



laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

6th November 2010 | Draft

Missing the New Renaissance?

No Room at the In?

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Produced on the occasion of a conference of the Scientific and Medical Network
to launch a compilation: *A New Renaissance: transforming science, spirit and society* (2010)

Introduction

This is a reflection on Renaissance, especially on the New Renaissance, long awaited and on which many hopes have been placed. This can only be a continuing exercise, following a trail of previous efforts (*Challenges of Renaissance: suggestive pattern of concerns in the light of the birth metaphor*, 2003).

The questions asked here are to do with the ways on which one might engage fruitfully with that event, if only as an exercise of imagination -- which may well be the key to enabling whatever it constitutes as an archetype cherished by many. Imagination may also be vital to exploring the necessary complexity it must embody to be adequate to the challenges of the present time, as previously suggested (*Imagining the Real Challenge and Realizing the Imaginal Pathway of Sustainable Transformation*, 2007).

Framed as a "reflection" however, such an exploration is also an exercise in mirroring and self-reflexivity. It is insufficient to any engagement with its potential significance to approach it either purely objectively or purely subjectively, each having its limitations. It might in fact be an integral characteristic of an emergent New Renaissance that it transcends such a polar modality from which discourse and governance suffer so unfruitfully. There are few disciplines which enable such integrative transcendence. Hence the case for aesthetic playfulness, as previously argued (*Enacting Transformative Integral Thinking through Playful Elegance*, 2010). However in this mode there is also the archetypal challenge of "stepping into" a reflective mirror (*Stepping into, or through, the Mirror: embodying alternative scenario patterns*, 2008).

The following exploration is structured in terms of a set of questions. There is then a case for initially presenting the challenge to comprehension in terms of an adaptation of the classic poem of [Edward Lear](#) (*The Akond of Swat*). This humorous, "nonsense verse" offers an appropriate counterpoint to the "seriousness" upheld as characteristic of a "New Renaissance". The same poem, adapted otherwise, was used to reframe humorously the desperate trillion dollar quest for the most wanted person on the planet, Osama bin Laden (*Engaging with Osama bin Laden in Swat*, 2009).

with apologies to Edward Lear (1812-1888) especially for the introduction of an additional "chorus" line, best "shouted", as recommended for the original chorus line by its author		
Who, or why, or which, or what, Is the New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	If it catches them then, either old or young Does it have them chopped in pieces or hung or SHOT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Does it like to sit by the calm blue wave? Or to sleep and snore in a dark green cave, or a GROTT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?
Is it tall or short, or dark or fair? Does it sit on a stool or a sofa or a chair, or SQUAT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Do its people prig in the lanes or park? Or even at times, when days are dark, GAROTTE, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Does it drink small beer from a silver jug? Or a bowl? or a glass? or a cup? or a mug? or a POT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?
Is it wise or foolish, young or old? Does it drink its soup and its coffee cold, or HOT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Does it study the wants of its own dominion? Or doesn't it care for public opinion a JOT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Does it beat its wife with a gold-topped pipe, When she let the gooseberries grow too ripe, or ROT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?
Does it sing or whistle, jabber or talk, And when riding abroad does it gallop or walk or TROT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	To amuse its mind do its people show him Pictures, or any one's last new poem, or WHAT, For the New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Does it wear a white tie when it dines with friends, And tie it neat in a bow with ends, or a KNOT. The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?
Does it wear a turban, a fez, or a hat? Does it sleep on a mattress, a bed, or a mat, or COT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	At night if it suddenly screams and wakes, Do they bring him only a few small cakes, or a LOT, For the New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Does it like new cream, and hate mince-pies? When it looks at the sun does it wink its eyes, or NOT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?
When it writes a copy in round-hand size, Does it cross its T's and finish its I's with a DOT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Does it live on turnips, tea, or tripe? Does it like its shawl to be marked with a stripe, or a DOT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Does it teach its subjects to roast and bake? Does it sail about on an inland lake in a YACHT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?
Can it write a letter concisely clear Without a speck or a smudge or smear or BLOT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Does it like to lie on its back in a boat Like the lady who lived in that isle remote, SHALLOTT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Some one, or nobody, knows I wot Who or which or why or what Is the New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?
Do its people like him extremely well? Or do they, whenever they can, rebel, or PLOT, At the New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	Is it quiet, or always making a fuss? Is its steward a Swiss or a Swede or Russ, or a SCOT, The New Renaissance? Is it Renewal, or it it NOT?	

Complementary questions

The following questions -- presented linearly -- are better considered as interwoven, even as braided themes -- as suggested by the final images [below](#). The pattern of conventional questions is itself questioned below. Each gives rise to:

- specific responses to which it may be easier to relate, namely specific stimuli
- indications of general tendencies, which are important as a reframing of an evocative contextual framework
- the challenge of how the specifics and the general can be fruitfully related, given the dynamics of variety

1. What is the New Renaissance?

At the time of writing, the New Renaissance is articulated through a book of that title edited by David Lorimer and Oliver Robinson (*A New Renaissance: transforming science, spirit and society*, 2010). It was [launched to the media](#) in London (6th November 2010) at a conference of the [Scientific and Medical Network](#), whose speakers including many of the contributors to the book. This helps to make the point that the New Renaissance is neither the event launching the book, nor the contributions, nor the themes they evoke. Or is it necessarily all those, and more?

The book's contributors stress:

... an urgent need for change and renewal in a period of crisis for philosophy, science and society. The Florentine Renaissance, some six hundred years ago, took a huge leap forward into realism, rationality and self-awareness. It was born out of the waning authority of medieval institutions and beliefs. We stand now at a similar junction in history. It is apparent to many that reductionist science with its materialist values - the worldview that has driven modern culture for the last two centuries - is losing credibility.... The essays gathered in *A New Renaissance* are a cultural response to the failings of the materialist worldview.

The contributions are clustered into four parts:

- diagnosis of the sources of the crisis in the current worldview.
- the search for a new understanding of consciousness and mind, based on findings in new non-materialist philosophy.
- renewal of spirituality beyond religion, aiming to recapture the personal depth and connection to the cosmos that materialism denies or ignores.
- possible reforms in politics, economics and education to help bring forth a society that can sustain the flourishing of human beings in the globally interconnected world of the twenty-first century.

The distinguished contributors have all written extensively in other works on the themes which variously address the question of what is the New Renaissance. Such themes include, or touch upon, according to their preoccupations, and those of others:

- change of paradigm (Hazel Henderson, *Paradigms in Progress: life beyond economics*, 1995)
- new thinking (Edward de Bono, *New Thinking for the New Millennium*, 2000)
- transdisciplinarity (Basarab Nicolescu, *Transdisciplinarity: theory and practice*, 2008)
- transcending polarity
- **collective intelligence** (Hideyasu Sasaki, *International Journal of Organizational and Collective Intelligence (IJOICI)*, 2010)
- wisdom
- personal transformation -- rebirth
- planetary consciousness (Ervin László, *Planetary Consciousness: our next evolutionary step, Cybernetics and Human Knowing*, 4, 1997; Shinichi Takemura, *Designing a Multiperson Planetary Consciousness*, Forum on Science and Spirituality, July 2010)
- new conscience
- emergence of new spiritual leadership
- new harmony (Christopher Alexander, *Harmony-Seeking Computations: a science of non-classical dynamics based on the progressive evolution of the larger whole. International Journal for Unconventional Computing (IJUC)*, 2009)

Whilst these explicit themes may be conflated (or confused) to some degree, any such checklist necessarily excludes:

- themes not considered of relevance to those authors, individually or collectively
- themes privileged by authors not assembled by that particular exercise
- themes promoted by non-verbal means
- themes not currently evident -- the "surprise" of any New Renaissance -- notably including that which cannot be expressed, the unsayable to which **apophysis** refers (*Engaging with the Inexplicable, the Incomprehensible and the Unexpected*, 2010)

Together these highlight a concern as to how a New Renaissance will avoid reactive closure clustering particular beliefs and articulations to the exclusion of others. This points to the challenge of the nature of a book as an integrative presentation, namely whether it is able to design in openness through the manner in which it interweaves its themes and opens them to what is not explicated there. The contrast is the form of integration defined only by the binding of the book -- once termed *Buchbindersynthese*.

The element of surprise might take several forms:

- that most evident being the especially painful chaos -- the "labour" through which any birth takes place -- perhaps usefully understood as the cognitive challenge to comprehending what is being born.
- planetary disaster of unforeseen nature and consequences This has been variously recognized (Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007; Karen A. Cerulo, *Never Saw It Coming: cultural challenges to envisioning the worst*, 2006)
- that associated with the serendipitous, synchronicity of the interwoven themes, rendering comprehensible the epistemological subtleties of the "pattern that connects" as explored by Gregory Bateson (*Angels Fear: towards an epistemology of the Sacred*, 1988)
- contact with "extraterrestrials", whatever that might mean -- especially in the light of the degrees of "alienation" engendered by current modes of globalization

Potentially these forms of surprise are of course intimately related. That to which they may give rise might include:

- a reframing of identity of the individual in relation to any larger reality, of which mirroring and self-reflexivity could be significant dimensions
- new understandings of integrative thinking, as summarized and suggested by Jennifer Gidley (*The Evolution of Consciousness as a Planetary Imperative: an integration of integral views. Integral Review: A Transdisciplinary and Transcultural Journal for New Thought, Research and Praxis*, 2007)
- emergence of collective initiatives reflecting such understanding, as separately explored (*Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007)

More provocative and mysterious is the use of "new" in relation to "renaissance". There is considerable literature on the "Renaissance", with a general, but not unchallenged, consensus that it began in Florence (Italy) in the 14th century. What is far less clear is the nature of the earlier "Naissance" and when it occurred for rebirth to be subsequently claimed. It can be understood as relating to deep collective memories of the cultural birth of earlier ages, notably **classical antiquity**, or perhaps to the emergence of different religious revelations. As a metaphor, however, it raises issues of how it is to be brought about -- conception, gestation, labour? Emergence from entombment?

2. When will the New Renaissance happen?

Again the book launch helps to distinguish between:

- the event on 6th November 2010, however auspicious the moment
- the ongoing enabling creativity of the contributors to that book, and to other initiatives, past and future

- the catalytic effect of that thinking interacting with the reflections of others, in the present and in the future
- other currents with which they have been or will be associated

The book launch specifically notes the culminating implications of forces engendering a New Renaissance:

It is apparent to many that reductionist science with its materialist values -- the worldview that has driven modern culture for the last two centuries -- is losing credibility. Its objectives of growth and acquisition, and its guiding principles asserting that there is no intrinsic meaning to life or purpose in the cosmos are now widely seen as creating an unsustainable world.

Any notion of "when" could also be reframed by other considerations:

- personal openness to change and the desire to explore it
- the widespread sense of convergence, prophesied or manufactured, on the [2012 phenomenon](#) -- a range of eschatological beliefs that cataclysmic or transformative events will occur on 21 December 2012
- understandings of cyclic time and [eternal return](#)
- time as an illusion, with time and change emerging from a universe that is fundamentally static (Craig Callender, *Is Time an Illusion?* *Scientific American*, 24 May 2010)

These factors may well allow the "when" to be reframed as "whenever", depending on the capacity to engage personally with it and to enact it (*Enveloping Development through Cognitive Enactivism*, 2009; *walking elven Pathways: enactivating the pattern that connects*, 2006; *En-minding the Extended Body: enactive engagement in conceptual shapeshifting and deep ecology*, 2003).

3. Where will the New Renaissance happen?

Clearly in a very particular sense the New Renaissance "happens" in London with the launch of the book of that title. Others would favour locations of significance to their particular belief system, possibly including:

- Jerusalem for the Abrahamic religions, or other places for other religions of the world
- perhaps Geneva for scientists, at the CERN [Large Hadron Collider](#), with its expectation of the imminent discovery of the "[God particle](#)"
- "globally", namely everywhere, in the light of understandings of [planetary consciousness](#), emergence of a "[global brain](#)", and the implications of the internet for acknowledgement of the noosphere (*From Information Highways to Songlines of the Noosphere: global configuration of hypertext pathways as a prerequisite for meaningful collective transformation*, 1996)
- "locally", in the sense that real change is held to happen only in a geographically local, community context
- "locally", in the sense of electronic proximity, as with some or many of the groups emerging on the web
- within oneself, through transformation of understanding of oneself in relation to the world, as promoted by various schools of thought (Henryk Skolimowski, *The Participatory Mind: a new theory of knowledge and of the universe*, 1994)
- place reframed, as explored by physicists and philosophers in terms of [non-locality](#) and the associated illusion of place

In the case of "locally", again this may take the form of special "zones" whether geographically or in cyberspace, which may well be experienced as "exclusive" by those who are unable to engage effectively with them (*Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007; *Dynamically Gated Conceptual Communities*, 2004)

4. Which New Renaissance?

The challenge of "which" is that it recognizes the existence of alternatives -- if only through their misguided advocacy by "others" lacking appreciation for the unique merits of one's own coherent understanding of New Renaissance. This is the provocative challenge of otherness and the associated problematic psychosocial dynamics amongst various parties all convinced of the validity of their particular perspective. Metaphors from geometry and topology may offer insights into how distinct forms of being "right" can coexist on more complex surfaces (*Metaphorical Geometry in Quest of Globality*, 2009; *Geometry of Thinking for Sustainable Global Governance*, 2009)

The challenge of "which" suggests possibilities such as the following:

- promotion of a unique and self-evident form of New Renaissance, whether:
 - [scientific revolution](#), as might be favoured by "scientific reductionists"
 - religion, each with its preferred understanding, typically dogmatically defined -- possibly including a Messiah or equivalent
- personal rebirth (*Varieties of Rebirth: distinguishing ways of being born again*, 2004)
- traditional esoteric understandings, including presumed "emergence" of a previously hidden spiritual hierarchy
- insightful communication with extraterrestrials (*Self-reflective Embodiment of Transdisciplinary Integration (SETI): the universal criteria of species maturity?* 2008)
- metaphoric borrowings from other cultures (Susantha Goonatilake, *Toward a Global Science: mining civilizational knowledge*, 1999) and variously interweaving their implications (*Enhancing the Quality of Knowing through Integration of East-West metaphor*, 2000). This could include the possibility of "exploiting" Goonatilake's "mining", then to be understood as making "mine"
- emergence of more appropriate governance as a necessary response to crises of unexpected dimensions

Whatever the preferred approach, the challenge of intercourse with otherness remains -- with those who hold alternative views and "disagree", preferring to sing from another "hymn sheet" or to follow the sound of a "different drummer" (*Us and Them: relating to challenging others*, 2009; *Human Intercourse: Intercourse with Nature and Intercourse with the Other*, 2007). A particular concern are the understandings of any "silent majority", singular or multiple, and what is implied by the "unsaid" (*Global Strategic Implications of the*

Unsaid: from myth-making towards a wisdom society, 2003).

The question of "which" is then a matter of whether the variety of views can be interwoven through dialogue in the light of a more integrative perspective. The book launch conference was explicitly framed as a "cross disciplinary dialogue". The divisive nature of "which" is then transformed into the aesthetic challenge of braiding themes into a significant whole then to be understood as the New Renaissance -- a degree of unity, of a higher order, within diversity. The question is the degree of subtlety and sophistication that can be brought to the process of eliciting that higher order -- and its comprehension by all (*Dynamics of Symmetry Group Theorizing*, 2008).

Given such possible complexity, and that it may be a feature of the requisite variety for a sustainable future, a particular concern is the capacity to elicit appropriate metaphors to interrelate radically distinct understandings of "which" such that choice is reframed into a richer modality (*Decision-making: guiding metaphors and configuring choices*, 1991). How does the contrarian get reframed as counterpoint in a larger harmony -- rather than as *diabolus in musica*?

5. How will the New Renaissance be enabled?

The London event is an indication of the challenge and, through its very own organization, offers a metaphor illustrative of how it might be addressed. As suggested by Gregory Bateson, in concluding a conference on the effects of conscious purpose on human adaptation: *We are our own metaphor* (Catherine Bateson. *Our Own Metaphor*, 1972, p.304).

The London event brought together, to enable the New Renaissance, an impressive cluster of:

- "**professors**", clearly actively professing specialized knowledge of how to ensure a safe birth -- perhaps to be understood as consultant gynecologists and obstetricians, even including geneticists, if there is any question of an *in vitro* fertilisation process, or challenges to civilizational fertility and fecundity. Clearly the condition of society is such that the possibilities of miscarriage are a major concern. Potentially even more worrying within that metaphor is the possibility of **multiple births** -- whether twins or more.
- "**doctors**", presumably acting practically in the light of the insights offered by the professors. Considerable technical expertise may be required to implement the advice of the professors, especially if the advice is contradictory, as is only too often the case. Again the possibility of accidents and malpractice can be usefully borne in mind.
- "**midwives**", namely others present, presumably to be understood as practitioners able to facilitate the actual process of labour -- with a more "hands on" approach than either doctors or professors. Not being conventionally qualified, this "other" category may include those with other skills, even extending into non-physical realms: the spiritual, the magical.

If such a birth is to be compared with the archetypal Second Coming, clearly this assembly of magi is numerically far in excess of the original **three wise men**. At least the event included some women. However it was claimed that the Biblical magi visited only after the actual birth and therefore cannot be said to have been involved in facilitating the Naissance itself.

The process of birth has however become far more complicated since those times. Home birth is widely deprecated and a manger would be seen as exemplifying the lack of hygiene to which institutional birth is the recommended response -- especially if there may be complications, requiring tests, equipment and any of a very wide range of specialists. Concern might be appropriately expressed regarding the influence of deep cultural memory of the former experience of the pain of birth now increasingly liable to engender birth trauma -- **tocophobia** -- and desire for caesarian delivery to avoid the pain of a Renaissance.

Which discipline would not consider itself to be of relevance to such a singular psychosocial event? Clearly cognitive hygiene is much to be desired in considering the requirements to enable a New Renaissance. A strong case could be made for the merit of "people of ignorance" to complement the many convinced of the unquestionable validity of their own perspective.

The challenge exemplified by *A New Renaissance* as a book, and the launching speeches of its contributors, is how the threads of insight are interwoven to ensure coherence for the birthing process -- or, switching metaphors, to achieve "lift off". Society has not clearly demonstrated the capacity to interweave the disparate insights of the disciplines, especially when the understanding of discipline extends beyond the conventional sciences -- whether to the "complementary" and "alternative" disciplines or into emotional and spiritual realms. Characteristically, many disciplines deprecate others as being totally inappropriate, if not totally dangerous. This was the challenge of those gathered on the launch occasion.

In anticipation of receipt of the book, and of viewing the web broadcast *** of the launching speeches, one can then only speculate on how the themes were braided together in an integrative pattern capable of encompassing the complexities of the birthing process -- a challenge previously discussed (*Interweaving Thematic Threads and Learning Pathways*, 2010). In echoing in some measure the aesthetic sensitivity of the Renaissance (notably to "**natural magic**"), rather than conventional linear discourse and text, presumably the insights articulated by each reflected off those of others so that a pattern emerged, as might be compared to:

- enabling light to be refracted and reflected as a consequence of cutting and polishing a precious stone (*Patterning Archetypal Templates of Emergent Order: implications of diamond faceting for enlightening dialogue*, 2002)
- a choral symphony of melodies, sounded by different instruments and voices, as previously argued (*A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006) and capable of encompassing discord through counterpoint (*All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony?* 2007)
- an exercise in **synaesthesia**, moving beyond conventional "vision" metaphors and involving **multiple intelligences** and senses through which embodiment could be ensured (*Strategic Challenge of Polysensorial Knowledge: bringing the "elephant" into "focus"*, 2008; *Cyclopean Vision vs Poly-sensual Engagement*, 2006). Of special importance is the ability to transcend the associated epistemological challenges by which eminent specialists are alienated from each other (*Epistemological Challenge of Cognitive Body Odour: exploring the underside of dialogue*, 2006)

Structured with such considerations in mind, the event must have been truly magically transformative -- perhaps to be represented visually by a mandala-style image such as those below. This might otherwise be understood as a psychoactive systems diagram or an archetypal "magic carpet" by which humanity could be transported into a new future (*Magic Carpets as Psychoactive Systems Diagrams*, 2010).

The problem for many may well be the difficulty of "seeing", "hearing", "feeling", or otherwise engaging with any emergent synthesis represented by such means. As with the tendency to dysfunctional bodyweight, the sense of vision or hearing may just be inadequate -- whether or not corrective measures and prosthetic devices can be found. As with the experience of many a mathematician or physicist, others may not be able to "see" the integrative marvels of their discoveries -- just as they may be blind to those of other disciplines. More provocatively one might ask whether the New Renaissance will be best "re-cognized", for some at least, as:

- a new "vision", the sight-based metaphor, widely favoured to the exclusion of others (forgetting the difficulties of the visually challenged in need of corrective lenses)
- a new "feeling", as recognized by some understandings of quality of life and well-being
- a new "taste", as notably articulated by Ken Wilber (*One Taste*, 1999) as a descriptor for [unitary consciousness](#).
- a new "sound", with which many would naturally resonate (Joachim-Ernst Berendt, *The World Is Sound: Nada Brahma: music and the landscape of consciousness*, 1991)
- a new "smell", especially as a corrective to the "stench" of global decay and corruption

The "re-cognition" of the New Renaissance -- in terms of the subtleties of synaesthesia and cyclic time -- may then also be understood as "re-membering", in the sense of en-activating -- as suggested by the philosopher-poet [Antonio de Nicolas](#) (*Remembering the God to Come: a book of poems*, 2000).

It is in this respect that it is to be hoped that the *Manifesto for Change: Crisis as Opportunity* -- an appendix to the *New Renaissance* book -- was the focus for calls by contributors for rendering into song, following the inspiration of the renowned *Biochemists Songbook* (1982) to facilitate comprehension of complex metabolic cycles. The appropriateness of this approach was recognized by [Franz Josef Radermacher](#) (FAW - [Institute for Applied Knowledge Processing](#), Ulm) in launching a book (*Balance or Destruction: eco-social economy as the key to global sustainable development*, 2002), in association with the [Global Marshall Plan Initiative](#), accompanied by a CD of 12 songs of *The Globalization Saga: Balance or Destruction* (2004).

6. Who emerges from a New Renaissance?

As a birthing process, for which "what" may be inappropriate, "who" is it that is reborn as a new "identity"? Possibilities might include:

- a form of Messiah consistent with the prophecies of various religions -- however their followers then dispute the manifestation
- some kind of *Zeitgeist*, a new spirit of civilization -- an "upgrade" on what has been valued in the past Renaissance
- collective rebirth of a group, as implied by claims regarding "cultural creatives", the superintelligent ("[Indigo children](#)", etc), or a "spiritual hierarchy"
- personal rebirth (*Varieties of Rebirth: distinguishing ways of being born again*, 2004)
- emergence of a more evolved species of humanity, patterned on the Neanderthal-to-Cro-Magnon transition (*Authentic Grokking: Emergence of Homo conjugens*, 2003)

Potentially much more intriguing, in the face of a mandala-like orifice as a "birth channel", is whether the New Renaissance involves:

- a. "something" emerging from that orifice, to which humanity will then be called upon to relate -- as conventionally to leaders and new beliefs
- b. humanity being drawn into, and through, that orifice as a strange attractor -- as into a "black hole", or in media representations of a "stargate"
- c. a mysterious combination of (a) and (b), of "coming out" and "going in" -- namely a both-and situation beyond conventional binary understanding

It is the focus on modality (b) which highlights the challenge of whether there is "room for all" in the process -- or whether it may be a case of "no room at the in", at the "entrance".

Framed in terms of "who", rather than "what" (as above), there is also the implication of a new sense of identity, perhaps transcending conventional definition (*Being What You Want: problematic kataphatic identity vs. potential of apophatic identity?* 2008). This might transcend and reframe current senses of identity, whether focused on the individual or on community. Part of the challenge may be communicating the nature of any richer sense of identity. In that respect the comment by [Kenneth Boulding](#) is relevant with regard to the use of metaphor:

Our consciousness of the unity of the self in the middle of a vast complexity of images or material structures is at least a suitable metaphor for the unity of a group, organization, department, discipline, or science. If personification is only a metaphor, let us not despise metaphors - we might be one ourselves. (*Ecodynamics: a new theory of societal evolution*, 1978).

7. Why a New Renaissance?

Beyond the question of "where" the New Renaissance may happen, as discussed above, there is the question of "from where" the collective sense of an impending New Renaissance emerges. This helps to respond to "why".

Responses might then derive from the following, singularly or in some combination:

- a characteristic of the arguments and stories in the literature on the 2012 phenomenon. It is then seen to be the natural culmination

of cycles of time with which various prophecies may be associated. Any historical sense of this may simply be phrased as "it is time", however macrohistorical patterns may be sensed (*Engaging Macrohistory through the Present Moment*, 2004) .

- a combination of nostalgia for imagined past times, nourished by myth, and a sense of frustration with the increasing crises of the present
- a sense of social, cultural, political or technological convergence on some form of [singularity](#)
- a sense that the integrative capacity of comprehension to encompass the rapidly developing challenges of governance and daily life may be reaching a form of memetic singularity (*Emerging Memetic Singularity in the Global Knowledge Society*, 2009)
- a sense that the challenges of resources and governance will soon result in a crisis of crises -- a conjunction of circumstances for which a New Renaissance will be the necessary resolution

New insights into the nature of time emerge from the considerations of the mathematical physicist [Roger Penrose](#) (*Cycles of Time: an extraordinary new view of the universe*, 2010). He suggests that the ultimate fate of the current accelerating, expanding universe can actually be reinterpreted as the "big bang" of a new one. This pattern might be fruitfully applied to civilizational cycles and systems, suggesting that "why" is a consequence of the very acceleration of the pace of life in any one civilization, its associated expansion, and various manifestations of exhaustion (shortage of resources, accumulation of waste, etc), necessarily engendering a form of renaissance. In earlier works Penrose has expounded controversial theories regarding the relationships between [physics and consciousness](#) (*The Emperor's New Mind: concerning computers, minds, and the Laws of Physics*, 1989; *Shadows of the Mind: a search for the missing science of consciousness*, 1994).

Surviving cycles: Renaissance following Remorse?

Any cyclic perspective brings into focus the "New Death" which presumably is associated in some way with any "New Renaissance", the latter displacing what came before. Whilst "[renaissance](#)" has many valuable **synonyms**, this plethora is matched by a dearth of **antonyms**. There is therefore a case for using "[remorse](#)" as the appropriate antonym in this context -- being of similar form with related connotations. It holds the regret for the declining cycle and even fruitful associations to the [postpartum depression](#) following birth. Particularly valuable is the quality of "remorse" inherent in the multitude of regretful communications regarding the failures of humanity in this period (extinction of species and languages, degradation of the environment, etc). As a term "remorse" is also etymologically (but incorrectly) suggestive of "*mourir*" and "*re-mourir*". Appropriately, "remorse" is etymologically derived from "*mordre*", meaning to bite (back) -- perhaps suggestive of both "biting the dust" and recycling.

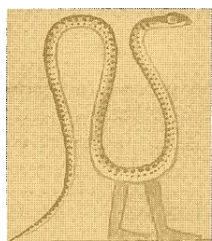
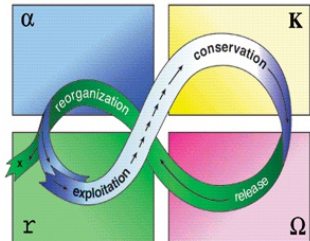

Within the context of the birth-death metaphor, it is appropriate to enrich reflection by associating the civilizational crises that humanity has narrowly survived -- such as world wars and nuclear incidents -- with the so-called [near-death experiences](#) reported by individuals as anticipating the experience of death. A global near-death experience has been variously articulated by Ken Ring (*Heading Toward Omega*, 1985) and Michael Grosso (*Experiencing the Next World Now*, 2004).

It is even more appropriate to note that the launch of the *New Renaissance* book occurred, coincidentally, on the occasion of an unprecedented exhibition at the British Museum of the 3500 year old Egyptian *Book of the Dead* -- translated as *The Book of Going Forth by Day*. Appropriate to a sense of cyclicity (also embodied in the [Ouroboros](#)) is one verse regarding the Sa-Ta serpent, or Sa-en-Ta ("Son of Earth"), disseminated (by *Guardian-Science*, 3 November 2010) immediately prior to the launch of *A New Renaissance*:

*I am the Sata-snake, long of years, who sleeps and is reborn each day.
I am the Sata-snake, dwelling in the limits of the earth.
I sleep and am reborn, renewed and rejuvenated each day.
(Book of the Dead, chapter 87)*

This is appropriately consistent with the myth of the [Rainbow Serpent](#), central to the atemporal [Dreamtime](#) of Aboriginal Australia (see also [Serpent-Symbolism](#) and renewal in *Wikipedia*). Related implications have been explored by [Jeremy Narby](#) (*The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the origins of knowledge*, 1999; *Psychotropic Mind: the world according to Ayahuasca, Iboga, and Shamanism*, 2010).

There is a case for recognizing the possibility that such understanding may hold insights into the paradoxical complexity now associated with the [Mobius strip](#) and the challenge for humanity of navigating the [adaptive cycle](#), the strategic focus of the [Resilience Alliance](#), as described by [Thomas Homer-Dixon](#) (*The Upside of Down: catastrophe, creativity, and the renewal of civilization*, 2006).

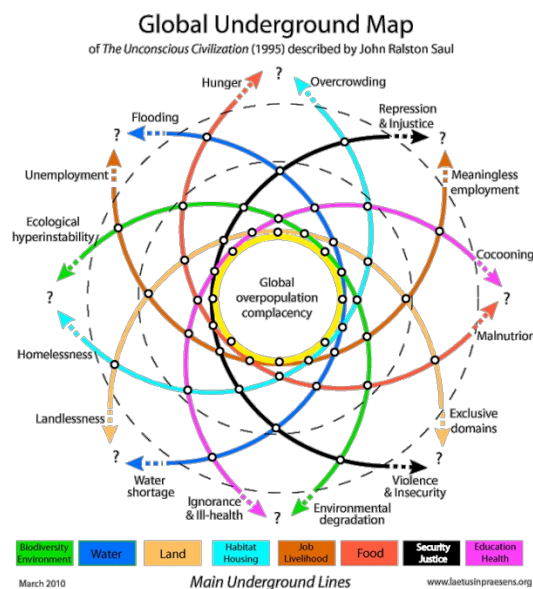
Indications of paradoxical complexity		
<i>Sata-snake</i> (Egyptian <i>Book of the Dead</i>)	<i>Adaptive cycle</i> (Resilience Alliance)	<i>Mobius strip</i> (paradoxically single-sided)
		

Together these may be understood as the cognitive challenge of engaging with what appears as "twistedness" (*Engaging with Questions of Higher Order: cognitive vigilance required for higher degrees of twistedness*, 2004; *Adaptive Hypercycle of Sustainable Psychosocial Self-organization*, 2010). It is appropriate to recall that management of "snake-like" twistedness was recognized in the first attempt at

European monetary cooperation in the 1970s, aiming at limiting fluctuations between different European currencies (known as the [snake in the tunnel](#)). So-called "snake-like" perturbations and oscillations are a preoccupation in achieving sustainable performance of toroidal nuclear fusion reactors on which energy hopes for the future are placed -- and may well constitute a vital metaphor for the emergence of integrative thinking (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006). Rather than following a "straight and narrow" direction in the pursuit of objectives, the "twists" and "turns" characteristic of national and global policy also merit consideration in such terms. More concretely, highway layout and traffic flow now require extensive use of complex curving intersections. A striking dynamic model of a "snake" encircling the globe is the Great Ocean Conveyor -- the [thermohaline circulation](#) of ocean currents on which environmental sustainability is heavily dependent.

The integration of feet (polarity) and coils (sinusoidal cycle) in the Sata image is a very creative representation of the strategic challenge of enabling and navigating the New Renaissance (*Walking Elven Pathways: enactivating the pattern that connect*, 2006). Given the other images above, appropriately the traditional commentary regarding the serpentine form and its transformations could be read from a topological perspective (*Book of the Dead*, ch. 87, Utt. 230 and 395). The charged associations of "Sata" with death and a "netherworld", subsequently echoed by the Abrahamic religions, emphasize the challenge of engaging with such otherness, as separately explored (*Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld*, 2010). The associations of "Sata" with the Earth, and the darkness of that netherworld, can be understood as a recognition (in psychological terms) of the spherical nature of the globe on whose other "side" the light does not shine -- during part of the cycle. In this sense the *Book of the Dead* indicates the transformative learnings to be obtained from the dark (*Enlightening Endarkenment: selected web resources on the challenge to comprehension*, 2005).

The psychoactive nature of the challenge can be recognized in the political "hot potatoes" on which debate is systematically avoided (*Overpopulation Debate as a Psychosocial Hazard: development of safety guidelines from handling other hazardous materials*, 2009). In this sense there is this a case for mapping the collective cognitive "netherworld", as in the following, developed in an earlier exercise (*Mapping the Global Underground*, 2010).



In the light of the argument of Goonatilake (1999), a more appreciative understanding of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, and of its equivalents (such as the Tibetan *Bardo Thodol*), might see them as an effort to communicate the various transformations appropriate to the navigation of chaotic, post-crisis, civilizational collapse. Then "death" can be associated with crisis or regime change -- as with the death of any one pharaoh. The issue is what psychosocial skills are required to navigate the chaos which humanity may now face. The indicated transformations into various contrasting species of animals might be considered as metaphoric indicators of possibilities -- as with changing gears in a vehicle. The four-fold presentation of the adaptive cycle is reminiscent of the thinking of [integral theory](#) behind the AQAL set of quadrants, for example. Different cognitive "habits" may need to be donned to travel each of the "underground lines" above -- and to "circulate" around the underground system..

The challenge is usefully explored in various science fiction scenarios focusing on the comprehension of high degrees of complexity calling for decision-making under operational conditions (as is the case in global management). The problem is that of piloting or navigating a spacecraft through "hyperspace" or "sub-space", as imagined in the light of recent advances in theoretical physics and mathematics. Because of the inherent complexity of such environments, writers have explored the possibility that pilots and navigators might choose appropriate metaphors through which to perceive and order their task in relation to qualitative features of that complexity -- for example, flying like a bird, windsurfing, swimming like a fish, tunneling like a mole, etc. The mass of data input derived from various arrays of sensors, and otherwise completely unmanageable, is then channelled to the pilot in the form of appropriate sensory inputs to the nerve synapses corresponding to his "wings" or his "fins". Perception through the chosen metaphor is assisted by artificial intelligence software and appropriate graphic displays. The pilot switches between metaphors according to the nature of the hyperspace terrain. Such speculations do at least stimulate imagination concerning a possible marriage between metaphor and artificial intelligence in relation to governance. Being a "snake" is but one option, as in the *Book of the Dead*. Such cognitive nimbleness is reminiscent of that presented in the *The Book of Five Rings* -- a classic martial arts text.

Such speculation is also fruitful in the light of the arguments by various authors for embodying the "external" features of nature as a clue

to psychosocial survival (Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: a necessary unity*, 1979; Henryk Skolimowski, *The Participatory Mind: a new theory of knowledge and of the universe*, 1994; *David Abram, The Spell of the Sensuous: perception and language in a more-than-human world*, 1997). Enactivating and navigating any New Renaissance may call for such "embodiment", as argued separately (*Existential Embodiment of Externalities: radical cognitive engagement with environmental categories and disciplines*, 2009).

Questioning the appropriateness of questions

It might fruitfully be asked whether an array of questions -- the set of so-called "WH-questions" above -- is the appropriate mode through which to engage with a New Renaissance. Is the New Renaissance thereby framed as an "answer" -- precluding the need for further questions?

Paris Arnopoulos (*Nova Magna Moralia -- physics-ethics-politics: neoclassic concepts for postmodern times, Skepsis: a journal of philosophy and interdisciplinary research*, 2002-3) explores the possibility of a "neoethics" -- which might be said to be a characteristic of a New Renaissance. Following his earlier work, he emphasizes a trilateral pattern of global morality combining physics, politics and ethics: physics because nature is the underlying context of global existence, politics because culture is the highest creation of human evolution, and ethics because it provides the conjunction between the other two. Consequently, neo-macro-morals take into account ecology, ethology and sociology. As he notes, to demonstrate this thesis:

... our method combines the four Aristotelian causes with the W5 (**who, what, where, when, why**) journalistic questions by reformulating his material, formal, efficient and final causes as **what, how, who and why** of ethics. To these, for the sake of completeness, we have added five more questions as to **where, when, whether, whence and how much**. We believe that by answering these questions as correctly as possible, one can explain a subject matter as completely as possible. *[emphasis added]*

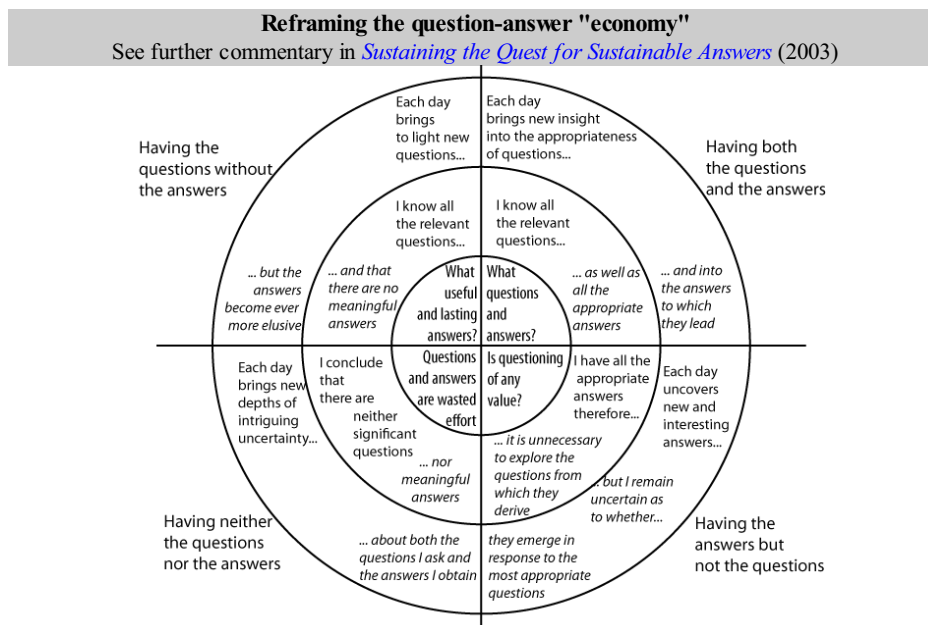
He concludes this exploration of an emerging neoethic:

The merging of ethical nurture, political culture, and physical nature performed here correlates consultation, negotiation and conservation as the means of balancing cooperation, accommodation and competition in these overlapping realms. Only such trilateral PEP [*Physics-Ethics-Politics*] balance respects morality, civility and ecology, a combination of which is indispensable to sustainable human development in the EGO [*Emerging Global Order*] of this new century.

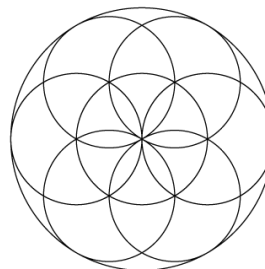
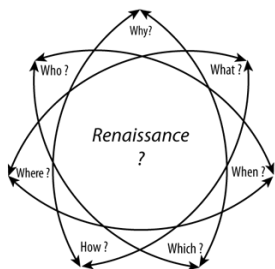
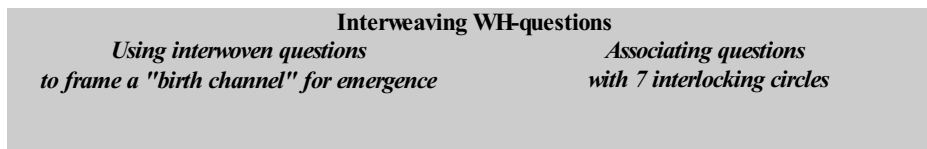
Whilst questions indeed have their place, and are vital to healthy critical thinking, the questioning posture can reinforce dysfunctional aspects of binary logic without enabling the transcendence of its limitations. Questions imply a requirement for answers, even encouraging a less than useful form of neediness in that respect. The dynamic also tends to preclude the fruitful dynamics associated with "not knowing" -- from which creativity, imagination and intuition emerge. And potentially any New Renaissance also?

Claims have been made that humanity knows all the necessary answers to address its condition. However this plethora of answers highlights the challenge of how answers are to be comprehended, whether they can be comprehended, and how they are to be meaningfully interrelated. The appropriateness of the New Renaissance may be inherently incomprehensible to many as currently conceived, especially in the light of its apparently requisite complexity (*Comprehension of Appropriateness*, 1986; *Dynamics of Symmetry Group Theorizing*, 2008; *Imagining the Real Challenge and Realizing the Imaginal Pathway of Sustainable Transformation*, 2007). It from this perspective that there is a vital need for enabling metaphors, whether of the simplest kind or from the frontiers of knowledge (*In Quest of Mnemonic Catalysts -- for comprehension of complex psychosocial dynamics*, 2007).

One (provocative) approach to reframing this situation is therefore as follows.



Another approach is to emphasize the interwoven nature of the questions in providing a context through which Renaissance emerges.



The left-hand diagram above suggests the form of a dynamic cognitive system, possibly to be understood as a resonance hybrid integrating the distinct modes of cognitive engagement associated with each question. It is the integrative emergent insight which would presumably enable the kind of cognitive transformation understood to be associated with a New Renaissance.

The possibility that the above set of WH-questions have some relation to the basic set of catastrophes has been separately explored (*Cognitive Feel for Cognitive Catastrophes: question conformality*, 2006; *Conformality of 7 WH-questions to 7 Elementary Catastrophes: an exploration of potential psychosocial implications*, 2006). This has been extended to the possibility of enabling a new understanding of integrative dialogue (*Interrelating Cognitive Catastrophes in a Grail-chalice Proto-model: implications of WH-questions for self-reflexivity and dialogue*, 2006).

The right-hand diagram above suggests ways of relating the set of questions to traditional patterns of interest to topology, such as [Celtic knots](#), [Borromean rings](#) and, in this particular case, to a detail of the [Flower of Life](#) symbol considered fundamental to sacred geometry across cultures. Both images offer associations to the *bi disk* of corresponding significance in Chinese culture, appropriately emphasizing with respect to the central orifice through which the New Renaissance emerges:

*It is the centre hole that makes it useful...
Therefore profit comes from what is there;
Usefulness from what is not there.
(Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching)*

New Language for a New Renaissance?

Arguably each new Renaissance gives rise to a new language. The essence of renaissance may be understood as the capacity to articulate (new thinking) in a new language.

The language of science may thus be understood to have emerged from that of the last Renaissance. What might then be the characteristics and requirements of a language appropriate to the New Renaissance? Arguably it will only be through the vehicle of that language that the significance of the New Renaissance can be appreciated. A sense of the nature of that language can potentially be conveyed by metaphor (*Metaphors as Transdisciplinary Vehicles of the Future*, 1991).

The possibility of an appropriate language for "The Making of Europe" has been explored by [Umberto Eco](#) (*The Search for the Perfect Language*, 1993). He summarizes the insights of philosophers, theologians, mystics and others for at least two millennia about the idea that there once existed a language, notably a "language of the birds", which perfectly and unambiguously expressed the essence of all possible things and concepts. He explores the history of that idea and of its profound influence on European thought, culture, and history.

In the light of the previous section, a case might be made for a language that reframed the elements of syntax -- including question and answer -- to offer new modes of cognitive engagement. Many possibilities are intimated by those non-western languages offering modes more akin to the unusual reflections of fundamental physics ([Zelda Kalian Newman](#), *Back for the future, forward for the past: tense and time in Modern Hebrew*, *Hebrew Studies Journal*, January 2009; [Rafael E. Núñez](#) and [Eve Sweetser](#), *With the Future Behind Them: convergent evidence from Aymara language and gesture in the crosslinguistic comparison of spatial construals of time*, *Cognitive Science*, 2006; [Ø. Dahl](#), *When the future comes from behind: Malagasy and other time concepts and some consequences for communication*, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 1995; [S. Fleischman](#), *The Past and the Future: are they coming or going?* *Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, 1982; [H. M. Klein](#), *The Future Precedes the Past: Time in Toba*. Word, 1987). Which way to the New Renaissance -- forwards or backwards?

Exploration of artificial and [constructed languages](#) point to possibilities, recognizing the challenges faced by Esperanto.

Myth and speculation offer other possibilities, as suggested by the mythical [Language of the Birds](#), common to the memory of many cultures. These include Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and shamanism, as indicated by [Philip Coppens](#) (*Tweet Tweet: the language of birds*). For some this esoteric language was used by the troubadours as well as being the language allowing for human communication with angels and deities. Separately the possibility that global use of Twitter can be understood as enabling the re-emergence of a form of this language (*Re-Emergence of the Language of the Birds through Twitter?*, 2010). Mythical understanding of

"angels" and "deities" can then be understood in terms of the challenging patterns of complexity to which the fundamental sciences are sensitive.

The ancient hieroglyphic language of the *Book of the Dead* has itself been described as the "language of the birds". Ironically Twitter messages ("tweets") could now be transcribed into that hieroglyphic language (see Hieroglyphs.net and [Online Hieroglyphics Translator](#)). This suggests the future emergence of a compressed idiographic language enabling more widespread comprehension of complexity and subtlety. Of course the hieroglyphic scripts could then be described as "tweeting Egyptian-style" -- 3,500 years ago.

However the ultimate test of any language appropriate to a New Renaissance is whether it sustains and enables humour as the capacity to embody unusual and unforeseen patterns (*Humour and Play-Fullness: essential integrative processes in governance, religion and transdisciplinarity*, 2005). There is even reason to suspect that, in the light of so-called **crazy wisdom**, the New Renaissance may emerge as the punch line of a cosmic joke -- or be best understood as such -- characteristic of the "laughter of the gods". Failure to "get" such a joke, even despite an "explanation", may be the essence of being "left behind". Echoes of this possibility are to be found in the nature of a Zen *koan* -- a necessarily subtle way of reframing the conventional dynamics of question and answer.

More problematic, but consistent with the sense of the "death" associated with any "rebirth", are the insights provoked by the [funniest joke in the world](#), otherwise known as the killer joke. This joke is simply so funny that anyone who reads or hears it promptly dies laughing. The question is what identity, or pattern of coherence, "dies" or disintegrates?

Conclusion

This particular reflection was triggered by an invitation to attend the book launch of *A New Renaissance* (London, 6th November 2010) as a member of the Scientific and Medical Network. After some effort and consideration of finances, the determining factor was that there was effectively "no room at the inn" (hence the subtitle of this document). As a metaphor, this might well be true for many on the occasion of a New Renaissance -- as with the purported constraint of 144,000 in heaven: *No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth* (Revelation, 14:3-5).

Much is now made of those then "left behind" -- as in an extensive series of books, exploring that theme from a Christian [dispensationalist](#), "end times", [pretribulation](#), [premillennial](#), [Christian eschatological](#) viewpoint (Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, *Left Behind*, 1995-2007). In that sense the above argument is written as a "left behind" reflecting on what might have been -- as for those who are unable to get a seat in the *Restaurant at the End of the Universe* (1980). The majority of humanity has of course already been "left behind" -- given the nature of progress and the increasing degrees of inequality. Few have access to the insights of *A New Renaissance*.

The reflection is in a mode which was used to consider the experience of reading a typically rich copy of the *Network Review* of the Scientific and Medical Network (*Musings on Information of Higher Quality*, 1996). That raised the related issue of how one engages with the plethora of more (and less) insightful texts, now widely available and generated in ever increasing quantity -- with relatively little effort by their authors to elicit the "pattern which connects", highlighted by Gregory Bateson as his central thesis:

The pattern which connects is a metapattern. It is a pattern of patterns. It is that metapattern which defines the vast generalization that, indeed, it is patterns which connect. (*Mind and Nature: a necessary unity*, 1979, p. 11)

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