, notably as highlighted by Maurice Yolles (*Knowledge Cybernetics: a metaphor for post-normal science*, 2010; *Organisations as Complex Systems: an introduction to knowledge cybernetics*, 2006). How indeed does academic reflection on governance inform the emergence of new modalities of governance -- as might emerge from reflection on the aftermath of the [World Models Project](#), for example (Richard Falk, *The World Order Models Project and its Critics: a reply*, *International Organization*, 32, 2, 1978, pp. 531-545) ?
- **why** is any particular form of governance upheld as appropriate -- potentially restricted by Winston Churchill's much-cited dictum regarding democracy. To what extent might the art of governance be more a question of "not-doing" as has been upheld in the Chinese imperial tradition. Is there an art to "non-decision-making" (*The Art of Non-Decision-Making*, 1997)? It is appropriate to note that the country in which most secretariats of international organizations are located, Belgium, is one which currently has had no government for more than a year -- a world record.

**Governance and "will"**: Use of "will" may only imply a determinative consideration. However, treated as a noun, it also fruitfully recalls what has been repeatedly highlighted as the major challenge in achieving social development, namely the "will to change" -- collectively, politically, or otherwise (*International Organizations and the Generation of the Will to Change*, 1970). How is that "will" to be engendered or elicited?

**"World" requiring governance**: It is readily assumed that the concept of "world" is readily and unambiguously comprehended. This may be usefully challenged through the degrees to which "global" is understood in the light of how a sphere is progressively understood (*Metaphorical Geometry in Quest of Globality*, 2009). Of particular interest is the sense in which people sharing particular worldviews recognize that they are living in "their own world" -- or are so recognized by others.

This argument can also be extended to the "world" as experienced as an individual -- and how the nature of its globality might be progressively experienced and understood.

**Governance itself**: A deconstruction of "governance" itself is offered by the following.

## Governance through ignorance in a knowledge-based society

**Governance in a knowledge-based society**: It is most curious the degree to which Attali seemingly ignores the role of the internet -- now and as might be anticipated. And yet, briefly stated, it could be argued that the internet has now acquired far greater significance in the eyes of many. Typically his selective review of international actors fails to mention the body most responsible for governance of the internet ([Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers](#)).

It is a fact of history that both the UN and UNESCO (with its information / knowledge-society mandate) completely missed every imaginable opportunity with respect to the internet. Arguably social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook -- together with Google -- now have a far more significant role in relation to future governance than any conventional "instance" mentioned by Attali. It is amazing the extent to which Twitter now has an infinitely more powerful communication function than the UN in its purported representation of "we the peoples". It is equally amazing that neither the UN system, nor the European Community, is able to ensure the development of such facilities, or the search engine capabilities of Google. This is as likely to be true of future innovations significant to

the emergence of a knowledge-based society.

As is to be expected the assumption is made that these can be "regulated" after the fact by the bodies which Attali identifies. More significant however is the seemingly complete incapacity to understand why these facilities are held to be significant by their enthusiasts and how they have effectively sidelined many patterns of communication previously articulated by the bodies Attali so selectively names. The bodies he names have exhibited no capacity to enhance proactively the social organization capacities of the internet. More ironic are the efforts of the intelligence services to do so for purely defensive purposes -- lacking any ability to adapt them to the challenges of global governance (*From ECHELON to NOLEHCE: enabling a strategic conversion to a faith-based global brain*, 2007). The cynical counter-argument is that the major social networking services and search engines have been developed in the USA as a means of implementing the original ambitions of the now officially deprecated US [Total Information Awareness](#) program.

**Governance through ignorance:** Ironically the so-called knowledge-based society is ever more increasingly characterized by ignorance -- in the sense that no one now has the capacity to encompass the knowledge produced in ever increasing quantities. All are therefore rendered increasingly ignorant relative to the amount of knowledge "available" to which meaningful access is inhibited by:

- physical access facilities (geography, electronic connectivity, etc)
- cost (commercial constraints, most notably imposed through copyright)
- restrictions (most notably commercial and governmental secrecy)
- unfamiliar, complex or alienating "language" and form of presentation

Such constraints notably affect those in positions of governance, despite the extent to which they may benefit from the most sophisticated "intelligence gathering" technology available. Aspects of the issue are evident in the lag in uptake of new information technologies, both with respect to the potential empowerment of those able to exploit them and to the disempowerment of those unable to benefit from them -- as is so strikingly evident with the elderly and the technologically challenged. It might be said that a new form of "illiteracy" is being rapidly engendered in society.

Decision-makers have long recognized the extent to which they are overloaded. The same is necessarily true of those who elect them, or tacitly approve their initiatives. Both decisions-makers and the wider population are necessarily ignorant about the future.

It is appropriate therefore to consider how governance can best function within an ignorance-based society in which access to knowledge is limited in ways which are potentially problematic. Arguable governance already takes place "through ignorance" and "in ignorance" of the wider implications of the issues considered and those which are intentionally or inadvertently ignored. Of particular relevance are poorly acknowledged cognitive resistances to potentially vital knowledge (Karen A. Cerulo, *Never Saw It Coming: cultural challenges to envisioning the worst*, 2006; John Ralston Saul, *The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995; Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007).

There is also the sense, which could be said to be widely acknowledged, that those in governance have always been relatively indifferent to conditions of which they could be aware but do not choose to be aware as a matter of convenience -- and in order to focus on what they perceive to be priorities. In that sense "priorities" are ways of implicitly defining that of which it is considered appropriate to be ignorant. They may also signal both the abilities of governance and the inability with regard to other matters.

Corresponding to the ignorance with which governance is framed and undertaken is that of the governed -- who may well be relatively indifferent, if not completely so, to the concerns, priorities and initiatives of governance. This relates to the widely debated issue of public apathy and democratic deficit.

Arguably the problematic aspects of this issue may be reframed (possibly dangerously and somewhat cynically) as offering the possibility of governance "with a light touch", namely minimal governance responding to only those issues which acquire salience. It might be said to correspond to the tradition of governance in imperial China in which the highest authority was characterized by how little it was called upon to act.

On the other hand, increases in the relative proportion of ignorance in society may be comparable to the advancing effects of senility in an aging individual -- offering the prospect of a global civilization increasingly haunted by forms of senile dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease (*Pointers to the Pathology of Collective Memory*, 1980). Are efforts at mapping cyberspace the first indications of capacity to detect "plaques" and "tangles" by scanning the global brain? (Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchin, *Mapping Cyberspace*, 2003). Are "dark spaces", indicative of an "unhealthy brain", already to be found? (Jerome Burne, *Are you wrecking your brain? Chilling pictures reveal shocking effects of alcohol, cigarettes and even caffeine on the mind*, *Daily Mail*, 5 May 2009).

## Failure of dialogue in governance

Attali makes various conventional recommendations for new contexts for global dialogue and debate. The assumption seems to be made that by simply placing the existing ingredients into a new pot a more fruitful outcome will emerge -- whether or not this is done according to any new recipe. This fails to address the abysmal failure of existing dialogue processes -- other than on narrow technical issues. Does the governance of tomorrow not call for new modes of dialogue? A multiplicity of processes are indeed on offer. However these apply only when participants "buy into" the process (even contractually) and "submit" to the facilitator and the consensual outcome. Any challenge to the process or the moderator is unacceptable -- making the process non-viable in the more conflictual situations characteristic of the real world (Middle East, inter-faith discourse, etc). Clearly no such process was in evidence in recent negotiations for the new US debt ceiling. Why not?

Is it to be assumed that governance assemblies of the future will echo the impoverished binary discourse of national parliaments -- and the debt ceiling debate? Will this be adequate to the challenge or merely exemplify the inadequacy of such contexts? Most pathetic is to note in TV coverage the manner in which UK Members of Parliament are obliged to stand up -- competitively -- in order to ensure

recognition by the Speaker of the House of Commons. Is this to honour behaviour in school classrooms?

More intriguing is where such challenges might be recognized -- given that parliamentary processes are accepted as comfortable by the participants. Why did Attali not recognize the need for far more powerful debating processes? What might that mean? Is he content with the debating processes in which he engages -- as templates for future governance? Are those debating with him equally content? Who is excluded from such debates to ensure the desired comfort of those engaged in them?

Is due process adequate, as Attali would seem to imply? What processes are required to bring potentially urgent issues to the attention of governance assemblies? The challenge is well illustrated by current processes of "dialogue" with "alternative" world views (*Avoiding Dialogue with Alternative Worldviews at any Cost*, 2005; *Guidelines for Critical Dialogue between Worldviews*, 2006)

What does this imply regarding representative debate -- and the ability to detect warning signals of which only minority constituencies are aware? Petitions -- as in the form of a collection of signatures and its submission to an appropriate authority? With regard to the recently announced launch of a petition website in the UK -- for those petitions having gathered 100,000 signatures -- the point was made that the current written petition system is little understood and appreciated. Once received, written petitions are "put in a plastic bag behind the chair of the Speaker" of the House of Commons -- a fate that is claimed speaks volumes for the seriousness with which petitions are taken in that exemplar of democratic institutions (*Speaker backs launch of e-petition website*, *The Guardian*, 2 August 2011).

Equally striking is the current case of an activist on hunger strike in India against the extent of institutionalised corruption in which many decision-makers there are complicit (Chetan Bhagat, *Anna Hazare's fight for change has inspired millions of Indians*, *The Guardian*, 17 August 2011). As noted by Bhagat, the government deprecated his challenge to due process, and variously mishandled him, culminating in arrest:

The ruling class, most from three generations ago, are bewildered. They don't understand movements going viral, with social networks acting as catalysts. Seasoned politicians they may be, but they cannot fathom why students from the premier Indian institutes of technology and farmers from rural villages are backing this activist, who seems to have come from nowhere. What's worse, the government cannot figure a way out. If it passes an anti-corruption law, many of its own lawmakers may end up in jail. If it does not, people will keep flooding on to the streets.

The question can be taken further to ask why the many **collaborative software** applications have had only limited uptake in the environments where they should, in principle, be of greatest relevance with respect to issues of governance. The shambolic UN Conference on Climate Change could be cited as an example, as separately discussed (*Insights for the Future from the Change of Climate in Copenhagen*, 2010)

Going further, it might be asked why the most challenging, complex and highly politicised arguments cannot be facilitated by use of argument mapping software. The most notable such challenge is the (over)population issue noted by Attali (*Overpopulation Debate as a Psychosocial Hazard*, 2009; *United Nations Overpopulation Denial Conference*, 2009; *Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge: incommunicability of fundamentally inconvenient truth*, 2008).

## Beyond a "Concert of Democracies"?

As noted above, an alternative to the divisive foreign policy of the Bush regime, inspired by the neocon *Project for the New American Century*, a new bipartisan report by the **Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs** (Princeton University), titled *Forging a World of Liberty Under Law, US National Security in the 21st Century* (2006), notably proposed a charter for the establishment of a "concert of democracies" -- of which, surprisingly, Attali makes no mention.

The concept had first been proposed as an "Alliance of Democracies" in May 2004 by Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay (*Democracies of the World, Unite, The American Interest*, January-February 2007). According to Lindsay, one of its objectives would be to "harmonize policies" (James M. Lindsay, *The Case for a Concert of Democracies, Ethics and International Affairs*, Spring 2009).

The initiative follows from one of the first speeches during World War I of President Woodrow Wilson who called for "a concert of free countries." The new concert is conceived in the following terms:

While pushing for reform of the United Nations and other major global institutions, the United States should work with its friends and allies to develop a global "Concert of Democracies" - a new institution designed to strengthen security cooperation among the world's liberal democracies. This Concert would institutionalize and ratify the "democratic peace." If the United Nations cannot be reformed, the Concert would provide an alternative forum for liberal democracies to authorize collective action, including the use of force, by a supermajority vote. Its membership would be selective, but self-selected.

As discussed previously (*Policy implications: a "Concert of Democracies"?*, 2006), the use of the "concert" metaphor in the report is one that in musical terms, could be challenged as a possibly outdated mode in which the "music" is necessarily "directed" by the "conductor" to ensure that all sing "in concert" from the same "hymn sheet":

Leading Americans across the political spectrum understood that we are far better off if American power is exercised within an international framework of cooperation, where others have a voice - although not a veto - and nations endeavor to work in concert towards common ends... This aspect of the Concert would constitute a major effort to integrate non-Western democratic powers into a global democratic order. At the same time, the Concert would be more substantial and exclusive than the already existing "community of democracies," which is a broad but shallow organization that seeks to strengthen democracy within

states..

As a reviewer of that report (also termed the "*Slaughter Report*"), Chibli Mallat describes the Concert of Democracies initiative in the following terms:

...it is the result of three years of intensive bipartisan debate involving over 400 prominent people from academia, the policy-making community, and the media in the United States, including former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former National Security Advisor Anthony Lake, Newsweek International editor Fareed Zakaria and former Secretary of State George Shultz. The Slaughter report operates as a post-modern multi-layered problem solver, addressing such problems as terrorism, China, AIDS and other pandemics, global warming, energy and infrastructures. It is ambitious, and seeks the defining status of the famous "X article" by George Kennan on the strategy of "containment" published in *Foreign Affairs* magazine in 1947. [more]

To what extent could the Concert of Democracies be said to be merely a form of institutionalisation of the strategic mindset underlying existing global policies? Speculating that the new diplomatic concert "may be less tuneful than the old one", *The Economist* noted that the metaphor had first been used in the instigation by Klemens von Metternich of the Concert of Europe in 1815 (*Concert of Democracies: a seductive sound*, *The Economist*, 7 June 2007). This lasted, through various adaptations, for a century.

Is the effective focus on "concerted effort" or "concertation" without calling upon the musical connotations and the associated sophisticated understanding of harmony -- despite purporting to be concerned to "harmonize policies"? As with Attali's argument, it appears to emphasize concentration, typically of a temporary character for a particular task -- as with any periodic plenary assembly. It is perhaps appropriate to note that the related term *concerto* is applied chiefly to compositions in which unequal instrumental or vocal forces are brought into opposition. In this form it avoids any exploration of the other powerful potentials of musical harmony reflective of the modern complexity that the new strategy purports to address.

There are indeed other lessons to be drawn from the metaphor (cf John Kao, *Jamming: the art and discipline of corporate creativity*, 1997; Lukasz Michalec and David A Banks, *Information Systems Development Methodologies and all that Jazz*, 2004). Specifically it would be especially regrettable if "concert" became merely another reframing of the unfortunate mindset underlying the "Global Compact" of the United Nations (cf "*Globalization*": *the UN's "Safe Haven" for the World's Marginalized -- the Global Compact with Multinational Corporations as the UN's "Final Solution"*, 2000). A critical description of European institutions has been made in terms of the "orchestra" metaphor by Timothy Garton Ash (*The European Orchestra*, *Hoover Digest: Research and Opinion on Public Policy*, 2001, 3).

In seeking possibilities that transcend the proposed "Concert of Democracies", it might then be asked, which Attali does not, how viable decisions in fact emerge from a context of the "systematic" failure of dialogue discussed above. How are decisions corresponding to the needs of longer-term sustainable governance to be engendered (*Future Generation through Global Conversation: in quest of collective well-being through conversation in the present moment*, 1997)?

Is consensus to be expected with respect to governance of the world? Is the presentation of any such "concert" trapped by a collective delusion which should be challenged (*The Consensus Delusion: Mysterious attractor undermining global civilization as currently imagined*, 2011). Are there even assumptions relating to "governability" which merit a degree of challenge (*Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy? Towards engaging appropriately with time*, 2011).

The "symphonic" concert image on the cover of Attali's book is then unfortunately consistent with the imposition of order implied by the thinking underlining the use of "concert" in the "Concert of Democracies" proposal -- with its US "conductor", perhaps led by Sarah Palin or Rick Perry. This framing totally fails to respond to the popularity of the reality and insights of the contrasting "demonic" image (above) presented in the introduction -- that of the Eurovision Song Contest. It might however be consistent with an evangelical equivalent -- such as the mass assemblies of the *Promise Keepers*.

## Governance in discontinuity and chaos

The question is how then to engage creatively with the chaos of a turbulent future. Given that the international system is already appropriately described as chaotic, how then are its asystemic characteristics (implicit in Attali's overview) to be transformed in relation to insights regarding the implicit and emergent orders of non-linear *complex systems*?

**Governance through checklists:** It is unfortunate that Attali concludes with ten recommendations effectively presented as a checklist. This is consistent with most approaches to strategy development in which little effort is made to explore the implications of one initiative for another, as a pattern of checks and balances. This regrettable tendency was most effort in the case of *Agenda 21*, the global action plan for sustainable development formulated at the *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) for the 21st century. Acclaimed as a comprehensive blueprint, there are no links between the issues identified in its 40 chapters. Discontinuity and fragmentation are effectively "designed in".

There is no effort to understand Agenda 21 as a systemic initiative, as previously discussed (*Configuring Globally and Contending Locally: shaping the global network of local bargains by decoding and mapping Earth Summit inter-sectoral issues*, 1992). The mapping exercise there endeavoured to use a polyhedral framework to "design in" coherence, if only with respect to information, as further developed subsequently (*Towards Polyhedral Global Governance: complexifying oversimplistic strategic metaphors*, 2008). Environmental preoccupations may call for environment-inspired patterns of order (*Enabling Governance through the Dynamics of Nature: exemplified by cognitive implication of vortices and helicoidal flow*, 2010).

As noted above, a similar point can be made with respect to the checklists of selected international bodies presented by Attali. Although often disparaged as a complex "spaghetti" network, little effort is made to elicit and enhance its systemic characteristics (*Polyhedral Empowerment of Networks through Symmetry: psycho-social implications for organization and global governance*, 2008). Rather than the "spreadsheet" format occasionally used to interrelate strategic initiatives, another fruitful approach is to map such information onto a torus (*Comprehension of Requisite Variety for Sustainable Psychosocial Dynamics: Transforming a matrix classification onto intertwined tori*, 2006).

**Imaginative challenge to objectivity:** Attali's argument is a conventional exercise in objectivity, which is what many would like to assume is all that is required in envisaging the future government of the world. This is somewhat curious for a French author of his generation, given the historically important role of the slogan of the May 1968 student revolution in France: *L'imagination au pouvoir* (Power to Imagination) -- the subject of commentary such as that of Thomas R. Flynn (*L'imagination Au Pouvoir: The Evolution of Sartre's Political and Social Thought, Political Theory*, 7, 2, 1979, pp. 157-180)

The role of imagination and subjectivity is all too easily omitted despite its role in faith-based governance (*Future Challenge of Faith-based Governance*, 2003). Following the questionable faith-based interventions in Iraq under Bush and Blair, the point is strikingly raised again by the very recent declaration of **Rick Perry** -- the person who may well be elected as the next "most powerful man on the planet":

Right now, America is in crisis. We have been besieged by financial debt, terrorism, and a multitude of natural disasters. As a nation, we must come together and call upon Jesus to guide us through unprecedented struggles, and thank him for the blessings of freedom we so richly enjoy... Some problems are beyond our power to solve.... with praying people asking God's forgiveness, wisdom and provision for our state and nation. There is hope for America. It lies in heaven, and we will find it on our knees.  
(*Rick Perry under fire for planning Christian prayer rally and fast, The Guardian*, 5 August 2011)

At this time of writing both Rick Perry and Sarah Palin are rated front runners for the Republican candidacy for the US Presidency in 2012. Whether in their relations with the Tea Party movement or the evangelical fundamentalists, both merit consideration as embodying an "imaginative" approach to the chaos of the future (Amy Goodman, *New Exposé Reveals Rick Perry's Close Ties to Radical Evangelicals and Self-Proclaimed Prophets, Democracy Now*, 12 August 2011). The mode of organization and existence of the Tea Party movement can even be fruitfully compared with another embodiment of that chaos, namely Al-Qaida (*Cultivating Global Strategic Fantasies of Choice: learnings from Islamic Al-Qaida and the Republican Tea Party movement*, 2010).

Attali indeed mentions religion with respect to his "double green" convergence of fundamentalist religion and ecology. However he avoids the larger question of the role of imagination, if only as increasingly central to the role of media and spin. The Club of Rome ventured to recognize both a "world problematique" and a "world resolutique" (Alexander King and Bertrand Schneider, *The First Global Revolution: a Report by the Council of the Club of Rome*, 1991).

Who might venture to recognize a "world imaginatque" in relation to them? Such an imaginatque may well be vital to reframing the challenges of future governance, as separately argued (*Imagining the Real Challenge and Realizing the Imaginal Pathway of Sustainable Transformation*, 2007). As well-recognized in marketing, the challenge of the times may be the detection and design of mnemonic triggers and holding patterns (*In Quest of Mnemonic Catalysts -- for comprehension of complex psychosocial dynamics*, 2007). The thirst for imaginative alternatives, highlighted by the entertainment industry, also merits careful attention (*Relevance of Mythopoetic Insights to Global Challenges*, 2009).

**Imaginal deficiency:** For that matter, what is "imagination" in a context global governance? How is its deficiency to be recognized (*Imaginal deficiency and simplistic metaphors*, 1995; *Imaginal deficiency in management and policy making*, 1995; *Failure of imagination to deal with an alternative logic*, 2005)?

Investigations into the "global intelligence failure" relating to 9/11 and Iraq (cf *Report on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Pre-War Assessments on Iraq*, 9 July 2004; Lord Butler's *Review of Intelligence of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 13 July 2004) highlighted two factors:

- **Groupthink:** This was originally defined as "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action". It describes a process by which a group can make bad or irrational decisions. Each member of the group attempts to conform his or her opinions to what they believe to be the consensus of the group. In a general sense this seems to be a very rationalistic way to approach the situation. However this results in a situation in which the group ultimately agrees upon an action which each member might individually consider to be unwise [more]. In the case of Iraq, this "extended to our allies and to the United Nations and several other nations as well, all of whom did believe that Saddam Hussein had active WMD programs" [more]. (cf *Groupthink: the Search for Archaeoraptor as a Metaphoric Tale: missing the link between "freedom fighters" and "terrorists"*, 2002)
- **Failure of imagination:** regarding the second factor, according to David Leventhal (*Bush's groupthink caused failure of imagination*, 11 September 2004): Groupthink "is used to blame the intelligence agencies for the WMD fiasco. 'Failure of imagination' is used to blame the whole body politic for the 9/11 attacks. Both frames are being used to deflect criticism away from the Bush administration. In reality, though, groupthink and failure of imagination uniquely characterize the administration's maladaptive pre-9/11 behavior".

Does a failure of imagination prevail in relation to current response to global governance, as suggested by the following commentaries on current crises:

- Julian Glover (*The cry for leadership goes out - and no one answers*, *The Guardian*, 7 August 2011): Despite their differences, capitalists, socialists, liberals and conservatives are united by a common idea. It is the assumption of linear progress for human civilisation: the belief, seldom stated because rarely challenged, that things can only get better or - if they seem not to be - can get better if we choose the right policies....What, once summoned back to their offices, do we expect ministers to do?... No one can agree, of course, but it's worse than that: no proposed strategy carries complete conviction even with those who propose it. There is a thundering absence of bright ideas, of the "hey, here's how" variety. Hence the frightening silence.... The crises we face in the summer of 2011 are no less sharp or scary [than those of the past], but what's missing is leadership, not so much by people as by ruling ideas. The best, as Yeats said, lack all conviction.
- *The Economist* (*The absence of leadership in the West is frightening -- and also rather familiar*, 30 July 2011): A government's credibility is founded on its commitment to honour its debts. As a result of the dramas of the past few weeks, that crucial commodity is eroding in the West....  
In the early days of the economic crisis the West's leaders did a reasonable job of clearing up a mess that was only partly of their making. Now the politicians have become the problem. In both America and Europe, they are exhibiting the sort of behaviour that could turn a downturn into stagnation. The West's leaders are not willing to make tough choices; and everybody--the markets, the leaders of the emerging world, the banks, even the voters -- knows it. It is a mark of how low expectations have sunk that the euro zone's half-rescue of Greece on July 21st was greeted with relief. As *The Economist* went to press, it still was not clear on what terms America's debt limit would be raised, and for how long. Even if the current crises abate or are averted, the real danger persists: that the West's political system cannot take the difficult decisions needed to recover from a crisis and prosper in the years ahead.
- Kishore Mahbubani (*A Rudderless World*, *New York Times*, 18n August 2011): The demand for global leadership has never been greater. The world is truly lost in trying to find a way out of the current crisis. America is imploding. Europe is crumbling. London is burning. The Arab Spring has lost direction. China and India remain internally preoccupied. If ever there were a moment for a global leader to step up, this is it. So why is no leader emerging? First, the world has changed structurally, yet our systems for managing global affairs have not adapted. In the past, when the billions of citizens of planet earth lived in separated countries, it was like having an ocean of separate boats. Hence, the postwar order created rules to ensure that the boats did not collide; it created rules for cooperation. Up until now, this arrangement has worked well.

**Governance in discontinuity:** In contrast to the "symphonic" possibility of government implicit in the argument of Attali, a degree of problematic discontinuity has been stressed by authors such as (Peter Drucker, *The Age of Discontinuity: guidelines to our changing society*, 1992) and Charles Handy (*The Age of Unreason: new thinking for a new world*, 1989; *Beyond Certainty: the changing worlds of organizations*, 1995; *The Age of Paradox*, 1994), Both are necessarily concerned with governance in the future.

The concern is also evident with respect to assumptions regarding limits to learning as challenged in relation to a report to the Club of Rome (*Societal Learning and the Erosion of Collective Memory a critique of the Club of Rome Report: No Limits to Learning*, 1980). That report usefully contrasted the relation between "maintenance learning" and "shock learning" (James W Botkin, et al, *No Limits to Learning: bridging the human gap*, 1979).

This contrast might in turn be related to the evident tendency for current governance, through "conventional thinking", to depend on maintenance learning -- only to be confronted periodically with the disastrous "surprises" which are the focus of Nassim Nicholas Taleb (*The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007). These force governance clumsily into a "shock learning" mode -- if fire-fighting reactions can be transcended. How might "conventional change" then be distinguished from any need for "unconventional change"?

**Governance through ridicule by the ridiculous?** Although seemingly offensive and inappropriate, it is useful to recognize the extent to which the "failure of dialogue" in democratic governance is exemplified by the use of ridicule. This is only too evident in parliamentary debate in which each party systematically denigrates the proposals of the other as ridiculous or worse. With all parties so framed by the democratically elected representatives of their opponents, it is difficult to conclude that together -- as the prime organ of governance -- they can be upheld as other than ridiculous on their own terms.

Such a situation raises the question as to whether there is any effort to explore forms of governance in which democratically elected representatives might transcend this level of mutual deprecation. It is however clear that assumptions regarding "consensus", as exemplified by consensual decision-making, are both an impractical and inadequate response to the challenge (*The Consensus Delusion: mysterious attractor undermining global civilization as currently imagined*, 2011).

**Governance of importance by the important:** A conventional approach to the challenges of governance is to focus on what is defined to be important by those held to be important. This modality is increasingly challenged by circumstances and the evident incompetence of those so defined in dealing with current crises.

It is curious that those involved in government would typically assume that they derive a sense of their own importance from the importance of the matters with which they choose so selectively to deal. Is the level of increasing inequality in society, and the anger it arouses, associated with such perceived notions of self-importance by the privileged? The anger is also associated with the assumed lack of importance associated with the preoccupations of those who are considered less important in society.

The situation might well be challenged by asking the question what it is that the important "import" -- and from whom do they "import" it? Conversely it might then be asked who are the "Very Exportant People" -- the "VEPs" -- the "Chinese" of the import/export business in an information society? And what is it that they "export" that is so valuable to the important and might well be increasing their indebtedness?

**Governance of confidence and confidence in governance:** Recent global crises in the financial system have made it evident, through extensive commentary, the extent of dependence on the intangibles of confidence and trust. Governance may indeed be held to depend to a high degree on confidence. Other recent crises have made it evident the extent to which confidence in many aspects of governance has been eroded (*Abuse of Faith in Governance*, 2009). The recommendations of Attali, even understood to be pragmatic and feasible, do not take into account such factors -- especially for those who have lost all belief that they "have a future".

There would seem to be an interesting balance to be explored between the governance of confidence and the confidence in governance. Given the increasing "virtualization" of a knowledge-based society, in which media may play an even more important role, the relation of credibility to confidence may be an ever increasing challenge.

**Governance of dependency and dependency on governance:** The extent of dependency in society is becoming increasingly evident. This ranges from dependence on increasingly scarce resources to dependence on stimulants of various forms -- including those supplied through various media. The issue of dependence on social services and assistance supplied by government is a matter of continuing controversy. It can be readily argued that some forms of dependence have become addictions -- as in the case of oil. Dependence on economic growth might also be seen in this light -- even to be described as a Ponzi scheme. Dependence on ever increasing population is a feature of this.

Framed in this way, there is a case for exploring the options for governance in increasingly turbulent social systems -- when dependency relations become fragile and break down.

**Governance through engagement with denial and the netherworld:** It is increasingly evident the degree to which discontinuity is associated with patterns of denial in governance. This is strikingly demonstrated by institutionalized secrecy and the embarrassment of "leaks". Conventional governance increasingly appears to function within a bubble of conventional comfort zones -- whilst being obliged to engage in covert operations and "dirty tricks" in contradiction with the values it publicly claims to uphold.

The question is then how to explore this "netherworld" as means of ensuring integrative governance of the complex system as a whole. As illustrated in Fig. 3b, below, pointers in this direction can be derived through use of a combination of the Fibonacci spiral and the double Euler spiral as a means of holding successive articulations of the *Ba Gua* system, as separately described (*Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: Patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld*, 2010).

The "netherworld" may of course be understood in terms of the chaotic worldviews cultivated by some sectors of society under certain circumstances -- as well-illustrated by the image (above) of the widely applauded winners of the Eurovision Song Contest.

**Governance through transcendence of approval of change:** The arguments above highlight the difficulty of achieving consensus on appropriate strategies -- or their useful approval through processes of governance. It is to be expected that contrasting strategies will variously emerge, articulated according to different principles best understood as complementary -- variously embodied in different "institutions", and variously comprehended as relevant to different circumstances.

Charles Handy uses four Greek deities to characterize the different styles of management (*Gods of Management: who they are, how they work and why they fail*, 1978). The relevance to future global governance merits consideration. The four gods (and the associated organizational styles) are: Zeus (club), Apollo (role), Athena (task) and Dionysus (existential). He notes:

Each of the four gods gives its name to a cult or philosophy of management and to an organizational culture. Each of these cultures has also got a formal, more technical name, as well as a diagrammatic picture. The names, picture and Greek God each carries its own overtones, and these overtones combine to build up the concept I am trying to convey. They also help to keep the ideas in one's memory. These names and signs and Gods do not amount to definitions, for the cultures cannot be precisely defined, only recognized when you see them... It is important to realize that each of these cultures, or ways of running things is good - for something.

The "approval" of change in such complex systems calls for ways of working with looser styles of connectivity/discontinuity between modes readily perceived as "systemic" and a challenge to comprehension. **Attali's question relating to "who" will govern tomorrow's world is then reframed within such a context as being usefully understood as a more implicit attribute of a self-organizing system.**

The musical metaphor remains useful given its wide appeal. The symphonic/concert style, necessitating explicit approval by a "conductor", indeed has its place in the execution of pre-composed pieces -- playing "**conventionally**". This is however also the case with contrasting styles, notably calling for improvisation in the moment by those participating -- playing "**unconventionally**". But the musical metaphor also highlights the need for a shift to a focus on the array of instruments capable of playing according to different styles. This shift recognizes the future emergence of new styles according to new understandings of the principles of "harmony" and the nature of tuning systems, as separately explored (*Tuning a Periodic Table of Religions, Epistemologies and Spirituality: including the sciences and other belief systems*, 2007).

Should the set of shared values fundamental to any "Concert of Democracies" be expressed as a conventional checklist -- or rather through a "melody" or "song" that interweaves their relationships into a comprehensible, memorable whole -- exemplifying their complementarity as a system of checks and balances?

In the quest for other mnemonic catalysts, the relationship between the sounds characteristic of the varieties of instruments (strings, wind, brass, etc) offers an interesting possibility of being understood in terms of the interplay encoded by the dynamics of the Chinese *Ba Gua* system -- then to be understood as transcending individual styles in order to embody the full pattern of potential change. Usefully the individual codes within the *Ba Gua* are associated mnemonically with particular instruments. More intriguing is the further articulation

of that array to a number characteristic of a full symphonic orchestra.

What remains elusive, and perhaps necessarily so, are the subtle dynamic relationships between forms of change with which governance is called upon variously to engage. The *Ba Gua* system, and its extension, offers one way of reflecting on this and the transactional game-playing to which governance is called upon to respond and by which it is itself characterized (*Cardioid Attractor Fundamental to Sustainability: 8 transactional games forming the heart of sustainable relationship*, 2005).

## Self-governance in the self-organizing world of tomorrow

The combination of constraints highlighted above -- relative ignorance, discontinuity, failure of dialogue, and turbulence -- suggest the widespread emergence of "self-governance" with respect to "worlds" engendered by processes self-organization within a complex system.

Both the self-organization, and the style of self-governance, will be imaginatively inspired to offer a degree of coherence to the particular "worldviews". It will be the capacity to imagine more coherent and integrative forms of organization which will elicit new styles of self-governance. The process and its coherence will be partially sustained by aesthetic criteria, as previously argued (*Enacting Transformative Integral Thinking through Playful Elegance*, 2010).

A key to this process will be the understanding of a "world" as experienced through self-organizing processes. Many traces of this are already evident in the implications of phrases such as: "they live in their own world", "making one's own world", etc. The coherence of many social groups derives from a sense that they constitute a "world of their own". People may of course "live in several worlds", just as some live in different contexts according to the seasons. Insight into the making of "worlds" is offered by Nelson Goodman (*Ways of Worldmaking*, 1978). The challenge to imagination is discussed separately (*Imaginal education: game playing, science fiction, language, art and world-making*, 2003).

For some the world may indeed be flat, as variously promoted by Thomas L. Friedman (*The World Is Flat: a brief history of the twenty-first century*, 2005; *The World Is Flat: the globalized world in the twenty-first century*, 2006) and separately challenged (*Irresponsible Dependence on a Flat Earth Mentality in response to global governance challenges*, 2008). But there is no reason for some not to adopt such a worldview in contrast to the far more imaginative worldviews which others may cultivate -- most notably the religions. Each is then free to dominate and organize their "world" -- although clearly history may well see various "wars between worlds".

Perhaps more intriguing is then how the "globality" of the "world" is variously understood, especially when use of "global" aspires to encompass the multiplicity of "worlds" in some way. How then to distinguish between the globality of a "world" and the globality of a "universe" to which some may wish to lay claim. Here it might be argued that this will call upon a creative mix of geometry and imagination in the quest for forms enabling comprehension of greater complexity and subtlety -- as a means of sustaining larger social groupings (*Metaphorical Geometry in Quest of Globality*, 2009; *Geometry of Thinking for Sustainable Global Governance*, 2009; *Geometry, Topology and Dynamics of Identity*, 2009).

Within such a context, as experienced by some, will be the challenge of the relation between understandings of the individual and that of any collectivity -- recognizing that individuals may well already have a sense of living "within their own world", especially as reinforced by the accelerating process of cocooning. The simplicity of the binary distinction between individual and collective is already variously challenged, calling for more complex geometries to articulate the reality experienced, as separately discussed (*Living as an Imaginal Bridge between Worlds: global implications of "betwixt and between" and liminality*, 2011; *¿ Defining the objective ∞ Refining the subjective ?! Explaining reality ∞ Embodying realization*, 2011).

Such considerations may give rise to highly imaginative understandings of "self-governance" -- even of "independence", as previously suggested (*Declaration of Universal Independence*, 2009). In seeming contrast with his approach to governance, in an earlier work (*Survivre aux crises: 7 stratégies*, 2009) Attali makes a case consistent with this point, as previously discussed with respect to the cognitive implications for survival of crises (*Individual motivation: radical possibilities in response to global crisis*, 2009). He argues that individuals can escape a crisis in better condition than they entered it. However the necessary prerequisite is to understand the logic and course of events, to make use of new knowledge accumulating in many domains, to depend only on oneself, to take oneself seriously, to become an actor in one's own destiny, and to adopt audacious strategies of personal survival. (pp. 15-16)

He stresses the importance of recognizing the "vertiginous reality" that: our sociopolitical systems are doing nothing, **absolutely nothing to avoid the threats facing the survival of individuals, enterprises, nations, and humanity itself.**

Worse still, Attali argues, despite what they claim in order to reinforce their legitimacy, they have no reason to do anything effective since they feed off the vitality of those living in their systems. Under these circumstances **it becomes pointless to await this or that general reform.** The opportunity lies in reconstructing oneself and in the vigilant association with allies -- rather than in depending uncritically on boundless optimism. The key lies in extreme lucidity with regard to oneself and a focused desire to determine one's own *raison d'être*, whether in the short-term or the longer-term. It is not just a question of conserving what has been achieved but may involve **going beyond existing patterns of order.** Nor is it just a question of preserving a sense of personal integrity but may well require exploring a variety of possibilities. (pp.19-20).

Given such arguments by Attali in his earlier study, a strong case could be made for treating his two studies as complementary rather than independent -- even conceived as addressed to two quite distinct audiences. Taken together, this perspective clearly raises the question of how to understand the possible relation between governance of "self" (whether individual or collective) and governance of a "world" (of whatever scope). Bluntly stated, **how does one govern one's own world -- however it is comprehended?**

One potentially fruitful approach may result from explorations of fractals, as exemplified by the *Mandelbrot set* (*Sustainability through the Dynamics of Strategic Dilemmas: in the light of the coherence and visual form of the Mandelbrot set*, 2005; *Psycho-social*

## Designing a sustaining image of governance for the future

Symbols are typically associated with the individual political parties which seek power in order to impose their vision of governance -- whether according to their understanding of the interests of the population of a whole, or in advancement of those of their own constituency. It is curious that no symbols are associated with governance of the planet as a whole -- transcending particular agendas, including those purporting to be in the interests of the planet as a whole.

Clearly there is an element of paradox in this situation in that agendas for the planet as a whole are necessarily promoted by particular constituencies. This suggests that the required symbol must encompass that paradox. Rather than being that of a particular party it should embody a range of governance modes and strategies -- providing dynamically for alternatives that may acquire relevance, especially the probability that such may emerge in the future.

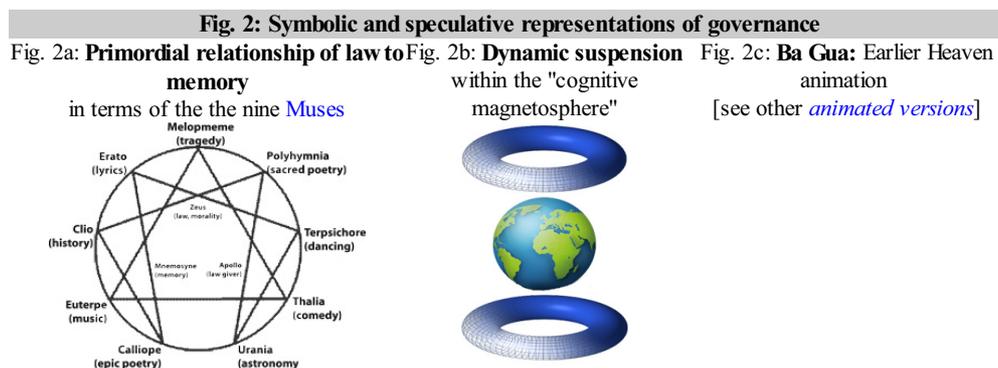
An elephant is often used as a symbol of a political party. The political implications of the challenge of "living room" elephants in the USA have been variously explored. As a cognitive scientist, [George Lakoff](#) (*Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate: the essential guide for progressives*, 2004) argues that much of the success of the Republican Party could be attributed to a persistent ability to control the language of key issues and thus position itself in favorable terms to voters. He outlines in detail the traditional American values that progressives hold, but are often unable to articulate. Columnist Ryan Sager (*The Elephant in the Room: Evangelicals, Libertarians and the Battle to Control the Republican Party*, 2006) uses the metaphor to discuss the conflict for control of that party.

Use of the elephant to symbolize the challenge for global governance is better reflected in a combination of:

- the parable of the [blind men and an elephant](#), variously used to illustrate the relativity, opaqueness, or inexpressible nature, of truth -- notably as embodied by experts in distinct disciplines
- the metaphorical idiom of an [elephant in the room](#), namely an obvious truth that is being ignored or goes unaddressed (*Climate Change and the Elephant in the Living Room*, 2008)

The question is how to identify and/or design one or more fruitful metaphors to hold the dynamics of the requisite paradox. Ironically one such example may be the psychology of the familiar process of "snoring" and its relation to the symbol of the Tao, as separately discussed (*Snoring of The Other: a politically relevant psycho-spiritual metaphor?* 2006) -- especially given the arguments of John Ralston Saul (*The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995). Understood as a challenge in self-reflexivity, the question may be framed as one of "stepping into the mirror" upheld by objectivity (*Stepping into, or through, the Mirror: embodying alternative scenario patterns*, 2008).

The Mandelbrot set, mentioned above, offers one such symbol -- widely acknowledged to be extraordinary. Various other visual symbols are illustrated in Fig. 2, Fig 3 and Fig. 4 below as a contribution to such an exploration (see also *In Quest of a Strategic Pattern Language: a new architecture of values*, 2008). Arguably any such symbol must necessarily be "extraordinary" to hold the paradoxical nature of engagement with the future and to enable the above-mentioned constraints to be designed "around"..



**Fig. 2a:** as indicated by the relationship in Greek mythology between [Zeus](#) (as the guardian of law and morality), who fathered the nine [Muses](#) with [Mnemosyne](#), and his son [Apollo](#) (as the giver of laws). This is suggestive of the complementary roles they may play in using various aesthetic modes to articulate an integrate significance in governance, as previously argued and imagined (*Aesthetics of Governance in the Year 2490*, 1990).

**Fig. 2b:** offers a provocative image of the potential challenge of sustainability represented as a dynamic balance -- well-recognized in [electromagnetic suspension](#). The lower torus might indeed represent achieving successful design and operation of a [toroidal nuclear fusion reactor](#) as the acclaimed key to the planet's future energy needs (such as [ITER](#)). The upper torus might then represent a corresponding form of "cognitive fusion" containing the challenging dynamics of the Knight's move and overcoming the disruptive instabilities of "monkeying" and "blame-games". The relation between the physical and cognitive tori is discussed separately (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006). Presented in this way, the image echoes the arguments for the elusive psychosocial paradoxical recognition of living "in between" contrasting understandings -- as many are increasingly obliged to do (*Living as an Imaginal Bridge between Worlds: global implications of "betwixt and between" and liminality*, 2011).

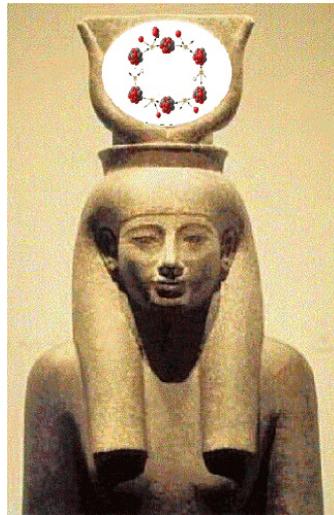
**Fig. 2c:** shows one of the classical Chinese *Ba Gua* arrangements encoding the different forms of change, traditionally considered of

significance to governance, especially when presented as an animation (*Animation of Classical BaGua Arrangements*, 2008).

**Fig. 3: Symbolic and speculative representations of governance**

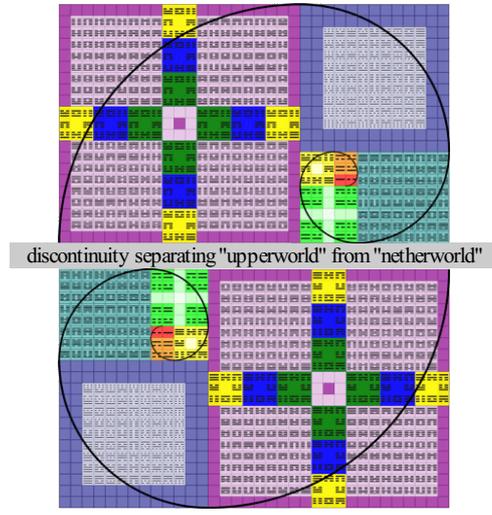
**Fig 3a: Conscious embodiment in creativity using a combination of traditional and classical imagery**

Reproduced from *Embodiment of Identity in Conscious Creativity: Challenge of encompassing "con"* (2011)



**Fig. 3b: Schematic combining Fibonacci and Euler spiral as a means of holding successive articulations of the Ba Gua system**

Reproduced from: *Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: Patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld* (2010)



**Fig. 3a:** Composite animation using images of the CNO fusion cycle, various traditional solar symbols, and a representation of a traditionally appropriate Egyptian deity Hathor [also WMV version]

**Fig. 3b:** The approach is partially inspired by the work of Christopher Alexander (*Notes on the Synthesis of Form*, 1964, *A Pattern Language*, 1977, and *The Nature of Order*, 2003-4), especially his current research emerging from that context (*Harmony-Seeking Computations: a science of non-classical dynamics based on the progressive evolution of the larger whole*, *International Journal for Unconventional Computing (IJUC)*, 2009; *New Concepts in Complexity Theory: an overview of the four books of the Nature of Order with emphasis on the scientific problems which are raised*, 2003). As discussed separately, of particular interest is Alexander's focus on "geometrical adaptation" (*Harmony-Comprehension and Wholeness-Engendering: eliciting psychosocial transformational principles from design*, 2010). It uses the *Ba Gua* encoding as a means of incorporating closure and denial (*Cognitive embodiment of an "underworld" into governance*, 2010).

## Conclusion

As noted in introducing this critique, Attali's question merits much attention -- irrespective of challenges usefully made to his answers from different perspectives and for different reasons. This is consistent with a point made in his introduction to the effect that:

Or, ni un empire, ni le marché ne pourront maîtriser les immenses problèmes du monde. Il faudra pour cela un gouvernement mondial... Il sera totalitaire ou démocratique, selon la façon dont il s'instaurera. Il est désormais urgent de la penser avant d'être pensé par lui.

Attali's asystemic worldview enables him to omit any reference to the potentially significant insights emerging from complexity theory with respect to self-organization. He refers in his introduction to the predictable emergence of "polycentric chaos". This is the stuff of complexity theory. How might the governance of the world "self-organize" and how might this "self-organization" be imaginatively enabled? (*Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007). Is there not a case for using the best systems insights to run simulations of communication possibilities on a wide variety of designs -- even interactively -- to identify fruitful possibilities for emergent coherence? (*Simulating a Global Brain: using networks of international organizations, world problems, strategies, and values*, 2001; *Superquestions for Supercomputers*, 2010)

If not, why not? How might such explorations relate to the *FuturICT Knowledge Accelerator* -- "a previously unseen multidisciplinary international scientific endeavour with focus on techno-socio-economic-environmental systems"?

Attali's recommended point of departure is a global forum -- an *Estates General* for the planet. In envisaging such a forum, where is the "due diligence" with respect to the many attempts, honourable and otherwise, to enable some such dialogue? It is not sufficient to claim to be operating *tabula rasa*. There is history and there are learnings. There have been "honourable failures". How then to move forward without falling into similar traps? The challenge is highlighted by the case of the *State of the World Forum* (*State of the 'World Forum' vs 'State of the World' Forum: challenge of reflexivity*, 2009).

Reference was made to the widespread tendency to focus creatively on the "rearrangement of the deck chairs on the Titanic". The need for "new thinking", as variously articulated, would appear to call for far more radical explorations than those advocated by Attali in his current study, although far more consistent with his earlier study of 2009. The possibility of emergent understandings of "self-governance" in self-organizing "worlds" of tomorrow therefore merits consideration. It challenges conventional understandings of "who"

will govern what "world" in the future -- especially the cognitive world which each is obliged to imagine and make. The ultimate challenge may well be how to engage with "externalities" and "otherness" (*Existential Embodiment of Externalities*, 2009; *Reframing the Dynamics of Engaging with Otherness*, 2011; *En-minding the Extended Body*, 2003).

Strangely, in Attali's explicit effort to focus on the pragmatically "possible", setting aside the "impossibility" of the ideal, he effectively ignores the extent to which many are already exploring the ideal and the impossible -- in full recognition of the demonstrated incapacity of governance to deliver on what is purportedly possible (other than in the form of bombs or their equivalents).

Emphasis was placed on the increasing role of ignorance in governance -- ignored, as might be expected, in a knowledge-based society. There is a curious sense in which the widespread focus on "targetting" individuals under ever circumstance in order to change their perspective -- typically with respect to marketing of every kind -- resembles the "targetting" of atoms and particles so characteristic of use of [particle accelerators](#) in fundamental [accelerator physics](#), as at CERN in its much-publicized costly quest for the "God particle" (Leon Lederman, *The God Particle: If the Universe Is the Answer, What Is the Question?* 1993).

There is the intriguing possibility that the very preoccupation with the design of such physical accelerators is a form of collective cognitive displacement by humanity ("[misplaced concreteness](#)") with respect to the learning required for the transformation of individual and collective awareness in governance of the future. Hence the relevance of exploring a "cognitive fusion reactor" as indicated in the commentary on Fig. 2b ([above](#)). In that light, representational experiments of potential relevance include that below in Fig. 4, as separately discussed (*Dynamic Exploration of Value Configurations: interrelating traditional cultural symbols through animation*, 2008; *Dynamic Interrelationship of Symbols of Coherent Experiential Representation of Nonduality (DISCERN)*, 2008).

The curious failure to benefit from the quality and subtlety encouraged in physics may be fundamental to the failure to respond to the challenges of governance. The point is well made by the existential timidity in the face of "extreme dialogue" -- seemingly unworthy of a civilization "reaching for the stars" and potentially dependent on fusion energy. The latter is famously dependent on the craziest "[Theories of Everything](#)", as illustrated by the much-quoted statement by Niels Bohr in response to Wolfgang Pauli: "*We are all agreed that your theory is crazy. The question which divides us is whether it is crazy enough to have a chance of being correct. My own feeling is that it is not crazy enough.*" To that Freeman Dyson added:

"When a great innovation appears, it will almost certainly be in a muddled, incomplete and confusing form. To the discoverer, himself, it will be only half understood; to everyone else, it will be a mystery. For any speculation which does not at first glance look crazy, there is no hope!" (Innovation in Physics, *Scientific American*, 199, No. 3, September 1958)

Could the challenge of dialogue with, and between, the "crazy" perspectives of relevance to the challenges of governance -- including religions -- be fruitfully seen in this light? Investment in this possibility might offer more hope than seeking crudely to eliminate and demonize insights that may, in some as yet unknown way, be vital to the future creativity and diversity of humanity?

**Fig. 4: Experimental representation of potentially requisite complexity for faith-based global governance**

(Reproduced from *Dynamic Exploration of Value Configurations: interrelating traditional cultural symbols through animation*, 2008)

Note: Originally developed in SVG, the above experiment is one of a set endeavouring to benefit from different formats (SVG, WMV, SWF), variously rendered on different browsers, in relation to relatively complex content dynamically displayed. In terms of content, the SWF result above notably fails to visualize explicitly the relationship between *I Ching* hexagrams and the Star of David (as specifically explored and visualized [elsewhere](#)). This is somewhat clearer in an SVG [experiment](#) (which does not appear to work in Firefox or IE) and in a WMV [experiment](#). Commentary on content and experiments is provided [separately](#). Relevant discussion of the 8-pointed star common to various cultures, and notably Islam, is provided separately and in relation to imaginative [Knight's move thinking](#) (*Symbols: vital psychoactive focus*, 2011). The *I Ching* relevance to reflection on governance is also the subject of extensive commentary (*Transformation Metaphors: derived experimentally from the Chinese Book of Changes (I Ching) for sustainable dialogue, vision, conferencing, policy, network, community and lifestyle*, 1997).

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