



# laetus in praesens

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## Flowering of Civilization -- Deflowering of Culture

### Flow as a necessarily complex experiential dynamic

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Produced in memory of the cut flowers arranged to enhance the quality of the deliberations at the Annual Meeting of the [World Economic Forum](#) focused on *The Reshaping of the World: Consequences for Society, Politics and Business* (Davos, 22-25 January 2014). An earlier version of this document appeared as a section of *Metaphors To Die By: correspondences between a collapsing civilization, culture or group, and a dying person* (2013).

## Introduction

Curiously flowers play a considerable role in the process of dying, whether to reframe the environment of hospice and intensive care, as wreaths at any funeral, on gravestones, in memorial gardens, or in the remembrance associated with [Poppy Day](#). Flowers thus offer a memory aid to the process of dying. Also curious is their importance in the decoration of conference rooms in which governance of the world is deliberated.

In both cases particular skills may be recognized in their appropriate choice and arrangement, as exemplified by the [ikebana](#) tradition, with its association to chivalry in the [bushido](#) way of the warrior (in one understanding of governance). Given the unprecedented official interest in [decryption](#), it is somewhat ironical that the [language of flowers](#) (floriography) constituted a traditional means of cryptological communication through their selection and arrangement.

As patterns, flowers have particular mathematical significance, as remarkably documented by [Keith Critchlow](#) (*The Hidden Geometry of Flowers: living rhythms, form and number*, 2011). Flowers are thus memory aids through which patterns of various degrees of complexity are recognized (and reinforced) in the course of the potentially diminishing cognitive competence of the dying process. They offer a mind-exercising function which some cultivate in [sudoku](#). Critchlow notes the conclusions of research demonstrating memory enhancement and "improved episodic memory" among the elderly after receiving flowers (Jeanette Haviland-Jones et al, *An Environmental Approach to Positive Emotion: Flowers*, *Evolutionary Psychology*, 3, 2005). Ironically, deprecatory euphemisms for retirement may however be framed in terms of "cultivating roses" -- culminating in the process of "[pushing up daisies](#)".

Memorial gardens and mausoleums are then to be recognized in the tradition of [memory palaces](#) and [theater of memory](#), according to the [method of loci](#) (Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory*, 1966; Peter Matussek, *The Renaissance of the Theater of Memory*, *Janus*, 8, 2001).

The question here is whether the widespread appreciation of flowers, and the metaphorical reference to them, suggest that more could be learned from them. As an aid to memory this may be of particular relevance to a more fruitful understanding of the dynamics of the life cycle of individuals, groups and global civilization -- especially the processes of their decline.

Given the current focus of the World Economic Forum (Davos, January 2014) on *The Reshaping of the World*, to what extent could this benefit by being reframed, through the skills of *ikebana*, as one of learning from flowers, "rearranging the flowers", and "saying it with flowers"? How might the "*Consequences for Society, Politics and Business*" then be understood?

The possibility has been further explored through the work of Taryn Simon, as described by Andy Battaglia (*Finding Flower Power, On a World Stage*, *The Wall Street Journal*, 16 February 2016):

In the art of Taryn Simon, flowers do more than spruce up the room. They also serve as accessories to power and symbols of the market forces behind sometimes messy geopolitical affairs. In *Paperwork and the Will of Capital*, her new exhibition... Ms. Simon re-created floral arrangements crafted for momentous meetings of world leaders -- bouquets that served as both decoration and silent witness to hard negotiations, ceremonial signings and handshake photo opps. *Extreme decision-making surrounded by these seemingly benign arrangements struck me: the idea that these castrated flowers, removed from their natural state, are placed in this decorative position around men believing they can influence the course of evolution and politics and economics and whatever else*, Ms. Simon said.

## Flowering and deflowering

**Flowering:** With respect to a civilization, use is made of the phrase "flowering of a civilization" or "flowering of culture" -- especially in their historical appreciation (Tom Foremski, *Will a fragmented media lead to a flowering of culture?* ZDNet, 28 November 2009; V. W. Brooks, *The Flowering of New England, 1815-1865*, 1937; J. Evans, *The Flowering of the Middle Ages*, 1967; Edward L. Widmer, *Young America: the flowering of democracy in New York City*, 2000).

Charles Kurzman (*Weaving Iran into the Tree of Nations*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 37, 2005) refers to the irony noted by Gilbert Murray a century ago that "in almost every nation in the world from the Americans to the Chinese and the Finns, the same whisper from below the threshold [of consciousness] sounds incessantly in men's ears. '*We are the pick and flower of nations: the only nation that is really generous and brave and just*'. The phrase "flower of (the) nation's" is commonly used as a qualifier, notably with respect to soldiers engaging in military action.

Reference is widely made to the Chinese **Hundred Flowers Campaign** in 1956. This was framed by Mao Zedong as: *The policy of letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend is designed to promote the flourishing of the arts and the progress of science*. Of subsequent relevance is the argument of John Cleverley (*Deflowering the Cultural Revolution: Letter from China*, Change, 1977)

The metaphor has been applied to genius and human talent. Curiously it has also been applied to reason in various domains, including the law:

- ... a new era has dawned upon the science of numbers; a "royal road" to mathematics has been discovered so strewn with the flowers of reason and philosophy that a youthful learner can follow it with interest and pleasure... (Charlotte W. Junge (*What's old about the new mathematics?* *The Arithmetic Teacher*, 17, 1970, 6)
- The surrealist flaneur seeks "strange flowers of reason to match each error of the senses: admirable gardens of absurd beliefs, forebodings, obsessions and frenzies... New myths spring up beneath each step we take." (Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, 1994).

There are many examples of use of the flower metaphor in the historical framing of psycho-cultural tragedy (*The Flowers of War*, 2011; *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 1857; *Flores Historiarum*, 1326; *Before the Flowers of Friendship Faded*, 1931).

Insightful schematic floral designs may also figure in some **oriental carpets**, as highlighted by Christopher Alexander (*A Foreshadowing of 21st Century Art: the color and geometry of very early Turkish carpets*, 1993) and in his later work (*Harmony-Seeking Computations: a science of non-classical dynamics based on the progressive evolution of the larger whole*, *International Journal for Unconventional Computing (IJUC)*, 5, 2009), as discussed separately (*Harmony-Comprehension and Wholeness-Engendering: eliciting psychosocial transformational principles from design*, 2010). Cultivation of a garden is therefore potentially of special value to a mathematician in declining years.

**Deflowering:** With respect to the concern here with the collapse of global civilization, the argument might be framed in terms of "deflowering of culture", namely one in which the fading of "flowers" is systematically enabled -- whether consciously or unconsciously. The phrase is however primarily used in its sexual connotation, although that might be said to be appropriate metaphorically to the widely recognized process of the "rape" of cultures and countries (*Institutional "rape" as systemic equivalent to individual rape?*, 2011; Michael J. Reppas, *The Deflowering of the Parthenon*, *Fordham Intellectual Property Media and Entertainment Law Journal*, 911, 1998; *Blood for Seed: the Great War and the Deflowering of Europe*, *Man Against the World*, 29 May 2013). Colonialism may be seen in this light, as with its evolution into some forms of neocolonialism and development. Cynically this process might be framed through a different metaphor -- *you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs*. With civilization to be understood as an omelette, and culture as an egg?

In practice this "deflowering" is notably to be recognized in regulations (such as those of the EU) regarding permissible varieties of plant species or in the advocacy of deforestation and land clearing to enable large scale monoculture by agribusiness. Fred Pearce notes false environment claims made under EU auspices (*The Deflowering of the EU's Green Logo*, *The Guardian*, 15 April 2010). The situation has long been acknowledged through a widely appreciated song: *Where have all the flowers gone? ... Oh, when will they ever learn?* (Ian K. Smith, *Top 20 Political Songs: Where Have All the Flowers Gone*, *New Statesman*, 25 March 2010). There is a degree of irony to the sense in which "flowering of culture" now manifests primarily through song in the face of ever increasing reduction in variety as a consequence of development.

Use of deflowering is especially appropriate given the common reference to "virgin forests" (D. H. Janzen, *The Deflowering of Central America*, Natural History, 83, 1974; Sharon Friedman, *Face It: all forests are "sluts"*, *High Country News*; Malcolm Smith, *The Deflowering of Britain*, *The Independent*, 21 July 1996; Ross Wehner, *Deflowering Ecuador*, *Mother Jones*, January/February 2003).

Curiously the theme has been variously explored in relation to New England (Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Deflowering of New England*, *The Hudson Review*, Winter 1950; Jacquin Sanders, *Look to your Geese: a novel of the deflowering of New England*, 1960; Roger Angell, *The Flowering and subsequent Deflowering of New England*, *New Yorker*, October 1967; Marvin Fisher, *Melville's "Tartarus": the Deflowering of New England*, *American Quarterly*, Spring, 1971). There has been recognition of the "deflowering of America", as with a leading poet of World War I, **Wilfred Owen**, who saw no honour or glory in a war he characterized as the "deflowering of Europe". **Charles Eliot Norton** is reported to have "bemoaned the deflowering of America" at the hands of the expansionists.

More generally, it could be argued that inappropriate development (as widely criticized) could be fruitfully described as a form of cultural deflowering. Srinivas R. Melkote chronicles the "deflowering" of the dominant development paradigm which had resulted in less for many (*Communication for Development in the Third World Theory and Practice*, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 18, 1993, 1). Developing is perhaps to be contrasted with "veloping" (*Veloping: the Art of Sustaining Significance*, 1997).

## Cutting flowers as a questionable strategic metaphor

Curiously the engagement with flowers, notably in the case of both the dying process and conference environments, is primarily through **cut flowers** -- possibly watered, but otherwise un nourished (being unrooted), and expected to fade within days. As a further metaphor of decay and unsustainability, these are shipped in large quantities from developing countries to industrialized countries -- no longer able to produce sufficient to satisfy the demand (*Fresh-Cut Flowers, Shipped by Sea?* *Wall Street Journal*, 11 May 2013). Recognized as an annual \$14 billion "perishable business", shipment by air has epitomized issues relating to "food miles" and consumerism (*Air-freight flowers greener than Dutch hothouses, say Kenyans*, *The Guardian*, 14 February 2007; *The Flower Industry*, *Ethical Trading Initiative*, 18 November 2011).

For a collapsing civilization, the cutting of flowers offers a further metaphor through a perverse interpretation of the injunction central to remembrance celebrated in the Christian **Eucharist**, as primary driver of the practice of faith-based governance: *Cut; observe, this do in remembrance of life* -- whether understood as "everlasting", or in terms of *life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*. This is curiously reminiscent of the slaughter of "Christmas trees" -- some 80 million annually. Deflowering through deforestation?

Here "cut" is the process of ensuring disconnection through severing and establishing artificial boundaries; "observe" is primarily the process of quantitative measurement; and "remembrance" is characterized by information and knowledge management. The process may be used to cut off what may be ignored and forgotten as being irrelevant -- possibly as an act of **conceptual gerrymandering**. The unfortunate perversion is echoed in metaphorical use of "plant" (for factory), "crop" (of trainees), "fruit" (for any product), "leaves" (in books), "root" (for any fundamental), "tree" (for any hierarchy), "jungle" (for any condition meriting clearing).

There is a sense in which the "cutting" mindset has been reframed as fundamental to the methodology of science -- whereby restrictive boundaries are legitimately defined to isolate systems meriting study, irrespective of any context, as separately discussed (*Vigorous Application of Derivative Thinking to Derivative Problems*, 2013; *Systematic Gerrymandering of Declared Threats and Legality of Response*, 2013).

There is little appreciation of wildflowers or wilderness, or that the wilderness should have a voice, to sing -- as is evident from the progressive extinction of bird species (Jonathan Franzen, *Last Song for Migrating Birds*, *National Geographic*, July 2013). This mindset is echoed in the framing of terrorism through the opportunistic conflation with the traditional fear of wildlife by humanity -- beyond any conventional understanding of law and order. This poses the question of how disparate voices are to be heard, as separately discussed (*Enactivating Multiversal Community: hearing a pattern of voices in the global wilderness*, 2012).

As noted separately (*Endangering species by rationalizing the environment*, 2003), the modern civilizing enterprise has been a vast exercise in taming the "wilderness" through "cutting" -- reframed as clearing the land". Animals are destroyed as being "dangerous to man" (or his self-image). Any species deemed to be of direct value are domesticated or cultivated. This enterprise is now being extended to include the destructive exploitation of ecosystems that are habitats of species that are no danger to humans. Even amongst the domesticated species, care is taken to emasculate or destroy those (such as bulls, stallions, or pack leaders) that might draw them into natural behaviours unwelcome to conventional society. The approach is further extended to include the restraint of dissenters, if not their criminalization (George Monbiot, *At last, a law to stop almost anyone from doing almost anything*, *The Guardian*, 6 January 2014).

Strangely, through the absurdity of war and conventional mindsets, those upheld as the "flower of society" (whether the elite or otherwise) are recognized as being "cut down" in battle -- another form of "deflowering". In remembrance, notably on Poppy Day, this has given rise to laments such as *Flowers of the Forest* or *In Flanders Fields*:

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

Curiously a variety of the red poppy is a central feature of the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan -- where it is a primary source of opium to enable (and fund) forgetfulness worldwide in a dysfunctional global society. Given the extraordinary parallels with a century ago, there is a case for exploring the possibility and value of a future lament of equivalent poetic form -- especially given the importance of poetry to the culture in question, as separately described (*Poetic Engagement with Afghanistan, Caucasus and Iran: an unexplored strategic*

opportunity? 2009). One approach is the following:

*In Afghan fields the poppies blow  
Between the crescents, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The drones, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

A remarkably insightful study of the role of flowers in relation to war is provided by Ann Elias (*War and the Visual Language of Flowers: an antipodean perspective, War, Literature and the Arts*, 20, 2008). This explores the poppy as an emotive symbol, an example of significance and symbolism of floral imagery to the war imagination. It notes the incongruity of flowers -- which popularly signify innocence and beauty -- within military contexts.

Elias specifically remarks on the philosophical study of the significance of flowers by Claudette Sartillot (*Herbarium Verbarium: the discourse of flowers*, 1993):

... it is in their nature to embody double meanings, since flowers are male and female in one, and when cut they become mobile metaphors that do not denote any fixed identity. In war imagery they oscillate between the beautiful and the ugly, the masculine and the feminine, death and love, and the transcendent as well as the abject. They are simultaneously symbols of grief for the slain, and symbols of hope about life's renewal. Sartillot describes the flower as a unique entity that:

seems to have no *topos*, no clear or real place, no role. If flowers are traditionally -- and as literary emblems, primordially -- associated with feminine beauty, life, and innocence, they shift in the same texts into their opposite.

Elias then concludes:

Nationalism depends on the symbolism and aesthetic of red which enfolds not only visceral references to the dead but also historical references to Flanders fields. However, the red poppy that increasingly emerges today as symbol of contemporary war, and its aftermath, is the cultivated narcotic poppy from Afghanistan. The Flanders poppy and the Afghanistan poppy symbolise two different eras of warfare, but in both cases, their image embodies the melancholy of the human condition which is the struggle between war and peace.

## Seeds of change and regeneration

Especially interesting are metaphors associated with seeds, as potentially engendered by flowers. Extensive reference is made to "seed thoughts", "seeding initiatives", and the process of dissemination of ideas and know-how emanating from global strategic deliberations. Ironically the inability of cut flowers to propagate through dissemination of their seeds remarkably epitomizes the inadequacy of the institutional environments in which they are used -- highlighting the cynicism with which "seeds of hope" are desperately promoted. In relation to civilizational collapse, the policies developed in such environments might be compared to justification for the current deployment of "terminator seeds" -- in that they have to be periodically "reauthorised", rather than being inherently sustainable.

With respect to creativity and innovation, much is made of "fertilization" -- readily associated with chemical fertilizer. Strangely there is increasing recognition of the consequence of collapsing bee populations, but with little understanding of their psycho-social equivalent. There is particular irony to the replacement of the *drone bees* (with which *queen bees* reproduce) by *artificial drones* of military repute (Heather Callaghan, *Robobee Officially Takes Flight: robotic pollinators to replace dying bees*, *Activist Post*, 13 May 2013; Russ McSpadden, *Robotic Bees to Pollinate Monsanto Crops*, *Earth First Newswire*, 8 April 2013).

Is an analogue to be envisaged with respect to creative communication (*Forthcoming Major Revolution in Global Dialogue*, 2013)? Are Monsanto and POTUS to be understood as competing or colluding in articulating the role of "queen bee" in the New World Order?

Concern at the loss of biodiversity has resulted in the storage of samples in *seed banks*. In the absence of "ecosystem banks", and the knowledge of how to reconstitute ecosystems, there is a degree of interest in the preservation of *sites of special scientific interest*. Unfortunately the pod in which seeds are compactly packed is now associated with a detachable *gun pod* from which bullets are delivered as "seeds of death".

## Virtualization of nature and disconnection from roots

**Disconnection:** Nature is treated conventionally as a "legacy system" (in computer terms) -- to be run, for those who choose to do so, in what amounts to a virtual environment, namely a greenhouse, a conservatory, or a terrarium. The approach may be extended to media representation and simulations (as with virtual fish tanks).

Missing is any systemic recognition of the cognitive disconnect or any mathematical exploration of that "disconnectivity" -- effectively a "missing link", or a breaking of the "meta-pattern which connects" (as noted by Gregory Bateson and *separately discussed*). Dying, and civilizational collapse, enable a degree of realization of this. The point has been variously made (James Lovelock, *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: a Final Warning: enjoy it while you can*, 2009; Jared Diamond, *Collapse: how societies choose to fail or survive*, 2005; Anders Wijkman and Johan Rockström, *Bankrupting Nature: denying our planetary boundaries*, 2012).

Through their virtualization, flowers have been denatured into the [rose windows](#) of Christian places of worship, and especially in the elaborate decorative [patterns of Islamic mosques](#) (Keith Critchlow, *Islamic Patterns: an analytical and cosmological approach*, 1999). Being denatured, any reminder of the dying process is simply absent -- or perversely associated with depiction of crucifixion.

Are blogs to be the virtual wildflowers of the knowledge-based society of the 21st century -- set in the wilderness of the [blogosphere](#)? Similarly, are tweeters to be its song birds, as separately imagined (*Re-Emergence of the Language of the Birds through Twitter?* 2010).

**Variety of ordering principles:** Flowers offer a gentle reminder of the variety of alternative forms of order -- especially in mathematical terms in the light of the hypotheses of cosmology regarding the nature of the [multiverse](#) in which alternative universes may be embedded.

Rather than any singular New World Order envisaged by government, or characteristic of some Theories of Everything, flowers give an immediate sense of variety and its value to the subtle dynamics of viable ecosystems. (*Law and Order vs. Lore and Orders? Imagining otherwise the forceful engagement of singularity with plurality*, 2013).

**Cultivating systemic ignorance:** The current use of flowers, for purely decorative and symbolic purposes during significant psychosocial processes, precludes recognition of the systemic insights they offer -- especially when "rootless", "potted", or arranged unnaturally (in ecosystemic terms).

It is intriguing to note use of such tokens in both centres of governance and places of terminal care. Both may indeed have ordered gardens, but not in order to facilitate more sustainable engagement with the reality of nature in all its variety. For some institutions the gardens may even be hidden and inaccessible, except to the few or under special conditions (as in the case of the [Vatican Gardens](#), where any visits are "guided"). The architectural complex of mutually hostile religious foci in Jerusalem is noteworthy for the absence of gardens -- the famed [Garden of Gethsemane](#) is a focus of controversy and the [Jerusalem Gardens](#) is a hotel. Curiously appropriate to this argument, the gardens associated with most churches tend to be cemeteries,

**Gardening:** This situation contrasts with the explicit appreciation of the cognitive role of gardens in some other traditions -- whether or not promoted as a World Heritage Site (*Hiraizumi: temples, gardens and archaeological sites representing the Buddhist Pure Land*). An older tradition has ensured the construction of sacred gardens in association with temples (notably in India and Japan), with an estimated 25,000 sacred groves (*deorai*) and other sanctified ecosystems in Rajasthan alone [[more](#); [more](#)].

In landscapes ravaged by humans, such zones are proving to be vital to the preservation and renaissance of biodiversity. Specific importance is attached to [Islamic gardens](#). It might be said that the Christian monastic tradition explicitly symbolizes its effort to dominate nature by containing its manifestation within hidden monastic gardens. This contrasts with the possibility of an [ecostery](#) (*Reimagining Principles Enabling an Existential Ecostery: engendering out-of-the-box awareness and its transformation*, 2013).

## Healthy engagement with decay and corruption

The systemic ignorance cultivated by the ritual emphasis on cut flowers is noteworthy in that they are expected to decay *in situ* to some degree -- to be duly replaced by "fresh flowers". Little is learned from unconscious exposure to this decay process -- evident otherwise as a vital characteristic in natural cycles, often as a feature of the propagation and germination of seeds. The focus on the serial replacement of policy failures by "fresh policies" has become a feature of the democratic process. The "decay" of previous policies is vociferously deplored by those who acquire power as a consequence.

Ann Elias (*War and the Visual Language of Flowers: an antipodean perspective*, 2008) comments on the essay of [Georges Bataille](#) (*The Language of Flowers*, 1929) as being:

... a subversive essay using the anti-romantic image of a dismembered flower to shock the human world into facing rather than repressing the reality of death. Bataille's essay criticises the human custom of avoiding the subject of death by projecting its destiny with death onto the beauty of flowers, which are made symbols of the ephemerality of human life. By exaggerating the hidden implication of the flower's vitality which is its imminent decay Bataille employs the allegory of the flower to reveal how easily human ideals of everlasting beauty and purity are subverted by the actuality that this beautiful object 'is risen from the stench of the manure pile -- even though it seemed for a moment to have escaped it in a flight of angelic and lyrical purity'. The image of the rotting flower prevents it from conveying any of the conventional ideals of flowers as innocent, beautiful, and peaceful since they are 'doomed to die almost as soon as they bloom, they wither sadly on the stem in rank disorder, eventually falling to the ground from which they came'. Once flowers start to rot they become inappropriate to the conventional rituals of public commemorations of war and sacrifice because they undermine idealisations of nature and human life.

Despite the degree of exposure to cut flowers, the extent of corruption within deliberative processes associated with global governance has long been readily denied -- as with what might be recognized as processes of institutional decay. The perception of corruption worldwide is now a focus of annual surveys ([Corruption Perceptions Index](#)).

The United Nations system has long offered a variety of examples. The recent scandals of the Catholic Church have drawn attention to the nature of systemic corruption and its denial -- under a cloak of sanctified innocence. The recent destabilization of the EU, as a consequence of lack of budgetary discipline within some member countries, has finally resulted in recognition of the extent of institutionalized corruption. Electronic surveillance disclosures have made evident how much is negotiated "under the table" -- but with little emergent capacity to address those processes more appropriately.

Yet to be learned, possibly through [biomimetic inspiration](#) from the plant world, is healthy integration of decay processes -- the process of dying.

As with the Roman Empire, is there scope for more specific official engagement with the "underworld" or the "netherworld", as discussed separately (*Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld*, 2010)? This would contrast with present formal acknowledgement of "evil" by both church and state, whatever it is to be held to mean in practice. Virtual wars and crusades against selected evils may be formally undertaken to eliminate them (*Review of the Range of Virtual Wars: a strategic comparison with the global war against terrorism*, 2005). There is however little overt recognition of the extent of covert implication in such processes -- and the healthier framing for which it calls.

A degree of response to decay of tangibles is evident in concerns regarding the accumulation of [waste](#), notably [radioactive waste](#). However, despite its recognition, little effort is made to address the massive waste accumulation in the gyres of the so-called [Pacific Trash Vortex](#), the [Indian Ocean garbage patch](#), or the [North Atlantic garbage patch](#). The possibility is ignored that psychosocial analogues to such waste is generated and accumulated -- intangibles undermining other recycling strategies.

## Recognizing viable pathways of diminishing competence

As noted with respect to *Metaphors To Die By* (2013), there is some recognition of "dying well" and a "good death". The possibility has been expressed through the mechanical metaphor of shifting to a lower gear -- [downshifting](#) (Steve Vernon, *Do the Downshift to Survive Your Retirement Years*, *MoneyWatch*, 6 April 2010; Carolee Duckworth and Marie Langworthy, *Shifting Gears to your Life and Work after Retirement*, 2013).

This metaphor does not systematically explore the progressive loss of cognitive capacity. Simpler patterns of order may need to be used to sustain a dignified sense of integrity and coherence -- as suggested with respect to the sequence of centro-symmetric polyhedra (*Metaphorical Geometry in Quest of Globality -- in response to global governance challenges*, 2009). This is potentially more evident in the case of the geometry of flowers. Yet to be identified are the pathways through "viable" patterns of collapse -- whether for an individual, a group or a knowledge-based civilization. Ironically this may be understood topologically as "packing" (a concentration on essentials) or as "unpacking" (as discarding unnecessary packaging).

Aging imposes a convergence on cognitive simplicity -- one that can be fruitfully undertaken voluntarily. Cultivation of flowers is consistent with this -- making of flowers an admirable symbol of requisite simplicity in guiding cognitive reflection on that convergence. This may well accord with the arguments of [Duane Elgin](#) (*Voluntary Simplicity: toward a way of life that is outwardly simple, inwardly rich*, 2010).

What are the viable patterns of downscaling or downshifting for the United Nations agencies, for example -- a more appropriate framing of [United Nations reform](#)? How might such understanding relate to that of the ordered collapse of major corporations and the downscaling required of government institutions by austerity measures in the face of dramatic budgetary crises?

The tetrahedral pyramid may prove to be the last explicit mnemonic recourse to viable ordering during the process of decline -- only implying the greater (deployed) complexity from which it has been reduced, and to which access is then severely constrained. Ironically it is the pyramidal form which has featured prominently in the architecture of cultures in which dying is a major concern -- possibly understood as a form of "gateway" to the afterlife. In some cultures, these are suggestive of the reason for pyramid construction during the lifetime of the person to whom it was dedicated.

The role of such holding patterns -- effectively their nesting within one another -- is central to the work of [R. Buckminster Fuller](#), as separately discussed (*Geometry of Thinking for Sustainable Global Governance: cognitive implication of synergetics*, 2009). Ironically such forms are of current symbolic significance on the dollar bill, with respect to naming of the NSA [PRISM surveillance program](#), and the US Pentagon.

As represented, notably by Critchlow, flower patterns are typically two-dimensional -- although centro-symmetrical. The two-dimensional representation accords with typical approaches to global governance and to "planning" in general. As such it is potentially a vital indicator of their inadequacy in practice. The central focus is of course typical of hierarchical organization with its own problematic implications. There is therefore an irony to the manner in which the three-dimensionality of flowers is made so evident in deliberative contexts -- if only as a decorative feature, much as with the [illuminated manuscripts](#) of centuries past.

Flowers offer the further advantage of expressing other patterns, as with colour and scent -- now increasingly valued in [neuromarketing](#), itself understandably related to any use of [psychoactive drugs](#) by policy-makers. Cognitive downscaling may then be understood as passing through multiple colour and scent variations to the primary colours and scents as viable memetic holding patterns -- according to deteriorating capacity to discern variety, and especially when (strategic) vision is constrained or absent. There is some irony to the fact that the major political parties in any democracy tend already to identify with preferred primary colours in opposition to the others.

## Dynamic of inspiration and expiration

There is a case for recognizing a degree of systemic isomorphism between living / dying and [inhalation](#) (inspiration) / [exhalation](#) (expiration). With respect to flower patterns, this dynamic is especially relevant from the perspective of disciplines which accord significance to the set of [chakras](#) through which inspiration and expiration are understood to pass -- as in breathing exercises. As noted by Critchlow, these renowned Vedic centres of the human body (also called lotuses) relate to the gross human anatomy as recognized by contemporary Western science but in themselves are not considered as of a gross nature.

Critchlow's study offers a remarkable articulation of the geometry of petal arrangements from the simplest flowers to the most complex -- artfully distinguishing between the "geometry of flowers" and the "flowers in geometry" (most notably the so-called [Flower of Life](#)). The geometry implies possibilities of transformation between the configurations.

The Vedic system offers a series of flowers of different complexity, each petal bearing a letter of the Sanskrit (Devangari) alphabet. The

flowers are treated as part of the continuum from the physical to the metaphysical. Although flowers are recognized to a degree in various traditions as memetic carriers, this is taken further in the attribution of significance to individual petals. With modern communication technology, the attribution of keywords to petals in configurations can be readily foreseen -- with the further possibility of alternative attributions when the configurations are scaled down to greater simplicity or up to greater complexity (as in familiar map-zooming features).

In three dimensions there is then scope for exploring the cognitive dynamics associated with the folding of petals from two dimensions to the greater integrity associated with three dimensions -- as separately argued and illustrated by animations (*Middle East Peace Potential through Dynamics in Spherical Geometry: engendering connectivity from incommensurable 5-fold and 6-fold conceptual frameworks*, 2012).

Why are global governance and planning so typically two-dimensional and static (*Dynamic Transformation of Static Reporting of Global Processes*, 2013; *From Lateral Thinking to Voluminous Thinking*, 2007; *Spherical Configuration of Interlocking Roundtables*, 1998)? The question is especially appropriate given the striking reminders offered by the much-admired use of flowers in deliberative environments and on occasions of remembrance of the most significant past failures of global governance.

Understood as a sustaining dynamic, this is notably a preoccupation of "internal alchemy" (*Neidan*), purportedly used by Taoist initiates to prolong life and create an immortal spiritual body that would survive after death -- through appropriate "circulation of light", as being essential to sustaining health (*Circulation of the Light: essential metaphor of global sustainability?* 2010).

This is held to be comparable to the "spiritual alchemy" of the West, and is the focus of the Chinese classic *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. It is the essential nature of the dynamic which makes of it an open secret -- whose very openness is a challenge to any comprehension in quest of closure. As a challenge in topology, new consideration of alchemy in relation to the closure of death has been presented by Steven M. Rosen (*Dreams, Death, Rebirth: a multimedia topological odyssey into alchemy's hidden dimensions*, 2013). How this applies to collectivities, especially a global knowledge-based civilization, has yet to be explored.

Alchemy offers a metaphorical sense of the distinct existential processes that are desirably associated with each "flower" in that ecosystem in order to ensure its sustainability.

## Flow: plant regeneration through flowers

**Flowers "in process"**: Further to the above argument with respect to cut flowers as a favoured symbol for individual and collective governance, Critchlow (2011) notes:

There is another factor that needs to be acknowledged: each flower is 'in process' at all times. This means that it usually spirals into being, maintains a full-faced 'aspect' for a time, then proceeds to withdraw life from this form as it contracts and often spirals back down into the soil... however 'flat' the flower's face is, there will inevitably be a three-dimensional aspect that cannot be taken fully into account.

It is this fundamental sense of process, and of engagement with time, that is essentially absent from reference to democratic and political processes, or from the wider implications of life-long learning. This sense of process can also be used to frame civilization -- too readily considered in static terms. The point is well made by Mahatma Gandhi in his much-cited response to a question about his appreciation of "Western civilization": *I think it would be a very good idea.*

**Flowers as the epitome of "flow"**: Critchlow then continues:

What we find when investigating the geometry of the life cycle of a flower is that it describes or creates a 'flow' from a point-seed to flower bud, and then through a spherical unfolding. The field of action that the flower's movement takes up is largely spherical. Yet petals perform a winding up to a winding down in each flower to complete its life's movement. This can best be illustrated graphically...

It is the plant's capacity to regenerate flowers that then offers more fruitful and appropriate insight into the cycle of living and dying, at least with respect to the collective. For the individual this is evident to a degree in the smaller cycles within any life, including respiration. Its implications for any form of rebirth are necessarily a matter of controversy.

Although they appear not to have a common etymological root, "flow" offers the delightful implication that this is precisely what "flowers" do in being "in process". There is now a degree of recognition of the art of "being in the flow". Of relevance to both individual and collective, this then suggests an association between "flowering" and "being in the flow". The significance of the latter has been emphasized in flow psychology, as articulated by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (*Flow: the psychology of optimal experience*, 1990), whether for the individual or extended to the collective (*Good Business: leadership, flow, and the making of meaning*, 2003).

**Video game engagement with flow and flower**: Despite the lack of any etymological relationship, the relationship between "flow" and "flower" has been explored aesthetically as in the process of appreciation of floral arrangement, as described by Alan McDaniel (*Rhythm relates "flow" in a floral arrangement*, Floral Design Horticulture).

The relation between flow and flow-er has been variously noted (Cathy McGlynn *Flowers and Flow-ers: Antiphallo centric Effects in Ulysses Otherness: Essays and Studies* 1.1 October 2010). It features in FLOWer, a process flow simulation environment. This offers the experience of different aspects of Flow in order to enable better operational decisions about a system, such as a company -- initially through a game.

Most notable is the development of two related video games, extensively described by *Wikipedia*:

- **Flow**: This is a game about piloting an aquatic organism through a surreal biosphere where players consume other organisms, evolve, and advance their organisms to the abyss. Developed in association with research by *Jenova Chen* (*Flow in Games*, 2007), it provides a unique game design methodology to realize player-centric **Dynamic Difficulty Adjustment** (DDA) in video games, which creates optimized video game experiences for different types of players. Rather than offering player a passive DDA experience by analyzing incomplete in-game data, this thesis uses Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory and provides players with subconscious choices to help them actively customize their optimal video game experiences. It treats active DDA as a new parameter for analyzing video games and seeks to address why certain video games had a wider appeal than others. Originally developed in 2006, it has been reworked into a highly popular **PlayStation** version.
- **Flower**: Developed by the creators of *Flow* as a "**spiritual successor**", the player controls the wind, blowing a flower petal through the air using the movement of the game controller. Flying close to flowers results in the player's petal being followed by other flower petals. Approaching flowers may also have side-effects on the game world, such as bringing vibrant color to previously dead fields or activating stationary windmills. The game features no text or dialogue, forming a narrative arc primarily through visual representation and emotional cues.  
Similarly appreciated, *Flower* was primarily intended to arouse positive emotions in the player, rather than to be a challenging and "fun" game. This focus was sparked by Chen, who felt that the primary purpose of entertainment products like video games was the feelings that they evoked in the audience, and that the emotional range of most games was very limited. The team viewed their efforts as creating a work of art, removing gameplay elements and mechanics that were not provoking the desired response in the players.

Given the widely recognized relationship between video games and drone operation, it will be interesting to see how the emotional dimension plays out in the latter context. Of some relevance is the objection by US war veterans to the proposal to honour drone pilots with medals (*Distinguished Warfare Medal Honoring Drone Pilots Canceled*, *The Huffington Post*, 15 April, 2013). This nexus of psycho-social complexity would be further aggravated were it to be known that drone pilots undertook their killing sessions to music -- as was reported of tank commanders, as a means of relieving the tedium and stress, during the US-led intervention in Iraq. Does this suggest the first indications of a renaissance of **martial music** -- with (virtual) bagpipers (courageously) leading the advance towards (virtual) death, as in centuries past? Presumably such music enables its beneficiaries to get into the flow of killing and dying -- thereby providing "metaphors to die by" for some.

**Cherry blossom as a vital cultural symbol**: The significance for one culture is poignantly indicated in the case of Japan and the symbolism associated there with cherry blossom, as discussed separately with respect to resilient response to the catastrophes of the nuclear power "plant" at Fukushima and the effects of atomic bombing (*Fukushima, cherry blossom and "mono no aware"*, 2011).

As documented by Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (*Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalisms: the militarization of aesthetics in Japanese history*, 2002), the symbolic importance of cherry blossoms, through their brief flowering and poignant scattering, become the quintessential symbol of *tokkotai* sacrifice -- resulting in an "aestheticization of death".

As argued separately from such a perspective, has sufficient attention been given to the final message of modern suicide bombers -- or to the moment in conflict situations where the risk of death is imminent and special strategic intuition is most called for (*Ensuring Strategic Resilience through Haiku Patterns: reframing the scope of the "martial arts" in response to strategic threats*, 2006) ?

The question is raised with respect to the "culture of death" as cultivated during the course of the American Civil War (Mark Schantz, *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: the Civil War and America's culture of death*, 2008). Schantz argues that "*Americans... taught each other how to die*". In her review of that work, Rana Salimi (*Glorification of the Death of Heroes*, Library of Social Science):

Schantz argues that religious beliefs about death were deeply significant for the Civil War. Soldiers marched off to war secure in the belief that their bodies would be restored and they would be reunited with loved ones in heaven. In a conflict that violently took the lives of 620,000 men, who were not just killed but "ripped apart", these beliefs sustained soldiers on both sides of the conflict who wrote about heaven as a home where death and suffering would be no more. Schantz writes that such beliefs about death insulated soldiers and their families from the horrors of the war. Thus, religious notions of life and death served political purposes and set the ground for the bloodiest war in American history.

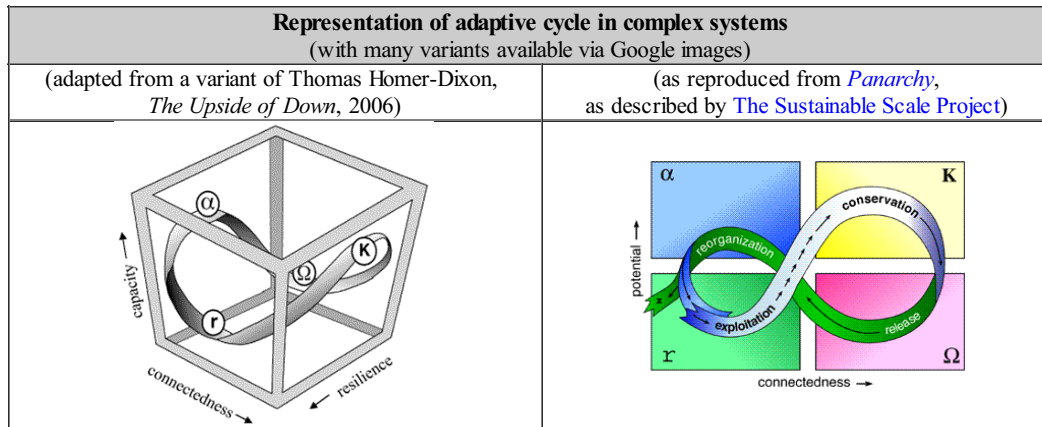
In presenting that review, Richard Koenigsberg notes the following examples of troops fighting in other wars that engaged in suicidal battle strategies resulting in enormous casualties. They were presumably sustained by "metaphors to die by" that merit the most careful clarification:

- Japanese soldiers in the Russo-Japanese war (1905).
- British, French, Italian, Australian, Italian, Australian and Turkish soldiers (among others) during the First World War.
- Japanese soldiers during the Second World War.
- Royal Air Force pilots during the Second World War (the number of UK airmen who gave their lives was ten times greater than the number of *kamikaze* pilots who died).
- American soldiers at the Battle of Normandy.
- German soldiers fighting Russia in the Second World War (e.g., the Battle of Berlin).
- Chinese troops attacking Americans in North Korea during the Korean war (1950): the "human wave attacks".
- Iranians fighting in the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88): human wave attacks.

They are hailed as the "flowers" of their country -- the "flower of the nation's manhood" (*Flodden field, where the flower of Scottish*

## Navigating the seasons of the adaptive cycle: natural alchemy?

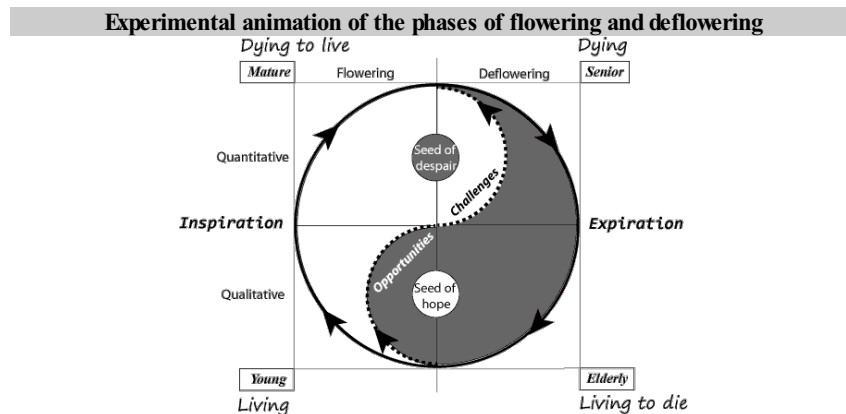
The process of flow, as evident in flowers, is characterized by a cycle of distinct phases of adaptation. The adaptive cycle is a focus of the [Resilience Alliance](#). It is featured in a study by Thomas Homer-Dixon (*The Upside of Down: catastrophe, creativity, and the renewal of civilization*, 2006).



**Possible animations:** Concerns with the nature of the adaptive cycle can be tentatively related to elements of the argument above, as in the following animation. This endeavours to hold generic systemic processes evident in plants, individuals and collectivities -- whether with respect to a respiratory cycle or to a life cycle. Of particular interest is the manner in which living and dying may figure ambiguously in metaphorical terms at unexpected parts of the cycle under particular conditions. This is evident with respect "dying to live" (as may be articulated by the young, those faced with crisis, or in a terminal condition) and with respect to "living to die" (as with respect to those dedicated to life-threatening combat).

The central line separating light and dark regions is used to hold the ambiguity arising from positive and negative feedback associated with challenges and opportunities in the face of crises and constraints. As such it merits considerations as a form of driver to the process. This dynamic is especially meaningful to those with a [bipolar affective disorder](#) -- raising the interesting question as to a possible collective analogue, alternating between maniacal "expression" and the deepest "depression".

Of existential interest is the manner in which the animation positions a "seed of hope" and a "seed of despair" -- consistent with the flower metaphor.



The depiction of the "seeds" above is an effort to hold, respectively:

- the degree of hope associated with the conception of fresh proposals and initiatives -- "seeds of change" -- in a context of despair. As articulated by physicist [Peter Russell](#), this could be understood in terms of *The White Hole in Time: our future evolution and the meaning of now* (1993)
- the degree of despair, deception and depression engendered by the failure of initiatives, understood (as noted *Metaphors to Die By*) as a form of "black hole" into which enthusiasm sinks (as into a [Slough of Despond](#)). This is notably evident from critical comments in the alternative press regarding what is not working. This is perhaps to be recognized, humorously, in terms of the vulnerability arising from progressive thinning of the capacity to response to surprise (the "Oh Hole"? -- and more seriously what becomes evident as a consequence, as argued by [Nassim Nicholas Taleb](#) (*The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2010).

Arguably the two extremes are symbolized to a degree by the red poppy and its challenging implications. As noted by Ann Elias (*War and the Visual Language of Flowers: an antipodean perspective, War, Literature and the Arts*, 2008):

But so mutable is the flower as cultural sign, and so complex the realm of aesthetics, that the red poppy alone is able to configure

the military body in contradictory ways as heroic, ruined, and also sexualised.

The drama and symbolism of the poppy's sanguine flesh and black centre, a 'well' that seems to bear the gaze of the dead, has been remarked upon so often that there seems no possible way to speak about it outside clichés. Yet the possibility that it can be expressed afresh never fails to allure....Underpinning the authority of the poppy is its clear and vivid form that allows our thoughts to concentrate on the simplicity of its language in an effort to comprehend the meaning of war. But the poppy is deceptively simple, and hidden behind its clarity and vivacity is an unfathomable reality. This is why the subject of the poppy is returned to repetitively: no representation of it is adequate just as no representation of war can express it sufficiently.

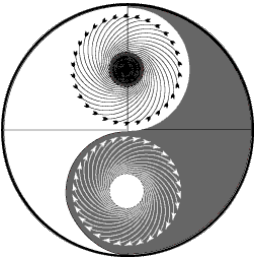
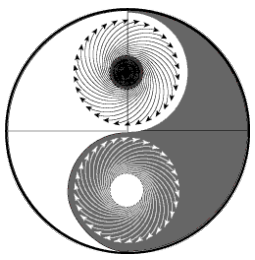
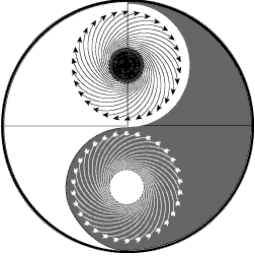
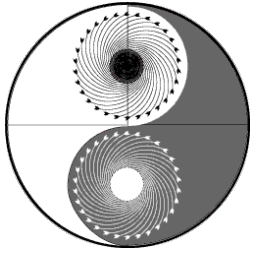
Curiously the seeds of hope could be understood as indicative of creative attachment to conventional reality and its transformation, whereas those of deception could be understood as fruitful indications of misplaced attachment. This suggests a need for detachment and an alternative framework, through a process of [critical thinking](#) and a "dying to the old".

With respect to the mutability of associations, Elias also notes that arising from the contrast between the red poppy and the white variant:

But peace ceremonies post-dating 1933 have appropriated the white poppy. Such is the power of the aesthetics of colour and form that in Australia, Britain, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States the red poppy and the white poppy express two opposing views on the morality of war: the red poppy embodies the national soul, the celebration of history, and the commemoration of sacrifice through blood that was spilt for the freedom of the nation; the white poppy makes a judgment about the other commenting that it romanticises the ideology of nation-states and glosses over the actuality that their histories are soaked in blood.

Any effort to separate the two halves of the pattern, as contrasting sets of associations, notably through denial of the negative (the "old") as a means of giving focus to the positive (the "new") is then usefully to be compared to the questionable remedy of [lobotomy](#) (*Being Positive Avoiding Negativity: management challenge of positive vs negative*, 2005). There is a sense in which the light of hope only enables awareness of a "local sun", whereas the darkness of despair renders apparent the multitude of "other stars" -- implying the integrity of an even larger universe, beyond the observable. The value of such darkness is recognized in various traditions (*Enlightening Endarkenment: selected web resources on the challenge to comprehension*, 2005). Although Abyssinia does not derive from "abyss", there is some poetic charm in this context to the fact that a significant proportion of imported cut flowers derive from a region known for its mountain abysses.

As a basis for more elaborate animations, the "seeds" may be understood as the focus of [spiral dynamics](#), as separately described with more extensive animations (*Convergence of 30 Disabling Global Trends: mapping the social climate change engendering a perfect storm*, 2012). As implied by that title, each of the 30 arrows is associated there with a named trend, with respect to "despair" -- and correspondingly with respect to "hope". The 4 variants below could be further distinguished and combined to constitute a pattern of 16 by associating significance to the directionality of the spirals, for example.

Suggestive alternative distinction between "seeds" as source and sink (as a basis for more complex animations)			
Common framing of despair and hope		Critical reframing	
Despair as sink (arrows in)			Despair as source (arrows out)
Hope as source (arrows out)			Hope as source (arrows out)
Critical thinking elicited and Hope neutralizing despair		Despair and Hope neutralizing despair	
Despair as source (arrows out)			Despair as sink (arrows in)
Hope as sink (arrows in)			Hope as sink (arrows in)

**Alchemy:** More controversial is the implication that the process could be related in some way to that to which alchemy variously alludes (as noted above). Aside from traditional interest in that perspective, it is appropriate to note the seminal study of [George Soros](#) employing that metaphor (*The Alchemy of Finance*, 1987), and others which have followed, as variously discussed (*Geometry of meaning: an*

*alchemical Rosetta Stone?* 2013; *Eliciting a universe of meaning from nothing through alchemical processes*, 2013; *An alchemical marriage?* 2010).

Appropriately reflecting the ambiguity of any preoccupation with alchemy is its deprecation as superstitious nonsense in contrast with conventional disciplines -- despite their evident inadequacy in the face of current crises.

This ambiguity is embodied in the icon of science, namely Isaac Newton, whose simultaneous work on alchemy continues to be reviewed in the [Newton Project](#), following years of deliberate neglect by science. Humorists could make much of the need for transmutation of "lead" into "gold" in a period of widespread "misleadership" -- and the absence of "goldership" (*Emergence of a Global Misleadership Council: misleading as vital to governance of the future?* 2007).

Rather than using "ambiguity" as a descriptor, Newton might be better understood as embodying "flow" between two or more cognitive modalities. In relation to finance, such flow can be recognized as the intangible circulation of confidence -- more tangibly recognized as liquidity (experienced in practice as a verb, rather than described in theory as a noun). Appropriate to this understanding is Newton's role as Warden and Master of the [Royal Mint](#), as well as being president of the [Royal Society](#).

## Dynamics of confidence: a "combustion engine"?

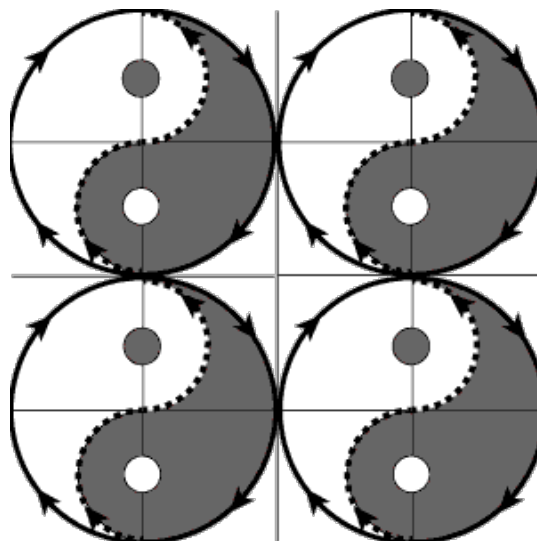
**Abuse of confidence:** The interpretation of finance in terms of alchemy can be fruitfully understood as a means of reframing the intangibles of confidence and trust, now well-recognized as fundamental to the dynamics of the financial system -- for which tangible monetary units are merely a conventional token. The systematic breach of trust by those in authority has been made only too evident through the financial and other crises of the recent period (*Abuse of Faith in Governance*, 2009; [Joseph E. Stiglitz](#), *In No One We Trust*, *The New York Times*, 21 December 2013).

The animation above might then be interpreted as indicative of a dynamic system of trust-making and trust-breaking -- of confidence-building and its negation through bond breaking. Just as financial economics is framed metaphorically as the "engine" or "motor" of civilization, there is a case for recognizing a more generic "engine", encompassing the biological process of (de)flowering. This might be better understood as a **"combustion engine" rather than a "combustion engine"**, especially in the light of separate arguments (*Primary Global Reserve Currency: the Con? Cognitive implications of a prefix for sustainable confidelity*, 2011; *Considerable Conglomeration of "Cons" of Global Concern: eightfold constraint on constructive conflict control?* 2012). [Curiously appropriate to the times, the term "combustion" already figures extensively in search engine results as a consequence of misspelling].

Given the relationship between trust and faith (as variously understood), and the intimate relation between faith in secular and religious contexts (as framed by theology), there is a case for exploring the "science" of confidence in new ways, as discussed separately (*Mathematical Theology: Future Science of Confidence in Belief -- self-reflexive global reframing to enable faith-based governance*, 2011; *Towards Conscientific Research and Development*, 2002).

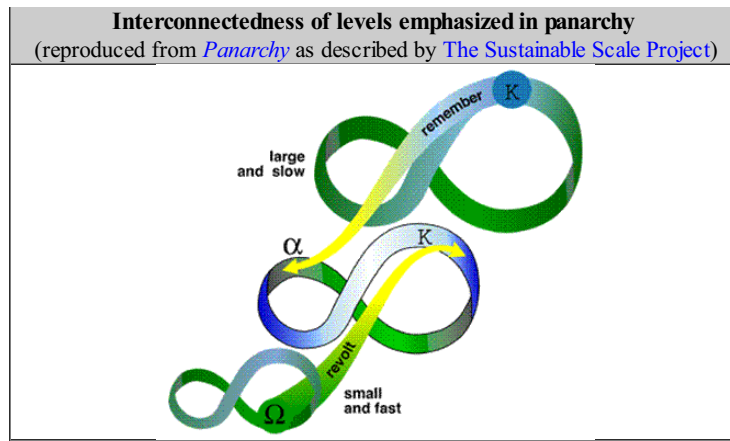
**Systemic interconnection and nesting:** As experimental animations, consideration could be given to improvements to that above, and its elaboration in various ways. The dynamic tentatively associated with each of the four phases, the use of black and white, and the direction of the arrows, might also be usefully depicted through alternatives such as the following. These suggest that the larger system of processes is replicated through nesting within each quadrant -- linking those phases and usefully highlighting potential conflicts in directionality (such as those between generations).

**Suggestive alternative nestings of larger system within its four phases**  
(as a basis for more complex animations)



This "nesting" can be seen as consistent with the interconnectedness of levels illustrated by the following schematic featuring the adaptive cycle at different scales.



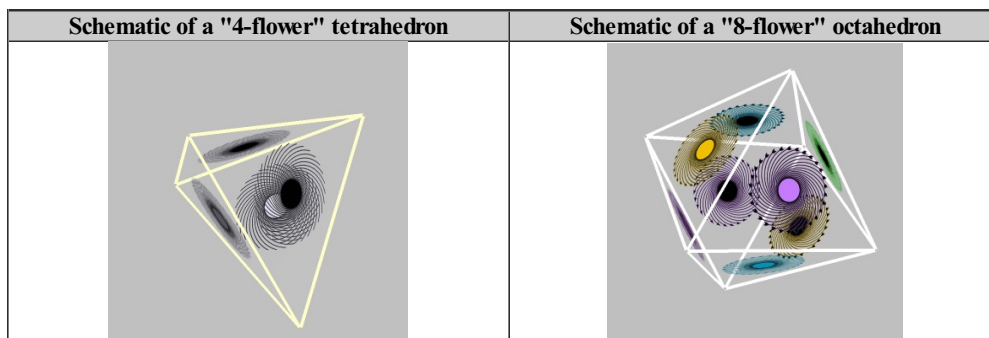


**Three-dimensional representations?** As noted above, the depictions in two-dimensions obscure implications which would be more readily apparent in animations in three or more dimensions. It is tempting, for example, to see a more appropriate representation as one combining the [Möbius strip](#) (as implied in some depictions of the adaptive cycle) and the [Klein bottle](#) (as an extension to include a degree of paradoxical self-reflexivity), as separately discussed (*Intercourse with Globality through Enacting a Klein bottle*, 2009). The cognitive and psychological implication in the dynamic is reminiscent of the concerns of [David Bohm](#) with respect to the [holomovement](#) of quantum mechanics, as the dynamic relating the explicate and the implicate order (*Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, 1980).

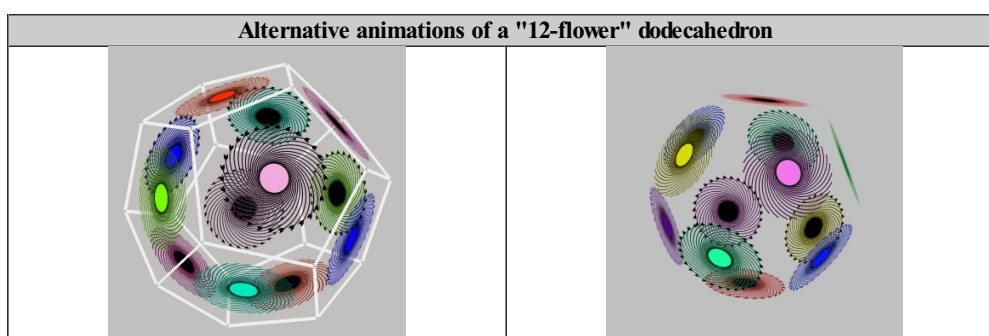
The patterns above are also reminiscent of some form of propeller enabling motion or propulsion. With respect to the latter, the dissemination of winged sycamore and maple seeds (spinning in the wind) has been one inspiration for the development of the helicopter and drone (*Secret Found to Flight of 'Helicopter Seeds'*, *Live Science*, 11 June 2009). Such biomimicry may yet contribute to the design of the psychopter envisaged by [Arthur M. Young](#), as discussed separately (*Engendering a Psychopter through Biomimicry and Technomimicry: insights from the process of helicopter development*, 2011). Ironically, using the Tao symbol, the paradoxes of the cognitive challenge are clarified by the simplest of metaphors (*Snoring of The Other: a politically relevant psycho-spiritual metaphor?* 2006).

## Arranging the flowers to engender an ecosystem?

**Polyhedral arrangement:** Following the argument above with regard to polyhedral holding patterns of different complexity, some indicators are offered by extending into three dimensions what might be considered the "2-flower" pattern of the Tao symbol, as illustrated by the following images and animations.



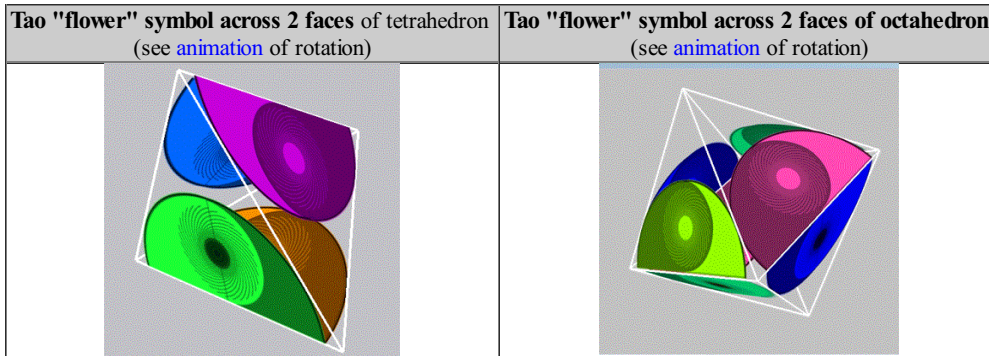
Of interest in this mnemonic approach is the representation of the compatibility between the flowers in the "ecosystem" constituted by each case. This could be indicated by how the directionality of the arrows (clockwise/anti-clockwise, inward/onward) meshes with the neighbouring flowers (or "clashes" with them). A more complex case is offered by the "12-flower" case of the dodecahedron as indicated below. The images and animations in all case were developed using the remarkable, and readily available, software of Robert Webb (*Stella: Polyhedron Navigator*). [NB: *Animations may take time to download on a slower connection*]



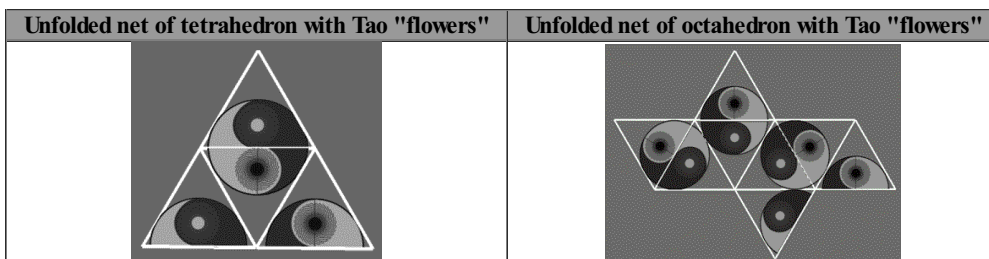
The configuration of 12 "flowers" is consistent with the separate argument developed with regard to the requisite variety of 12-fold

patterns of governance (*Enabling a 12-fold Pattern of Systemic Dialogue for Governance*, 2011; *Eliciting a 12-fold Pattern of Generic Operational Insights: Recognition of memory constraints on collective strategic comprehension*, 2011). Notable in this respect is the tendency to favour such 12-fold patterns (*Checklist of 12-fold Principles, Plans, Symbols and Concepts*, 2011). In terms of the flower metaphor, what might "gardening knowledge" then imply for a global knowledge-based system (*Knowledge Gardening through Music*, 2000)? Again the relevance of the song: *Where have all the flowers gone? ... Oh, when will they ever learn?*

No effort was made in this exercise to "arrange the flowers" -- namely to optimize or minimize systemic incompatibilities across the boundaries between neighbouring flowers. This could possibly be supplemented by the kind of twisting line drawn between the circular elements of the Tao symbol, with its implications of higher dimensionality. The bounding line might itself be coloured between neighbouring flowers to indicate their degree of "mutual reinforcement" or "mutual challenge". A preliminary illustration of such possibilities is offered by the following images and animations -- notably of relevance to ongoing discussion concerning a mapping of the Chinese *BaGua* configuration on to the octahedron, which would enrich that connectivity.

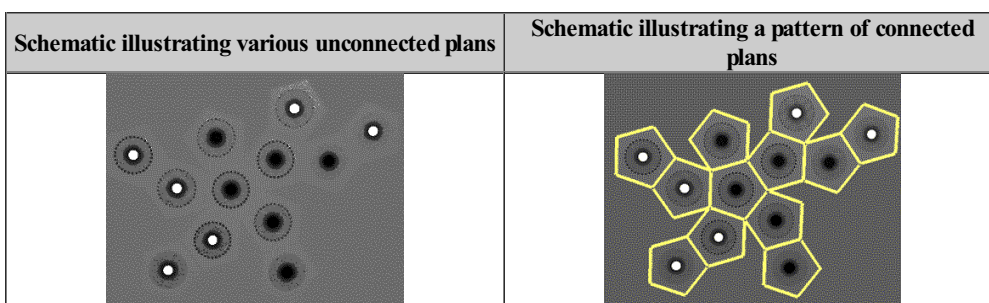


The unfolding of the above polyhedra, into a plan view of the networks of which they are formed, is also of some interest -- as evident below. Although potentially to be understood as two-eyed, the image on the left (below) is somewhat reminiscent of the reverse of the [Great Seal of the United States](#), dominated by an unfinished pyramid of 13 steps, topped by the [Eye of Providence](#) within a triangle -- as evident on the [US dollar bill](#). Aesthetically both are suggestive of an Eye of Providence as might have been imagined by Pablo Picasso according to the rationale of [Cubism](#) -- implying possibilities for a multidimensional "cubist arrangement of flowers". In Cubist art, objects are analyzed, broken up and reassembled in an abstracted form -- instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist endeavours to depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context.

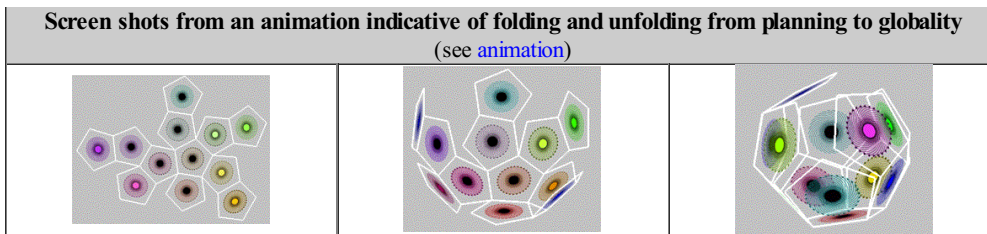


A further restriction in the images presented was the manner of use of colour and background. White lines might have been used instead of black, where relevant. The colouring of the flowers was itself an arbitrary default option of the software. No attempt was made to refine their allocation with that facility. Of potential interest is the possible different colouring of the underside of flowers -- especially as seen through the polyhedral form.

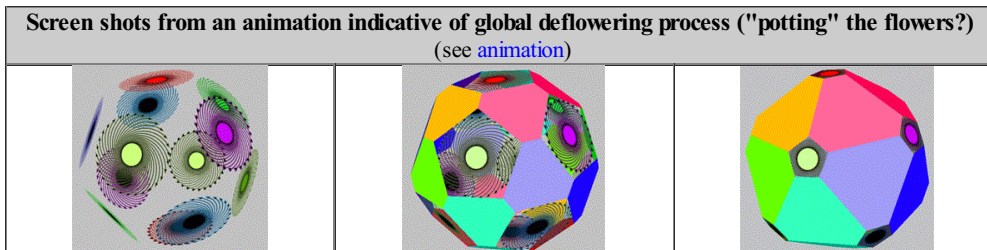
**From "planning" to "globality"**: The polyhedral navigation software may also be used to explore insightful metaphors of the challenges of transformation from the conventional "plan" view of governance to that of "global governance" -- whether for a civilization or an individual.



The challenge might then be framed as one of transforming from the two-dimensional plan view to a global configuration, as suggested by the screen shots of the following animation. This transformation was explored, with extensive animation, in a separate document (*Middle East Peace Potential through Dynamics in Spherical Geometry: engendering connectivity from incommensurable 5-fold and 6-fold conceptual frameworks*, 2012). The following screen shots are indicative of one variant of this.



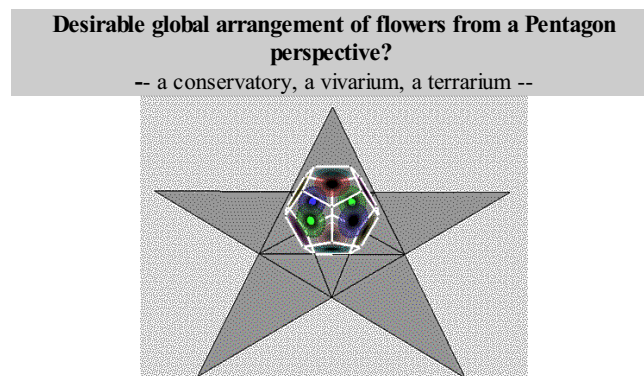
The process of "deflowering" through loss of variety is however illustrated by screen shots from the following animation. In terms of dying, the latter could be compared to progressive cultural enclosure, entombment, or the closing of a coffin, as discussed separately (*Enstoning of Promise, Potential, Possibility and Pattern*, 2012). The animation could have included a reversal to indicate the emergence of flowers from their restrictive, "potted" condition.



The emergence of *Moiré effects* between the patterns is also of interest -- in the animations rotating the configurations, and as explored to a greater degree in the separate document in which those spiral patterns were elaborated (*Convergence of 30 Disabling Global Trends*, 2012).

A range of 56 other possibilities, as visual triggers to the imagination, is presented as a "*Gallery of Polyhedral Flower Arrangements*" (2014) -- consistent with the argument for memory aids (*In Quest of Mnemonic Catalysts -- for comprehension of complex psychosocial dynamics*, 2007). The challenges of appropriately "arranging" flowers to engender an ecosystem might then be understood as one of "remembering" them as integral to such a system. This contrasts with their current fate of being discarded as "waste" -- exemplifying the dysfunctionalities of "remaindering" rather than "recycling" (*Reintegration of a Remaindered World: cognitive recycling of objects of systemic neglect*, 2011).

**Pentagons and Prisms:** There is some charm to the enthusiasm of the US Pentagon for geometry -- as in the fundamental role which has been attributed to the *PRISM* surveillance program, however this may be related to the *Five Eyes* alliance of intelligence operations. If a degree of systemic coherence is otherwise implied by enthusiasm for 12-fold patterns in governance (as noted above), this can indeed be represented by a dodecahedron with its 12 pentagonal faces.



In this light there is scope for exploring forms in which pentagonal prisms are associated with each of the 12 faces of the dodecahedron of governance (if only for purposes of surveillance). This geometrical process readily lends itself to extending each prism -- either **outward** from a face or **inward** within the dodecahedron. These alternatives are helpful in distinguishing visually (as below) between the **external societal** implications of the Pentagon's *PRISM* from the **internal psychological implications** engendered by the fundamental invasiveness of that program -- on which many now comment.

Use of rhombicosidodecahedron, with 12 pentagonal faces, to suggest extremes of <i>PRISM</i> implication		
12 "imposed" prisms?	12 "flowers" of governance?	12 "invasive" prisms?

## Conclusion

**Asystemic denial?**: The cyclic emphasis in the argument above is partly reminiscent of the preoccupations of Pitirim Sorokin (*Social and Cultural Dynamics*, 1957; *Crisis of Our Age*, 1992; *Man and Society in Calamity*, 2010). It frames questions regarding *The Reshaping of the World* envisaged at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (Davos, January 2014). The metaphorical implication of "reshaping" suggests that the world is to be recognized as having a static form which can be sculpted otherwise. This framing can be variously challenged, as separately noted (*Dynamic Transformation of Static Reporting of Global Processes*, 2013).

The framing implies that indications of fundamental processes of decline can be ignored. This is itself a mindset typical of decades past and of the capacity to set aside strategic questions arising from learnings of the past (*Strategic Implications of 12 Unasked Questions in Response to Disaster*, 2013).

As noted by Ann Elias (*War and the Visual Language of Flowers: an antipodean perspective*, 2008):

The image of the rotting flower prevents it from conveying any of the conventional ideals of flowers as innocent, beautiful, and peaceful since they are 'doomed to die almost as soon as they bloom, they wither sadly on the stem in rank disorder, eventually falling to the ground from which they came'. Once flowers start to rot they become inappropriate to the conventional rituals of public commemorations of war and sacrifice because they undermine idealisations of nature and human life.

**Complicity**: Especially relevant is the assumption that those adopting this framing are uniquely competent to engage in any "reshaping" -- questionable in the light of their degree of evident complicity in engendering the ongoing financial crisis. Given their much vaunted association with the corridors of power of a negligent international community, it is appropriate to ask how it is that they failed to benefit from the levels of electronic surveillance over recent decades in detecting vulnerability to such disaster.

Or is it to be assumed that such surveillance is only competent to detect "terrorists" and "pedophiles" -- as is so frequently claimed -- and not those who engage in financial malfeasance dangerous to society (*Extreme Financial Risk-taking as Extremism: subject to anti-terrorism legislation?* 2009).

Curiously any reference to the manner in which attendees at such events are "picked" is metaphorically associated with the decision-making process through which flowers are "cut" and by which selected animals are "cut" out from a herd. The process of taking (or accepting) a "cut" in a decision-making context is of course a far more controversial issue.

**Decision-making vs. Consensus-building?** With respect to governance, the sense of "cutting" is implicit in "decision" through etymological roots. Decision-making may involve "cutting to the quick", "cutting off", or even "executing" -- widely exemplified by budgetary "cuts". As noted above, cutting off may be a characteristic of any decision to define system boundaries -- even to be understood as problematic conceptual gerrymandering. Strategies and people may be excluded precisely because "they do not cut it" or because they are not "cut out" for the task. Strangely a retiring director of a British intelligence service chose defensively to assert that "all we do" is terminate certain relationships -- raising the question of how such services could be reframed to engender relationships and enhance connectivity (*From ECHELON to NOLEHCE: enabling a strategic conversion to a faith-based global brain*, 2007).

Supercomputers are developed for the scientific decryption of ever more complex passwords, now deemed essential to confidentiality (*Superquestions for Supercomputers: avoiding terra flops from misguided dependence on teraflops?* 2010). Could this capacity indeed be transformed into one of mnemonic encryption through the art of florigraphy, as vital to sustaining confidence in an essentially mysterious ecosystem of meaning -- a form of psycho-social permaculture (*Reimagining Principles Enabling an Existential Ecotery: engendering out-of-the-box awareness and its transformation*, 2013)? How indeed to "say it with flowers" in the 21st century -- adapting to personal and collective circumstances of declining capacity (*Existential Embodiment of Externalities: radical cognitive engagement with environmental categories and disciplines*, 2009)?

Whilst decision-making bears a relatively clear relationship to (surgical) cutting, less evident is any complementary function through which relationships are healed through binding together. Terms such as rescision and rescission do not adequately frame the process that would seem to be required. Reconciliation is more appropriate. In the light of the above argument, **consensus decision-making** could even be considered an **oxymoron**, perhaps indicative of vital paradox at best. The paradox is inherent in the need for a process which binds together without cutting apart -- best indicated by the challenge of engendering an ecosystem. It requires a dynamic through which the hopes of each are variously sacrificed ("cut") to enable the coherence of the whole -- perhaps an ultimate "combustion engine".

Decision-makers would be hard put to ensure that a garden or a civilization is self-sustaining -- perhaps as implied by the process of permaculture. How is decision-making to be related to engendering -- especially given the widely-noted gender bias amongst decision-makers and those involved in "shaping the world" in global summitry (*Framing the Global Future by Ignoring Alternatives: unfreezing categories as a vital necessity*, 2009)? The possibilities of "manufacturing consent" are proving to be ever more questionable (Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: the political economy of the mass media*, 1988). The nature of creative inaction as an effective catalyst to sustaining an ecosystem remains elusive (*The Quest for the Socio-Economics of Non-Action*, 1993; *The Art of Non-Decision-Making -- and the manipulation of categories*, 1997).

**Human "flowers" in global summitry?** Is the prevailing mindset of global governance one which is as competent as that of a century ago -- resulting in the deaths of so many during World War I -- as suggested by the recent intervention in Iraq? More "flowers of the nation's manhood to be cut"? Another Poppy Day? Like the political, military and business leaders during World War I, is it their inherent tendency to shape events to ensure the highest mortality?

More curious in relation to the flower metaphor, is the questionable appreciation of so-called [Tall Poppies](#) -- describing a social phenomenon in which people of genuine merit are resented, attacked, cut down, or criticised because their talents or achievements elevate them above or distinguish them from their peers. The syndrome has been recognized since Greek antiquity. Especially resented is the manner in which they imbue themselves with importance -- irrespective of whether their skills prove relevant to enhancing the lives of others. This reinforces arguments that they should be "cut down to size" -- as participants at the [World Social Forum](#) might readily suggest in the light of their experience of having been subject to "cuts" enabled by processes at the World Economic Forum.

Despite his acknowledged contributions to the termination of World War II and the development of artificial intelligence, over a half-century ago [Alan Turing](#) offered another tragic example of the conflict between civilization and culture. As an exemplar of the flowering of human cultural genius, in terms of this argument, he was officially "cut" by chemical castration -- a factor leading to his suicide. On 24 December 2013 he finally received a posthumous royal pardon (Oliver Wright, [Alan Turing gets his royal pardon for 'gross indecency' -- 61 years after he poisoned himself](#), *The Independent*, 23 December 2013).

As applied to the individual, especially those of some distinction, "cutting" may be used literally or metaphorically to isolate socially or inhibit reproduction -- as with strategic use of amputation of limbs, lobotomy or castration. Given their performance, cynics readily refer to participants at global summits as eunuchs, or even zombies -- the [living dead](#), strangely mirroring the viability of the cut flowers with which they are confronted there.

The presence of other human "flowers" (whether "cut" or not) may well be a feature of the arrangements of global summitry -- as very occasionally reported by journalists or otherwise implied ([Women and the Underside of Meetings: symptoms of denial in considering strategic options](#), 2009; [Elise Boulding](#), *The Underside of History: a view of women through time*, 1976) . In a satirical reminiscence on his own efforts in convening the Alpbach Symposium (*Beyond Reductionism: new perspectives in the life sciences*, 1968), [Arthur Koestler](#) controversially framed the participants themselves in those terms (*The Call Girls: a tragi-comedy with prologue and epilogue*, 1973). In 1968, he was awarded the [Sonning Prize](#) "for outstanding contribution to European culture".

Since 1945, Alpbach has been the venue for the [Alpbach European Forum](#), an annual two-week conference of leading figures from the worlds of science, business, the arts and politics. Recognized as the Austrian counterpart of the Davos Forum (founded in 1971), the Alpbach series might well be considered the inspiration for that initiative. It is of course a fact that many of the participants in Koestler's 1968 event are now dead -- including Koestler himself, under [tragic circumstances](#). He was no stranger to death, and was renowned for his description of an early encounter with it ([Dialogue with Death](#), 1937).

The personal implications of decline and death may be assiduously ignored by everybody at a global summit. Death is however extremely assiduous in ignoring nobody -- whether individual or collective. In the face of catastrophic decline, how is the unasked question enabling rebirth to be recognized ([World Futures Conference as Catastrophic Question: from performance to morphogenesis and transformation](#), 2013)? Is a flower a fruitful reminder of how to "be in the flow" through which to adapt appropriately to the requisite transformation? Is a flower somehow a question in its own right -- as implied by the significance associated with the poppy?

**Consideration of metaphors to die by:** This suggests a further sobering thought for distinguished individuals acting on the assumption of their special competence in "[Reshaping of the World](#)". As with flowers (individually or collectively), ensuring their rebirth is a matter of dying appropriately. They too are well advanced in the dying process and could benefit from more fruitful [Metaphors To Die By](#) -- with consideration of what these might imply for a global civilization in crisis. The relevance is reinforced by the meeting of the G8 a month prior to the Davos event. Billed as the [G8 Dementia Summit](#) (London 2013), it made clear the challenge which will in all probability face some of the Davos participants -- if they are not "cut down" in the prime of life by lifestyle diseases ([Cognitive Implications of Lifestyle Diseases of Rich and Poor: transforming personal entanglement with the natural environment](#), 2010).

Dementia could well be understood as an especially intimate form of cultural deflowering to which many are exposed in their final years - - if only in the case of close relatives. For those so exposed it is a radical and tragic "reshaping of the world". It is the loss of the finer connectivity which gives higher meaning to life.

[George Bernard Shaw](#) was once visited by a flower-loving aristocratic fan. The lady visitor observed that there were no flowers inside Shaw's home. "Mr. Shaw, I am surprised to see no flowers in your beautiful home. Don't you love flowers, Mr. Shaw?" Bernard Shaw responded: "Indeed I do love flowers, dear lady. I also love children. But I do not go around chopping off their heads for display in my living room!"

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