



laetus in praesens

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Enactivating Multiversal Community Hearing a pattern of voices in the global wilderness

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Introduction

This is an interweaving of arguments variously developed previously, initially in relation to the challenges of governance (*Poetry-making and Policy-making: arranging a Marriage between Beauty and the Beast*, 1993). These were given a particular focus with respect to the role of poetry in cultures which are currently a focus of strategic concern (*Poetic Engagement with Afghanistan, Caucasus and Iran: an unexplored strategic opportunity?* 2009) -- especially given the various traditions of improvisation in "poetic wrestling" (*Strategic Jousting through Poetic Wrestling: aesthetic reframing of the clash of civilizations*, 2009; *Strategic Dialogue through Poetic Improvisation: Web resources and bibliography*, 2009).

More generally and more fundamentally, emphasis was subsequently placed on the transformation of conversation (*Transforming the Art of Conversation: conversing as the transformative science of development*, 2012) -- most notably in the light of the inspiration offered by physicists to poets regarding the nature of a "multiverse" (*Being a Poem in the Making: engendering a multiverse through musing*, 2012). In particular this drew attention to conventional understandings of objectivity and subjectivity and the challenge to those whose experiential reality was necessarily "in between" (*Defining the objective ∞ Refining the subjective ?! Explaining reality ∞ Embodying realization*, 2011; *Living as an Imaginal Bridge between Worlds: global implications of "betwixt and between" and liminality*, 2011).

These considerations can be related to the current concerns of critical pedagogy as framed by Joe L. Kincheloe (*Critical Pedagogy and the Knowledge Wars of the Twenty-First Century*, *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 2008) regarding the "the dire need for different perspectives, for multiple forms of knowledge" -- which he terms diversity -- as a means of engaging effectively with the "nasty and perilous times" in which we live and with those who seek to derive exclusive advantage from them.

The question developed further here is the possibility of "multiversal community" -- in the light of previous consideration of "multivocal" possibilities (*Multivocal Poetic Discourse Emphasizing Improvisation: clarification of possibilities for the future*, 2012; *Enabling a 12-fold Pattern of Systemic Dialogue for Governance*, 2011). Imaginative notions of such community have recently become evident in blogs. "Multivocal" could well be considered the essence of democratic governance.

Through citation of multiple "voices", here the purpose is to "talk up" that possibility -- following the manner in which governments "talk up" possibilities, most notably in relation to those with financial implications for which it is sought to elicit confidence (now seemingly with the intention to betray that confidence when convenient, as in "talking up liquidity"). In aesthetic terms "talking up" through poetry and song may have been the intention of what was achieved by the [troubadours](#) and [troubairitz](#), during the High Middle Ages, with respect

to [chivalry](#) and [courtly love](#).

The integrative role of poetry in a period of chaos has been usefully articulated by [Noel Stock](#) (*A Call to Order*, 1976):

Poetry survives disaster, the decay of civilizations and cultural breakdowns because it is linked indissolubly to knowledge -- to the "discovering, clarifying and handing down of knowledge". Or, in other words, worthwhile poetry is not airy stuff which deals with nothing in particular, a vague entertaining thing for our leisure hours. The bigots of all ages have held it to be nothing more than idle entertainment, but the traditional sane view has ever been that poetry is somehow basic, located in things, in planes of reality, in modes of being, feeling and so on.

Aspirations to "[global sensemaking](#)" may then be fruitfully understood as a cognitive challenge calling upon a variety of senses (*Strategic Challenge of Polysensorial Knowledge: bringing the "elephant" into "focus"*, 2008). The question raised here can be succinctly expressed by how to engage meaningfully with the poetry of "otherness". This is exemplified by that of the Taliban (cf. Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *Poetry of the Taliban*, 2012) -- as insightfully reviewed by [Charles Cameron](#), developer of a web variant of *The Glass Bead Game*.

Contrasting understandings of poetic discourse and dialogue between poets

Extensive use is made of terms such as "poetic discourse", "poetic dialogue", "poetic debate", and the like -- with a degree of reference to "multivocal" and "polyvocal" (cf. David Smalling, *The value of poetic discourse*, *Poetry Soup*, 2011). It is therefore important to the development of the possibility of "multivocal community" to distinguish what tends to be currently intended by such phrases from forms of improvisational discourse between several parties using a poetic form.

This was previously addressed with respect to strategic possibilities (*Poetic Engagement with Afghanistan, Caucasus and Iran: an unexplored strategic opportunity?* 2009) in sections now presented separately as an annex to this document (*Multivocal Poetic Discourse Emphasizing Improvisation: clarification of possibilities for the future*, 2012). The "multivocal" dimension was explored in the light of their extensive understanding in patterns of song (*Enabling a 12-fold Pattern of Systemic Dialogue for Governance*, 2011).

The term "poetic discourse" is frequently used to refer to a process in which poets engage in some way. In order to develop the theme of this argument, it is however necessary to extend and emphasize the distinctions stressed in the previous paragraph regarding the contrasting ways of understanding this process.

Poetic writings as discourse: Poetry may be understood as discourse -- even dialogue -- in its own right (cf. Antony Easthope, *Poetry as Discourse: new accents*, 1983). It is readily inferred that the writing of poetry is a mode of discourse and interaction with others -- notably other poets. This clearly avoids any face-to-face interaction in the moment, as is suggested by the possibility which is the focus here. A valuable summary is offered by Sheung Wai Chan (*Some Crucial Issues on the Translation of Poetic Discourse from Chinese to English*, *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 3, 2003, 2).

It is appropriate to note that the preparation and publication of scientific papers may also be considered as a mode of "discourse", most notably within the scientific community. Scientific "debate" may well be associated with a succession of rounds of mutually critical paper publication -- possibly over years.

Poetic readings as discourse: The reading of pre-written poetry to an audience is a well-recognized pattern, readily to be understood as a form of discourse -- especially if the audience is then invited to comment or to question the author. A number of poets may present their works successively in such a context. It may be inferred that this constitutes a form of "dialogue" between poets and the worldviews they may respectively represent.

This approach figured most prominently as a poetry evening coordinated by Ram Devineni at the United Nations headquarters, and inspired by it in 200 cities elsewhere (*Dialogue Among Civilizations Through Poetry*, 2002) and was related to a focus of UNESCO (*Dialogue Through Poetry and UNESCO's World Poetry Day*, 2002). In 2003 readings were again being organized around the world with the theme of "Can poetry create a culture of peace and non-violence in the world?".

A related "Poetry on the Peaks" initiative was also organized (Evelina Rioukhina, *International year of mountains*, *Poetry on the Peaks*, 2002):

To increase the awareness, especially during the International Year of Mountains, poets, writers, other organisers, including politicians and other international activists, supported the idea to address humanity with poetic appeal and to transmit an important message to mankind from the Seven Summits of the seven continents and other significant 24 mountaintops. The idea was born within the "Dialogue through poetry" organisation, created during the United Nations Dialogue among Civilisations, and was highly welcomed during the literary conference in United Nations in New York, held last year. Professional mountain climbers working with Alpine Ascents International and International Mountain Guides are preparing the mountain ascent.

The approach is further described by Alia Lahlou (*Dialogue Through Poetry*, *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 2011) in relation to an event hosted by the Woodrow Wilson Center's Middle East Program.

Again it is appropriate to note that the presentation of scientific progress, most notably in the form of "papers", may take place through "lectures" -- also readily considered as a mode of "discourse", most notably within the scientific community. The audience may be invited to comment or question the author(s) -- or not. When successively presented by a panel of scientists, possibly commenting on points in the presentations of others, this may be particularly recognized as constituting the essence of dialogue or debate.

Conversation through poetry: Emphasis may be placed on a sense of "conversation" between poets and/or their works. A striking example is offered by that between Jim Harrison and Ted Kooser (*Braided Creek: a conversation in poetry*, 2003). The two friends and fellow poets decided to have a correspondence entirely in short poems of which some 300 were exchanged in a longstanding correspondence.

Another example is provided in a compilation by Kurt Brown and Harold Schechter (*Conversation Pieces: Poems that talk to other poems -- Conversations through poetry*, 2007) described as follows

To write a poem is to become part of a great conversation with one's literary predecessors, but the poems in this anthology are a special breed, their authors deliberately addressing a particular poem or poet of the past or present. They may be replies, reproofs, updatings, acts of sabotage or adulation; they may argue with, elaborate upon, poke fun at, or pay tribute to their originals. From Raleigh's famous answer to Marlowe's *Passionate Shepherd*, to Anthony Hecht's *The Dover Bitch*, from Ogden Nash sending up Byron to Mona Van Duyn giving us Leda's perspective on the swan or Annie Finch's *Coy Mistress* arguing her case with Marvell, these remarkable poems are not only engaging in themselves, but also capable of casting surprising new light on the poems which inspired them. This conversation of the greats includes Philip Larkin replying to Sir Philip Sidney, Ezra Pound to Edmund Waller, Randall Jarrell to W.H. Auden, Denise Levertov to Wordsworth, Galway Kinnell to Rilke, David Lehmann to Pound, C.K. Williams to Coleridge - and many more.

Poetic gatherings and communities as discourse: The dialogues between poets that ensues at the best poetry festivals around the world are rare occasions treasured by them -- offering a sense of their "community of discourse". As described in *Poetry Communities and Movements*:

For many centuries, poetry movements and communities have served as the most provocative, creative, vital, engaging, and oft-underground elements of regional and national literary trends. The simple joy of gathering for a single or group reading, listening to verse, hearing background stories, and discussing poesy has joined and empowered poets from ancient Athens to the streets of San Francisco. The assemblies launched social and political discourse while feeding creative explosions that, in nearly all cases, involved the arts and music as well.

The pattern is of course reflected in many conferences worldwide, of every kind of interest group, in which "networking" is highly valued as vital to the process of integrative discourse within that community. The sense of "community" is taken further when institutionalized, either in the form of a university or "think tank", or specially created environments ("incubators") enabling interaction between research, technology and business. Similarly a number of examples exist of the creation of intentional artistic communities to facilitate analogous cross-fertilization and mutual stimulus.

In the light of the classic study by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980), common use of "think tank" invites reflection on the institutional metaphors which such communities "live by" (see discussion: *Meta-challenges of the Future: for Networking through Think-tanks*, 2005; *Tank-thoughts from Think-tanks: constraining metaphors on developing global governance*, 2003). This is especially relevant in the sense in which "they are their own metaphor", as remarked by Gregory Bateson (cited by Mary Catherine Bateson, *Our Own Metaphor*, 1972), thereby calling for a degree of self-reflexive discourse (*Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007).

In the case of "university", this is further suggested by fruitful implications in the contrast between "universe" and "multiverse" with respect to the nature and shape of the "conversation" thereby rendered possible (*Transforming the Art of Conversation: conversing as the transformative science of development*, 2012).

The contrasting "voices" gathered in such environments emphasize the challenge of the potentially "multivocal" organization of such discourse -- potentially transcending the perspective of Paul Feyerabend (*Against Method: outline of an anarchistic theory of knowledge*, 1975). It offers the further sense in which **the "disciplines" -- whether of the sciences or the arts -- can themselves be considered as "voices"**, each effectively voicing a mode of knowing (cf. *Reflections on Organization of Transdisciplinary Conferences: challenges for the future*, 1994). As argued by Walter Pater:

For as art addresses not pure sense, still less the pure intellect, but the "imaginative reason" through the senses, there are differences of kind in aesthetic beauty, corresponding to the differences in kind of the gifts of sense themselves. Each art, therefore, having its own peculiar and untranslatable sensuous charm, has its own special mode of reaching the imagination, its own special responsibilities to its material. (*The School of Giorgione*, In: *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, 1873).

Beyond complacency regarding existing modes of discourse?

Criticism vs. Self-reflexivity? The examples above highlight modalities and arenas in which there is every reason for a degree of satisfaction. The initiatives encouraged by the United Nations and UNESCO do however suggest that more might be expected from "poetic dialogue", just as more might be expected from "scientific discourse" (cf. *Knowledge Processes Neglected by Science: insights from the crisis of science and belief*, 2012). A degree of self-criticism and self-reflexivity would appear to be missing in both cases in respect of the quality of the dialogue that is cultivated.

With respect to poetry, some dimensions are remarkably clarified in an interview with the British poet, theorist and activist, Steven J. Fowler by Feliz L. Molina (*Poetic Activity: Poetry in the UK Through SJ Fowler*, *Huffington Post*, 2012). Fowler is a member of

Contemporary Poetics Research Centre, and the founder of *Maintenant*. He is the poetry editor of *3am magazine*, and the UK editor of *Lyriline* and *VLAK*, and he curates the *Comarade and the Covers* projects. His work is concerned with poetry and ethics, and the avant garde poetry movements of contemporary Europe.

For Fowler, as reported in that interview:

If we are to envision poetry in the service of social agency it should be more complex in its constitution than that which it serves to overthrow. In fact, perhaps it is just the concept of complexity over simplicity....

To maintain this sense of doubt from the outset is to acknowledge that poetry is very unlikely to change anything concrete in social terms. In a sense, to cut to the quick, to even expect this change is to begin to fail, to set oneself up for disappointment and cynicism beyond that. By accepting limitations and getting on with it, with doubt (and, it must be stressed, humour) activity continues and blooms, and draws in new minds and new energy....

A huge issue with UK poetry is factionalism. I think anyone who surrounds themselves with acolytes, whether it is their doing or not, no matter how socially engaged or artistically vital and their work may be, is, in some fundamental way, intellectually bankrupt. This urge to reject factions and social cliques is, on my part, from my 20 years practicing martial arts I think.

The world is full of martial arts masters who chop blocks of wood and teach from behind a green curtain. Whenever we are protecting our egos we become less than we need be, because as soon as a situation becomes live, becomes battle-tested as it were (here it is vital to remember avant garde is a military term) that which has not been really considered and modified through contrast, confrontation and difference becomes flaccid and useless, and falls away.

Beyond its identification by Fowler as an issue, **how is "factionalism" to be reframed poetically in terms of multivocalism?** To whom is that a concern?

A different critique, of relevance to eliciting response to the challenges of global governance, is offered by Noel Stock (*A Call to Order*, 1976):

Examine the rhythms, style and images of our recent poetry... and a common factor begins to emerge. Words, we find, are refusing to form those living phrases which are the bedrock of all good verse. They are refusing to work together in a unity analogous to the phrase in music. It is not that our poets do not try, but that **the words simply will not crystallize into acceptable patterns of universal validity**. This suggests immediately that we have become separated in some way from that which gives life to our words, namely the past. [*emphasis added*]

Inadequacy of current modes of knowing to existential tragedy: In a very helpful review, Mark Harris (*Ways of Knowing: anthropological approaches to crafting experience and knowledge*, 2007) quotes extracts from a poem by Philip Larkin (*Ignorance*, 1955):

Strange to know nothing, never to be sure
Of what is true or right or real,
But forced to qualify or so I feel. [...]

Strange to be ignorant of the way things work:
Their skill at finding what they need,
Their sense of shape, and punctual spread of seed. [...]

Even to wear such knowledge -- for our flesh
Surrounds us with its own decisions --
And yet spend all our life on imprecisions,

That when we start to die
Have no idea why.

The poem recalls the earlier discussion of **liminality** (*Living as an Imaginal Bridge between Worlds: global implications of "betwixt and between" and liminality*, 2011).

Vulnerabilities of modes of knowing: What is most to be valued in "science" as a mode of knowing falls all too readily victim to "scientism" -- perhaps usefully challenged as a cognitive "disease", defensively distinguished from "science" (cf. *Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society: speculations towards the development of cures and preventive measures*, 2008). Poetics in turn readily falls victim to "poeticism" -- a condition less clearly articulated. This has been defined as: *the qualities of bad poetry: trite subject matter, banal or archaic and poetical language, easy rhymes, jingling rhythms, sentimentality, etc; the standards of a poetaster*. Equivalent tendencies are of course evident in the other arts -- and with respect to religion and spirituality.

The term "poeticism" is however confusedly used to both deprecate (as above) and to appreciate a valuable characteristic of poetry. Following the citation of Larkin (above), in discussion with Nigel Rapport, the latter notes a "more palatable" version offered by Percy Shelley (1954):

... who would claim that poetry -- our human capacity for imagination and creativity -- can compass all kinds of knowledge. Our human poeticism is at once the centre and the circumference of our human ways of knowing. Just as a single word -- however

seemingly limited and fixed in its physical form -- can spark limitless imaginary wanderings, thoughts and evocations, so the body plays host to consciousness and creativity (p. 309)

As with the other cases, "poeticism" may be understood as inappropriate use of a poetically inspired mode of knowing -- held to be excessive in some way from the perspective of the other in the dialogue. In deprecation, "poeticism" may then include any uncritical reliance on a poetic mode. Such usage is to be compared with use of "poetism" in the *Poetist Manifesto* as discussed below (cf. Peter A Zusi, *The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on constructivism and poetism*, *Representations*, 88, 2004, 1, pp. 102-124).

Poetic intercourse and multivocal poetics: It is of course to be expected that poetry would be inspired by metaphorical interpretations of "intercourse" as a means of enhancing the nature and quality of the relation between poets, their works, and their audience. At its simplest, the presence of different "voices" within the same context -- such as a periodical or a gathering -- may be interpreted as "multi-vocal" or "poly-vocal". It may be framed and studied as such. The sense in which poetry is especially sensitive to "the other" may notably evoke metaphorical use of intercourse, whether in "multi-vocal" contexts or otherwise (cf. *"Human Intercourse": "Intercourse with Nature" and "Intercourse with the Other"*, 2007)

A politically engaged example is offered by Leslie Bayers (*Voice, visibility, and performance: Alternative expression in contemporary Peruvian poetry*, University of Kansas, 2006) who examines how six contemporary Peruvian poets merge indigenous and Western expressive modes to offer alternatives to dominant poetic traditions and subvert residues of colonialism:

While the poets I examine write from a variety of social and literary contexts, through varying strategies they all creatively re-articulate Andean voices and cultural elements suppressed by the canon. In the process, they not only revise multiple literary and political constructs---including homogenizing national frameworks, indigenismo, and elitist notions surrounding the genre of poetry -- but also implicitly restructure reading practices through their promotion of alternative aesthetic sensibilities.

Transcending the boundaries of conventional poetic discourse

Imaginative fictional exploration: The classic works which appear best to have alluded to possibilities of transcending conventional discourse, through a degree of infusion of poetry, are those of [Hermann Hesse](#) (*The Glass Bead Game*, 1946) and of [Robert Graves](#) (*Seven Days in New Crete*, 1949). The first used an aesthetic game, in a community named as [Castalia](#), to carry the allusions as to the nature of that discourse. The second alluded to the nature of governance of New Crete by poet-magicians. Both situated the communities in the future and were of Greek inspiration.

In his review of the second, Robert H. Canary (*Utopian and Fantastic Dualities in Robert Graves's Watch the North Wind Rise*, *Science Fiction Studies*, 1, 1974, 4) notes:

Poets are here the acknowledged legislators of the human race, and poetic values rule even in economic matters: there is no money in New Crete, goods being given to those who need them in return for free gifts; no machines are allowed that are not hand-crafted, made with the hands of "love." For Graves, at least, love is a poetic value.... To begin with, it is obviously concerned not only with the kind of society implied by Graves's poetic values but also with the kind of society ideal for poets. The two are not identical, for the poetry of New Crete -- and its music as well -- is insipid and academic.... The inhabitants of New Crete do not admire poets but the Goddess who inspired them.

The Glass Bead Game provides more focus to the allusions by exploiting references to "correspondences", whether "aesthetic" or "scientific" (cf. *Theories of Correspondences -- and potential equivalences between them in correlative thinking*, 2007). Efforts have been made to replicate elements of that game, as they can be inferred, in an online interactive environment. The *Wikipedia* profile offers links to:

- [Toward the Glass Bead Game: a rhetorical invention](#) (2004): Joshua Fost's implementation using [Semantic Web](#) elements. He argues that one of its central attractions is the promise it offers of a medium in which to express the many beautiful symmetries which connect ideas and disciplines -- held to be a deep and identifying trait of the human mind. He subsequently proposed a model for the evolutionary and neuropsychological forces underlying both this quest and its ultimate destination (*Not God, Then What? Neuroscience, Aesthetics, and the Origins of the Transcendent*, 2007)
- [The Glass Bead Game](#): Paul Pilkington's implementation, remaining close to Hesse's original conception (and articulated in a [set of books](#)), which grew from the connections between music and mathematics
- a [wiki](#) exploring playable variants of the game and what an ideal "glass bead game" might be.

Poeclectics: Mario Petrucci (*Making Voices: identity, poeclectics and the contemporary British poet*, *International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing*, 3, 2006, 1):

The concept of Poeclectics is described, and used to explore the vitality, diversification and complexity of voice currently exhibited among British poets. The author also examines, through a Poeclectic lens, specific aspects of literary output in order to demonstrate a growing engagement between their means of funding and profound contemporary issues of personal-creative identity. The importance of collaboration among artists is highlighted... introducing the terms polyvocal, co-vocal and multi-vocal..

In summary, Poeclectics expresses a wide-ranging diversity and plurality in poetic voice. It serves:

1. the desire to investigate the tangents and outbacks of creative self; and
2. to register deep uncertainties over canon-making and any rigidly held author perspective.

Poetry slams: Of relatively recent origin, typically a [poetry slam](#) is a competition at which poets read or recite original work. Now a worldwide phenomenon (with at [world level](#)), in the most common variant, an "open slam," the competition is open to all who wish to compete -- implying a degree of "multivocalism". In an "invitational slam," by contrast, only those invited to do so may compete. In a "theme slam" all performances must conform to a specified theme, genre, or formal constraint. Slams are controversial and have evoked considerable criticism from conventional poets. A compilation by Tim Clare presents critical and supportive arguments (*Slam: A Poetic Dialogue*, 2010).

As noted by Bob Holman (*Multivoice Poetry Ensembles*, 12/14/99):

Multivoice poems, a staple of the [Dada](#) / [Futurist](#) / [Surrealist](#) / [Fluxus](#) lineage, have often been a successful weapon at the [National Poetry Slams](#). This year, however, they were rarely seen. Some poets sneer at Slam's use of the form as gimmickry, a strategy to hide a weak performer. Still, some "group poems," as Slam calls them, have become true classics: [Gary Glazner's](#) *Toad Venom*, the first group piece, is one, and Dallas's (*Black/Gay/Redneck*) *Superheroes, Baby!* another. Austin's *Motorcycle* piece is a real showstopper, and [Taylor Mali](#) used group pieces to bring Providence a championship in 1996 and followed that with the controversial *Sex Poem* for Mouth Almighty, champs the next year....

Universes and *i was born with two tongues* turn the poem into a communal act. In using literature as a lever for social change and devoting themselves to poetry's artistry, not rhetoric, they punch a hole in the future, a sweet opening for a new literature -- people-driven, with searing content, and not afraid of beauty.

Following recognition that the multiplicity of faiths constitute multiple "voices", slam has been adapted to a form of interfaith discourse through [Sacred Slam](#), described as follows:

Expect the unexpected at Sacred Slam. You may hear a Buddhist beat box over Tuva throat chants, a Sufi articulate the universal tragedy of September 11th, 2001, and a Kabbalah teacher offer Sound Meditation to end the evening. You may hear from a female Christian Activist or a Palestinian Muslim, or an Israeli Jew and leave not knowing what box belonged to whom.

Poetic improvisation in the moment vs. Prescribed unresponsive discourse

A central concern in this argument is the extent of development of poetic improvisation as being indicative of the role of improvisation in other forms of discourse, dialogue and conversation. These and related issues have been previously explored (as noted above), and now presented as an annex under the title [Multivocal Poetic Discourse Emphasizing Improvisation: clarification of possibilities for the future](#) (2012).

Improvisation: Other arenas in which improvisation might be both expected, valued and considered significant (in contrast to prepared statements), include:

- political debate
- religious discourse
- scientific debate
- philosophical debate

As remarked by [William Harris](#) (*Improvisation: the new spirit in the arts*, Middlebury College):

We are living in a new age in which "Improvisation" has become a key motivating force in all of the arts. This started originally as a reaction in the early 20th century against stiffness and calcification which had taken the inventive spirit out of theater, dance and music . It was a plea for a freedom which would revitalize new performance and new composition in all the arts. But Improvisation was soon seen as more than a protest, as it became a regular part of the creative spirit of the mid-century age. We can no longer think of Improvisation as affecting one segment of the creative arts; it is probably much nearer the core of the creative impulse than we had thought in our teaching programs in the Humanities....

In imaginative philosophical terms, *Improvisation* might be metaphorically described as the act of stepping out of the fixed and fossilized world of the Past, standing for a moment on a tight-rope Wire representing the moment of the Present, while preparing to test the waters of the Future with an exploratory toe. Yes, this is a mixed metaphor, but it is intentional and it is perhaps like much of life itself!

Improvisation in one form or another is the premise of all living beings, which are constantly maneuvering one way or another to escape the formaldehydization of homeostasis. It is a condition of life for a proto-amoeba to improvise its status by splitting in two, making possible both survival and extension in the same stroke....

Improvised poetry: Harris continues with respect to poetry:

... although virtually identical with every other form of Language, [poetry] is somewhat different. In the Western tradition, we think of poems as consolidated and highly structured speech-forms, printed on a page to be read by college graduates as a silent

form of personal meditation. Much modern poetry was actually written to be read in silence, and when we hear a recording of an author reading his own verse, it is often a disappointing experience. We say we prefer to look around on the printed page as we read in order to get the message exact and intact. College teaching of poetry focuses first on the Meaning which the author is trying to convey, it generally misses or dismisses the interior musicality and rhythmic complexity which all good poetry has, a sad end for the evolution of an ancient verbal art.

But I mention this for a specific reason. We are just now beginning to see the possibilities of "improvised poetry", but we are hampered by the way we have been accustomed to deal with poetry, as a visual rather than a spoken art. Artful dramatic reading of poetry can restore an awareness of poetry as musical art, but we are not yet comfortable with the next step, which is to actually speak poetry without a script, the way we speak a sentence... But this is not the way we do our poetry; we write it down on paper, hoping to get it printed in a book for others to read in their armchair by the fire in an hour of relaxing silence.

We are now ready for experiments in improvised poetry, which is starting to take place in experimental poetry "reading" groups here and there. But it will take a while until we get as natural and free with this new use of the ancient art, as the Gaelic poets of the last millennium were, or the South Slavic *guslars* who continue their oral art even today. But there is something new in the works.

The *Oxford Companion to Italian Literature*: offers a remarkable account of the appreciation of improvised poetry in Italy:

... Italy was unusual in cultivating and celebrating skilled improvisers working with the language, idiom and forms of the literary lyric -though the borders with popular improvisation were uncertain, as they were with literary poetry.... improvisations were performed to a paying public in halls and theatres. Improvised poetry generally had an instrumental accompaniment and was in some measure 'sung'.... the virtuoso professionals gave every sign of entering states of poetic ecstasy, delivering odes, narrative poems, canzonette, and sonnets with a fluency and power that amazed their audiences, who suggested themes and very often rhymes and metres.

Living tradition of poetic improvisation: Irrespective of the above considerations, poetic improvisation is a living tradition in many parts of the world.

Charles A. Perrone *Na ponta do verso: poesia de improviso no Brasil Critical Studies in Improvisation / Études critiques en improvisation*, 7, 2011, 1)

There is nothing quite like joining a gathering in a public square in a small town in the interior of South America's largest country and hearing pointed verses hurled one's way to the delight of the folk attending to the rhythmic words of a pair of rhyme-masters armed with *pandeiros*. Clearly, their measured lines had to be improvised in the heat of the moment because those agile verse-makers had never before seen me, the clothes I was wearing, how I comported myself, what bags I was carrying, nor did they have any way to estimate how much loose change I might possess to contribute to their cause. Yet those were the topics of their intoned verses... Such is the subject matter of the publication under review here, the title of which plays on the Portuguese idiom for something "on the tip of one's tongue" and translates literally as "on the tip of the verse, improvised poetry in Brazil." The volume, naturally, concerns the principal forms of performed popular poetry that involve improvisation in an immense and multifarious land.

Sections of the annex help to distinguish the traditions in which the improvisation in "poetic debate" is combined with interaction -- possibly competitive --under the following headings:

- *Poetic discourse as a lost art*
- *Poetic engagement*
- *Lost archetype?*
- *Medieval Europe*
- *Dialogue in Islamic cultures*

The regional traditions cited may include but surely are not limited to: **poetic improvisation** and jousting traditions as noted in *Poetic Engagement with Afghanistan, Caucasus and Iran: an unexplored strategic opportunity?* (2009), including:

- *balagtasan* (Philippines); *kabigan* (Bangladesh), *Kantan Chamorita* (Mariana Islands)
- *contrasti* (Sicily), *zajal* (Lebanon), *chjami è rispondi* (Corsica), *quintillas* (Spain), *cantigas ao desafio* (Portugal), *griot* (West Africa); *guslari* (Slavic); *bertsolariak* (Basque); *pytaris* (Crete), *spiritu pronto* (Malta), *cantadori* (Sardinia), *glosadores* (Balearic Islands)
- *decimas* (Ibero-America); *decimistas* (Cuba), *cantores* (Puerto Rico, San Domingo, Ecuador), *payadores* (Argentina), *cantadores* and *repentistas* (Brazil), *troveros* (Mexico), *payadores* (Uruguay), *galeronistas* (Venezuela)
- *flyting* (notably in Scotland) as a public contest of extravagant insults, often structured in the form of a poetic joust (similar to African American practice of *freestyle battles* and the historic practice of the *dozens*)
- etc

Examples of poetic interaction: The above traditions are distinguished in relation to other approaches in the annex within the following sections:

- *Improvisation in oral poetry*

- [Invective poetry](#)
- [Folk traditions](#)
- [Interactive dialogue projects](#)

The presentation in the annex is supplemented by the following, variously providing insights into an underlying process which may or may not combine the multivocal variety with a degree of spontaneous mutual challenge

Oral poetry (but not multi-vocal, improvised or challenging?): As described by *Wikipedia*, this is poetry that is composed and transmitted without the aid of writing. The complex relationships between written and spoken literature in some societies can make this definition hard to maintain. Oral poetry is sometimes considered to include any poetry which is performed live. In many cultures, oral poetry overlaps with, or is identical with, song. Meanwhile, although the term oral etymologically means "to do with the mouth", in some cultures oral poetry is also performed by other means, such as talking drums in some African cultures. Oral poetry exists most clearly within oral cultures, but it can survive, and indeed flourish, in highly literate cultures.

Epic poems (but questionably multivocal and not improvised?): The [long poem](#) is a literary genre including all poetry of considerable length. Though the definition of a long poem is vague and broad, the genre includes some of the most important poetry ever written. The long poem traces its origins to the ancient epics, such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. With more than 74,000 verses and about 1.8 million words in total, the *Mahabharata* is one of the longest epic poems in the world. It is roughly ten times the size of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined, roughly five times longer than Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and about four times the size of the *Ramayana*. In English, *Beowulf*, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, are among the first important long poems. The long poem thrived and gained new vitality in the hands of experimental Modernists in the early 1900s and has continued to evolve through the 21st century.

One genre theory claims that once a poem takes on multiple voices, it becomes a novel. Many long poems do make use of multiple voices, while still maintaining all the element of a poem, and therefore cause even more confusion when trying to define their genre.

Improvisation (but not multivocal or challenging?): *Critical Studies in Improvisation (Études critiques en improvisation)* is an open-access, peer-reviewed, electronic, academic journal on improvisation, community, and social practice housed at the University of Guelph. Notably the study by Gary Peters (*The Philosophy of Improvisation, Critical Studies in Improvisation*, 7, 2011, 2). Traditional [epic poetry](#) included improvisation moments where the reciter flattered the audience (especially the authorities) or to substitute a forgotten passage. There are also societies that value improvised poetry as a genre, often as a debate or "poetic joust", where improvisors compete for public approval. Some of these [impromptu](#) poems are later recorded in paper or transmitted orally.

Some of these forms also include humour. [Michel Ducom](#) established himself within the Bordeaux [poetical improvisation](#) movement in the 1990s but has since composed and performed with a wide range of poets working in diverse poetical areas ([Bernat Manciet](#), [Serge Pey](#), [Méryl Marchetti](#)...). The emergence of poetical improvisation, like previous developments in French poetry, was largely tied to the [free jazz](#) experience.

Improvised poetry duels and contests (but not multivocal?): Contrasting with slams, for Amanda Dargan (*Improvised Poetry Duels and Contests*, 2011) in the light of the People's Poetry Gathering:

[City Lore](#) is engaged in a long term initiative to research, document, and present informal poetry duels and contests. In 1999, the Gathering highlighted the pan Latino [decima](#) tradition.... In 2001, the Gathering highlighted a number of competitive Asian traditions in the U.S. including the Filipino-American [balagtasán](#) genre of traditional poetry debates. The Yemeni [balah](#) tradition of competitive improvised verse was highlighted at our 2004 Yemeni dinner, and the Basque [bertsolari](#) tradition at the 2006 Gathering. In 2009... we traveled to Port of Spain to document the [extempo \(picong\)](#) tradition of improvised poetry contests. In 2010, we traveled to São Paulo and Brasília in Brazil to document [emboladores](#) and [repentistas](#). Last year, City Lore received a grant from the NEA for a series of performances and discussions highlighting Poetry Duels from the Americas, and will be hosting a performance of Lebanese poets in the [zajal](#) tradition.

Popular engagement and participation (but not challenging or multivocal?): With respect to [balagtasán](#), for example, Virgilio S. Almarío (*Art and Politics of the 'Balagtasán' (Verbal Joust) During the American Colonial Period (1898-1946) in the Philippines*, 2003) notes:

During the [American Occupation](#), poetry was more than a personal art for the enjoyment of a small circle of initiates. At that time, it was a popular art practiced by highly skilled craftsmen for the instruction or delight of a broad public... It became such a popular form of entertainment that practically every poet of the period, if he was worthy of the title of "[makata](#)," had to display his skill in declamation and argumentation as a [balagtasán](#) poet.... Later on, the [balagtasán](#) assumed the form of debate in verse where the poets had to improvise in verse while arguing a position that they had been appointed to defend.

Play may constitute a significant dimension, as described by María Cristina Quintero (*Poetry As Play: Gongorismo and the Comedia*. John Benjamins Publishing, 1991):

One of the manners in which poetry became public ostentation and served a special function was through the very popular [certámenes](#). A detailed account of these poetic jousts would constitute in itself an interesting paper in Spanish literary history. These competitions made poetry a component of a celebration or spectacle. (p. 26)

Spontaneous creativity (but not multivocal?): As noted by Robbie Brown (*Website prods poets to seek their 15 minutes of creativity*, *Boston Globe*, 26 June 2007):

At ancient Greek festivals, poets competed alongside athletes, matching verse with quick-tongued rivals in public battles of wit and wordplay. Two millennia later, you find QuickMuse.com, the modern descendant of those ancient Greek poetry jousts. For the past year, QuickMuse has been asking pairs of well-known writers to create poems on a shared topic and posting the results online. "It's not a competition like a fight to the death," with clear winners and losers", QuickMuse founder Ken Gordon says. "It's a competition like a bunch of jazz musicians improvising together and playing different solos." Gordon calls these contests "agons," an ode to the ancient Greek poetry competitions of the same name....

The results of QuickMuse contests are available online -- not only in their final form, but also as simulations of the poets' creative process. During each second of competition, QuickMuse software captures images of the poets' screens. Afterward, the website replays the images in rapid succession, revealing the poets' writing as it occurred, word by word and line by line. "[W]e suspect *QuickMuse* will bring readers closer to the moment of composition than they have ever been before," Gordon writes on the website.

Multivocal poetic improvisation as an elusive phenomenon

Poems for multiple voices: Poems for multiple voices can be difficult to find. [Aeschylus](#), the Greek tragic dramatist, was the first to include two actors in addition to the chorus. As noted by Nancy O'Brien (*Poems for Multiple Voices*, 2011), indicating source materials, there are poems that are meant to be read aloud by two or more people, with different lines for each reader. Sometimes the lines for different voices are in different colours, or they are physically separated on the page. Lesson plans are now extensively developed using poems for multiple voices. For example, as noted by William P. Bintz (*Using Poems for Multiple Voices to Integrate Reading and Writing across the Curriculum*, *Middle School Journal*, 36, 2004, 2, pp. 34-41):

Poems for Multiple Voices are viewed as an instructional strategy to provide students opportunities for them to actively experience and develop meaningful and integrated curriculum and create interdisciplinary connections between literacy and other content areas. Making interdisciplinary connections with literacy requires questioning, and perhaps shifting, current perspectives on reading.

For other sources, see [Popular Poetry Multiple Voices Books](#). With respect to poems of this nature, an insightful comment is provided by Zoe Brooks (*Poems for Multiple Voices*, October 2012). She argues that the approach -- once so prevalent -- permits the exploration of textures, emotions and forms in a unique way. As presented by Uirak Kim (*The Medieval Poetics of Pilgrimage and Multiple Voices*, 2007):

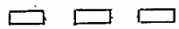
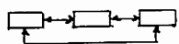
Similarly, each poem has been regarded as a revelation of its respective cultural milieu, and despite the more than five centuries which separate them, the poems are decidedly similar in other, fundamental ways. Eliot's poem, like Chaucer's, employs multiple voices, and the voice of a narrator/host is intermingled with the myriad speakers of both works...

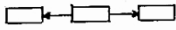
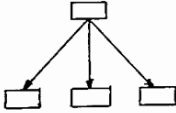
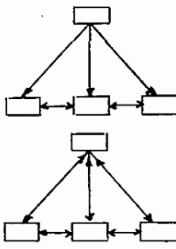
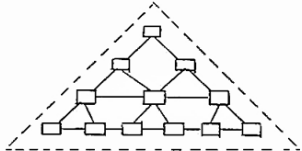
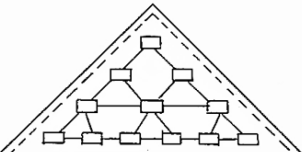
In *The Idea of the Canterbury Tales*, Donald Howard [*Writers and Pilgrims*, 1980] explains that "these multiple viewpoints and multiple degrees of closure make the inner form of the tales seem a maze of contradictions in which the individual is left to find his own way".

Patterns of relation between voices distinguished by prefixes: In Poeclectics, as noted above, a distinction is made between:

- multi-vocal: the actual presence of more than one speaking voice
- co-vocal: collaborative practices, or group use of experimental vocal techniques
- polyvocal: as retaining the sense of many-voiced, for instance, as when various registers exist within a single work, or if many voices are operating on some area of poetry

If disciplines can be meaningfully considered as "voices" (as suggested above), then there is a case for working with the early exploration of distinctions by [Erich Jantsch](#) (*Towards interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in education and innovation*, In: Centre for Educational Research and Innovation. Interdisciplinarity; problems of teaching and research in universities. OECD, 1972, p. 107). The diagram below (as previously presented in *Conceptual Gaps And Confused Distinctions: possible ambiguities in the translation of interrelated concepts between sectors, jargons or languages*, 1974) suggests the possibility of clarifying distinctions between patterns of voices in poetic discourse.

Diagram illustrating the structural differences between elements in a conceptual series as distinguished by prefixes such as : multi-, cross-, pluri-, inter-, trans-, supra-, meta- The diagram is an elaboration of one used by Eric Jantsch (<i>Towards interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity in education and innovation</i> , 1972, p. 107)	
	Several units unrelated, except as a collection of units of the same kind
	Several units bilaterally interrelated amongst themselves, but not otherwise organized.

	<p>Several units organized, but as an imposition on the others of an extension of the order natural to one of them.</p>
	<p>Several units organized through a new higher level unit which provides each unit with its place but does not provide for direct relationship between them.</p>
	<p>Several units organized through a new higher level unit which provides each unit with its place and does provide (variously) for direct relationship between them.</p>
	<p>Several units organized within a new organizational framework, which contains them and any higher level units to which they may relate, such that the boundaries between the units are of less significance than their function within the larger framework thus permitting the framework to relate to external events.</p>
	<p>A new framework of a higher logical type within which the units, their relationships, and the framework by which they are contained, may be discussed critically.</p>

Framework: The annex offered one section suggesting a *Framework for clarification of "poetic debate"* as a means of drawing attention to a vital process -- one readily "misappropriated" (as illustrated above) under labels with which secondary processes of less relevance to this argument are primarily associated. The tentative framework endeavoured to address the challenge of distinguishing unambiguously between:

- presentation, possibly even to be caricatured as "showing off" -- as may be characteristic of "readings" and "lectures"
- competition between performers for audience attention and approval
 - without direct interaction between competitors
 - with direct interaction between competitors, but without engagement in terms of content or style
- jousting, wrestling or wrangling to defeat the other, possibly to be caricatured as "showing up" the other
 - with prepared material
 - making extensive use of improvisation in the moment
- "playing together", whether
 - as a staged performance, possibly of classical roles involving overt complicity between performers
 - as a staged performance determined by a hidden agenda (as with "match fixing" in a variety of competitive sports)
 - unstaged and unplanned
- improvisation by the "voices" towards collective self-transcendence, however that might be understood -- possibly to be characterized as a "fifth discipline" regarding which *The Glass Bead Game* offers allusions to a magically transformative process

The framework merits further enrichment to reflect:

- the variety embodied by increasing the number of distinct "voices", namely the complexity held by the dynamics of their interaction
- the capacity for "backward compatibility" of the emergent pattern, namely the capacity to provide space for (legacy) interactions of lower complexity (of earlier phases) corresponding to other parts of the framework -- thereby avoiding the problematic issues of elitism
- the possibility of cyclic development and recurrence (implied by use of "rehearsal"), as suggested by the classic statements:
 - The First Shall be Last, and the Last First (*Matthew 20:16*)
 - 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).

Relevance of poetic debate to other arenas of discourse

Of particular relevance is the sense in which the above distinctions and possibilities also apply to the other arenas of discourse mentioned above, namely:

- **political debate:** in which the degree of multivocal "debate" may be as questionable as in the case of "poetic discourse", and in which spontaneity may typically be avoided in preference to prepared statements and the use of prompts in monologues and "speechifying". This tendency increases with the degree of difference between the positions held and the perceived value of communicating with an audience via the mass media.

- **religious discourse:** where the quality of multivocal interfaith dialogue may be as questionable as in the case of political debate, and in which spontaneity may be assiduously avoided -- as with preferences for sermonising and *ex cathedra* declarations -- and in sacred ritual. Whilst forms of harmony may purportedly be collectively sought, their quality (according to poetic criteria) may be readily challenged -- in contrast to that achieved in traditional religious epic poems (see discussion in *Learnings for the Future of Inter-Faith Dialogue*, 1993)
- **scientific debate:** is much valued as a feature of the advancement of knowledge, notably through the manner in which incompatible views are variously challenged. Traditional assumptions regarding the reasonableness of the discourse process were however challenged by the vigorous debate following the work of [Thomas Kuhn](#) (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1962). Further challenges have been highlighted by [Rupert Sheldrake](#) (*The Science Delusion: freeing the spirit of enquiry*, 2012) and subsequent discussion (*Knowledge Processes Neglected by Science*, 2012). Despite various claims for a degree of harmony within scientific understanding, this remains as elusive as any sense of "multivocal" interdisciplinarity or transdisciplinarity.
- **philosophical debate:** much valued over the centuries, the nature of such debate has been summarized by [Nicholas Rescher](#) (*The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity*, 1985), who concludes:

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.

In each case concern can be expressed at the constraints on multivocalism, improvisation and mutual challenge -- irrespective of whether there is any effective emergent harmony embodying discord, and of whether the process engages a wider audience, as might be expected or claimed

Wrangling with animal spirits: Of ironic relevance to this discussion is the ambiguity in use of the term "wrangling". The historical British meaning of "wrangler" is a person who excels at debate. Specifically it may refer to a formal procedure of academic disputation by "wranglers", prior to adoption of the written examination, in the case of some instances of scientific and philosophical debate -- and possibly, by extension, to theological debate (although "theological wrangling" has long been an expression of deprecation). In North America, however, a **wrangler** is a person employed to handle animals professionally. For some of religious persuasion, "wrangling with the devil" is a life-long challenge, or a skill attributed to exorcists (cf. *Catholic Church sets up exorcist hotline*, *RT.com*, 1 December 2012).

A degree of relationship between both usages is charmingly offered by the sense that in the course of debate (or any form of intercourse) the positions and dynamics of the "other" are perceived to have a "disorderly" animal quality -- potentially challenging and attractive. This might follow from consideration of the term "animal spirits", as used by [John Maynard Keynes](#) (*The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* 1936), to describe emotions influencing human behaviour and measureable in terms of consumer confidence. Given the use of "wrangling" in both mathematics and theology, there is then a case for eliciting greater insight into the process from mathematical theology, as previously suggested (*Mathematical Theology: Future Science of Confidence in Belief*, 2011).

Multivocal poetic improvisation can then be usefully understood as "prefiguring" modes of discourse in these other arenas -- in which multivocal "conversation" is remarkably challenged at this time, as separately discussed (*Transforming the Art of Conversation: conversing as the transformative science of development*, 2012). In this sense, poetry is "prescient" (when it is) precisely because it is indeed "pre-scientific". Instances of "multiversal" poetic improvisation then offer -- potentially -- a language and template through which to explore new modes of discourse in such arenas.

There is a marked tendency in such arenas to appreciate the capacity for insightful impromptu speech-making and response -- in contrast to the stilted presentation of prepared statements, most notably assisted by slide presentations (*Power Point*, etc). This raises the question as to whether that improvisational capacity is an unexplored indication of both capacity and authenticity -- the capacity to "**think on one's feet**", under rapidly changing circumstances created by others (cf. [Evan Paul Jordan](#), *A Comparative Investigation of Impromptu Speaking and Oral Reading under conditions of delayed Auditory Feedback*, 1952; [Nils Erik Enkvist](#) (Ed.), *Impromptu Speech: A Symposium. Papers Contributed to a Symposium on Problems in the Linguistic Study of Impromptu Speech*, 1981). This includes the capacity to respond fruitfully -- especially with elegance and wit -- in the moment to the arguments of others in the heat of multivocal discourse. It might be asked why debate on policy issues of great global significance are not assessed in terms of such qualities.

Beyond diversity towards multiversality?

The argument has contrasted "universe" with "multiverse" as understood from both an astrophysical and poetic perspective. Related contrasts are to be found with "universality", as more commonly used, and "multiversality", as of potential significance. Also of interest is the potential significance of "multiversity" compared with "university". Given the musical significance of counterpoint, in times of considerable "controversy", what might be the role of a "contraversity", or a "conversity", as previously discussed (*Complementarity of university and conversity*, 2012)?

The issue addressed here is the problematic cognitive constraint of "universal" -- and more especially where none such exists, or is a challenge to comprehension, or that any such "univocal" worldview should be recognized as an ultimate cognitive aspiration (cf. *Paradoxes of Engaging with the Ultimate in any Guise: Living Life Penultimately*, 2012). Such implications are challenged by recognition of desirable "diversity" and the cybernetic requirements for variety in a system of any kind. Also of potential significance are the implications of "versity" otherwise prefixed (conversity, etc), as previously discussed (*Complementarity of university and conversity?* 2012).

It is intriguing that preoccupation of governance with achieving univocal "universality" should be characterized as an aspiration to consummation of adversarial democratic processes and modes of thinking, usefully termed "binary", as separately questioned (*Transcending Simplistic Binary Contractual Relationships*, 2012). It is therefore of interest to consider any use of the prefix "bi-" or "di-" in relation to "verse", "versity" and "versal", whether in systemic or aesthetic terms.

Diversal knowledge and diversity: As noted above, using these terms, a strong case is made by Joe L. Kincheloe (*Critical Pedagogy and the Knowledge Wars of the Twenty-First Century*, *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 1, 2008, 1):

We live in nasty and perilous times. Those of us in critical pedagogy cannot help but despair as we watch the U.S. and its Western collaborators instigate imperial wars for geopolitical positioning and natural resources, and mega-corporations develop and spend billions of dollars to justify economic strategies that simply take money from the weakest and poorest peoples of the world and transfer them to the richest people in North American and Europe. In this context, the politics of knowledge become a central issue in the educational and social domains of every nation in the world...

Such diversal knowledges enhance our socio-political and educational imagination and our ability to imagine new ways of seeing and being and interacting with other people and the physical world. I believe that **a multilogical critical pedagogy can lead the way to these new social, ideological, epistemological, ontological, and cognitive domains....** [*emphasis added*]

More specifically Kincheloe argues for diversity in terms of "the dire need for different perspectives, for multiple forms of knowledge in the effort to expose and resist the New Empire":

A key task of critical pedagogy involves helping people understand the ideological and epistemological inscriptions on the ways of seeing promoted by the dominant power blocs of the West. In such work, criticalists uncover both old and new knowledges that stimulate our ethical, ideological, and pedagogical imagination to change our relationship with the world and other people. Concurrently, such critical labor facilitates the construction of a new mode of emancipation derived from our understandings of the successes and failures of the past and the present. Such an undertaking is essential to the planet's survival at this moment in history. In the last years of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the hegemonic politics of knowledge and the crypto-positivistic epistemology that is its conjoined twin are destroying the world.

Could democracies be recognized as having degenerated into "diversal communities" -- as typically institutionalized in parliamentary architecture and adversarial processes?

Diversal perspectives: The implications for psychosocial "ecosystems" are noted by Andrea Ganzaroli, *et al* (*On the civic role of firms in emerging ecologies of value*, 2007):

Knowledge is the main competitive asset in today's economy... In this paper the development of ecologies of value, context of knowledge sharing where parties participate to the production of a collective value, is presented as alternative strategy to protecting the value of knowledge through intellectual property right. Being able to leverage on the potential disclosed by collective interaction in ecology of values requires participants not exploiting open accessibility to their own advantage. This calls for the emergence of a new ethic. An ethic of the abundance, where people develop a complete consciousness of the potential deriving from sharing knowledge for their own success and happiness. The role of firms in emerging ecologies of value is to promote the development of such an ethic by setting up context of interaction that are open, based on tolerance and mutual transparency.

Of particular interest is the authors' reference to "diversal" as a quality of individuals or groups:

According to Post (2005) "the long term success of the modern business system requires greater and more systematic managerial attention to the interest and concerns of diversal individuals and groups who are, both voluntary and involuntary, affected by corporate activity"

The recognition of "diversal" positions is highlighted also by Petra Hauke (*Turning an Idea into a Book*, 2005):

The aim of all our publications is to make clear motivation and development of diversal discussions and to help the profession to find solutions for problems in library science, librarianship and library services... The intention was to spread the current discussion about the rule type, to document the diversal positions and to help finding the best way for renewing the cataloguing system.

Bialgebra and biuniversal algebra: In mathematics, a **Hopf algebra** is a structure that is simultaneously an (unital associative) algebra and a (counital coassociative) **coalgebra**. The compatibility of these structures makes of it a **bialgebra**. The representation theory of a Hopf algebra is particularly valued, since the existence of compatible comultiplication, counit, and antipode allows for the construction of tensor products of representations, trivial representations, and dual representations. Coalgebras or cogebras are structures that are dual in the sense of reversability of associations. That literature also makes reference to a curious notion of "biuniversal".

There would appear to be a case for exploring the use of such insights to enhance understanding of the cognitive challenges of the relationship between the appeal of "universality" and that of "diversality" -- and the requirements for them. It might be assumed that

relevant insights of value are to be found in [homological algebra](#), notably with respect to its clarification of "biuniversal models" of [Marco Grandis](#) (*Homological Algebra In Strongly Non-abelian Settings*, 2013; *Homological Algebra: the interplay of homology with distributive lattices and orthodox semigroups*, 2012; *Directed Algebraic Topology: models of non-reversible worlds*, 2009).

The nature of the shift in cognitive perspective between "universal" and "diversal" frameworks has been helpfully clarified in related terms by [Patrick Heelan](#) (*The Logic of Changing Classificatory Frameworks*. In: J A Wojciechowski (Ed), *Conceptual Basis of the Classification of Knowledge*, 1974) and in other work on [category framework transposition](#).

Embodying challenge and surprise into multivocal poetic improvisation

Transforming the discourse complex: The argument above has highlighted a set of interwoven factors, each of which may be variously present or absent in discourse -- or claimed so to be. In no particular order, they might be termed:

- **aesthetic elegance:** whether attributed to patterns of discourse, concepts or insights -- enabling higher, subtler or more appreciated patterns of order
- **multiple voices:** reflecting a diversity of engaged parties -- preferably with radically distinct perspectives
- **competitive challenge between voices:** typically with each seeking to correct, dominate, reframe or subvert -- as perceived by the other thereby exposed to a critical perspective
- **leadership:** striving to impose or elicit a degree of order, as with the role of a conductor -- curiously implied in proposals for a [concert of democracies](#), and typically subject to challenge in the light of insights into preferred alternative patterns of order
- **participant animation:** enabling engagement, whether or not with the encouragement of an "animator" -- whose role and preferred processes may well be challenged by others
- **gamesmanship:** implying a degree of play between participants, whether framed in terms of "winning" or of playfulness (as in music)

Of particular interest, as being of wider relevance, is the nature of the embodiment of "challenge" into a dynamically emergent pattern. Such challenge may take the form of:

- the "**otherness**" of **difference** and the potential disruption of any alternative possibility
- the sense of "**backward compatibility**", calling for space for what may be framed by some as inadequate, "obsolete", "antique" or old, but which may be:
 - valued as such, as in architecture, computer games, traditions, etc
 - deprecated as the nature of the environment in which some are obliged to live
- **recognition of ignorance**, whether or not it is condemned or valued -- as with:
 - anticipation of the unexpected, as with the arguments concerning surprise of [Nassim Nicholas Taleb](#) (*The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007) or of Karen A. Cerulo (*Never Saw It Coming: cultural challenges to envisioning the worst*, 2006)
 - understandings of "unknowledge", as introduced by G. L. S Shackle (cf. Ulrich Witt, *Novelty and the bounds of unknowledge in economics*, 2007; Marco Crocco, *The concept of degrees of uncertainty in Keynes, Shackle, and Davidson*, *Nova Economia*, 12, 2002, 2, pp. 11-28), usefully epitomized by Nassim Taleb as the "**anti-library**" of "unread books" of Umberto Eco:

The writer Umberto Eco belongs to that small class of scholars who are encyclopedic, insightful, and nondull. He is the owner of a large personal library... a very small minority [of visitors]... get the point that a private library is not an ego-boosting appendage but a research tool. Read books are far less valuable than unread ones. The library should contain as much of what you do not know as your financial means... allows you to put there. You will accumulate more knowledge and more books as you grow older, and the growing number of unread books on the shelves will look at you menacingly. Indeed, the more you know, the larger the rows of unread books. (cf. [Umberto Eco: 'I'm a writer not a reader'](#), *The Guardian*, 22 May 2011)

The reference above to "bialgebras" could well be considered as an example of "unknowledge" for most.

- the **requirement for embracing error**, as highlighted by [Donald Michael](#) (*On Learning to Plan and Planning to Learn*, 1973)
 - distinctions between the "**known unknowns**" and the "unknown unknowns" as highlighted through "poetry" by [Donald Rumsfeld](#), and separately discussed (*Unknown Undoing: challenge of incomprehensibility of systemic neglect*, 2008).
 - a degree of unconsciousness, as highlighted by Jungian arguments regarding the **shadow** and its collective manifestations (cf. [John Ralston Saul](#), *The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995) -- perhaps well exemplified by the "unsaid" (*Global Strategic Implications of the Unsaid: from myth-making towards a wisdom society*, 2003)
- **critical self-reflexivity**, allowing for doubt, as separately argued (*Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007) -- notably calling for:
 - **negative capability** as identified by the poet [John Keats](#), namely the capacity to admit misunderstanding -- to "embrace error" (as noted above)
 - a sense of the "mirroring" function of the other (possibly through "**mirror neurons**"), both in offering access to what is

otherwise unconscious (V. S. Ramachandran, *The neurons that shaped civilization*, TEDx India, 2009) and in transforming any image (Richard Gregory, *Mirrors in Mind*, 1997; Sabine Melchoir-Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History*, 2002; Miranda Anderson, *The Book of the Mirror: an interdisciplinary collection exploring the cultural story of the mirror*, 2008; Mark Pendergrast, *Mirror, Mirror: a history of the human love affair with reflection*, 2004; Benjamin Goldberg, *The Mirror and Man*, 1985). Many poems reflect on the nature of this mirroring function (see *Poems About Mirror*).

- a previously unrecognized form of self-consciousness, usefully modelled by speculative reflection on its relevance for any encounter with extraterrestrials as archetypal "others" (*Self-reflective Embodiment of Transdisciplinary Integration (SETI): the universal criteria of species maturity?* 2008)
- ability for *innovative response* to the unexpected, possibly prefigured in poetic form. ***Is it only poetry that is capable of giving expression to unknowledge and the unsaid*** -- as implied by Gregory Bateson:

One reason why poetry is important for finding out about the world is because **in poetry a set of relationships get mapped onto a level of diversity in us that we don't ordinarily have access to**. We bring it out in poetry. We can give to each other in poetry the access to a set of relationships in the other person and in the world that we are not usually conscious of in ourselves. So we need poetry as knowledge about the world and about ourselves, because of this mapping from complexity to complexity. (Cited by Mary Catherine Bateson, 1972, pp. 288-9) [*emphasis added*]

Presented in this way, the dynamic operation of the complex of factors is easily obscured. At its simplest, as when confronted with any challenge, it calls for the ability to think creatively in the moment. **References to "poetry" obscure the capacity for "poetry-making" in a multivocal, improvisational setting -- a capacity more commonly recognized in musical improvisation** within a (jazz) group.

The future may consider it remarkably significant that a musical skill engendered by the traditions of a repressed culture should prove to be so valuable under conditions in which conventional governance has proven to be so inadequate (cf. *Knowledge Gardening through Music: patterns of coherence for future African management as an alternative to Project Logic*, 2000). This point has been extensively argued by John Kao (*Jamming: the art and discipline of business creativity*, 1997). As with poetry, music may then be understood as prefiguring comprehension of more appropriate styles of psychosocial organization -- a point argued by Jacques Attali (*Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, 1985).

The cognitive "design challenge" of enabling this dynamic merits consideration in the light of the current challenge of handling **nuclear plasma**, as separately discussed (*Complementarity and Self-Reflexivity: between nuclear fusion and cognitive fusion*, 2006). Ironically, as with "multiverse", the "fusion" metaphor is central to the processes of **fusion music**. This is a musical genre that combines two or more styles. A common example is the development of rock and roll from a fusion of blues, gospel and country music. The main characteristics of the genre are variations in tempo, rhythm, and the occasional use of long musical "journeys" that can be divided into smaller parts, each with their own dynamics, style and tempo. "Fusion" used alone may well refer primarily to jazz fusion.

Towards an imaginative reflection on possible "Rules of Poetic Engagement": The above considerations are distinguished in relation to other approaches in the annex under the following headings:

- *Collaborative aesthetics*
- *Collaborative creativity*
- *Practical concerns*
- *Characteristics of possible "rules"*

Relevant insights from the Poetist Manifesto

Contributing to the insights offered in the above-mentioned allusions within *The Glass Bead Game* of Hermann Hesse, are those of **poetism** - by which Hesse may well have been inspired. This was an artistic program formulated through **Devetsil**, an association of Czech avant-garde artists, by **Vítězslav Nezval** and **Karel Teige** (*The Poetist Manifesto*, 1924). In its **unusual zest for life, and for a life of zest**, the program foresaw, according to its "rough formulation" in a manifesto, as translated by G. S. Evans and excerpted here:

- A new style of art, one which stops being art, which is ignorant of traditional prejudices, which takes in each promising hypothesis, sympathizes with experimentation, and whose methods are as rich and unprepossessing as life itself.
- In the blossoming of the new art you will find such a sense of vitality and life that you will forget the various contentious points of artistic doctrine. Artistic professionalism cannot survive anymore.
- If it is the art of life, the art of being alive and living life, it must ultimately be as self-evident, pleasurable and understandable as sport, love, wine and all other types of delicacies.
- It cannot be a mere occupation, or trade, but rather a common need. No individual life, if it is lived decently -- that is, in laughter, happiness, love and contentment -- can be without it... It is fundamentally a gift, or a game without obligations or consequences.
- It is the progeny of actual life. It wasn't born from esthetic speculation -- the romantic sensibilities of the art studio -- but is the result both of the people's tenacious, disciplined production and their life's activity in general. It doesn't sit in cathedrals or galleries; it is outside in the streets, in the architecture of the cities, in the refreshing green of the parks, in the bustle of the harbors and the workings of industry, which sustain us and our living environments.
- It doesn't prescribe any formulas: modern creations and forms are the result of hard work, produced by the perfect execution of the dictates and the goals of the economy. It includes the engineer's calculation but completes it with a poetic vision. To the science concerned with the construction of cities -- urbanism -- it supplies the captivating and the poetic; it maps out the ground-plan of life, the prototype of the future, utopia. Its products are the implements of abundance and happiness.

- Poetism is the crown of life, whose basis is constructivism. Relativists, we are convinced of a hidden irrationality, which the scientific system doesn't perceive and is irrepressible...
- Poetism is not only the antithesis, but also the necessary fulfillment of constructivism...
- Art which could be called poetism is casual, playful, fantastic, festive, non-heroic and amorous -- it is not at all like romanticism....poetism wants to make life into a great and entertaining enterprise, an eccentric carnival, a harlequinade of the senses and imagination, an intoxicating film, a wondrous kaleidoscope. Its muses are kindly, tender and joyful, its glances are as fascinating and inscrutable as those of two lovers.
- Poetism is without a philosophical orientation. It would only confess to a practical and tasteful eclecticism. It is not a world view... but a part of life. And certainly not a part of life that resides in the workroom, library or museum...
- Poetism isn't an -ism, which is to say an -ism in the hitherto narrow sense of the word. For today there isn't an artistic -ism. Constructivism is the method of all types of productive work. Poetism is, in the most beautiful sense, the art of life, a modern epicureanism. It does not bring in an esthetic which would forbid or impose...
- Poetism is, above all, a *modus vivendi*. It is a function of life and, at the same time, is its *raison d'être*... Poetism is a grand education. The excitant of life. It relieves depression, concerns, resentment. It is spiritual and moral hygiene...To not understand poetism is to not understand life!

As summarized by Alfred French (*The Poets of Prague*, 1969):

...in Teige's view the noblest expression of modern art was to be found not in cathedrals or galleries but in the functional products of technical civilization. The art of tomorrow, as already demonstrated by the architecture of today, would shun romanticism and decoration, and its spirit would be akin to that of geometry or science. But though the new living style was to be, at its best, severely logical, it must also cater for the irrational side of man, that side of him which hungered for the bizarre, the fantastic, and the absurd. For six days would man be rational, but on the seventh would he rest from reason. This recreation, or social hygiene, as Teige regarded it, was the function of Poetism, which thereby supplemented Constructivism, being itself its opposite face.

Poetism was not itself art, but a style of living, an attitude, and a form of behaviour. It was favourable to the growth of an art which was playful, unheroic, unphilosophical, mischievous, and fantastic: it thrived in an atmosphere of gaiety and fun, and aimed to draw the attention of its audience from the gloom of factory and tenement to the bright lights of man-made amusement.

Poetism seeks to turn life into a magnificent entertainment, an eccentric carnival, a harlequinade of feeling and imagination, an intoxicating film track, a marvellous kaleidoscope. Its muses are kindly, gentle and smiling, its glances are as fascinating and inscrutable as the glance of lovers. [emphasis added]

Emergent techniques in enactivating multiversal community

As noted above striking examples, readily comprehensible and appreciated by multitudes, have emerged from fusion music echoing to a degree some traditional forms of poetic improvisation. Possibilities are also evident in the [polyphony](#) of multipart singing, as separately discussed (*Clues to patterns of dialogue from song*, 2012).

Suggestive indications are offered through the Japanese art of writing of [collaborative poetry](#) (*renga*) as offered in the compilation by Jane Reichhold (*Round Renga Round*, AHA Books, 1990):

Writing *renga* requires an art of partnership rarely needed for creative efforts. In some aspects, two strangers doing a *renga* together takes the comic-tragic proportions of a blind date. Whereas the success or failure of a date can regress into the twisting path of memory, a *renga*, when published, holds up to everyone's discerning eye what has happened between the lines of two persons meeting eighteen times over a longer period of time.

Even without Freudian training, the open, poet-hearted person can recognize the currents of emotion flowing across the rock-like words in a stream of sparkling dialogue. For a person who has written *renga*, it is easy to mark the lines of ebb and flow - when interested waned or, better still, caught fire from fire causing images to appear unbidden, without search or desperate grabbing on the dark banister of the remembered. Each *kasen renga*, especially done as these are - by mail over a period of several months - uses timeless images that cast into a mold some of that slurry called the now-moment....

The roles change, the kaleidoscope of personalities shifts with the slant of a different pen and though one may prefer to act the part of one type of poet, the words of a near-stranger can nudge one into pretending one is really someone else. With English *renga* writing so new there are almost no opportunities to study and appreciate the subtle changes an author makes while switching partners....

The formal plan was that each of the five of us would start a *kasen renga* (a formal 36-link poem somewhat following the traditional Japanese plan devised by Basho) in a twosome with each other. With a bit of calculation, who began with whom, we spaced out the *hokku* (first and beginning link) and introductions were begun. None of the other writers had previously done a *renga* together; I had done at least one *renga* with each of them. Each couple decided their own rules and tolerances, agreeing on how close to stick to the *kasen renga* rules regarding the use of moon and flower verses. Each writer was responsible for his/her desecration or in-desecrations. There was no overall *renga* master and the individual *renga* were not critiqued by the other writers. If questions arose, the *hokku* writer had the last word.

Writing collaborative poetry in this way can be usefully compared with the process of report writing by a committee -- typically as a

feature of the policy-making process.

Poetry-making as a template for policy-making

Renewed interest has been expressed in the work of [G. L. S. Shackle](#), recognized as having taken economics into novel territory such as the importance of [imagination](#) in economic decisions to assess the plausibility of alternative outcomes. He argued in *Policy, Poetry and Success* (*The Economic Journal*, 1966) that:

Reason or imagination; probability or poetry; the search for solutions or the search for beauty. These are contrasting theories of the conduct of affairs... To each there corresponds a general policy of life, a general prior assumption dictating attitude and method...

A problem is a set of conditions abstracted from circumstance. We are asked to say what these conditions, *and these only*, imply. A solution of the problem is a suggested state of affairs which conforms to the stated conditions. **In life at large; in politics or business, in human affairs in general, who abstracts for us a set of known conditions and arranges for the exclusion and non-operation of any others? Who limits our field of action to a *given* state of technology or of basic science? Who preveves this field inviolate from the choices of other contemporary or future human choices?**

... Is policy-making, by necessity, an originitive art? Art is the manipulation of constraints. The poet is confined to the use of words whose meaning is supplied by tradition and convention. The musical composer can only exploit the possibilities of sound, whose properties are given by Nature. [*emphasis added*]

As a challenge to the imagination, the phrase *When a Man Dies a World goes out of Existence* (as variously attributed to G. L. S. Shackle and to [Josef Popper-Lynkeus](#)) merits consideration in systemically analogous forms:

- *When a Man Dies an Ecosystem goes out of Existence* -- given the obvious systemic implications at the individual level
- *When a Man Dies a Universe goes out of Existence* -- given the cognitive implications, as an extension of use of the "world" metaphor
- *When a Man Dies a Multiverse goes out of Existence* -- given the cognitive/ecosystemic implications argued here

Together these usefully suggest the existential contrast between *Live like a forest* or *Die like a tree*. The latter might be phrased -- more provocatively and playfully -- as "*Die-a-log*", given the deadening, logic-chopping characteristics of the dialogue process as currently cultivated, when imagination is curtailed.

The possibility of "marrying" poetry and policy in some way was the focus of a previous exploration -- notably in the form of a "Vision of a Poetic Policy Group Initiative" (Part G of *Poetry-making and Policy-making: Arranging a Marriage between Beauty and the Beast* (1993)). That study offered various examples inductive of the possibility of such an interweaving. More recent examples variously include:

- **Political and diplomatic examples:**

- Robert Borgen (*Poetic Intercourse: the use of Chinese poetry in East Asian diplomatic exchanges*, University of California Davis, Modern Language Association, 2005)
- John Barrell (*Poetry, Language, and Politics*. Manchester University Press 1988)

- **Planning-related example:** The question of how to interrelate poetry and planning as a key to visionary planning was evoked in the following terms by Voula Mega, as research manager of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (*Link Poetry and Planning - the wish of Voula Mega*) in preparation for the conference "Myth of the City" (Dublin, 1995):

I do believe that planning systems need to improve the imaginative capacity to envisage a better future. I also believe that each citizen can be a little poet and contribute to the planning system if there is a context of effective participation and co-decision.

She added that this conference can show how poets "*can contribute in enhancing the enlightening abilities of planners (who in continuation will enhance the context and substance of citizen's participation)*". As to the outcome of such a conference, Mega called for the following:

Bringing together planners and poets (and it would be the same with plastic artists or film makers) will be substantial when based on selection of poets who wrote a lot on cities and planners with outstanding poetic achievements in their planning work. But even if this precondition is not fulfilled, the encounter can still be enriching if, i.e. organized around the analysis of poems or urbanity or pulling messages from planning experiments with poetry and art of living.

- **Culturally-determined examples:**

- Easterine Iralu (*The Conflict in Nagaland: through a poet's eyes*, *Skarven*, September 2004)
- Dirgham H. Sbait (*Debate in the Improvised-Sung Poetry of the Palestinians*, *Asian Folklore Studies*, 52, 1993, pp. 93-117):

This paper deals with the poetic debate engaged in by professional Palestinian poet-singers, primarily at traditional

Palestinian weddings in the Galilee region. Details are given regarding the extemporizing-singing of several poetic genres (*catdba, hida, mcanna, qarrddi, and gasidih*), the sociocultural background of the groom's wedding eve, and the broader context in which the poetic debates are conducted. Transliterated Arabic texts and their English translations are included to illustrate the poetic duels between the poet-singers, the refrains of the folk dancers, the interaction between the two, and the issues on which the poets debate.

- Clive Holes and Said Salman Abu Athera (*Poetry and Politics in Contemporary Bedouin Society*. American University in Cairo Press, 2009) which considers:

Colloquial Bedouin poetry remains a vibrant art that has manifold modern functions: commenting on world affairs; criticizing the domestic policies of Arab states; and highlighting poverty, discrimination, the corrupt practices of officialdom, and a compliant local media.

- **Visions of the good society:** This commonly explored theme was the focus of the first TEDxSwarthmore event. The theme was notably explored by Mary Jean Chan by framing it in terms of *A Tapestry of Narratives: Conversations through Poetry*.

A totally different "voice" is to be recognized where the "good society" is one which constitutes an embodiment of the sacred -- however that is to be understood. It is then appropriate to note the work of E. D. Blodgett (*Silence, the Word and the Sacred*, Calgary Institute for Humanities, 1989). This result of a dialogue between poets and scholars on the meaning and making of the sacred, endeavouring to determine how the sacred emerges in sacred script as well as in poetic discourse:

It ranges through scholarship in areas as apparently disparate as postmodernism and Buddhism. The perspectives developed are various and without closure, locating the sacred in modes as diverse as patristic traditions, feminist retranslations of biblical texts, and oral and written versions of documents from the world's religions. The essays cohere in their preoccupation with the crucial role language plays in the creation of the sacred, particularly in the relation that language bears to silence. In their interplay, language does not silence silence by, rather, calls the other as sacred into articulate existence.

Negative capability: It is readily assumed that poetry primarily seeks to embody the more appreciated qualities of life -- and has an obligation to do so. However much poetry is driven by the experience of tragedy and pain. The question is then the extent to which the tragedies of the times are fruitfully embodied and reframed by poetry -- as might be expected from the UN-sponsored *Dialogue Among Civilizations Through Poetry* (2002) or UNESCO's *World Poetry Day* (cf. *Repentismo: the art of improvising poetry in song*, UNESCO, 2012).

How are starving children, disease, corruption, drone attacks on civilians, torture, extinction of species, ghettos, pollution, censorship, and the like, embodied in "verses" in a multiversal aesthetic context? Is it only composers of song lyrics who see the need for this? How is tragedy honoured and given larger meaning as a means of engendering greater insight? In his critique of a review of the work of T. S. Eliot in 1928, Noel Stock argues:

It is rather sad, now, to recall the future into which the reviewer and his right-thinking humanists were then gazing: economic depression, Dachau, Dresden, 40 million people driven from their homes between 1945 and 1960, and ever-increasing industrialization and pollution, to mention but a few of the things that were to happen. The Waste Land was far wider than they realized. (*Fragmentation and Uncertainty*, 1976)

Does the global environment merit appreciation as a multiversal poem -- and with the global civilization do dependent on it? How is the present to be reimaged without the aid of multiversal insight?

Engaging imagination multiversally

Hearing voices: This document was started in the edenic wilderness of Tasmania (cf. *Where There is No Time and Nothing Matters: cognitive challenges at the Edge of the World*, 2008). It is an area with extremely problematic historical associations, as described separately (*Interweaving Demonic and Daimonic Associations in Collective Memory: co-presence of "Tasmania" and "Van Demon's Land"*, 2008). The document was completed at a point of intersection of the Indo-Australian tectonic plate and the Pacific tectonic plate in seismically active New Zealand -- equally edenic (cf. Owen Marshall, Grahame Sydney and Brian E. Turner, *Timeless Land*, 2004). All these plates together lend themselves to reflection, in the light of the above argument, as being themselves distinct "voices" -- challenging simplistic understanding of the integrative planetary globality they together define. Extending the metaphor, it is of vital importance to attend vigilantly, as they do in New Zealand, to the process of [hearing their seismic voices](#) in the depths of what indeed constitutes a global wilderness.

Myth as a means of engaging attention: The argument above has highlighted the possibility of interweaving the contrasting modes of knowing associated with poetry-making and policy-making. The argument can be related to the neglected importance of the role of mythology, so often expressed through poetic associations, in engaging the popular imagination -- otherwise alienated by the sterile tedium of policy discourse. This argument has been developed in relation to an example that has captured the imagination worldwide, namely the *Lord of the Rings* (*Relevance of Mythopoetic Insights to Global Challenges: cognitive integration implied by the Lord of the Rings*, 2009).

Ever since the first *Lord of the Rings* (2001) movie was released, New Zealand (where it was filmed) has been known as the "Home of Middle-earth". This leading role has been reprised in an epic fantasy *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, which had its world premiere in Wellington at the time of writing (November 2012). The city was variously transformed into the "Middle of Middle-earth" with the complicity of the City Council (*New Zealand's capital Wellington renamed for Hobbit premiere*, 27 November 2012). This extended to a widely-cited "alternative currency" (*Hobbit coins worth thousands to become legal tender in New Zealand*, *The Telegraph*, 10 October 2012).

It might however be readily assumed that the realm of fantasy is well and truly disassociated from that of official reality as reinforced by conventional institutions. It is therefore remarkable to note the efforts of New Zealand to engage with that realm as evidenced by the indication of film locations of iconic events in the *Lord of the Rings* on maps of the country for the benefit of tourists. More remarkable is the initiative of Air New Zealand in developing a new variant of the standard safety video for passengers by which travellers have long been bored. As noted by *The Economist* (*Safety videos: Safety on Air Middle Earth*, 31 October 2012), its most recent effort -- entitled *An Unexpected Briefing* (now distributed via YouTube) hints at movie associations with elves, wizards and dwarves peopling mythological Middle Earth. For *The Economist*:

Given the humdrum information required of a safety video, it's admirable to see Air New Zealand continually trying to produce something with a bit of entertainment value. This is one of its best efforts -- passengers will certainly watch.

Shifting tectonic plates: Cognitively it might indeed be affirmed that globality, as "superficially" understood through "plate voices", is centred on a form of "unknowledge" -- whose problematic nature is manifest through the destructive potential of the metaphorical "volcanoes" and "earthquakes" demeaned as reprehensible "social unrest" (cf. *Unthought as Cognitive Foundation of Global Civilization: implications of God, debt, overpopulation, waste, negligence, encroachment and death?* 2012). Recognition has however already been given, metaphorically, to the "shifting tectonic plates" of global society, notably by the US National Intelligence Council (cf. Robert Davies, *The Shifting Tectonic Plates: facing new community challenges to business in a fragile world of risk and opportunity*, The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum, 2002; Chris McGreal, *China's economy to outgrow America's by 2030 as world faces 'tectonic shift'*, *The Guardian*, 10 December 2012).

Curiously the "plates", when considered to be planar, then also bear comparison with the "plans" variously promoted at the global level to respond to the challenges of governance -- then together defining some sense of globality. The comparison is especially striking given the manner in which such plans forcefully push up against each other through the competing efforts to ensure their respective implementation. Aside from the destructive "seismic" sociopolitical effects where they meet, they tend separately to define the unrelated cognitive continents of the world -- and the dividing mountainous ranges of its topography.

Use of such metaphor suggests the need to elicit more radical learnings from the environment -- in the spirit of *biomimicry*. Again New Zealand offers an interesting example through its choice of the marine *nautilus* as symbol of the *New Zealand Curriculum Framework*. With respect to governance, its symbolism is a key to the Pacific-based *Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability* -- effectively "bridging across the plates" constituting the "Pacific Ring of Fire" -- in which New Zealand participates. This spiral form has been explored separately as indicative of a more challenging approach to governance (*Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld*, 2010).

Risk-taking: Given the worldwide preoccupation with extremism as being indicative of terrorism -- and the effort to minimize risk (especially on the part of investors) -- it is again curious the extent to which New Zealand is unique amongst countries in featuring *extreme sports* as a primary attraction for the young (cf. *Norms in the Global Struggle against Extremism: "rooting for" normalization vs. "rooting out" extremism?* 2005). Especially noteworthy, in marked contrast to most other countries, is the legal context for such risk in that it is specifically indicated that those in any way responsible for such facilities cannot be sued for injuries incurred by participants "investing" in such activity.

Ironically this explicit policy might be contrasted with the implicit *caveat emptor* regime made only too evident with respect to official complicity in the sale of high risk derivative packages to unsuspecting customers -- at the origin of the continuing global financial crisis (cf. *Extreme Financial Risk-taking as Extremism -- subject to anti-terrorism legislation?* 2009). Given that one of the extreme experiences offered in New Zealand is the *world's highest cliff jump*, there is now a further irony to use of the "fiscal cliff" metaphor in the US (*IMF chief Christine Lagarde warns US of worldwide effects of fiscal cliff*, *The Guardian*, 9 December 2012).

Tragicomic death of a global civilization? In this imaginative vein it is therefore appropriate to note the extent to which the current global malaise has been reframed to widespread appreciation through fantasy. An example is through the work of science fiction author *Jack Vance*, especially in his *Dying Earth series* -- honoured in a compilation of short fiction and essays (George R.R. Martin and Gardner Dozois, *Songs of the Dying Earth*, Subterranean Press, 2009). Have the institutions of global governance anything equivalent to offer in their unimaginative presentations of a problematic future and the possible responses thereto? The controversy associated with the policy implications of the widely successful science fiction movie *Avatar* (2009) is indicative of the imaginative challenges in that respect.

More generally, any examination of the *Wikipedia List of highest-grossing films* invites comparison of such as *Lord of the Rings*, or *Avatar*, with the amounts associated with current public indebtedness (cf. *Greek government-debt crisis*). The comparison then invites reflection on what currently attracts public confidence. Whilst it is conventionally ridiculous to take fantasy and myth "seriously", it must be asked how "serious" are the current approaches to governance which engender and sustain the array of financial and other crises. The extent of use of imagination "enhancers" such as drugs and alcohol, and their financial significance, can only sharpen such reflection. Are official initiatives to be fruitfully perceived as "laughable" -- as framed by many humorists -- or, if not, why not? Does seeing the current civilization as a source of humour -- as the future may well see it -- offer an integrative perspective to which it is otherwise impossible to

give expression?

[Humanity] has unquestionably one really effective weapon -- laughter. Power, money, persuasion, supplication, persecution -- these can lift at a colossal humbug -- push it a little -- weaken it a little, century by century; but only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand. (Mark Twain)

The sense of [tragicomedy](#) is further highlighted in a period of continuing bloody conflicts around the world. A personal dimension is offered in the week of the premiere of *The Hobbit* by the first stages in the trial of the diminutive, hobbit-like [Bradley Manning](#), accused of enabling the WikiLeaks release of [US diplomatic cables](#) through the agency of [Julian Assange](#). The latter also figures as central to a continuing saga -- itself usefully framed in mythical terms (cf. *WikiLeaks and the First Global Condom War: political awakening through asymmetric psychodrama: US versus Assange*, 2010).

The frequent implication in sexual scandal of leadership at the highest level adds to the comic dimension, as recently exemplified by the case of [Dominique Strauss-Kahn](#) (cf. *Pre-Judging an Institution's Implicit Strategy by the Director's Private Behaviour: remarkable parallels in the case of the IMF and Dominique Strauss-Kahn*, 2011). An even more recent example is the sexual scandal involving the Director of the CIA, [General Petraeus](#) (*David Petraeus CIA scandal engulfs US Gen John Allen*, *BBC News*, 13 November 2012).

Black humour of contradiction: The dimensions of the tragicomedy are especially evident in the contradictions in the treatment of those for whom some form of "poetic justice" might be otherwise appropriate. As noted by Glenn Greenwald, the US does nothing to punish those of its citizens held to be guilty of war crimes or of Wall Street fraud affecting millions, yet demonises the whistleblower (*Bradley Manning: a tale of liberty lost in America*, *The Guardian*, 30 November 2012). Are Bradley Manning and the Statue of Liberty now to be recognized as the two faces of a crumbling civilization -- perhaps reminiscent of the deity [Janus](#) of the Roman Empire, as marker of transitional portals?

The mishandling of Manning by US security services, as alleged in the legal process, is also curiously reminiscent of the agents of [Sauron](#) central to the mythology of *Lord of the Rings* (*The "Dark Riders" of Social Change: a challenge for any Fellowship of the Ring*, 2002) -- especially in a period when their number is to be further increased (Dominic Rushe, *Pentagon reportedly planning to double size of its worldwide spy network*, *The Guardian*, 2 December 2012).

"We have seen the enemy and them is US"? In a complex of crises, attribution of blame to an "other" is widely evident. The "blame-game" is practiced at the highest levels as has been only too evident. The US readily casts itself as a victim of this tendency through its deniable complicity in processes such as those mentioned above. The questionable mindset and practices of "US" are a characteristic preoccupation of alternative and progressive news dissemination -- raising the question as to how this might transcend "[whingeing](#)" as a preferred pattern.

Curiously, although much use is made of humour in framing the "other" as a focus for mockery -- even in presidential campaigns -- the tragicomedy of the collapsing global civilization is rarely characterized by the capacity to see the humour in the situation as a whole and to "laugh at oneself". The potential of humour to reframe the situation otherwise is poorly explored (cf. *Humour and Play-Fullness: essential integrative processes in governance, religion and transdisciplinarity*, 2005; *Recognized role of humour: in politics, leadership, religion and creativity*, 2005). Although it is readily said that it is important to recognize how one may be part of the problem (if not of the solution), this can be extended to recognition that if there is failure to recognize how one is part of the problem, one is then unlikely to be able to understand the nature of the solution required. This extends further to recognition of the humour in the situation and in "seeing the joke" -- of which one may well be the focus -- requiring the capacity to "laugh at oneself".

Use is commonly made of the polarizing distinction between "them" and "us" -- most notably as fundamental to the foreign policy of America and its allies for whom *You're either with us, or against us* (cf. *Us and Them: relating to challenging others*, 2009). As a cognitive framing, there is however a profound irony to such use of "us" by the "US" in official declarations. This is reminiscent of the arguments above regarding distorted mirroring. It offers a valuable twist to the classic adage by the renowned American humorist [Walt Kelly](#): *We have seen the enemy and them is us* (*Pogo*, 1972). The "US" is indeed "us", both for Americans and for others. Much is also made of the developmental aspiration of many other societies -- "them" -- to be like the US.

Central to the tragicomedy, by which the crumbling of global civilization is currently facilitated, is the limited ability to recognize how the "us" of *Pogo* is so intimately related to the "US" that is the focus of global whingeing about "them" as the enabling factor of the global problematic. This complexly convoluted identity is consistent with that of the argument of [Douglas Hofstadter](#) (*I Am a Strange Loop*, 2007). It offers a collective challenge previously explored (*Sustaining a Community of Strange Loops: comprehension and engagement through aesthetic ring transformation*, 2010). The question is then the nature of the "magical" engagement with/through the mirror -- long featured in folk tales and myth (cf. *Stepping into, or through, the Mirror embodying alternative scenario patterns*, 2008; *Looking in the Mirror -- at Josef Fritzl ?*, 2009).

Eliciting the logic of the imagination: Although acknowledging, as noted above, that *Poetry survives disaster, the decay of civilizations and cultural breakdowns because it is linked indissolubly to knowledge*, Noel Stock usefully argues that:

The shortcomings of recent poetry are perhaps most obvious when we examine images: not images in isolation but **that essential skill by which the poet draws together disparate, even conflicting images and suggestions, and unifies them in the poem**. Such unity is not, for example, unity of narrative though it might well occur in a unified narrative. Nor it is a matter of sticking to one's subject and making sure that all the parts of the poem have some common botanical or religious meeting-place. It might, and often does, include these, and work through them, but it can and does exist in poetry which has no unity of narrative or external reference for the parts. It is sometimes even present in verse containing images and epithets incongruous or conflicting, and with no common ground whatsoever if analysed as objects separate from the poem. (*A Call to Order*, 1976)

[emphasis added]

In the desperate quest for some form of unity or universality, whether on the part of physics or global governance, the quality of that unity might be better considered in the light of Stock's further argument with respect to the logic of the imagination:

The unity of genuine poetry is from the "logic of the imagination" which is seen to be not in conflict with the logic of concepts, but on another plane, making use of the latter and submitting to it for purposes of its own, but not to be confused with it as if the logic of concepts were the sole measure of poetry's existence. **Poetry calls for the underwriting of all the parts of a poem, including "reality" and "fact" by the "logic of the imagination", and the creation and blending of images in harmony with it.** But the poet today usually takes hold of some "fact", "belief" or "feeling" and then describes or embellishes it. Description and embellishment, instead of radiating from an inner unity, follow as it were an exterior course founded on the observation of phenomena, or on some idea, derived, no matter how indirectly, from the exterior world of the slide-rule. (*A Call to Order*, 1976) [emphasis added]

Curiously the US continues to be "at war" with cultures in which poetry is unusually favoured as a mode of expression -- at every level of society. Ironically the US is led by a President from a city renowned for "poetry slams".

Conclusion

The argument can be understood as a deliberate exercise in "interweaving", as separately discussed (*Interweaving Thematic Threads and Learning Pathways: Noonautics, Magic carpets and Wizdomes*, 2010). The main threads, offering maximum contrast, are those of poetry and physics -- associated through contrasting interpretations of "multiverse" and the multiple "voices" thereby implied.

Both cases suggest a cognitive challenge. In the case of physics, what is to be understood experientially for humans by multiple universes? In the case of a poem of many verses, or a song, what is the "magic" through which their resonant associations "work" -- enabling the magic to be appreciated cognitively and to inspire and enliven? There are further challenges. For physics, how is the "magic" offered by the aesthetic elegance of a poem to be recognized and considered meaningful? For those poetically inspired, how is the integrative elegance of the insights of physics to be comprehended? What enables any theoretical model to "fly"?

Relevant issues have been highlighted at the time of writing by Ernie Lepore and Matthew Stone (*Philosophy and the Poetic Imagination*, *The New York Times*, 2 December 2012):

Here's one striking puzzle: We speak and write with remarkably different aims. We sometimes try to get clear on the facts, so we can reach agreement on how things are. But we sometimes try to express ourselves so we can capture the uniqueness of our viewpoint and experiences. It is the same for listeners: language lets us learn the answers to practical questions, but it also opens us up to novel insights and perspectives. Simply put, **language straddles the chasm between science and art...**

In our view, part of what makes language artistic is that we have to explore it actively in order to appreciate it... These efforts can lead to new insights, new perspectives and new experiences. Poetry is a form in which this reader engagement is particularly striking and important. It's a good illustration of the way philosophical work can help awaken us to the richness of the language that surrounds us, even in the seeming cacophony of the digital age. [emphasis added]

Long prior to the recent critique by Steven Fowler of factionalism amongst poets (cited above), Noel Stock had however argued:

It is not in the difficulties of modern art that our problem lies, but in its giving in to it. The difficulty derives, in part at least, from the nature of our society: fragmentation and uncertainty are there for all to see. It is right and inevitable that our art should in some reasonable measure -- reasonable, because art is for human beings -- reflect or take note of this fragmentation and uncertainty. (*A Call to Order*, 1976) [emphasis added]

In developing this argument, Stock's words merit reflection with respect to the above-mentioned "whingeing" on the part of social actors indulging variously in the blame-game in frustration at the resistance to social change. The change agents of the present, as "artists of social transformation", could then merit consideration in the light of Stock's critique of poets:

... the artists have betrayed their art. **Instead of turning their uncertainty into art, they have wallowed in it.** Dislocations in society, the obvious inadequacies of ordinary middle-class materialism, have been seized upon... not as difficulties to be overcome, or matters to be turned into art, or worlds to be transcended, but for the opportunities they provide for indulgence in the anarchies attendant upon self-pity. [emphasis added]

Rather than "whingeing" about the inadequacies of "them", is there a case for reframing the engagement between "us and them" in the light of the subtler underlying insights of the "martial arts" (cf. *Ensuring Strategic Resilience through Haiku Patterns: reframing the scope of the "martial arts" in response to strategic threats*, 2006)? What might be the "aikido" of social transformation -- beyond the constraints of "whingeing"? Or a multiversal "opera" (*All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony*, 2007)? As remarked by Nathan C. Henne (*A Poetics of the Uncertain: trajectories of the Maya Mind and Tongue in American Literatures*, ProQuest, 2007):

By focusing on multivocal poetics instead of primary meaning as we are able to capture it smoothly in Indo-European languages, we move the heart of works of Earlier American literature out of the periphery and into a central defining position of a Poetics of the Americas (p. 146)

In a psychosocial and a sociopolitical context, of what relevance is either physics or poetry to governance and the elaboration of coherent strategic initiatives? How might the insights offered by a pattern of multiple "verses" -- as "versions" or variants embodying diversity -- inform community and comprehension thereof? The challenge is reminiscent of the factional aspirations to "universal" community within the [Christian Church](#), the [Islamic Ummah](#), or various diasporas. With that in mind, for both physics and poetry, a fundamental challenge is how to embody the recognition that, in a "multiversal" community, each is necessarily but one of a number of voices -- which together engender the magic (but only together, as in any musical composition).

Strangely, although "magic" is widely deprecated from many conventional perspectives, it is highly valued in a wide range of marketing promotions as vital to attracting clients and engaging support. In that sense, even in politics, presentations appreciated as "magical" are also much to be valued over the conventional (*Magic, Miracles and Image-building*, 1993). It follows that it may then be asked how what is appreciated in any magical song -- as an extension of poetry -- might translate into the preoccupations of policy, as separately discussed (*A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006). What are the "verses" required in such "multiversal" formulations in order to hold together and reflect the worldviews of those whom it is expected to engage? Might such verses perhaps engender "overtones" of a more fundamental, or higher, order of significance?

The threads of this argument imply a radical cognitive engagement in recognizing multiversal community. In a fundamental sense there is a call to be simultaneously composer, performer and audience in a what is effectively a multiversal opera. Exploiting the abbreviations [BYO](#) and [DIY](#), it is a case of "bring your own" and "do it yourself" -- namely design it yourself from what you find meaningful (cf. *Designing the 21st Century -- through integration of the arts and sciences*, 1985). In this sense multiversal community is to be enacted and recognized through the eyes of the beholder in the moment -- in a mode transcending dependence on "[rhyme or reason](#)" (cf. *Warp and Weft of Future Governance: ninefold interweaving of incommensurable threads of discourse*, 2010).

The weaving together of poetry and policy through this modality can be understood as anchored in the cognitive sense of [poiesis](#) as "making" -- appropriately associating [autopoiesis](#) and [allopoiesis](#) as a challenging complementarity. Implying "self-creation", the former, expresses a fundamental dialectic among structure, mechanism and function -- as articulated by the biologists [Humberto Maturana](#) and [Francisco Varela](#) (*Autopoiesis and Cognition: the realization of the living*, 1980).

The association of these systemic processes with "self-organization" and "self-governance" emphasizes the more intimate sense of [BYO](#) and [DIY](#) in enacting multiversal community. [BYO](#) offers the further implication of "be your own", namely the cognitive correspondence to the organization and governance of *Your Inner Ecosystem* (*Scientific American*, June 2012).

Together these implications pose the existential question of how one is onself a multiversal community in resonance with the voices in a global wilderness (cf. [Henryk Skolimowski](#), *The Participatory Mind: a new theory of knowledge and of the universe*, 1994), as separately discussed (*Cognitive Implications of Lifestyle Diseases of Rich and Poor: transforming personal entanglement with the natural environment*, 2010). In this light consideration could be given to the healing role of poetry for the **collective** -- notably explored by the [Institute for Poetic Medicine](#) for the **individual** -- as enabler of the "[pattern that connects](#)". This is the cognitive meta-pattern identified by Gregory Bateson (cf. *Walking Elven Pathways: enactivating the pattern that connects*, 2006; *Climbing Elven Stairways: DNA as a macroscopic metaphor of polarized psychodynamics*, 2007).

The "voices" interwoven in this way recall the much-quoted maxim of Walter Pater: *All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music*. A multiversal community thereby seeks to unify subject matter and form, with the disparate voices drawing upon one another in an attempt to surpass their own limitations. The music to be heard is not the insipid form (of which Robert Graves warns) but rather a strange, terrifying and awe-inspiring sound -- in resonance with the agonies and opportunities of the times.

The tragic nature of the crumbling of global civilization can best be recognized in its poignant resemblance to the dramatic effects of senility on individual memory. Whilst the health of the collective body may indeed be sustained and improved, the degradation of mental capacities is only too evident with respect to recognition of any "pattern that connects" -- most notably by aging leadership and institutions (cf. Karen A. Cerulo, *Never Saw It Coming: cultural challenges to envisioning the worst*, 2006). The ever increasing power of information tools obscures the progressive erosion of attention capacity and the ability to sustain the coherence of a knowledge-based civilization (cf. *Societal Learning and the Erosion of Collective Memory: a critique of the Club of Rome Report: No Limits to Learning*, 1980). Ironically, as with individuals subject to Alzheimer's disease, music may evoke and sustain the connectivity otherwise at risk.

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