



laetus in praesens

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Affinity, Diaspora, Identity, Reunification, Return

Reimagining possibilities of engaging with place and time

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Introduction

There is a characteristic shared by a variety of disparate understandings of belonging. As indicated by the title, it has to do with the natural process of individual experiential affinity or "resonance" with what are effectively abstractions or virtual entities. The process is fundamentally constrained and denatured by regulations governing such association -- to the point of reducing it to the vaguest of sentiments and hopeless "might have beens".

The clearest example is that of the affinity with which one may relate to a country of which one is not a national, where one may not have been born, and with which one has no apparent formal ties. This is an experience shared by many who may find they "feel at home" in such a place, even though they may have no formal right to live there -- other than temporarily as a tourist, if at all. Even less tangible may be the relationship one feels to such a place through experience of its culture and people -- without ever having travelled there. This can be described as an experience of resonance. Such "affinity" may also be felt in relation to other places.

Another variant is the relationship to a place from which one's ancestors came, namely the sentiment evoked by "roots" -- whether or not one feels any other relationship to the place or its culture, perhaps arising from some form of entitlement through the male or female bloodline. This is especially evident in some understandings of diaspora. It may take a different form in the case of a sense of bond with a country where one was born by chance (in passing), but with which no other formal bond exists -- whether or not there is any legal consequence.

Many variants of such situations are now created by tourism, temporary work or education in distant countries, refugee status and forced resettlement, and the like. This subtle complexity of "bonds" is formally reduced to regulations regarding citizenship, birth certificates and tax obligations -- by which identity is defined for administrative purposes. Some may have multiple passports and have the right to reside in many countries (temporarily or permanently), notably as the consequence of international treaties. Regulations may well ignore any particular bond associated with land which has belonged to one's family over generations.

The question explored here is whether there are other ways of imagining fruitful association with countries, lands and "places", however distant or virtual -- or possibly divided in some way. Of particular interest is the possibility that this might be recognized through refining the pattern of formalities by which such associations are currently defined and restricted. Such an extension might be relevant to concerns regarding democratic deficit, whether nationally or with respect to a region (as in the case of Europe) -- typically framed in terms of public relations, divorced from the subtlety of imaginative associations. It could also be relevant to preoccupation with how to elicit concern for the globe as a whole -- as a responsible citizen of the world.

The argument suggests a subtle psychosocial dynamic between affinity, diaspora, identity, reunification and return.

Official administrative "necessities"?

The ability of individuals to associate meaningfully with a distant place could be understood as constrained by the administrative requirements assumed to be necessary to ensure the coherence of that "realm" or "domain". They can perhaps be summarized as including:

- Identity: namely the need for clarity on who is a recognized citizen or member, in contrast to those who are not. This may be confused in practice with a separate need to ensure the attractiveness of the realm through public relations in order to encourage visitors, typically tourists. The situation may be further confused by recognition of the identity of "consumers" of the products of the realm, whether within the realm or through exports elsewhere.
- Citizenship and residence: namely the further qualification on identity in terms of status as a citizen and/or resident. This is necessarily confused by procedures allowing for residence by non-citizens (including relatives)
- Property ownership: namely the relationship between residence and possible ownership of one or more properties. This is necessarily confused by procedures allowing for ownership of property by non-residents (and non-citizens) and the situation of those having no administratively identifiable residence
- Taxation: namely concern to ensure that revenue for the purposes of administration (and infrastructure maintenance and development) is engendered from citizens, residents and property owners
- Voting: namely the rights accorded to citizens to vote for legislative assemblies responsible for administration policies and regulations and to ensure their democratic oversight. This is necessarily confused by voter qualifications (age, gender, legal status), notably as to whether eligible voters are non-residents, absent at the time of voting, or legally required to vote.
- Obligations and responsibilities: whether those of the administration (in ensuring security, social security, etc), or those required of citizens and residents

These issues typically engender constraints from an administrative perspective regarding who can be associated in whatever way with the realm. Possibilities of reframing the relationship to a realm -- effectively bypassing those constraints -- are considered below.

Property "possession" and ownership

It could be argued that the relationship to property, whether tangible or virtual, is quite extraordinary and fundamentally questionable. With respect to land, "possession" is ensured by legal proof of ownership, typically guaranteed and authenticated by administrative authorities. Ownership in perpetuity may have been accorded in periods past by a sovereign power. The principle is extended to other tangibles: buildings, animals, objects, etc -- goods and chattels. It is further extended with respect to certain rights associated with such property: access rights, water rights, hunting rights, fishing rights, etc. Of special interest is the extension even further to include mineral rights, typically below the surface, and possibly irrespective of the ownership of the land surface.

This sense of ownership and possession may of course conflict with that of traditional claimants to the land as framed by other concepts of legitimacy. As a result of colonial appropriation of the land -- "in the name of the crown" -- this has given rise to considerable conflict, irrespective of treaties designed to resolve the issues. Such conflict, and associated resentment, continues to this day -- with often vigorous protest by those whose ancestors first inhabited the lands in question, typically with a quite different sense of ownership (if any).

Terra nullius? The debate may centre on the legal assumptions of *Terra Nullius*. This continues to be of relevance with respect to Arctic territories, the sea bed, and potentially to sub-surface regions. It necessarily applies to the Moon, to asteroids and to other planets. Of relevance to this argument is the manner in which land on planets or the Moon is currently offered for sale by promoters who provide titles to [extraterrestrial real estate](#). People may then claim to own that land -- irrespective of whether there is any authoritative recognition of that claim. The question of exclusive ownership of occupied bases on such bodies by government or commercial enterprises raises issues which remain to be resolved.

Intellectual and cultural property: The principle of property ownership has been further extended to [intellectual property](#), namely of intangible property -- whether or not it can take tangible form (books, software, images, web domains, etc). A variant includes the right to property in cyberspace, most notably in [virtual worlds](#).

Another variant is that of [cultural property](#), including symbols and ritual artefacts. The process of naming is of course a subtle means of establishing a claim to a degree of possession of an identity associated with a distant form. Clearly every identity is potentially free to name the features visible from its own worldview, without subscribing to those attributed by others. The naming of stars through the International Astronomical Union offers another example ([Public Naming of Planets and Planetary Satellites](#), September 2013).

This recalls the psychosocial appropriation of a space at the collective level described by the process of *land nam*, coined by [Ananda Coomaraswamy](#) (*The Rg Veda as Land-Nama Bok*, 1935), to refer to the Icelandic tradition of claiming ownership of uninhabited spaces through weaving together a metaphor of geography of place into a unique mythic story. This territorial appropriation process, notably practiced by the Navaho and the Vedic Aryans, was further described by [Joseph Campbell](#) (*The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: metaphor as myth and religion*, 2002):

Land nam ("land claiming or taking") was [the Norse] technical term for this way of sanctifying a region, converting it thereby into an at once psychologically and metaphysical Holy Land.... *Land nam*, mythologization, has been the universally practiced method to bring this intelligible kingdom to view in the mind's eye. The Promised Land, therefore, is any landscape recognized as mythologically transparent, and the method of acquisition of such territory is not by prosaic physical action, but poetically, by intelligence and the method of art; so that the human being should be dwelling in the two worlds simultaneously of the illuminated moon and the illuminating sun.

A more recent variant includes [imaginary countries](#), invented through stories, or in whose existence people believe in without proof. Such "countries" may be notably distinguished by culture, elaborate mythology, and the cultivation of an [artificial language](#) (Alberto Manguel, *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places*, 2000). A striking example is the [Imaginary Society](#) (or [Société Imaginaire](#)), founded in 1984 and sustained by the initiative of the Batuz Foundation as a grouping over 500 artists, writers and scholars from around the world. [Fantasy worlds](#) may be elaborated in a [fictional universe](#), as used in the novels and interactive games of fantasy fiction. Such worlds typically involve magical abilities, possibly with a medieval or futuristic theme. When created through a process called [world building](#), they are known as a [constructed world](#). These elaborate and make self-consistent the setting -- within which many may participate through online gaming, effectively forming a diaspora. Such entities raise fundamental questions as to the nature of their "existence".

The various understandings of [Shambhala](#) offer a well-known example of [mythical cities](#) and "[lost cities](#)" -- part of a larger class including others of legendary and symbolic significance, engendering pilgrimage (Jerusalem, Mecca, Varanasi, etc). Their nature may encourage the design of [ideal cities](#) to embody in material form an understanding of symbolic unification, possibly focused on buildings of particular form ([Matrimandir](#) of Auroville, [Damanhur](#), [Goetheanum](#), [Arcosanti](#), etc).

These subtle understandings are extended in curious ways to belief systems, most notably religions and ideologies as a form of property in the [noosphere](#) -- perhaps to be termed "nooproperty", now that [noopolitik](#) has become a recognized concern. There may be an implication that a discipline or practice is effectively the property of its practioners -- accredited or licensed by authorities they recognize, following appropriate training and qualification. Innovations may need to be recognized through registered patents.

More curious is the manner in which theories may be named by an articulator thereof: [Einstein's Theory of General Relativity](#), and the like. This form of possession may be questionable, even controversial, if the same discovery has been made independently by another. Great importance is then attached to priority in time, although precedence is curiously decided in terms of timing of "publication".

The process of publication in an accredited journal, possibly in an international language, is then strangely reminiscent of the manner in which authorities arrogate to themselves the right to recognize ownership of tangible property. Such issues raise the question of possession and ownership in future instances of "rediscovery of the wheel" by those who are not aware that it had already been "discovered" -- somewhere or somewhen.

Controversy may arise, possibly to be expressed in the form of "that is my idea" or "I thought of that first". Less evident, but fundamental in practice, is possession of an idea, a plan of action, a project, or a sense of identity -- irrespective of whether it is articulated in some medium.

Questionable claims to possession

Tangible property: Recognition of any right to ownership may depend to some degree on whether the property is inhabited, embodied or exploited in some way -- as with the case of "second residences". This recognition is partially challenged by squatters and trespassers who may claim a form of ownership of uninhabited property -- if only with respect to others of similar status. Issues become apparent when "[travellers](#)" (including gypsies) appropriate unoccupied (common) land.

Also of particular relevance to this argument is the manner whereby the independence of an area of land may be declared and claimed -- irrespective of conventional understanding of sovereignty of that land. An example is offered by [micronations](#), also known as model countries and new country projects. These are entities that claim to be independent nations or states but which are not recognized by world governments or major international organizations. The "independence" may be recognized to a degree -- or tolerated -- by the sovereign realm in which they are embedded, possibly for historical or traditional reasons, or where no other administrative concerns arise. The sovereign realm may then restrict its preoccupation to "foreign relations".

Of particular interest is the manner in which England was "claimed" on behalf of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia by [Burnum Burnum](#) - - with the planting of the Aboriginal flag on the white cliffs of Dover on the Australian Bicentenary Day of 26 January 1988.

Whether or not boundaries are implied, considerable significance may be attached to any "sphere of influence". This may apply at the neighbourhood level in the case of street gangs, or at the continental level as with interpretations of [Manifest Destiny](#) (and the [Monroe Doctrine](#)), the German understanding of [Lebensraum](#), the Italian equivalent ([Spazio vitale](#)), or the Japanese analogues ([Hakko ichiu](#), [Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere](#)). Spheres of influence may be claimed by organized crime families and recognized between them.

Other unusual forms of "possession" are evident through a process of "adoption": [adopt a highway](#), [adopt a village](#), [adopt a river](#), or some other natural resource -- as a means of ensuring its protection. Indigenous peoples may recognize individuals with some form of symbolic or ritual responsibility for particular features of the environment.

Of striking significance are those instances in which the land, or some feature of it, may be understood as the traditional realm of nature spirits of some kind, whose possession of it is variously respected and vigorously defended by indigenous peoples ([Darrell A. Posey](#), *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity*, 1999). Any misappropriation of it is then held to be potentially dangerous.

Possession of identity: The possession of identity is the focus of a complex dynamic, variously interweaving the following:

- the identity accorded by naming, initially by parents, then by wider circles, including peers, possibly through nicknames. The process of *land nam* is relevant (as noted above)
- the identity attributed through official processes of registration of birth and the like
- the identity reinforced by physical attributes, including gender and sexual orientation
- the identity acquired through prowess in education, employment and other activities (sport, etc), and its recognition by peers

- the identity associated with symbols of wealth and status, including housing and clothing
- the identity associated with membership of a community, ethnic group, religion
- the identity associated with practice of a language and cultivation of an ideology
- the personal sense of identity, irrespective of that attributed by others, although qualified and reinforced by it

The sense of identity, and of how it is "possessed", may be given focus when its expression is prohibited in some way, whether with respect to use of mother tongue, expression of sexual orientation, or other processes of forceful assimilation into other cultures. It may be further formed through ways in which it may be experienced as violated, including identity theft.

Possession of a "qualification": People and groups may be recognized as possessing a quality of some kind. These may include:

- possession of an attribute (looks, intelligence, charisma, etc)
- possession of a talent or skill, possibly recognized in the form of experience
- possession of a certification of prowess, whether academic, skill-related, employment-related, and including any criminal record
- possession of an objective, goal, or aim
- possession of a principle, value or ethical/moral code
- possession of knowledge, energy, information, resources

Such possession may be unrelated to any expression in practice. The possession of knowledge can be explored through the widespread use of the metaphor that *understanding is grasping*, as discussed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Philosophy in the Flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*, 1999, p. 125, 375): *When the mind metaphorically grasps the form (the physical structure) of the object perceived, it understands (via the metaphor Understanding Is Grasping)*. The problematic implications are discussed below in relation to identity and unification.

Extraordinary possession of intangibles: Irrespective of formal recognition as intellectual or cultural property, a wide range of intangibles may be subject to a degree of possession (as evocative of memories and emotions) through their qualification by "my":

- people: my spouse, my children, my lover, my friend, my servant, my master, my leader
- groups: my team, my association
- obligations: my job, my duty, my responsibility
- objects: my car, my weapon, my clothes
- processes: my technique, my recipe
- place: my town, my neighbourhood, my pub -- even my seat therein (*Stammtisch*)
- aesthetic expression: my song, my tune, my poem
- understanding/commitment: my opinion, my idea, my interest, my enthusiasm, my mission, my career
- aspiration: my hope, my love, my sense of destiny
- audience: my followers, my supporters
- images: as with images of celebrities, or of the New York skyline

The nature of such possession may be variously challenged, most notably in the case of people -- where this may be perceived and experienced as implying an unwelcome degree of **objectification**, as in **sexual objectification**. The case of men framing their relation to their partners as possession of an object (notably a "trophy wife") is a continuing theme of concern. As **object sexuality**, the process may be evident without being focused on another person. Possession of territory may be challenged by understandings of **environmental stewardship** of the Earth.

Possession of a sense of place

Tangible focus: Some may "possess" a sense of place of some kind, especially in relation to any sense of the homeland or homecountry to which they feel and cultivate a relationship. The latter senses are particularly denoted in German by the term *Heimat*, as being the relationship of a human being towards a certain spatial social unit -- understood as contrasting with social alienation.

Such a sense of possession may be much accentuated with respect to places of religious significance, most notably Jerusalem and other pilgrimage sites (*List of religious sites*).

As noted by *Wikipedia*, a **sense of place** has been defined and used in many different ways by many different people. To some, it is a characteristic that some geographic places have and some do not, while to others it is a feeling or perception held by people (not by the place itself). It is often used in relation to those characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as to those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging.

Intangible focus: The above sense is distinguished by *Wikipedia* from the **spirit of place** (or soul) as being the unique, distinctive and cherished aspects of a place; often those celebrated by artists and writers, but also those cherished in folk tales, festivals and celebrations. It is thus as much in the invisible weave of culture (stories, art, memories, beliefs, histories, etc.) as the tangible physical aspects of a place (monuments, boundaries, rivers, woods, architectural style, rural crafts styles, pathways, views, and so on) or its interpersonal aspects (the presence of relatives, friends and kindred spirits, and the like). This has been recognized internationally to some degree by the *Québec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place* (2008).

Places otherwise possessed: Possession in this context is complicated by the sense in which a place may be "possessed" as much by the spirit (or spirits) held to be associated with it as by any conventional sense of possessing that place -- irrespective of any legal title defining that relationship.

In classical Roman religion a **genius loci** was the protective spirit of a place, possibly understood as a **tutelary deity**. They may be

recognized as *Landvaettir* (spirits of the land) in Norse mythology and in Germanic neopaganism. [Numinous spirits](#) of places in Asia continue to be honored in city pillar shrines, outdoor spirit houses and indoor household and business shrines.

Especially through the manner in which these may be reinforced by some sense of divine mandate or manifest destiny, it is appropriate to note how these constitute secular understandings (or unconscious echoes) of places evoked in myth. *Wikipedia* offers a [List of mythological places](#) (Agharta, Atlantis, Avalon, Beyul, El Dorado, Ys, Hyperborea, Ile-Ife, Iram of the Pillars, Shangri-La, Thule, Utopia). These are somewhat reminiscent of the [pure lands](#) of Mahayana Buddhism, namely the celestial realm or pure abode of a [Buddha](#) or [Bodhisattva](#).

Such subtlety may extend into more conventional understandings of [Fatherland](#) or [Motherland](#), as the concept of the place (in cultural geography) with which an ethnic group has traditional relationship and a deep cultural association -- the country in which a particular collective identity began, especially as [homeland](#) or "home country". It is relevant to note how the sense of "homeland" has been exploited in the US through the expression [Homeland Security](#), strangely echoing the use of Fatherland by other regimes.

Renewing a sense of place: Although the above are related, they are distinguished by *Wikipedia* from [topophilia](#) as being a strong sense of place, often associated with the sense of cultural identity among certain peoples and a love of certain aspects of such a place ([Yi-Fu Tuan](#), *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values*, 1990).

Of particular interest in a time of massive migration, with its controversial consequences, is the possibility that such consideration might offer new insight into the sense of place and homeland, with which people identify so deeply -- as a desirable place "to be" -- as explored by a variety of authors ([Christopher Day](#), *Spirit and Place: healing our environment, healing environment*, 2002; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: the perspective of experience*, 1977; [Christopher Alexander](#), *The Timeless Way of Building*, 1979; [Edward S. Casey](#), *Getting Back into Place: toward a renewed understanding of the place-world*, 1991; [James A. Swan](#), *The Power of Place: sacred ground in natural and human environments*, 1991).

Approaches to the experience are explored by the disciplines of [psychogeography](#) and mythogeography (Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 2006; Phil Smith, *Mythogeography: a guide to walking sideways*, 2010). With respect to the "pursuit of happiness", this fruitfully reframes the experience of being "here" in contrast with the desire to be "elsewhere".

The nostalgic yearning for such places, however understood, could be understood as taking secular form in the quest for a sustainable world (*In Quest of Sustainability as Holy Grail of Global Governance*, 2011). The poignancy of the relationship is enhanced by a sense of a cultural memory for a place now lost -- [lost lands](#), [lost cities](#), [utopias](#) -- to which some form of return may or may not be possible, as sustained by myth and legend (Bell Hooks, *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics*, 1999; M. Craig Barnes, *Yearning: living between how it is and how it ought to be*, 1992; Irwin Kula and Linda Loewenthal, *Yearnings: embracing the sacred messiness of life*, 2007).

The current situation might even be imaginatively caricatured as corresponding to that depicted in the *Battlestar Galactica* TV series -- themed as scattered human survivors (a diaspora?) obliged to flee tyranny into outer space aboard a "ragtag, fugitive fleet, on a lonely quest -- for a shining planet known as Earth".

Divided realms and domains as variously possessed

Continental divisions: There is widespread recognition of divisions between "North" and "South". This had been accompanied by recognition of divisions into "blocs" -- "West" and "East" -- now held to be of less significance. Continuing attention is given to the distinction between "industrialized" and "developing" regions -- now somewhat reframed by recognition of "emerging" countries. There is significant compensation for such continental divisions through creation of intercontinental associations, as with the Commonwealth, the OECD, or the Anglosphere grouping. BRICS, etc. Many might be considered a degree of formalization of a diaspora.

Divided nations: This term is used in a number of distinct senses:

- Division between nations with respect to global governance ([Ian Goldin](#), *Divided Nations: why global governance is failing and what we can do about it*, 2013; *Divided Nations: a crisis of priorities and procrastination threatens global security, following weak U.N. Climate Talks*, *Conservation International*, 8 December 2012)
- Division into separate nations as a result of internal and external factors, most notably corresponding to capitalist and communist ideologies. Most discussed examples include: North Korea / South Korea, China (PRC) / China (ROC), West Germany / East Germany (now reunified), North Vietnam / South Vietnam (now reunified), North Yemen / South Yemen (now reunified) ([Quansheng Zhao et al.](#), *Politics of Divided Nations: China, Korea, Germany and Vietnam -- unification, conflict resolution and political development* 1991). The case of Ireland could be considered in this light.
- Divisions of geographically coherent land by international borders. *Wikipedia* provides a list of islands whose land is so divided ([List of divided islands](#)).
- Divisions within existing nations:
 - possibly straddling national borders ([Tristan James Mabry et al.](#), *Divided Nations and European Integration.*, 2013). The former Soviet Union split into 15 nations in 1991. The possibility that the USA might in future split in some way is occasionally considered (*Let's Support Splitting the USA up into Different Countries*, *Occupy Forum*, 28 August 2012), and as noted by *Wikipedia* ([List of U.S. state partition proposals](#)).
 - inspired by some desire for separation and/or other factors. The prime example is the ongoing conflict in the relationships between Israel and Palestine.

- recognition of traditional nations. The term "nation" may be attributed to indigenous peoples inhabiting lands reserved by treaty within a larger nation, as with the 630 [First Nations](#) within Canada. This suggests that in psychocultural terms any traditional tribes could be appropriately recognized as "nations" -- as many of them may understand themselves to be.
- consequent on a degree of recognition of [micronations](#) (as noted above)
- through formation of enclaves and exclaves. An [enclave](#) is defined in international law as any portion of a state that is entirely surrounded by the territory of another state. An [exclave](#) is defined as a portion of a country geographically separated from the main part by surrounding alien territory (see [List of enclaves and exclaves](#)). Coastal territories such as Gibraltar, Ceuta, Monaco, Kaliningrad, Cabinda, etc., which can all be easily entered or exited by air or sea without the need to enter the territory of another state, are also called enclaves
- resulting from territorial disputes with other nations (see [List of territorial disputes](#)). Notable examples include that relating to Falklands Is/Malvinas
- as a consequence of socio-economic characteristics. A number of countries distinguish internally, notably between "North" and "South", as being relatively wealthy or impoverished.

The existence of many diasporas, as listed by *Wikipedia*, suggests that the distinctions above do not exhaust the manner in which "nations" in a more general socio-cultural sense may be "divided" as a consequence of identification with a diaspora beyond any conventional consideration of borders. Of notable interest are the cases of diasporas based on forced or voluntary [exile](#) from a nation (whether individual or collective), possibly including [governments in exile](#) or [exiled heads of state](#).

The complexity of the examples helps to make the point that the assumed simplicity of "division" may not be adequate to the complexity of the situation as experienced -- as illustrated by the case of Israel. Especially problematic is the sense in which diasporas might correspond to [classes of citizenship](#).

Divided cities: A divided city may be defined as one which, as a consequence of political changes or border shifts, currently constitutes (or once constituted) two separate entities, or an urban area with a border running through it. In a [List of divided cities](#), *Wikipedia* distinguishes:

- united cities that were divided
- cities that arose next to each other across a boundary line
- cases that involve formerly united cities being divided *and* cities growing up across borders from one another

Divisions within many cities may be recognized with respect to:

- political factors
- socio-economic factors, especially the existence of urban slums and no-go areas -- possibly using phrases such as "the other side of the tracks"
- ethnic ghettos
- primary language

Striking examples are offered by Jerusalem, Brussels and Basle -- and previously by Berlin.

Divided worldviews: These are most evident both between the following domains and within them:

- religion: Most strikingly illustrated by divisions between the Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Islam, Judaism), and by the sectarian violence within them -- so recently evident in the case of Islam
- science: Most evident in the relationship between the disciplines
- political ideology: Most evident in the relationship between ideologies of capitalist and socialist inspiration

Given the varieties of "division" highlighted above with respect to the more tangible domains of "nations", there is a case for recognizing the possibility of analogues in the case of such intangible "realms".

Divisions within underlying philosophy have been most succinctly expressed in the conclusion of [Nicholas Rescher](#) (*The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity*, 1985):

For centuries, most philosophers who have reflected on the matter have been intimidated by the strife of systems. But the time has come to put this behind us -- not the strife, that is, which is ineliminable, but the felt need to somehow end it rather than simply accept it and take it in stride.

Dispossession, repossession and being possessed

Being possessed: The sense of possession is also experienced through that of "being possessed" in various ways, even when this is only recognized or claimed by others. Possibilities include:

- possession by an idea or belief, most notably as deplored as characteristic of sects and other groups -- and addressed by processes of [deprogramming](#)
- possession by a mission or sense of destiny, possibly as a consequence of membership of a sect or other group
- possession by another person, as is held to be questionable in certain relationships of which the most extreme are the variants of [slavery](#), [involuntary servitude](#), or [debt bondage](#)
- possession by a contractual relationship, as may be recognized in certain forms of commercial agreement, notably those designed to ensure [vendor lock-in](#) (proprietary lock-in, customer lock-in), whereby a customer is made dependent on a vendor for products and services, unable to use another vendor without substantial switching costs.

- possession by the state through statutory obligations

Extreme forms of possession are recognized in the form of:

- obsession with an idea or belief, notably characteristic of paranoia (*Transforming from Paranoia through Metanoia and Hypnoia?* 2013)
- possession of a habit, especially in the form of an addiction, perhaps characterized as vicious cycles
- processes aimed at **winning the hearts and minds** of opponents rather than seeking to defeat them by force. Possession is then achieved by ensuring conviction and conversion.
- metaphorically through having "sold one's soul", or being possessed by the "soul" of another
- **demonic possession**, as addressed through processes of **exorcism**

Dispossession: This is widely recognized with respect to tangible property, notably:

- dispossession through **military occupation**, of which historical and **current instances** are indicated by *Wikipedia*, most notably the occupations by Israel (**Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, West Bank and East Jerusalem**)
- dispossession of traditional lands (and fishing areas), as in the historical (and ongoing) dramas with respect to **indigenous peoples**
- dispossession of housing, as so dramatically highlighted by its repossession in the case of the sub-prime mortgage crisis
- dispossession of property consequent on the break-up of marital relationships and partnerships, possibly including children
- dispossession of cultural heritage, notably ritual artefacts and ancestral remains
- dispossession of legal heritage
- dispossession of genetic heritage, as this might be understood through the patenting of the genes of certain populations
- stripping the land of tree cover and species associated with biodiversity and traditional livelihoods, and the equivalent with respect to fishing areas -- possibly compounded by its contamination by the dumping of waste

Dispossession may take subtler form, less readily recognizable, through:

- dispossession of dignity, as a consequence of some relationships, most notably as a consequence of sexual aggression, **enhanced interrogation**, but evident (with advancing age) in the dependency on more intense forms of care
- dispossession of identity, most notably in the case of electronic **identity theft**, but more radically through **brainwashing** and re-education
- stripping of honours, rank, office, or privileges
- **social alienation** and **dissociation**
- the process of **deprogramming**

Both possession and dispossession may be of fundamental existential significance, even actively sought as part of any "retirement from the world" characteristic of the monastic quest.

Repossession: Again this is most evident in the case of tangible property, and especially as a consequence of any failure to "keep up the payments" by which it was acquired -- as with the extent of **repossession** resulting from the sub-prime mortgage crisis. It is more dramatically evident as a consequence of disputes regarding traditional rights to the land and its governance -- as exemplified in the ongoing dispute between Israel and Palestine. It is further complicated by historical assumptions resulting in processes of **forced assimilation**, featuring those of dispossession (noted above), and exemplified by **Americanization (of Native Americans)**, **ethnocide**, **forced conversion**, **linguicide**, and the **stolen generation** (of Australia).

Possession of a worldview within the noosphere

There is an extensive literature on "world-making", following the work of **Nelson Goodman** (*Ways of Worldmaking*, 1978). The sense of property associated with a "world" so made may be associated with a need to defend that ownership by legal means as intellectual property (as discussed above). Common reference to "perspective", and possession of a "point of view", recalls the widespread use of optical metaphors based on "vision" in preference to the consideration of alternatives (*Developing a Metaphorical Language for the Future*, 1994; *Strategic Challenge of Polysensorial Knowledge: bringing the "elephant" into "focus"*, 2008).

The possession of a perspective from within a world so made is discussed separately with respect to geometric metaphors (*Identity, Possessive World-making and their Transformation Dynamics*, 2012). Identification with what is framed by such geometric metaphors, when the creativity is felt to be sufficiently radical or fundamental, constitutes a form of "world-making" -- in accordance with **social constructivist** arguments.

The argument there distinguishes between:

- **Point-related "world"**: The sense of possession in relation to a point made is evident in the expressions "my point" or "our point". This can of course be extended to multiple points, or some collection of them. More intriguing is the sense in which "making a point", or expressing a "viewpoint", implies a perspective and even a "worldview" -- possibly even justifying the defence of the point as being a form of intellectual property.
- **Line-related "world"**: The sense of possession in relation to a point tends to be even more developed in the case of a line as a set of aligned points (as with a defining set of "bullet points"). This may be evident in use of such expressions as "holding a line" and "drawing a line". Mathematicians have speculated on the experience of entities only capable of living along the length of a line as being the nature of their 1-dimensional "world". This experience is echoed to a degree by those who live along a road or railroad in remote regions.

- **Polygon-related "world"**: Property in the sense of territory is typically bounded as a polygon, most frequently in the form of a rectangle or square, to which title is granted. This may be reinforced by fencing or other forms of physical protection to prevent outsiders from "cross the line" -- or to ensure that insiders do not venture out. A "quadrangle", as a courtyard surrounded by building, may define the world of a community and a worldview. Metropolitan France is notably termed *l'Hexagone* by the French. The physical frame so created is readily experienced as a "world", especially when inherited and defended over generations. Virtual real estate in cyberspace may replicate such patterns. (*Towards Polyhedral Global Governance: complexifying oversimplistic strategic metaphors*, 2008; *Topology of Valuing: psychodynamics of collective engagement with polyhedral value configurations*, 2008; *Polyhedral Empowerment of Networks through Symmetry: psycho-social implications for organization and global governance*, 2008; *Global Street Twinning in Polyhedral Configurations*, 2009)
- **Circle-related "world"**: In this case the sense of world-making is most evident in relation to intangible social circles (as in social networking), possibly protective of an "inner circle" or instigated by it -- as upholding and articulating a particular worldview. At the international level, the UN Security Council, the G8 or the G20, might all be so described. The widespread existence of buildings called "centre" implies, to a degree, the focus of such circles.
- **Cylinder-related "world"**: In the form of a truncated cylinder, this has been proposed as the basis for a space habitat, the **Alderson disk**. The form is basic to the design of another proposed such habitat known as the **O'Neill cylinder** consisting of two counter-rotating cylinders. Increasing research on the capacity of astronauts to live in a cylindrical space craft offers another sense of the need to live in a very particular kind of world.
- **Polyhedron-related "world"**: This is most evident in the use of cuboid structures for dwellings of every kind -- and their agglomeration. For many these contexts are their "world", whether it be the room of a child or an office. Great attention may be given to their decoration to reinforce this sense. A similar pattern is evident in the polyhedral forms typical of tents. Symbolically a "world" is effectively created or implied by the use of a square pyramid on the widely used US dollar bill (in that sense earning a living might be understood as "world-making").
- **Sphere-related "world"**: In the light of the shape of the planet, the sphere is the form most closely associated with a world -- and by extension of the "world-making" explored by science fiction and space habitat design (**Dyson sphere**, **Bernal sphere**, etc). Hollow spherical space habitats offer a curious echo of the deprecated **hollow earth hypothesis**.
- **Torus-related "world"**: Recognition of the toroidal form as a world is rare. Arguably however, the path traced out by Earth around the Sun could be understood as instituting a toroidal form in time. *** drilled torus paper

These different forms of "world" suggest quite different challenges to their "possession" in the virtuality of knowledge space -- of which one "form" is the "noosphere". The particular characteristic of "sphere" may preclude recognition of other topological forms which may enable and sustain experience and identity more fruitfully. (***) Rosen, Klein) This is evident in consideration by astrophysicists of the **shape of the universe**.

Mathematicians have indulged in speculation regarding the contrast between one, two and three-dimensional perspectives (**Edwin Abbott Abbott**, *Flatland: a romance of many dimensions*, 1884; **Dionys Burger**, *Sphereland: a fantasy about curved spaces and an expanding universe*, 1983; **A. K. Dewdney**, *The Planiverse*, 1984; **Ian Stewart**, *Flatland*, 2001). These imply the possibility of unexplored constraints in relation to higher dimensional worlds and those of greater topological complexity.

Of particular interest is experience of "worlds" and cognitive "habitats", and perception of their respective worldviews, in the following cases:

Metaphor	Domains					
	science	theology (religion)	philosophy (secular)	political ideology	military (security)	aesthetics (humanities)
point						
line						
polygon						
circle						
cylinder						
polyhedron						
sphere						
torus						

Such a framework suggests interesting questions about the nature and experience of the associations formed within it, the ability to travel within it, and the nature of "world citizenship" and the sense of being a "world citizen". These suggest further questions as to how the world is to be "enjoyed", as separately discussed (*En-joying the World through En-joying Oneself: eliciting the potential of globalization through cognitive radicalization*, 2011).

Of particular interest is the possibility of a curious property variant for the **Uncertainty Principle** -- namely an **Uncertainty Principle for Property Possession**: *The more property is formally or legally definable, the less is its capacity to function as a credible carrier of meaning and identity* (and vice versa). The cognitive challenge is is potentially consistent with Einstein's original theory (*Einstein's Implicit Theory of Relativity - of Cognitive Property? Unexamined influence of patenting procedures*, 2007).

Of greatest interest is the meaning to be associated with the sense of "my world" as a vehicle for identity. More provocatively, there is

then the question suggested by the word play of "mining rights" thereon, and how this might relate to "self-possession" and confidence in one's own powers. Also pertinent is the argument of John R. Wikse (*About Possession: the self as private property*, 1977).

Associative diasporas and degrees of possession

The intriguing question arising from different degrees of possession is what this might imply for reframing (or "refining") those considered most obvious and well-defined, namely citizenship, residence and tax obligations. These forms of possession are recognized and reinforced by definitive legal provisions, irrespective of the exceptional subtleties of multiple citizenship, residences and tax obligations -- or contested historical issues.

The following table is suggestive of a more flexible understanding implying degrees of possession, possibly recognized through different frameworks. These variously suggest degrees of relationship.

	birth	education	residence	religion	commerce	legal	science
obligatory membership							
voluntary membership (subscriber)							
contract (longer-term)							
subscription (shorter-term)							
solidarity							
support							
approval							
identification							

With such understanding it can then be asked whether the possession of people may be strongly defined and experienced in some instances, such as a place of birth (with its legal consequences), but to a lesser degree in others, such as enthusiasm for a particular style of music. Intermediary conditions may be contractually defined, such as (long-term) membership of an association, as a client (of a lawyer), or a customer (of a computer system). The latter are indicative of a degree of both possessing and being possessed -- perhaps to be understood.

Such **degrees of possession effectively define degrees of association -- corresponding to degrees of experiential affinity or resonance**. These can be understood in terms of a form of "diaspora" -- of different degrees of association.

A core diaspora eliciting the strongest "bonding" might be composed of those born in a country but resident elsewhere. A looser diaspora might be exemplified by those customers using a particular computer operating system. A more extended diaspora might include those culturally identified to some degree with a distant country -- with which their relationship may well be perceived as tenuous by others having possessions or family there. Even subtler variants might include those sharing a distinct belief system -- perhaps with a focus on a mythical place, of which Jerusalem offers one tangible form.

How possessed by something is it necessary to be for resonant engagement with it to be meaningful? Who has the authority to assess this? What might be the implications?

Diasporas, in being characterized by an essentially virtual relationship to a realm, are especially significant in sustaining its wider reputation -- transcending the narrowly conventional preoccupations of governance

Cultural diasporas with a territorial focus: There is a considerable literature on [diasporas](#) understood in terms of a scattered population with a common origin in a smaller geographic area. The term may also refer to the movement of the population from its original homeland, whether by expulsion, forced resettlement, slave trade, migration, or the like -- including those seeing asylum elsewhere.

Wikipedia offers an impressive [List of diasporas](#) (some 200, many not widely recognized), together with separate discussion of [European diasporas](#) (over 30), the [African diaspora](#), and the [Asian diasporas](#). Many have been engendered by movements of populations subsequent to World War II, to formation of post-colonial states, or to the end of the Cold War. They continue to be engendered by movements of [economic refugees](#) ([boat people](#), etc) and those in quest of security. Various forms of "internal diaspora" may be recognized, notably as the result of forced resettlement of populations and ethnic groups -- especially indigenous peoples.

For the purpose of this argument, diasporas of particular interest (as case studies) are those eliciting active government interest, beyond dependence on remittances:

- [Scottish diaspora](#) and [Irish diaspora](#), are a focus of active policy concern and study (as at the [Scottish Centre for Diaspora Studies](#)), notably with respect to issues of exodus and brain drain (Scottish Government, *The Scottish Diaspora and Diaspora Strategy: Insights and Lessons from Ireland*, 2009; *Engaging the Scottish Diaspora: rationale, benefits and challenges*. 2009; John Bryant and David Law, *New Zealand's Diaspora and Overseas-born Population*. New Zealand Treasury, 2004). The [Scottish Diaspora Tapestry](#) is a project to involve communities around the world in the celebration of Scottish heritage and culture.
- [Jewish diaspora](#)
- [Palestinian diaspora](#)

The argument could of course be extended to other forms of diaspora with respect to a discipline, a faith or a strategy -- where there is a contrast between the position of the central authority or governing body and those with a looser ("less professional") affinity with their preoccupation (perhaps as "amateurs"). Many "international associations" profiled in the [Yearbook of International Organizations](#) could be considered in this light -- even specific contrast to their "intergovernmental" variants.

Right of association: [Freedom of association](#) is the right to join or leave groups of a person's own choosing, and for the group to take collective action to pursue the interests of members. It is recognized in various international conventions, including the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (articles 20 and 23).

Curiously the focus of "freedom of association" is typically with regard to an organized group, such as a trade union -- itself legally constituted in some way. It may be extended to the association with groups of a more informal nature. Of more relevance to the argument here is the nature of the possible further extension of "association" to groups of an even more tenuous nature -- from an administrative or legal perspective -- possibly of psychological or conceptual nature ([Universal Declaration of the Rights of Human Organization: an experimental extension of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), 1971). Clearly this would necessarily include kinship groups and [extended families](#) -- a preoccupation with regard to right of [family reunification](#) in debate on immigration.

Wikipedia notes the existence of [diaspora populations on the internet](#) -- with numerous web-based news portals and forum sites dedicated to specific diaspora communities, often organized on the basis of origin and current location. Companies from the emerging countries are looking at leveraging diaspora communities to enter the more mature market.

Clearly there is an even more elusive condition of "association" with respect to any belief system on a longer-term basis, or with respect to any issue about which a person may have a supportive opinion on a shorter-term basis -- as with a "movement of opinion" (reflected in "opinion surveys" and the registering of "likes"). The Tea Party movement offers one such example, as might Al-Qaida ([Cultivating Global Strategic Fantasies of Choice: learnings from Islamic Al-Qaida and the Republican Tea Party movement](#), 2010). The argument could be extended to include the Islamic *Ummah* or various understandings of the Judeo-Christian community.

This argument suggests that **"association" is on a continuum of experiential resonance with "opinion" and more fundamental beliefs**. This generalization then points to the relevance of association to "freedom of opinion" as recognized by Article 19 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#):

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Expression of opinion and association voting rights

Voting: The extended sense of association with a "place", whether physical or virtual (as argued above), raises the question as to whether this could fruitfully imply an extension of the sense in which a person has an (extended) right to "vote" regarding any governance of that place -- whatever "voting" may be held to mean (or might come to mean from a future perspective).

With respect to voting, Article 21 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) specifies:

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

If "association" is on a continuum with "opinion" and identification with more fundamental belief, **is there a case for recognizing "voting" as being on a continuum with other forms of expression of opinion?** In reframing degrees of relationship to a "place" or "locus", through an "associative diaspora", is there a case for imagining degrees of voting rights? There are numerous specific references to diaspora voting ([What can the EU do for the national minorities living in diaspora?](#) EURANET, 16 November 2013; [The History and Politics of Diaspora Voting in Home Country Elections](#), Overseas Vote Foundation).

Corporate model: An interesting model is offered by [shareholders](#) (stockholders) of corporations. According to the "class of stock", they are granted special privileges which may include:

- right to sell their shares.
- right to vote on the directors nominated by the board.
- right to nominate directors (although this is very difficult in practice because of minority protections) and propose [shareholder resolutions](#).
- right to dividends if they are declared.
- right to purchase new shares issued by the company.
- right to what assets remain after a liquidation.

In relation to the argument here, "degree of association" (or possession) would then correspond to "class of stock" -- effectively the extent to which the person was a "shareholder", perhaps usefully recognized as a [stakeholder](#)". Expressed otherwise, **to what extent could the member of a diaspora be considered a "stakeholder" with regard to any issues of governance of a country?**

Corporations may take this consideration further through their extreme sensitivity to the opinions of customers -- effectively members of a form of diaspora. Irrespective of any formally recognized legal considerations, the governance of the corporation may need to be extremely responsive to the financial consequences of the views of customers, effectively voting with their purchasing choices, or "voting with their feet". This is evident to a degree in the dependence of some economies on the [remittance](#) of funds by their nationals (their diaspora) from foreign countries, and the enthusiasm of others for benefitting from taxation of their nationals resident elsewhere.

Such feedback may well lead to a change of strategy or governance of the corporation consistent with a cybernetic understanding of complex systems ([Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations](#), 2007). This could be a vital response to recognition of democratic deficit and the challenge of ungovernability

(*Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy? Towards engaging appropriately with time*, 2011).

Diaspora "vote": The question here is whether some such model could be of relevance to the illustrative cases highlighted above: the Scottish diaspora, the Irish diaspora, the Jewish diaspora, the Palestinian diaspora, the Tibetan diaspora?

Given the facility with which websites can be created for a "diaspora" (as noted above), could such facilities be used to enable members of the diaspora to "vote" with regard to any issues of governance of the country concerned? Clearly, following the corporate model, a distinction could be made between:

- those "voters" with a higher "class of stock" (born in the country, parent born in the country, etc)
- issues on which the opinion of various categories of voter would be taken into consideration to some degree

Of related interest is the status of any minority parties and the views of they represent, in relation to any diaspora(s). Both reflect views deemed secondary, even negligible, by the governing party in power and its supporters. A diaspora could effectively dissociate itself from short-term governance, as conventionally understood, and focus its energies on matters of longer-term significance corresponding to their experiential resonance for its members.

Technicalities: Many issues evoked here may well figure in debates associated with [diaspora politics](#). It is appropriate to note that [diaspora studies](#) is starting to rival "international studies" in the academic world -- perhaps through enabling a greater degree of identification (cf. [International Diaspora Engagement Alliance](#)). Technical issues of interest include:

- electronic voting: constraints on the use of [online voting](#) are of particular interest in the light of controversies over [electoral fraud](#) (irrespective of whether electronic systems are used). The question is of increasing relevance in that populations are expected to have ever greater confidence in [online banking](#), despite concerns about their security. It would appear to be inconsistent to argue for the viability of the latter and reject the viability of the former -- especially given voter apathy, exacerbated by queuing at polling stations (and bad weather).
- electronic petitions: the increasing use of [online petitions](#) in democratic processes, most notably as a means of reflecting the views of those associated with an issue -- as a form of "ad hoc diaspora" (eg. [Avaaz](#), [MoveOn](#), etc).
- legal issues: consideration is already variously given to:
 - voting by citizens located temporarily in another country
 - voting by non-resident citizens located semi-permanently in another country
 - voting by foreigners resident in a country
 - [disenfranchising](#) certain categories: under age, criminal, incompetent
 - obligation of citizens to vote in some cases
- financial obligations: the right to vote in any conventional association (as with a corporation) is typically restricted to "paid up" members, whatever weight is given to their vote. This suggests consideration of restricting or weighting expression of opinion by members of a diaspora through any form of vote -- according to some measure of their investment in the relationship.
- formal recognition: whilst issuing a "passport" to a member of a diaspora is clearly excessive and inappropriate (given international treaty considerations regarding citizenship and identity), there is a case for a degree of recognition. This could follow from existing use of documents corresponding to a "[green card](#)", a "resident card" or a "visa". Whatever the rights accorded to such documentation, members of a diaspora could be considered eligible for various "cards", recognized to a degree within the country, without interfering with those associated with passports recognized internationally. Possession of multiple credit cards and "[fidelity cards](#)" bears reflection -- especially given the questionable significance that has been associated with "[card carrying](#)"
- sanctions: procedures are used in response to behaviours considered inappropriate by those claiming to be protective of the diaspora. These can be variously recognized in the use of [blacklisting](#), [shunning](#), declaration as *persona non grata*, or condemnation (as in "[self-hating Jew](#)")

As discussed below, these possibilities merit reflection with respect to divided countries or those regions considering an increased degree of autonomy of a country.

Reimagining unification and reunification through metaphor

The theme, aspiration and practice of unification have been widely discussed. The focus here is to contrast the intense reflections on unification within fundamental physics with the quality of reflection in the case of socio-political domains. The approach is to consider the nature of the metaphors considered appropriate to such reflection. *Wikipedia* offers an extensive [List of political metaphors](#). Few, if any, focus on the challenge of unification. This is also the case in early reviews (Jeffrey Scott Mio ([Metaphor and Politics](#), *Metaphor and Symbol*, 1997; Eugene F. Miller, [Metaphor and Political Knowledge](#), *American Political Science Review*, 1979).

This tends to be the case with more recent studies (Terrell Carver and Jernej Pikalo, *Political Language and Metaphor: interpreting and changing the world*, 2008; Archibald Cary Coolidge, *Political Metaphors*, 2000). Some indications occur in other works (Francis A. Beer and Christ'l de Landtsheer, *Metaphorical World Politics*, 2004; Andreas Musolff, *Metaphor and Political Discourse: analogical reasoning in debates about Europe*, 2004; Markus Kornprobst, et al. *Metaphors of Globalization: mirrors, magicians and mutinies*, 2008).

Conventional metaphors: Given the crisis of the times and acknowledgement of the need for "new thinking", the approach here sets

aside conventional reflection on the frameworks which tend to be the preoccupation of initiatives such as the European Union. These include establishing or harmonising:

- a legal framework
- an accounting framework
- a trade or market framework (customs union, etc)
- a corporate framework, exemplified by acquisitions and mergers
- elaboration of common frameworks: technical standards, social security standards
- a leadership framework as suggested by the imperial tradition
- religion, as through global community (echoing heavenly order)

Partially explored metaphors: Understandings of unification might be explored through the images of organization suggested by Gareth Morgan (*Images of Organization*, 1986). These he clusters as: machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, flux and transformation, and instruments of domination.

To identify common metaphors for knowledge, two of the most-cited chapters in the knowledge management literature were analyzed by Daniel Andriessen (*On the Metaphorical Nature of Intellectual Capital: a textual analysis, Journal of Intellectual Capital*, 2006). The works reviewed were (Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi (*The Knowledge-Creating Company*, 1995, ch. 3) and Thomas H. Davenport and Laurence Prusak (*Working Knowledge*, 2000, ch. 1). Andriessen elicited six types of metaphor: knowledge as something physical, knowledge as a wave, knowledge as a living organism, knowledge as thoughts and feelings, knowledge as a process, and knowledge as a structure.

Whether understood as "organization" or "knowledge, clusters of seemingly relevant metaphors for unification might therefore include:

- mechanical metaphors -- especially from astronautics:
 - gravity models
 - planetary models / epicycles
 - sun and satellite
- architectural metaphors -- especially ideal cities and temples, possibly centro-symmetrical
- variable geometry: "sides" of a coin, transformation of polyhedra
- human relations -- friendship, marriage (and its consummation)
- theological metaphors -- especially embodied in a sovereign (as with the Holy Roman Empire)
- ecosystem metaphors -- especially in the light of biodiversity ("unity in diversity")
- culinary metaphors -- cutting the pie, breaking eggs to make an omelette, new wine and old bottles
- metaphors of alternation -- reunification through the dynamic

Specific indications are offered by Olivia Caramello (*Unifying Theory: metaphors and analogies*) in terms of: star-planet relation in astronomy, "bridges" for translating in linguistics, genetics (classifying topos as a form of DNA), toposes as "natural environments" for mathematical theories, photographs from a plane, "bridges" between perceptions.

Further possibilities are suggested by Don Ambrose (*Unifying Theories of Creativity: metaphorical thought and the unification process, New Ideas in Psychology*, 1996), by Andreas Musolff (*Metaphor and Political Discourse: analogical reasoning in debates about Europe*, 2004; *Metaphor Scenarios in Public Discourse, Metaphor and Symbol*, 2006), by Jörg Zinken (*Ideological Imagination: intertextual and correlational metaphors in political discourse, Discourse Society*, 2003) and by Pamela Hobbs (*Surging ahead to a new way forward: the metaphorical foreshadowing of a policy shift, Discourse and Communication*, 2008).

Combining once more the focus on organization and knowledge in relation to unification, the comment of Daniel Andriessen and Marien Van Den Boom (*In Search of Alternative Metaphors for Knowledge: inspiration from symbolism, Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management*, 2009) with respect to [knowledge management](#) and [intellectual capital](#) (IC) is of relevance:

Knowledge innovation places organizations in a situation comparable to recent emancipation movements (black consciousness, feminism) looking for a new language and new emancipatory metaphors to express the journey to self-definition challenging externally defined images... Andriessen and Van den Boom (2007) explored alternative metaphors for knowledge from Asian philosophies. An alternative metaphor, *Knowledge as energy*, was explored in (Bratianu and Andriessen 2008). However, more alternatives are needed to cope with the richness of the knowledge concept. Therefore this turns to the field of symbolism to address the question: *What alternative metaphors can highlight important aspects of knowledge and other intangibles that the IC metaphor cannot?*

The authors mention use of the metaphor *Understanding is Grasping* (noted above). The metaphor can be provocatively questioned, especially with respect to identity and unification (*Beyond Harassment of Reality and Grasping Future Possibilities: learnings from sexual harassment as a metaphor*, 1996). Especially questionable is the association of grasping with closure -- using the five fingers of the hand. A different order of "grasping" is implied by the higher (and less restrictive) order of "closure" achieved using the five senses -- and the metaphors associated with them (*Strategic Challenge of Polysensorial Knowledge: bringing the "elephant" into "focus"*, 2008). This notably transcends the single-sense limitations of the "vision" metaphor favoured by politicians -- and the questionable closure it offers.

In the face of the evident challenge of (re)unification, the question is where are the guiding or generative metaphors gathered and considered in the light of their relevance and communicability? Is there a need to be attentive to a condition which might be termed "metaphorical impoverishment" (*In Quest of Uncommon Ground: beyond impoverished metaphor and the impotence of words of power*,

1997).

This was a consideration in the [Metaphor Project](#) of the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential (Generative metaphor and policy-making, 1995)*. Current possibilities are discussed in terms of *Psychosocial potential of analogy detection* (2013), notably in the light of the [Metaphor Program](#) initiated by the US [Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity](#) (IARPA) to build a world repository of metaphors enabling a computer system capable of understanding metaphors used in a variety of languages (see [MetaNet: A Multilingual Metaphor Repository](#)). As noted, this is however more likely to focus at this time on the defensive potential of metaphor for the security of the US "homeland" -- rather than on any proactive, constructive understanding of the "global homeland" of humanity.

Of specific interest is any study of divided countries and cities in terms of the metaphors used to reframe the challenge to discourse and reimagining "unification":

Metaphors	Divided "realms"					
	Cyprus (N and S)	Israel and Palestine	China (PRC) China (ROC)	Korea (DPRK and RK)	Ireland (N and S)	Belgium (Flanders / Wallonia)
Metaphor 1						
Metaphor 2						
Metaphor 3						
Metaphor ?						

Preliminary searches did not yield any systematic approach to the question (in contrast to the earlier [Metaphor Project](#)), with only the occasional reference to relatively trivial metaphors. This is especially surprising in the case of South Korea which has a [Ministry of Unification](#) and is renowned for the establishment of a [Unification Church](#). Of complementary interest is the effort to profile the range of approaches to integration in an earlier [Integrative Knowledge Project](#). The challenge has been highlighted by more recent understandings of "integration" (*Self-reflexive Challenges of Integrative Futures*, 2008).

An earlier experiment in 1991 explored the application of the same basic set of dynamic metaphors to: a [Scottish identity](#), a [Middle Eastern identity](#), a [European identity](#), a [Canadian identity](#), and others. The six metaphors used in each case were: an *ecology of options*, a *physiology of interdependent organs*, a *nuclear fusion reactor*, an *organic molecule of variable geometry*, a *pattern of circulating traffic*, and a *crop rotation cycle*.

Similar inquiries could of course be extended to interdisciplinary, interfaith and ideological differences given the potential of (re)unification which they variously assume to be possible and desirable -- and to which they aspire to "return" by some means..

More powerful metaphors? There is a case for assuming that relevant "global" metaphors might be especially associated with the more extraordinary discoveries of science -- specifically physics and mathematics -- at the frontier of what the human mind can comprehend. The role of analogy and metaphor in creativity has been extensively explored in a recent study by [Douglas Hofstadter](#) and [Emmanuel Sander](#) (*Surfaces and Essences: analogy as the fuel and fire of thinking*, 2013). Is there a need for a higher degree of "fuel and fire" in considering unification?

The argument here is that the creativity now believed to be required to engage with complexity in nature may echo in some way that required to address the psychosocial issues of "unification", as discussed separately (*Engendering a Psychopter through Biomimicry and Technomimicry: insights from the process of helicopter development*, 2011; *In Quest of Mnemonic Catalysts -- for comprehension of complex psychosocial dynamics*, 2007).

The argument is consistent with the work of [Christopher Alexander](#) (*The Nature of Order: an essay on the art of building and the nature of the universe*, 2003-4) and its development (*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; *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). He emphasizes the importance of geometric adaptation in order to enable comprehension of a higher order, as discussed separately (*Harmony-Comprehension and Wholeness-Engendering: eliciting psychosocial transformational principles from design*, 2010).

Framed otherwise, it might be asked whether a distinction can usefully be made between "first order" explanations (and their relevant metaphors) and those of "second" and higher orders. Why might explanations of "lower order" be inadequate to vital issues of governance -- especially when there is extensive recourse to mathematics of "higher order" in the exploitation of possibilities of the financial markets, if not of their governance from a cybernetic perspective (*Uncritical Strategic Dependence on Little-known Metrics: the Gaussian Copula, the Kaya Identity, and what else?* 2009; *Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007).

Relevant arguments have been developed with respect to the cognitive "hole" from which "Black Swans" emerge, as described by [Nassim Nicholas Taleb](#) (*The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007; *Antifragile: things that gain from disorder*, 2012). At the time of writing, such relevance is highlighted by a natural disaster -- [Typhoon Haiyan](#) -- described, like many disastrous predecessors, as "unimaginable".

A useful metaphor, appropriate to the neglected role of diasporas in governance, is highlighted by the argument of [Katia Moskvitch](#) (*Forgotten Force: the other great cosmic attractor*, *New Scientist*, 7 November 2013):

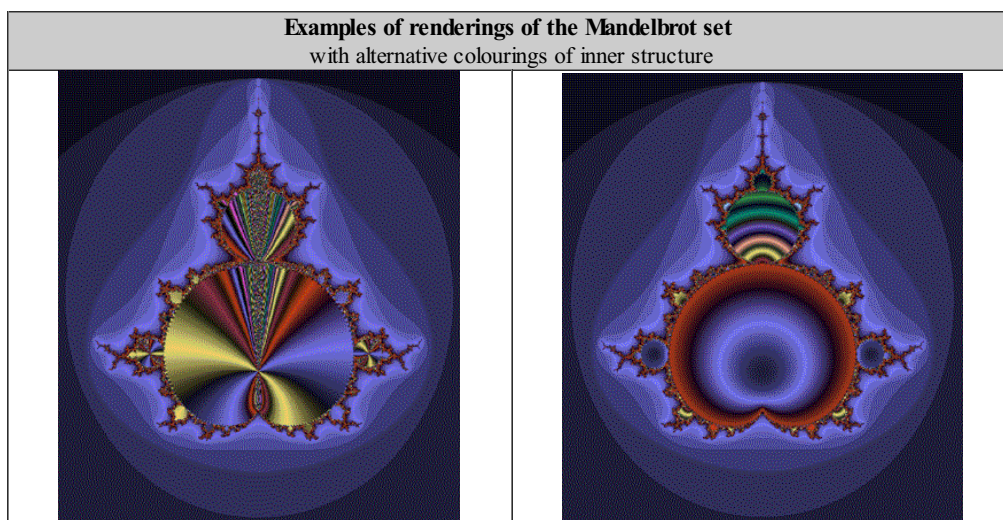
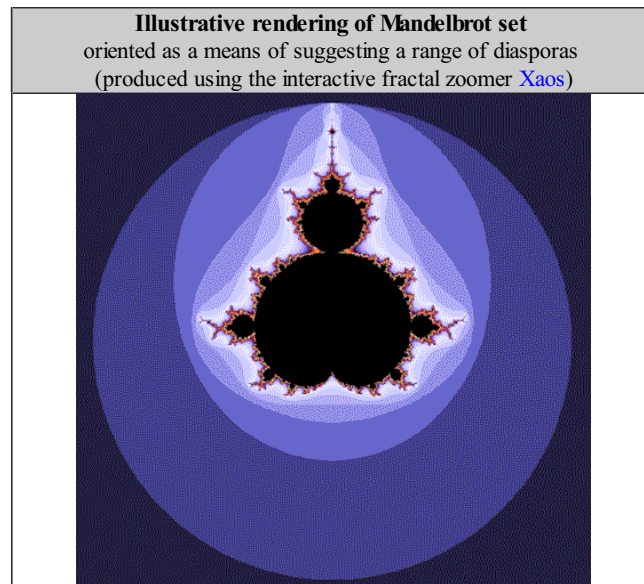
When it comes to the cosmos, gravity is the big attraction. The same force that keeps our feet on the ground also shapes the universe. It takes clouds of gas and sculpts them into planets and stars. It fashions hundreds of billions of stars into galaxies, which clump together to form clusters, then superclusters. Yet gravity isn't the only player in the game -- another force operates

across the cosmic landscape, and that is magnetism. Magnetic fields stretch for vast distances in the near-nothingness of deep space, even spanning the billions of light years between galaxies. Admittedly, these fields are feeble. A fridge magnet is more than a million times stronger than the weak, all-pervading sea of magnetism in the Milky Way and beyond. That might explain why cosmology has largely ignored magnetism. After all, how could something so puny influence a galaxy?

As a metaphor this draws attention to the possibility of other weak forces with which diasporas may be associated, namely human values with their own implications for unification, notably when understood as *strange attractors* (*Human Values as Strange Attractors*, 1993). Is the faint sentiment of "Britishness", of "being European", or of "being human", then to be compared with the relative strength of "magnetism" within the "cosmos" (in contrast with a "fridge magnet")?

A striking example of a form of potential metaphorical value is the *Mandelbrot set*, an "object" engendered in the so-called *complex plane*. It is suggestive of possibilities of variously ordering and mapping psychosocial issues and rendering them comprehensible, as separately discussed (*Imagining the Real Challenge and Realizing the Imaginal Pathway of Sustainable Transformation*, 2007).

In offering a visual representation of the boundary between evident chaos and the order characteristic of unification, the much-studied set is of particular interest (*Sustainability through the Dynamics of Strategic Dilemmas -- in the light of the coherence and visual form of the Mandelbrot set*, 2005). Visually it offers a sense of degrees of association of relevance to the sense of diaspora outlined above, whilst giving a sense of the ordered complexity at the core of what could be the preoccupation of governance -- with its focus on the "foci of law and order".



Examples of other metaphors that merit particular attention might then include:

- **Symmetry and paradoxical topology:** Reference was made above to the insights associated with polyhedral organization, and discussed elsewhere (*Metaphorical Geometry in Quest of Globality -- in response to global governance challenges*, 2009; *Middle East Peace Potential through Dynamics in Spherical Geometry: engendering connectivity from incommensurable 5-fold and 6-fold conceptual frameworks*, 2012). Such considerations can be extended to a far higher degree (*Potential Psychosocial Significance of Monstrous Moonshine: an exceptional form of symmetry as a Rosetta stone for cognitive frameworks*, 2007; *Topological Clues to a Memorable 12-fold Systemic Pattern*, 2012). Such possibilities provide a focus for discussion on comprehension (*Dynamics of Symmetry Group Theorizing: comprehension of psycho-social implication*, 2008).
 - paracycling ***

- **Astrophysics:** Much is made of the awesome reality of the Universe as an imaginative trigger, conveyed to some degree by pictures of ever increasing quality. As a reasonably well integrated cognitive enterprise, the manner whereby the solar system and galaxies have been rendered comprehensible, beyond the past focus on constellations and planets suggests that its features can be borrowed as fruitful metaphors of relevance to unification -- as well as a fruitful degree of dispersion characteristic of a diaspora. These can then serve as a basis for a more comprehensive mapping of detailed insight into the "universe of knowledge" and the "cyberspace" through which it may now be navigated to some degree (*Towards an Astrophysics of the Knowledge Universe from astronautics to noonautics?* 2006; *Emerging Memetic Singularity in the Global Knowledge Society*, 2009; *Psychosocial Implications of Stellar Evolution? Reframing life's cycles through the Hertzsprung-Russell diagram*, 2013). Especially intriguing are the insights that might be suggested by the extension of the preoccupation of astrophysics into the nature of a **multiverse** and a **metaverse** (*Being a Poem in the Making: engendering a multiverse through musing*, 2012; *Enactivating Multiversal Community Hearing a pattern of voices in the global wilderness*, 2012).

Astrophysics and cosmology, in reflecting on the creation and collapse of universe(s), also suggest insights into the dynamics of alternation underlying unification and reunification -- with the necessity of intermediary conditions suggestive of a higher order of governance and identity.

- **Standard model of fundamental physics:** Following decades of research, a **Standard Model** of the evolution of the Universe has been developed from a compromise between the observable data and the known physical constraints -- in the light of the coherence of the associated mathematics. The Standard Model combined with **general relativity** is currently the best explanation of how the Universe works -- although it has inadequacies. The question is whether such thinking is suggestive of one that could to be fruitfully applied to the psychosocial challenges of unification (*Beyond the Standard Model of Universal Awareness: Being Not Even Wrong?* 2010). The latter argument was further extended (*Epistemological Panic in the face of Nonduality: Does nothing matter?* 2010). Given the psychosocial challenges of the "nothing" in terms of which many are now obliged to envisage their future, such arguments justify exploration of more radical insights (*Emerging Significance of Nothing*, 2012; *Import of Nothingness and Emptiness through Happening and Mattering*, 2008; *Going Nowhere through Not-knowing Where to Go*, 2013; *Way Round Cognitive Ground Zero and Pointlessness?* 2012).
- **Cognitive fusion:** The extensive investment in engaging with the design and implementation challenges of nuclear fusion as a source of energy, most notably through the **ITER project**, are suggestive of insights that merit exploitation with respect to possible psychosocial analogues, as separately discussed (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006). Given the crisis of the times, remarkably little attention has been given to the role of "psychosocial energy" (*Reframing Sustainable Sources of Energy for the Future: the vital role of psychosocial variants*, 2006; *Massive Elicitation of Psychosocial Energy: requisite technology for collective enlightenment*, 2011).

Quantum reality: Further to the previous points, considerable significance is now attached to reality as framed by **quantum mechanics**. It is framed as "more real" than the reality through which psychosocial dynamics are currently understood and discussed. It would seem that this has not been taken into serious consideration in reflecting on the requirements for adequate ordering of understanding of possibilities of psychosocial unification.

This would appear to be especially relevant to the binary dynamics through which "us-and-them" relationships are so widely and disastrously ordered (*Transcending Simplistic Binary Contractual Relationships: what is hindering their exploration?* 2012). Various possibilities can be considered (*Encountering Otherness as a Waveform -- In the light of a wave theory of being*, 2013; *Being Neither a-Waving Nor a-Parting: cognitive implications of wave-particle duality in the light of science and spirituality*, 2013; *Potential of Feynman Diagrams for Challenging Psychosocial Relationships? Comprehending the neglect of an unexplored possibility*, 2013).

The increasing comprehensibility of quantum reality is indicated by the recent amendment by **Google's Artificial Intelligence Lab** to its popular *Minecraft* game to reflect some principles of quantum mechanics (*Google's Quantum AI Lab adds quantum physics to Minecraft*, *The Verge*, 20 October 2013; *Minecraft gets quantum blocks in Google mod*, *New Scientist*, 20 October 2013). As the latter indicates:

Google's modification, *qCraft*, adds blocks with a quantum twist. Some can have multiple possible properties and will **change their appearance based on when they are observed**, linked to the quantum concept of **superposition**. Pairs of blocks can also be **entangled**, so that the appearance of one will influence that of another no matter how far apart they are in the virtual world.

With the addition of such observer-dependency properties, some of the new blocks can be "activated" simply by looking at them, while others are prone to disappear at any moment. In considering elective affinities and the significance variously attributed to the focus of diasporas (indicated above), is there not a case for benefitting from the insights built into intelligent gaming of this kind?

The relevance of this framework can be explored with respect to the challenge of understanding of how an electron "moves". This question was addressed to readers of *New Scientist* in the form *Where does the energy come from to keep electrons moving around the nucleus of an atom?* (*Quantum question*, 22 October 2013). In reproducing the best answers received, the website *Energy Realities* indicated that "nobody has all the answers to the world's energy questions". The commentary specifically noted the inadequacy of understanding and hence the merit of the following (extracts from) those articulations:

Jon Richfield: ... electrons don't move round the nucleus like moons kept in orbit by their mass and gravity - electrons behave

more like standing waves resonating with the nuclear field.... Another way to look at it is that an atom-bound electron described in quantum physics has a particular probability of being found in any particular place within its orbital- a three-dimensional shell around the nucleus. That electron has no exact position, even at absolute zero, so it has no way to keep any stiller than by staying in its orbital. No energy is involved in that at all.

Sam Buckton: It might at first appear that the electron is in a kind of perpetual motion about the atomic nucleus. The reality, however, is perhaps even more interesting. Electrons behave in a rather unintuitive way that we have had to accept as a fundamental of nature.... they do not really "move" at all. They exist in a haze of probability around the nucleus, and the Heisenberg uncertainty principle states that we cannot know the electron's position or momentum simultaneously to a satisfactory degree of accuracy.... In summary, electrons stick around the nucleus thanks to the electromagnetic force, plus a generous helping of quantum weirdness.

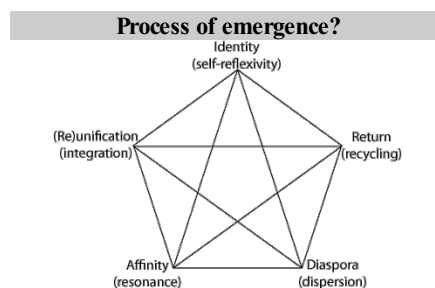
It is most curious to note how recent explorations of quantum reality have employed a term -- "discord" -- which so aptly characterizes the psychosocial relations of diasporas, exemplified by the case of the Middle East. Use of the term is closely related to another -- "noisy" -- which is equally apt. As noted by [Hugo Cable](#) and [Kavan Modi](#) (*Noise is the key to quantum computing*, *New Scientist*, 20 November 2013), current research is exploring the possibility:

In practice, quantum devices are proving extremely difficult to build because they must operate under noise-free conditions. But what if we could create "noisy" quantum devices? This may be possible, thanks to an obscure property of the quantum world called **discord** - a hot but controversial topic.

Could this not be appropriately said of the ideal models presented as solutions to the challenges of the Middle East? Can the ever-present "noise" be exploited in some counterintuitive manner? As the authors note, the **qubits** of quantum computers share a property unique to the quantum world, namely **entanglement** -- whereby two particles become inextricably linked no matter how far they are apart. This could be readily said of the actors in the Middle Eastern drama -- clearly "far apart" in their negotiating positions. They continue:

Controlling entanglement, however, is a frustrating goal...heat and many other factors create noise which rapidly degrades this quantum feature... What if we could build quantum devices that tolerate noise -- or even exploit it? Within the last two years this has become a real possibility....The once-obscure line of discord research is rapidly becoming mainstream now that there is clear evidence that noisy quantum devices will provide stepping stones to powerful quantum technologies. Discord might even play a role in our understanding of the quantum-to-classical transition that explains the emergence of our everyday experience of the real world...

Should the wider relevance of such thinking be considered, given the bloody daily consequences of the unimaginative proposals currently on the table?



Sensing time and the potential of return

The argument above has focused on the affinity, potentially embodied in some form of diaspora, with respect to a tangible or virtual place -- a "homeland". This affinity may also be strongly associated with a sense of time regarding some possibility of "return". The **right of return** features in Article 13 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* as:

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Wikipedia offers comments on its [interpretation on a country-by-country basis](#). For example, Israel has enacted the **Law of Return** giving all Jews, persons of Jewish ancestry, and spouses of Jews the right to immigrate to and settle in Israel and obtain citizenship, and obliges the Israeli government to facilitate their immigration. The preoccupation is reinforced by some governments in seeking to reverse an exodus of intellectual resources -- a **brain drain** -- as with the flagship campaign of the Government of Scotland ([Homecoming 2014](#)). The **Palestinian right of return** is however a vigorously contested issue.

However, as with "place", the experience of time may take a variety of forms. These may range from a sense of the spirit of the times (*Zeitgeist*), through a moment of personal destiny understood as "my time has come", to a sense of the sweep of time (*Engaging Macrohistory through the Present Moment*, 2004). It includes that of "Next Year in Jerusalem", as cited by those of Jewish faith at the

end of the [Yom Kippur](#) service. Curiously it includes the experience of "doing time" by those who have been incarcerated, or experience life in those terms.

The interplay of the sense of time and place in relation to "return" can be considerably enriched through the much-studied metaphor of a journey during which the conventional sense of both time and place may be transformed (Mohamed Shokr Abdumoneim, [The Metaphorical Concept "Life is a Journey" in the Qur'an: a cognitive-semantic analysis](#), 2006; Markus J. Milne, Kate Kearins and Sara Walton, [Creating Adventures in Wonderland: the journey metaphor and environmental sustainability](#), *Organization*, 2006).

Appropriately, in relation to (re)unification, the metaphor of "knowledge as a journey" has been explored by Daniel Andriessen and Marien Van Den Boom ([In Search of Alternative Metaphors for Knowledge: inspiration from symbolism](#), *Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management*, 2009). It might also be related to emerging concern with the problematics of recycling -- of the global "chickens coming home to roost" ([Reintegration of a Remaindered World: cognitive recycling of objects of systemic neglect](#), 2011).

The framing suggested above by quantum reality suggests the possibility of far more radical modes of understanding of time and place. and relating to them, than are cultivated by convention. As indicated in the discussion of how electrons "move", any movement over time is better comprehended in terms of a waveform -- calling into question the conventional sense of movement. It is most curious that not an iota of effort is seemingly devoted to exploring the relevance of such understandings of "reality" to the "reality" of ongoing bloody territorial conflicts, as separately argued ([And When the Bombing Stops? Territorial conflict as a challenge to mathematicians](#), 2000; [Middle East Peace Potential through Dynamics in Spherical Geometry: Engendering connectivity from incommensurable 5-fold and 6-fold conceptual frameworks](#), 2012)

Identity: Such considerations have potential implications for the understanding of identity in time, as separately discussed ([Being a Waveform of Potential as an Experiential Choice](#), 2013; [Encountering Otherness as a Waveform: in the light of a wave theory of being](#), 2013; [Emergence of Cyclical Psycho-social Identity: sustainability as "psychically" defined](#), 2007). The patterns of resonance, between the elements of a poem, which ensure its coherence and sustain affinity with it, also have implications for individual identity, as may be speculatively explored ([Being a Poem in the Making: engendering a multiverse through musing](#), 2012). Especially intriguing in this respect are the implications of the songs and music favoured by particular diasporas -- serving to sustain them in subtle ways. These merit further attention, as separately argued ([A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?](#) 2006).

Renewal: Framed in such terms, any conventional sense of "return" is called into question. Who is returning where and when and to what? The challenge to comprehension is partly indicated by the poem: *We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know it for the first time* (T. S. Eliot, [Little Gidding](#), 1942).

Is such "knowing" usefully understood as a higher order of "possession" -- possibly one in which attachment/detachment, engagement/disengagement are ambiguously governed by a variant of the Uncertainty Principle? This would transcend conventional understanding of possession as [cognitive closure](#) (Hilary Lawson, [Closure: A Short History of Everything](#), 2002). Conventional possession may be fundamentally inappropriate to the very nature of such "return", as separately discussed ([Paradoxes of Engaging with the Ultimate in any Guise: living life penultimately](#), 2012; [Living as an Imaginal Bridge between Worlds: Global implications of "betwixt and between" and liminality](#), 2011).

Eternal return: As potentially implied by understanding in wave terms, identity and renewal are also indicated by notions of [eternal return](#) -- a concept that the universe has been recurring, and will continue to recur, in a [self-similar](#) form an infinite number of times across infinite time or space (Mircea Eliade, [The Myth of the Eternal Return: cosmos and history](#), 1971; Ned Lukacher, [Time-Fetishes: the secret history of eternal recurrence](#), 1998; Jean-Pierre Luminet, [The Wraparound Universe](#), 2008).

Such considerations might be associated with the process of [iteration](#) through which the coherence of the Mandelbrot set is engendered in the complex plane, as mentioned above -- even extending to a sense of fractal identity. Of related relevance is any requirement for repetition in the learning process through which insight is consolidated -- recalling the much-cited comment of [George Santayana](#): *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*.

Such error-based learning recalls the argument of Donald N. Michael ([On Learning to Plan and Planning to Learn](#), 1973):

More bluntly, future-responsive societal learning makes it necessary for individuals and organizations to embrace error. It is the only way to ensure a shared self-consciousness about limited theory as to the nature of social dynamics, about limited data for testing theory, and hence about our limited ability to control our situation well enough to be successful more often than not.

Timeship: Rather than a return across a physical or virtual "space" to a place defined in tangible, territorial terms -- exemplified by the imaginative focus provided by a conventional space vehicle (a "spaceship") -- there is a case for considering the design and operation of a "timeship" ([Timeship: Conception, Technology, Design, Embodiment and Operation](#), 2003).

Many psychosocial structures, including governments, could be understood as timeships -- especially those framed in terms of millennia (as with some empires) or eternity (as with some churches). This highlights the question of how timeships function as vehicles for any return, as separately explored ([Embodying a Timeship vs. Empowering a Spaceship](#), 2003). The challenge to society of sustainability in time may be framed as one of embodiment ([Strategic Embodiment of Time: configuring questions fundamental to change](#), 2010). This contrasts curiously with some spiritual aspirations to [eternal rest](#).

Timelessness: Such implications raise the question of how return to a homeland is to be associated with some sense of timelessness. This is explicitly exemplified at "Waldheim" ([Cradle Mountain](#), Tasmania) as the embodied focus of sustainable nature conservation, whose founder [Gustav Weindorfer](#) provided the motto: "where there is no time and nothing matters", as separately discussed ([Where There is No Time and Nothing Matters: cognitive challenges at the Edge of the World](#), 2008).

Timeout: As with the fallow period in [crop rotation](#), another consideration is the conventional call for "timeout" in sport and debate. This may be related to advocacy of use of "po" by [Edward de Bono](#) (*Po: Beyond Yes and No*, 1973), as separately discussed ([Categorical Straightjackets -- PO: A suggestion for a de-patterning device for international organization descriptions](#), 1974). Associated with his advocacy of [lateral thinking](#), it could be understood as a provocative bracketing of conventional discourse -- even as a "po-session". This could be a call, out of time, to recognize "what we have got now", within the rigid confines of traditional thinking, limited by concepts which have developed simply for the purpose of arriving at the "right" answer.

Humour: It is appropriate to note the manner in which humour reframes any conventional sense of time, under a remarkable range of conditions -- in celebration of the moment. It engenders a much-valued degree of integration, as separately discussed ([Humour and Play-Fullness: essential integrative processes in governance, religion and transdisciplinarity](#), 2005). The instant gratification it offers in a complex-knowledge-based society -- characterized by information overload and highly dependent on distraction -- of course gives cause for reflection.

Of relevance to comprehension of return, humour has been the focus of a recent study by Matthew M. Hurley, Daniel C. Dennett and Reginald B. Adams, Jr. ([Inside Jokes: using humor to reverse-engineer the mind](#), 2013). In a discussion of "A Mind that Can Sustain Humor", the authors suggest that:

The furniture of the world is just too loosely tied down to admit of being perfectly anticipated on the basis of a finite examination. So any solution will have to be an approximation, a workaday bag of tricks that does a prerry good job keeping us *au courant* and unfazed. A crucial move made by evolution in addressing this design problem has been endowing the mind with a skill for the on-demand creation of *mental spaces* via a process of *spreading activation*.... A mental space is a region of working memory where activated concepts and precepts are semantically connected into a holistic situational comprehension model. (p. 97)

They elaborate a model of [just-in-time spreading activation](#) (JITSA) controlled in practice by a variety of semantic tools, highlighting the vital role of timing (p. 275-277).

Given the embodiment of paradox into humour, there is a case for focusing more attentively on the universe, as conventionally framed and experienced, as being the ultimate joke -- as many have concluded. This could be of particular relevance to any fundamental aspiration to "return". The paradox might lie in the illusion of situating the "homeland" elsewhere to be reached elsewhere -- rather than recognizing that it is essentially "here" and "now" -- if appropriately framed otherwise. Such considerations offer a fruitful challenge to conventional arguments regarding "right of return".

Engaging with other elective affinities

The argument above focuses on affinity with a tangible or virtual place. As implied, it could be extended to include the challenges of affinity with any "other" -- especially individuals and groups -- implying another place

In the case of individuals, this highlights the fruitful potential of subtler thinking regarding interpersonal affinities and bonds -- most notably as suggested by [Johann Wolfgang von Goethe](#) (*Elective Affinities*, 1809). This is currently evident in the tragedies of marital breakdown and the challenges of homosexual partnership ([Marrying an Other whatever the Form: reframing and extending the understanding of marriage](#), 2013).

In the case of groups, this highlights the challenge of those groups whose mission is to seek recognition of their primacy in any new world order -- and to ensure the conversion of all to that perspective. They readily welcome a return of the estranged "to the fold"!

Is there a case for recognizing that such affinity may be based on recognition of a diaspora -- most fruitful understood as non-exclusive. Does affinity with multiple diasporas, with their disparate focal "places", fruitfully raise the question of fragmentation of personal identity mirrored by fragmented externalities? Does this point to new possibilities, through more powerful metaphors, of reframing (re)unification -- as a prelude to meaningful "return"?

In calling for imagination, this argument might then imply that thinking in conventional society (as argued by Edward de Bono) is characterized by imagination frozen in the past -- effectively a "coagulation" of past creativity. This is perhaps exemplified by the focus on the "static" with little capacity to respond to the "dynamic" -- except through surprise at any "unimaginable disaster" ([Dynamic Transformation of Static Reporting of Global Processes: suggestions for process-oriented titles of global issue reports](#), 2013). A more fruitful approach to "solution" might "re-cognize" the value of alternation between processes traditionally explored through the alchemical formula of *solve et coagula* ([Steven M. Rosen, Dreams, Death, Rebirth: a multimedia topological odyssey into alchemy's hidden dimensions](#), 2013).

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