



laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

9 May 2017 | Draft

Psychosocial Transformation by "Pill Pushing"?

Model-making, strategic advocacy and the myth of the "red pill"

-- / --

Introduction

"Is this a pill which I see before me?"

Varieties of "pill" for the delivery of "drugs"

Designer drugs -- and "designer pills"?

Academic model-making as "pill production"?

Values and principles as pills?

Bullets as pills -- bombs as mega-pills?

Ball games as framing pill games?

Pill promotion and pill pressure?

Placebos, "pill resistance" and addiction?

Choice of "pill": to be or not to be, individually or collectively?

Symbolism of the pill in choosing

Visualization in 3D of a trinity of connotations as a cognitive pill

References

Introduction

At the time of writing, a primary theme of the cult movie *The Matrix* (1999) offers pointers to an unusual way of reframing engagement with the current challenges of society. The movie highlights the choice between [the Red Pill and the Blue Pill](#), namely a choice between enabling knowledge, freedom and the sometimes painful recognition of reality -- in contrast with a blue pill reinforcing more-of-the-same, namely falsehood, security and blissful ignorance of illusion (Jenny C. Yip, *Red Pill or Blue Pill? What You Don't Know May Hurt You!* *Psychology Today*, 6 September 2012).

The "blue pill" course has long been celebrated in mythology and popular culture by [Lethé](#) as the spirit of forgetfulness and oblivion -- from which [lethargy](#) so appropriately derives.

The [2017 presidential campaign in France](#) echoes the divisive characteristics which emerged as a consequence of the [2016 presidential campaign in the USA](#), or from the debates regarding [Brexit in the UK](#). The populations are effectively implicated in the choice between two "pills" -- the "My Way" articulated by each of the opposing candidates in the final round.

There is however an extra twist to that offered by the science fiction movie, namely that for each candidate their own strategy is framed as the "red pill" of painful reality necessary for fruitful remedial change. The strategy proposed by the opposing candidate is then reactively framed as a "blue pill" reinforcing the dangerous illusion of complacent continuity and inappropriateness. The "red pill" is necessarily framed as a "radical" solution calling for a courageous degree of daring -- in contrast with the "blue pill" more readily associated with the cowardly, complacent. and potentially dangerous.

The argument is repeatedly made that these are complex times, rendered more complex by the nature of claims and counter-claims in a new post-truth era of [fake news](#) in which all authority is called into question -- including proponents of any "My Way". The "pill metaphor" has the advantage of offering further insight in that physical and psychological health is now readily understood as dependent on a balanced course of medication. Many consider it reasonable to take one or more pills a day (*Medicine Use Statistics*, Eurostat, 2014; Michael Zennie, *Americans consume eighty percent of the world's pain pills as prescription drug abuse epidemic*, *Daily Mail Online*, 10 May 2012). Potentially more relevant is the manner in which "health" is defined to encompass the need for recreational drugs, performance drugs, and complementary medicines -- with relatively little recognition of deleterious ["side effects"](#).

In exploiting the metaphor, the point to be stressed is the widespread familiarity with the use of a "pill" for remedial purposes -- as well as the manner in which any problematic resistance to "health" may be framed as a negative "poison pill". Advocated solutions to the problems of society can thus be explored as "red pills" -- with the psychological transformation that any [paradigm shift](#) may imply -- a pill for every ill. Similarly the dramatic problems of society associated with failure to change can be seen in the light of the "blue pills"

which cultivate the illusion that all is reasonable, reinforcing comfort zones, cocooning and business-as-usual. Also intriguing is the sense in which values, to which reference is so frequently made as a source of inspiration, can themselves be understood through the pill lens.

Through echoing bullet points (made at the micro-level) and the global nature of the remedial transformation (variously sought at the macro-level), the familiar pill of medication offers a valuable lens through which to interrelate and comprehend a disparate variety of phenomena (typically confusing in their totality).

The following discussion is a further development of points previously made (*Remedies to Global Crisis: "Allopathic" or "Homeopathic"? Metaphorical complementarity of "conventional" and "alternative" models*, 2009; *Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society: speculations towards the development of cures and preventive measures*, 2008).

Ironically it raises the question as to whether the online *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* could also be explored as an *Encyclopedia of Blue and Red Pills* -- a "mega-pill" in its own right?

"Is this a pill which I see before me?"

Eradicating the other: Shakespeare's widely cited phrase from the play *Macbeth* takes the form "*Is this a dagger which I see before me...*" (*Macbeth*, II, i, 33). Through the image of the dagger the phrase gives focus to the situation in which Macbeth has made his strategic decision to kill the King and take the crown as his own. Inspired in part by his own ambition, the decision to murder Duncan is aided by the prophecies of the witches as well as the insistent urging of his wife.

Rather than a "dagger", the question here is whether choice in many circumstances is now more appropriately framed in terms of a "pill". For Macbeth the use of the dagger resolves the problematic situation in which he finds himself. Does a pill, metaphorically understood, now serve a similar purpose -- more broadly framed? What desirable "killing" is achieved by use of a pill -- whether as a pain-killer, a remedy, or otherwise?

For presidential candidates, winning supposedly now empowers them to eradicate all that their opponents represent (*Eradication as the Strategic Final Solution of the 21st Century?* 2014). The loser adopts a mode of resistance to the initiatives of the winner. Each becomes a "poison pill" for the other.

Bluntly stated, given the myth of the [silver bullet](#), and increasing strategic recognition of [wicked problems](#), **what change initiative cannot now be readily framed as a "pill"**? More particularly, so framed, can the nature of the widespread quest for change be usefully envisioned otherwise?

Being the change: How does the use of any "pill" relate to the much-cited injunction to *Be The Change You Want To See In The World*? Although misleadingly attributed as such to Mahatma Gandhi, the quote is effectively a summary of his insight. Carrying significance potentially more relevant to the challenge of the times, the actual wording (as [clarified](#) by Joseph Ranseth, 27 August 2015) was:

We but mirror the world. All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change.

Controversially, are suicide bombers to be understood as embodying this insight -- however readily framed as perverse by others seen as part of the problem? Can they be recognized as effectively reframing themselves as a "pill" through which to remedy the ills of the world as they perceive them? The pill metaphor may offer a new lead into the understanding of violence, whether celebrated in *Macbeth* or otherwise (*Global Incomprehension of Increasing Violence*, 2016)

Metaphorical implications: The **conventional dependence on "pills", and on the purveyors of them, usefully evokes questions through which "otherwise" might be more fruitfully explored.** Such dependence gives focus to consideration of metaphorical analogues of [Big Pharma](#), the associated [Big Pharma conspiracy theories](#), the massive worldwide trade in [illegal drugs](#), as well as the widely publicized scandals of [doping in sport](#).

The red-and-blue pill metaphor also offers a remarkable characterization of the simplistic binary approach currently favoured in strategic decision making -- strangely contrasting with any understanding of a balanced course of medication. Contrasting colours are of course characteristic of the political parties promoting consumption of their particular "pills".

A richer, and potentially requisite variety of "colours" is highlighted by the metaphors exploited by [Edward de Bono](#) (*Six Thinking Hats*, 1985; *Six Action Shoes*, 1991; *Six Value Medals*, 2005). These can be usefully understood as richer sets of complementary "pills", although he offers a more general insight of relevance to reframing any strategic focus on a singular "pill" (*Six Frames For Thinking About Information*, 2008).

Beyond current "pill obsession" as the cognitive key to remedial response, does pill medication imply an unexplored possibility of a "remedial language" for the future -- a remedial [pattern language](#)? (*In Quest of a Strategic Pattern Language*, 2008).

Varieties of "pill" for the delivery of "drugs"

The primary connotation of pill and drug is of course as a medication taken to cure or ameliorate any symptoms of an illness or medical condition. Preventive medicine may also involve their use to mitigate against any possible future illness, rather than focusing on any existing or pre-existing diseases or symptoms. There is an extensive classification of [types of medicines](#) and diseases -- seemingly unmatched in the case of their collective psychosocial analogues.

Much use is made of [complementary medicines](#), typically deprecated by the pharmaceutical industry as lacking any basis in evidence.

These may be associated with an extensive range of [nutritional supplements](#). How are their psychosocial equivalents to be recognized?

There is considerable consumption of performance drugs, whether to facilitate occupational performance, cognitive performance, or performance in sport. Recognized as [performance enhancing substances](#), these include those associated with muscular capacity (as characterized by [doping in sport](#)), improvement of attentiveness and focus, [nootropics](#) or smart drugs ([cognitive pills](#) memory pills), and [pain-killers](#). In this connection, extensive use is made of [stimulants](#) and [sedatives](#), notably by executives, the military, and students (Darryl S. Inaba, et al., *Uppers, Downers and All Arounders: physical and mental effects of psychoactive drugs*, 1996; *Uppers and Downers: what influences patterns of drug use, and what does not*, *The Economist*, 7 April 2005).

Given worldwide concern with [depression](#), the role of [antidepressants](#) ("happy pills") is widely acknowledged. Corresponding concern with psychological [stress](#) and [anxiety](#), and with [attention deficit hyperactivity disorder](#), have enhanced the interest in the combination of both stimulants and sedatives.

As a further extension of the latter, there is of course considerable consumption of [recreational drugs](#), despite the associated controversies, most notably with respect to their [psychoactive effects](#). So framed, distinctions are made between depressants, stimulants, euphorians, hallucinogens, and inhalants.

Drugs have long been used to enhance spiritually oriented rituals and the experiences they offer. Traditional examples include [ayahuasca](#). More recent examples include [LSD](#) (*Psychedlic Drugs: the God Pill*, *The Economist*, 13 July 2006; Steven Spaliviero and Richard Shearsills, *Pills of God: God created man, man created Ecstasy*, 2015). The possibilities have been taken further through microdosing, as argued by James Fadiman (*Microdosing Psychedlics; Science and Sacraments: psychedelic research and mystical experiences*, 2013). Widely cited is the recognition that the ancient "immortals" of Taoist China used the term Golden Pill (Elixir) as a metaphor of the essence of true consciousness, fundamentally complete and illumined. One of the most powerful sects of China (*Jindan Jiao*) subscribed to the Doctrine of the Golden Pill

With respect to the more recognizable conditions to which they offer a remedy, all these are suggestive of "pills" in response to the subtle psychosocial conditions faced collectively by society on which individuals are required to make choices -- notably as voters. The many advocates of such remedies in all their forms can then be explored as "pill pushers" -- more specifically the politicians seeking election on the basis of a manifesto and electoral promises.

Understood as "[drug pushers](#)", "pill pushers" can be seen as including those encouraging others to take [illegal drugs](#) and who derive benefit from their supply. This offers a means of reframing consideration of the grooming of killers -- whether the [suicide bombers](#) considered characteristic of "[Islamic terrorism](#)" or those morally legitimated by "[Christian terrorism](#)" (notably under the aegis of [just war theory](#)).

An insightful contrast is offered by Colin Liddell between the red and blue pills and a third "black pill" which he associates with the nihilism he attributes to ISIS (*The Black Pill*, *Radix Journal*, 6 October 2015).

Designer drugs -- and "designer pills"?

As noted by *Wikipedia*:

A [designer drug](#) is a structural or functional analog of a controlled substance that has been designed to mimic the pharmacological effects of the original drug, while avoiding classification as illegal and/or detection in standard drug tests. Designer drugs include psychoactive substances that have been designated by the European Union as new psychoactive substances as well as analogs of performance-enhancing drugs such as designer steroids

Exploiting the metaphor, it can be argued that many innovative remedial proposals could be usefully explored as "designer pills". Whereas in the drug case, these offer a functional analogue with respect to effects on the individual, such proposals can be understood metaphorically as remedial responses to collective conditions deemed in need of transformative change of some kind. Gizem Saka asks the question *Red Pill/Blue Pill: what if pharmacology could change your economic preferences?* (*Psychology Today*, 29 March 2011)

Of interest is the manner in which drugs beyond those conventionally "controlled" by authorities are considered illegal. Similarly the "designer pills" can be seen as extending metaphorically the strategies of collective relevance beyond those conventionally approved. This offers a means of reframing both the strategies controversially embodied by Donald Trump and those characteristic of Islamic jihadism.

The problematic process of drug testing by authorities can be usefully compared with the controversial process of "testing" the "pills" advocated for psychosocial transformation -- whether consensual or otherwise. Indicators are offered by repressive measures justified by authorities in their response to belief systems deemed dangerous to the well-being of society. The countries where one of the Abrahamic religions is dominant offer only to evident indications of this pattern

The argument frames the question as to how people might best go about designing their own "pill" -- whether individually or collectively.

Academic model-making as "pill production"?

Model-making: The argument can be taken further in reframing the model-making proclivity of academia and think tanks -- especially in their use of the laboratory and workshop metaphors -- as characterizing the elaboration of "designer pills".

Under the guise of the "advancement of knowledge", there is clearly a sense in which such models are designed as "pills" to be presented to the collective and consumed by society as a means of its transformation. As might be expected, as with "designer drugs", those involved in the process aspire to benefits in terms of career advancement, recognition and awards -- epitomized by the Nobel Prizes.

Especially intriguing is the resemblance of such models to psychoactive substances. Arguably an implicit ambition is to transform the paradigms within which society collectively operates cognitively -- exemplified by aspirations to the elaboration of an ultimate [Theory of Everything](#) by which all will be subsumed. The academic process can of course be recognized as having been long-preceded by that of the various religions and their theological models -- each identified with a "Big Pill" which people are invited to swallow. Ironically the ambitions associated with such a cognitive "mega-pill" call for careful dissociation from those of a "[universal panacea](#)" -- with all its "snake-oil" connotations.

Reality distortion: Intriguingly, the models so engendered are effective to the extent that they are [reality distortion fields](#), as variously understood and described. As distortion fields, such "[reality bubbles](#)" could then be understood as "vehicles" within which (or on which) people can cognitively ride ([Christian de Quincey](#), *Reality bubbles: Can we know anything about the physical world?* *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 2008; *Reality Bubbles Consciousness and the Problem of Matter*, Center for Creative Inquiry, 2008). However, the term tends to be applied to imply a degree of local manipulation of reality whereas it could be more usefully understood in terms of the reframing offered through the promulgation of any innovative model, potentially conceived to be of universal application -- a "[killer app](#)"?

For those who subscribe to them, models can be recognized as [filter bubbles](#) created by personalizing results from search engines ([Eli Pariser](#), *The Filter Bubble: what the internet is hiding from you*, 2011). This trend has been further exacerbated by the recognition of the extent to which search engines amplify the dissemination of fake news (*Google accused of spreading fake news*, *The Guardian*, 6 March 2017; *Fake news a real problem for Google, Facebook*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 15 November 2016).

Universality? A related insight is offered by astrophysics in struggling to articulate how the universe is to be understood in universal terms -- rather than within the framework of an Earth-centric perspective. Whether in geocentric or heliocentric terms, or with respect to the galaxy within which the solar system is embedded -- or the systems of even larger scale -- all offer provocative metaphors for the challenge of reconciling a multiplicity of perspectives, as argued separately (*Towards an Astrophysics of the Knowledge Universe: from astronautics to noonautics?* 2006; *Entering Alternative Realities -- Astronautics vs Noonautics: isomorphism between launching aerospace vehicles and launching vehicles of awareness*, 2002).

So framed, the "universal truth" offered by any model is far more complex -- especially in terms of its dependence on time and the challenge of its comprehension, however simply it may be variously framed from different perspectives and other ("distant") frameworks. Especially valuable are the insights offered through gravity as a metaphor for the arrogance so characteristic of the promulgation of any singular model -- and its capacity to "bend the light", as separately argued (*Arrogance as an analogue to gravity -- equally fundamental and mysterious*, 2015; *Understanding models otherwise -- as centres of "gravity"*, 2015).

In the light of the general theory of relativity, promulgation and appreciation of models in psychosocial systems might well benefit from the much-cited insight of the theoretical physicist [John Wheeler](#): *Mass tells space-time how to curve, and space-time tells mass how to move*. Gravitational force can be explained by the warp that a massive object causes on the space around it -- as with a "massive model"? Other objects coming near this massive object are forced to follow a course dictated by the warp, their paths being distorted.

World-making: In that light, can the degree of distortion achieved by a pill (purportedly for remedial purposes) be fruitfully compared with the "comprehensive" nature of a ("massive") model -- and its implications in terms of psychosocial gravity? Also of relevance to this argument and its metaphors is the process of "world-making", as variously discussed ([Nelson Goodman](#), *Ways of Worldmaking*, 1978; [Nathalie Karagiannis](#) and [Peter Wagner](#), *Varieties of World-making: beyond globalization*, 2007). This has been further elaborated in the light of the construction of virtual worlds ([Mikhail Epstein](#), *The Art of World-Making*, *Philosophy Now*, 119 April/May 2017). The psychological implications have been highlighted by [Jerome Bruner](#) (*Self-Making and World-Making*, *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 1991).

"Pill-oriented modelling"? The abstraction and generalization through which models are constructed in an academic context highlight the extent to which there is a focus on "entities" and "objects". This shift in perspective recalls that achieved in the major paradigm shift to [object-oriented computer programming](#). Anticipated by such a technical development, this suggests the value of recognizing the extent to which models are constructed as assemblages of "pills" -- resulting in the elaboration of a form of mega-pill through their insightful configuration. A case for recognizing "pill-oriented modelling" as a paradigm in its own right?

Pills as intellectual property: Curiously the production of any model is typically associated with another fundamental issue characteristic of pill production, namely the question of copyright claimed with respect to it as intellectual property. Most models are disseminated under such constraints, especially the images by which they may be illustrated. Ironically, and however universal it claims to be in ordering reality, the model makes no reference to that constraint.

The framing in terms of ownership also merits consideration of the handful of global corporations controlling the media via which models are presented. As might be expected, the number is of the same order as that of the global corporations controlling the manufacture of pharmaceutical drugs.

Self-reference? Of related interest is the remarkable lack of self-reference on the part of model builders with respect to the models that they make. This gives rise to problems variously discussed ([Hilary Lawson](#), *Reflexivity: The Post-Modern Predicament*, 1985; [Douglas Hofstadter](#), *Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid*, 1979; *I Am a Strange Loop*, 2007).

In the academic environment there is little indication of how the originator of a model embodies it personally as a fruitful distortion of conventional reality. This is reminiscent of the silence concerning the use of pills by those who design them -- in contrast with the data assiduously collected regarding their claimed effects on others. This inadequacy might well be mitigated when with a "pill-oriented" approach to modelling.

Values and principles as pills?

As noted above, much is currently made by politicians of the values fundamental to society -- and the need to protect them against alternative values by which they are believed to be threatened. The [clash of civilizations](#) and the problematic relation between the [Abrahamic religions](#) exemplifies this dynamic -- for which Islamic terrorism is cited as a particularly deadly threat by those who choose to forget the consequences of Christian terrorism and its impact on other cultures. Clearly there is a sense in which each religion righteously perceives its own world view as a "red pill" with those failing to subscribe to it as having chosen the "blue pill" -- possibly even framed as the [left-hand path](#) and potentially "evil" (*Existence of evil as authoritatively claimed to be an overriding strategic concern*, 2016).

How might the subtlety of values be recognized in terms of "designer pills"? As noted above, Edward de Bono, provides one lead (*Six Value Medals*, 2005). Medals can be recognized as "designed" to embody values and ensure their commemoration, as discussed separately (*Quantum Wampum Essential to Navigating Ragnarok: thriving in crisis through embodying turbulent flow*, 2014).

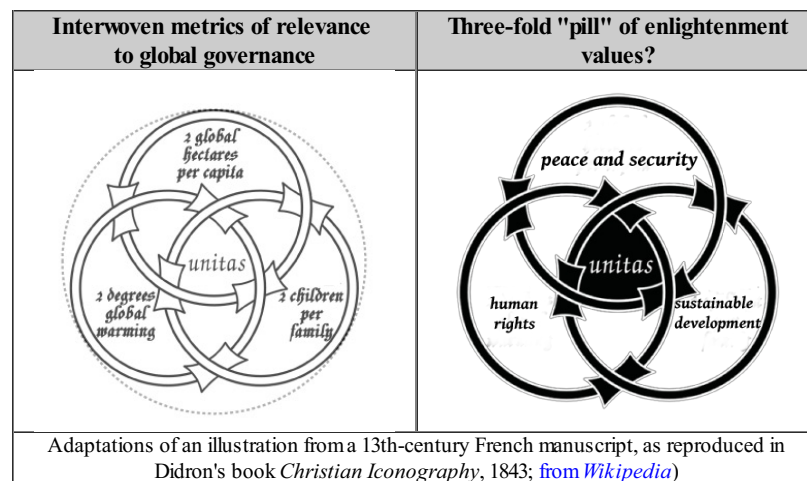
Especially interesting is the manner in which the transformative power of preferred values is asserted as non-negotiable and unquestionable. Can they be understood as a form of "preventive medication" -- simplistically designed to inhibit any radical paradigm shift?

Does conventional use of "love", "peace", "justice", "liberty" and "equality" merit exploration in such terms -- given the manner in which the terms are abused in society? (*Cultivating the Myth of Human Equality: ignoring complicity in the contradictions thereby engendered*, 2016). Questions to be asked include whether and by whom "love" is already framed as a "pill", as variously asked by some.

Rather than the static implication of any pill, is there a hidden dynamic to be recognized that is more consistent with its process implications (*Freedom, Democracy, Justice: Isolated Nouns or Interwoven Verbs? Illusory quest for qualities and principles dynamically disguised*, 2011). The static focus of strategic reports is indicative of this constraint (*Dynamic Transformation of Static Reporting of Global Processes: suggestions for process-oriented titles of global issue reports*, 2013).

Such a possibility could be explored further in the light of the recent declaration by the UN Secretary-General (*UN must reform to defend enlightenment values, secretary-general says, The Guardian*, 10 May 2017) pointing to the three separate pillars of the UN: peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. He asked whether these could continue to be addressed separately, calling for them to be combined into a single program -- one central to any strategy of reform.

Understood as "value pills", it could be argued that this implies a "multi-pill" complex as being fundamental to the UN, if it is to be recognized as the "big pill" through which the ills of global civilization are to be remedied. Speculatively, since these are otherwise in no way comprehended as integrated, the following images offer pointers. Their structure anticipates discussion below. The image on the right derives from a separate discussion (*Cognitive Cycles Vital to Sustainable Self-Governance*, 2009).



The red pill metaphor has been used as a focus for discussion of moral considerations (*The Red Pill of Moral Psychology, Pragmatic Education*, 1 October 2016). It has also provided a focus for courses (*Psychology of the Red Pill: decoding your mental matrix*, Udemy, March 2015).

Bullets as pills -- bombs as mega-pills?

Especially intriguing is the sense in which bullets can be recognized as pills -- as the ultimate remedies in intractable situations. Seemingly this is indeed how they are appreciated ("valued") and used -- as responses of last resort. There is thus considerable irony to use by the military of "pill-box" as a secure defensive position from which enemies can be safely targeted with bullets. There is further irony to the intimate relationship between such weaponry and the think tanks in which they are conceived (*"Tank-thoughts" from "Think-tanks": metaphors constraining development of global governance*, 2003).

Curiously use is made of the expression [bullet points](#) in the articulation and presentation of a strategic proposal -- for ease of comprehension. This suggests a sense of "bullet nesting" to the extent that the contextual proposal is to be recognized as a larger bullet -- potentially even extending to the design of [cluster bombs](#) as mega-proposals (admitting of no refusal).

In this light, point-making may be considered comparable to world-making (as mentioned above), but on a micro-scale. Such

considerations frame the sense in which each is now the target of a vast array of bullet points from which there is little protection. In cognitive terms, the design of "[bullet-proof vests](#)" is as yet in its infancy.

Of course, whereas proposals and models are readily articulated through bullet points, especially intriguing is the sense in which both may be recognized and experienced as a "bomb shell". As a mega-pill this offers the sense of an "information bomb" -- presumably to be an expected characteristic of [information warfare](#) (Paul Virilio, *The Information Bomb*, 2006). The releases of [US diplomatic cables via Wikileaks](#) from 2010 can be understood in such terms -- as a form of remedial response to a cultivated lack of transparency (characteristic of any "blue pill" framing)..

The quest for the radical global transformation of global society can clearly be explored in terms of the quest for a mega-pill and its design. One such form was proposed by [Peter Russell](#) as an "inner Manhattan project" -- comparable to the intensive program that unlocked the secrets of the atom and made them available for human use.

Arguably religions are continually in quest of an information bomb to transform society as a whole to their respective world views. Their scriptures, in the light of revelation, may well be understood as constituting such a "bomb" -- as with the predictions of the Abrahamic religions regarding the future return of some form of [Messiah](#) to resolve the problems of humanity.

Curiously the [full-spectrum global dominance](#) sought by the US military strategy may also be considered from this perspective -- as a mega-pill -- potentially rendering of secondary significance any dependence on nuclear weaponry (F. William Engdahl, *Full Spectrum Dominance: totalitarian democracy in the New World Order*, 2009; *U.S. Navy Information Dominance Roadmap, 2013-2028*, 2013). The tensions at the time of writing may suggest otherwise ([Eric Zuesse, America's Top Scientists Confirm: U.S. Goal Now Is to Conquer Russia](#), *Global Research*, 4 May 2017).

With recent use of the "[mother of all bombs](#)", what might be the expected impact of the "mother of all pills"? (*The Mother of All Bombs: How badly did it hurt IS in Afghanistan?* *BBC News*, 27 April 2017)

Ball games as framing pill games?

The physical similarity between a pill and the ball which is a focus of [ball games](#) (such as football, basketball, tennis or cricket), calls for exploration of how those games echo or frame the games people play with transformation pills. The possibility recalls the approach of [transactional analysis](#) ([Eric Berne](#), *Games People Play: the psychology of human relationships*, 1964).

What do people, whether individually or collectively, project onto the ball and its implication for "scoring" and "winning"? The question is especially intriguing in that the ball -- as a pill -- is not the property of either team alone, in contrast with the case of the pills promoted by competing candidates in political, academic or religious arenas.

Strategic prowess is associated with the ability to control the ball as it passes between teams. When there is a goal, success is indicated by imposing that strategy on the other through implanting the ball in the goal of the other -- with all the associated sexual connotations of such "scoring".

Game-playing is of course embodied in the eternally fascinating dynamics between men and women -- frequently framed by the language of ball games (even to slang use of "[balling](#)"). Relevant to this argument, the mysteriously polarizing world of the [Men's Rights Movement](#) and Men's Rights Activism (MRA), has been explored from a feminist perspective in an award winning documentary on gender equality, power and privilege (Cassie Jaye, *The Red Pill*, 2016). This follows from an appropriation of the red pill perspective by the MRA as described by Lana Wachowski (*The Delicious Irony of MRAs' Appropriation of "The Matrix's" Red Pill Film*, *FlavorWire*, 12 February 2015).

Game-playing is clearly fundamental to the process for men and women of choosing a partner -- a process in which "the pill" has acquired particular significance. Curiously the early [origins of democracy in Greece](#) made use of a process reminiscent of the red-blue-pill choice. Small coloured stones were used -- white for yes and black for no. Each voter placed one of these into a large clay jar -- subsequently opened for the counting of the "[ballots](#)".

A form of this traditional process continues to be used in secret ballots in secret ballot. A white ball or [ballot](#) constitutes a vote in support, with a black ball signifying opposition -- termed "[blackballing](#)". The process is now commonly applied to elections to membership of many clubs and similar institutions, such as Freemasonry and fraternities.

In terms of game-playing, the constraining binary characteristic of contemporary strategic discourse is of course appropriately called into question by the [rainbow coloured flag](#) variously favoured as representing the [LGBT pride](#) movement, the [peace movement](#), and the [international cooperative movement](#).

Pill promotion and pill pressure?

This exercise in reviewing strategic proposals through the familiar lens of medication, and its increasingly insistent promotion (purportedly in the interest of the "patient"). It can be further highlighted through religions and the beliefs they variously propose as essential to salvation. Given the relation explored here between drugs and pills, the association is readily reinforced through the assertion of Karl Marx that [religion is the opium of the people](#). With opium as a drug, this is strangely echoed by the injunction to consume the "elements" in the Christian ritual of the [Holy Communion](#): *Do this in remembrance of me*.

The sense of how the transformative power of the pill is associated with an elusive deity, is also noted by Frank J. Ninivaggi:

At times, the mind becomes ill and strives for cures -- one of which is psychotropic medication. People seeking psychiatric medication for themselves or their children often have the underlying fantasy that "God is in the pill"... Regrettable fallout is

thinking that mental problems, misbehavior, and learning differences can be "cured" by psychotropic drugs. The devil is in the side effects -- often never discussed by physicians. ("*God in a Pill?* *Psychology Today*, 24 September 2015)

In arguing against illicit drugs, the question has been more explicitly asked (*God in a Pill? Meher Baba on L.S.D. and The High Roads*, 1966). References to *The God Pill*, noted above in relation to psychedelic drugs, avoid the question implicit in the assertion by Marx. Is *God a Pill* -- as might effectively correspond to the behaviour and belief of some? Rather than being "in a pill", a Christian web site explores the more fundamental question *What if God were a pill you take once a morning?* (*Calvary Chapel South Bay*, 2012).

Aspects of the question have been taken up by "neomaculine men" with respect to the theme of this argument (Donovan Sharpe, *A Red Pill Perspective on the Existence of God, Return of Kings*, 1 December 2016). *The Matrix* as a movie has itself been reframed in religious terms (*The Matrix as Messiah Movie: a cyberpunk parable*).

Unfortunately the appreciation of Marx ignores the sense in which any political ideology may also constitute an opiate for some -- as with Communism or Capitalism. This general argument then invites recognition of the extent to which modern science itself is a form of mega-pill, whether to be appreciated as such at the present time or in the distant future. The possibility can be explored in relation to the quest for the collective consensus implied by discovery of any Theory of Everything (*The Consensus Delusion: mysterious attractor undermining global civilization as currently imagined*, 2011).

In the political sphere ironically, the promotion of a mega-pill can currently be recognized in the discourse of candidates for high office -- as in the French presidential campaign at the time of writing. Its global pill-like form is implied by the quest for **solidarity** -- and the expectation that the electorate is prepared (or can be "persuaded") to "sing from the same hymn sheet", through the "management of consent" (Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: the political economy of the mass media*, 1988).

Is "globalization" to be fruitfully explored as the effort of civilization to transform itself into a mega-pill -- as an inadvertent approach to self-healing?

It is curious that whilst politicians appeal for the solidarity on which their electoral mandate depends, those in the financial community appeal for the **liquidity** on which their profitability depends. In this implied evocation of the conventionally deprecated **classical elements** (earth, water, air, and fire), any corresponding need for "air" is loosely articulated in terms of the needs of the population for liberty and freedom -- whether freedom of movement or liberty of opinion -- namely a degree of freshness associated with the "**winds of change**" and a need to "breathe". The need for "fire" is again only loosely articulated -- perhaps best recognized in the value of excitement, innovation and creativity.

Placebos, "pill resistance" and addiction?

The role of **placebos** in assessing the effectiveness of remedies is well recognized and extensively studied (Fabrizio Benedetti, *Placebo Effects: understanding the mechanisms in health and disease*, 2014; Faith Brynie *The Placebo Effect: How It Works*, *Psychology Today*, 10 January 2012).

More intriguing is the extent to which various "pills", purportedly for the collective transformation of society, may also take the form of placebos (Allan McConnell, *Placebo Policies: feelgood measures for tough policy problems*, 2017; Jason Willick, *The Case for Placebo Politics*, *The American Interest*, 13 April 2017; Tyler Durden, *The (European) Placebo Effect*, *ZeroHedge*, 27 February 2012; Michael Emerson, *European Neighbourhood Policy: Strategy or Placebo?* CEPS #215, 2004; Michael Orsini, *Take Two and Vote in the Morning: reflections on the political placebo effect*, *The Journal of Mind Body Regulation*). Most obvious is the manner in which "pill pushers" -- whether political, academic or religious -- articulate remedial "pills" deliberately (or inadvertently) lacking in any "active" ingredient.

The art, so admirably exemplified by political manifestos, is to focus on the promises or claimed effects of the strategic pill by which hopes are evoked. These may well have adequate effect in their own right -- irrespective of the extent to which they are implemented. This is a concern with respect to fake news and propaganda. In marketing terms this is conventionally understood as "selling the sizzle rather than the steak". Any broken promises can be subsequently, set aside or blamed on the resistance of others -- those having opted for the "blue pill".

A related phenomenon in the case of drugs is that of **drug resistance** -- whether or not there is an active ingredient. In terms of the metaphorical argument here, people may become resistant to the promotional campaign supposedly designed to ensure their "buy-in". This is especially problematic in the case of **psychic numbing** in the face of human tragedy (*Starvation Imagery as Humanitarian Trump Card? Counterproductive emotional blackmail engendering worldwide indifference*, 2016).

Arguably the currently complete loss of credibility of conventional authorities -- as duly accredited "pill pushers" -- can be explored in terms of drug resistance. Their arguments no longer carry conviction -- especially in a period when such authorities are vigorous in their request for "concrete proof" on matters of concern to them (*10 Demands for Concrete Proof by We the Peoples of the World*, 2012).

Curiously matching "pill resistance" is an increasing degree of cognitive "pill addiction" -- presumably corresponding to that for the variety of drugs (as noted above). This could be explored in terms of the addiction to particular cultural memes as variously purveyed by "pill pushers" in their cultivation of religious, ideological and strategic agendas.

Reference to addiction in contrast to "pill pushing" usefully highlights in relation to "pills" of the otherwise well-defined contrast between **push-marketing and pull-marketing** of any product. To what extent is the consumption of psychosocial pills extensively determined by "pull" rather than "push"? The dynamic is evident in the case of religious hierarchies and believers.

Choice of "pill": to be or not to be, individually or collectively?

Electoral drama: This argument has been elaborated in response to the widely reported drama of recent elections reframed by popular dismay at traditional political processes -- as in the the USA, the UK and France. As usual, the electorate is required to make strategic choices, typically between options experienced as inadequate reflections of individual preferences. As strategic remedies to problematic social conditions. It is suggested here that the choices can be usefully explored as "pills".

Candidates, and their supporting parties, frame their preferred strategies ("My Pill?") as being unquestionably vital to the future collective health of their respective societies. Those of their opponents are framed as fundamentally dangerous to the health of the society and the well-being of its citizens. The pattern corresponds to that of Big Pharma in deprecating any use of alternative and complementary medicines>

It is in this sense that the metaphors offered by the red and blue pill offer a useful way of framing the existential drama -- especially when the democratic process is biased in favour of binary decision-making so as to exclude any reflection of a wider variety of perspectives.

Bitter pill? Any conventional electoral choice is increasingly a "bitter pill" to swallow. Arguably the implications of one or other strategy are usefully to be compared with the choice articulated by Shakespeare's *Hamlet: To be or not to be, that is the question* (Act III, Scene I). The choice in *The Matrix*, and as subsequently interpreted, is between:

- "red pill" option: *to be* in a new way, however painful the transition, namely *not to be* in the world as currently experienced and framed
- "blue pill" option: *to be* as one has always been and valued, namely *not to be* as implied by painful alternatives of questionable value

There are no other options on offer. Alternatives to that pattern of choice are systematically deprecated, echoing that process of choice whilst claiming to have considered all viable options (*Considering All the Strategic Options -- whilst ignoring alternatives and disclaiming cognitive protectionism*, 2009).

As noted, some commentators have argued for an extra "pill", better to frame the existential choice. However these do not reflect the richer insights variously associated with cybernetics and ecosystemic viability (or the 6-pill framework of Edward de Bono as mentioned above). Unfortunately, these also fail to engage with the logical challenges of a post-truth era as separately discussed (*Towards articulation of a "post-truth table"?* 2016).

Confidence: Also missing from current consideration is how better to evoke collective confidence and trust, now that processes of the recent past have demonstrated how unworthy of trust are those who claimed to be the epitome of trustworthiness. As it relates to the degree of confidence in any choice on offer, new approaches merit consideration (*Primary Global Reserve Currency: the Con? Cognitive implications of a prefix for sustainable confidelity*, 2011; *Varieties of Confidence Essential to Sustainability: surrogates and tokens obscuring the existential "gold standard"*, 2009).

There is a sense in which "monkeying" with confidence has itself become an art, as separately argued (*Monkeying with Global Governance: confidence artistry as "monkeying"*, 2011). Curiously, but perhaps appropriately, the quest for confidence may be intimately related to conquest (*Con-quest Aesthetically Reframed via the Concordian Mandala*, 2016).

Dilemmas? There is also a sense in which civilization is locked into strategic dilemmas, whilst ignoring the possibility of quadrilemmas and other patterns of choice, as discussed separately (*Configuring Strategic Dilemmas in Intersectoral Dialogue*, 1992; *Sustainability through the Dynamics of Strategic Dilemmas*, 2005; *Reframing the Game of Strategic Dilemmas: a 12-fold interplay of possibilities of otherwise*, 2009).

Symbolism of the pill in choosing

Medication: Physicians have been slow to recognize the intangible implications of the dispensation of pills. Clarification of these implications from multiple perspectives is offered by Jonathan M. Metz and Michelle Riba (*Understanding the Symbolic Value of Medications: A Brief Review. Primary Psychiatry*, July 2003):

However, physicians are perhaps less attuned to the functions these medications perform as symbols -- metaphors, similes, icons, and other abstract properties that complicate thinking of pharmaceuticals simply in terms of hard-and-fast facts. Symbolically speaking, medications convey a host of connotative implications that are difficult to recognize, let alone to quantify.... Scholars from disciplines as far reaching as psychoanalysis, business and marketing, and cultural and media studies have begun to explore the complex connotations accrued by selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), mood stabilizers, and other drugs commonly prescribed by psychiatrists. These studies provide evidence that psychotropic medications have symbolic valence at the contextual, economic, and cultural levels.

The authors stress that psychotropic medications have been shown to demonstrate symbolic properties at the contextual, economic, and cultural levels. This is leading to understanding of these medications as transitional objects, commodities, metaphors, and icons.

Transitional objects (or comfort objects) are defined as "not me" possessions, imbued with meaning because they symbolize a transition from dependency to autonomy.

Symbolic significance has been most clearly evident in that attributed to "the pill" with respect to birth control and family planning -- and empowering women with respect to control of their bodies. Corresponding to the contraceptive for women has been the use of pills to

remedy erectile dysfunction in men.

Contraception and aphrodisiac: The fundamental importance of such remedies is increasingly obvious through the manner in which wildlife is endangered disastrously in the quest for aphrodisiacs -- and the significance implicitly attached to that need.

Curiously it could be argued that issues of sexual intercourse centre on dissemination by the male of the sperm and its fruitful reception by the woman. This dynamic has long been fundamental to psychoanalysis. With respect to this argument and paradoxically, the sperm may be usefully understood as a "pill" of the most fundamental nature (as implied above with respect to the game-playing dynamic). Its collective significance invites exploration with respect to its implications with respect to globalization (*Engendering Invagination and Gastrulation of Globalization*, 2010).

Controversially, the very quest for a child may well be framed by some as a "pill" whereby potentially dysfunctional relationships with a partner may be mitigated and remedied. With birth so framed, it is appropriate to explore death as the ultimate "bitter pill" to be "swallowed" by many. That nexus of connotations is rendered more complex by the controversy associated with access to a [suicide pill](#) - especially given the mysterious cognitive dynamics of a [suicide bomber](#).

Understood as a "pill", the fruitful dissemination of sperm is variously framed and perceived as the ultimate remedy for male-female relationships in building a family. Such dissemination can also be recognized as strangely related to the manner in which global society is endangered by overpopulation. The dissemination context also suggests how the significance of "birth" lends itself to a three-fold metaphorical reframing, with the complementary sense of "seed" (notably "seed thoughts" and "seeding initiatives") and of "egg" (prefigured by the form of a pill). However these are recognized, notably as traditional symbols, each potentially contributes to transformation of its context. Both "seeding" and "egging on" hold characteristics of "pill pushing".

Traditional symbols: Recognition of symbols relevant to this argument may also be sought in cultural traditions. Potentially to be framed as a remedial "pill", for example, is the focus of the Judaic tradition on the ritual sacrifice of the [Red Heifer](#) by the [Temple Institute](#) in Israel -- with all that is expected to enable. Offering further implications for insight into functioning of a pill, that focus is cited as the prime example of a *chok*, or biblical law, for which there is no apparent logic (Ed Greenstein, *Is it Possible to Make Sense of a Biblical Ritual (Chok), The Torah*). As noted above, more generally, any expectation of the return of a Messiah (or equivalent) can be so framed.

Any myth, through the imaginative transformation it evokes, might well be understood as a "pill" -- however its remembrance may be deprecated by authority. As with the above-mentioned assertion by Marx regarding religion as an opiate, the argument might be extended to encompass myth -- as deprecated by science.

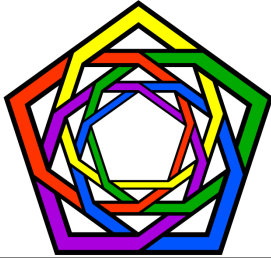
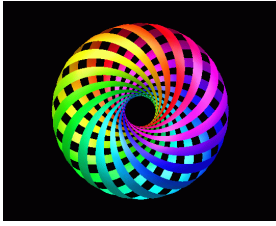
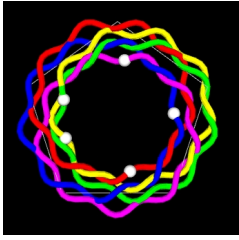
Mention was made above of the Greek myth of [Lethe](#), a goddess appropriately who might now be represented by the "blue pill" of *The Matrix* -- itself a modern exercise in myth-making. In its association with forgetfulness and oblivion, the goddess in question was also identified with one of the five rivers of Hades, of current relevance (*River Lethe in popular culture*). The other four rivers being the [Styx](#), the [Acheron](#) (the river of sorrow), the [Cocytus](#) (the river of lamentation) and the [Phlegethon](#) (the river of fire).

This examples suggests that mythology may prove useful in articulating in greater detail the symbolism of a "pill" and the dynamics of its functionality -- beyond the simple connotations of its roundness and globality.

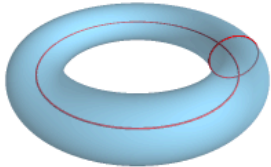

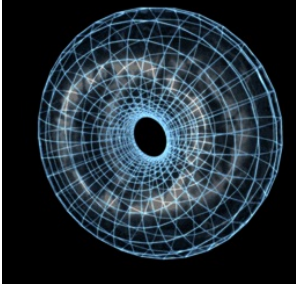
One possibility is suggested by the fivefoldness attributed to the organization of Hades. This could be seen as represented by the Discordian Mandala, as discussed separately with respect to a "concordian" equivalent (*Concordian Mandala as a Symbolic Nexus: insights from dynamics of a pentagonal configuration of nonagons in 3D*, 2016; *Con-quest Aesthetically Reframed via the Concordian Mandala*, 2016). This was inspired by the social chaos purportedly addressed by the so-called [Discordian Mandala](#). The mandala is described in the controversial *Principia Discordia*, elaborated by [Greg Hill](#) with [Kerry Wendell](#), as the provocative doctrinal manifesto of [Discordianism](#). It was originally published under the title *Principia Discordia or How The West Was Lost* (1965). The name was intended to signify *The Principles of Strife*.

Visualization in 3D of a trinity of connotations as a cognitive pill

As an exercise in imagining the 5-fold complexity of a "pill", the Discordian Mandala, is presented below in conjunction with both a representation in 3D of a flat torus in a 3-sphere, and with the screen shot of an animation of possible dynamics of a 5 coil configuration. The latter resulted from a previous exercise (*Visualization in 3D of Dynamics of Toroidal Helical Coils in quest of optimum designs for a Concordian Mandala*, 2016).

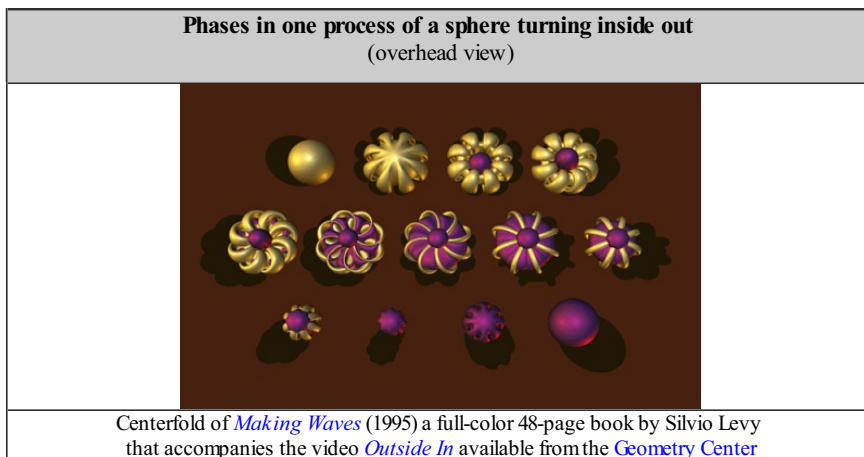
Discordian Mandala	Flat Torus in the Three-Sphere	5 coil configuration
		
Reproduced from Wikipedia	Reproduced from Thomas Banchoff's Project List	Variants: interactive X3D or VRML ; video MOV

The point to be emphasized -- as a "pill" in its own right -- is that the challenge for the imagination is one of dimensionality. The animation on the left (below) was part of a process of exploring the three-dimensional dynamics of a "pill". That included the following animations.

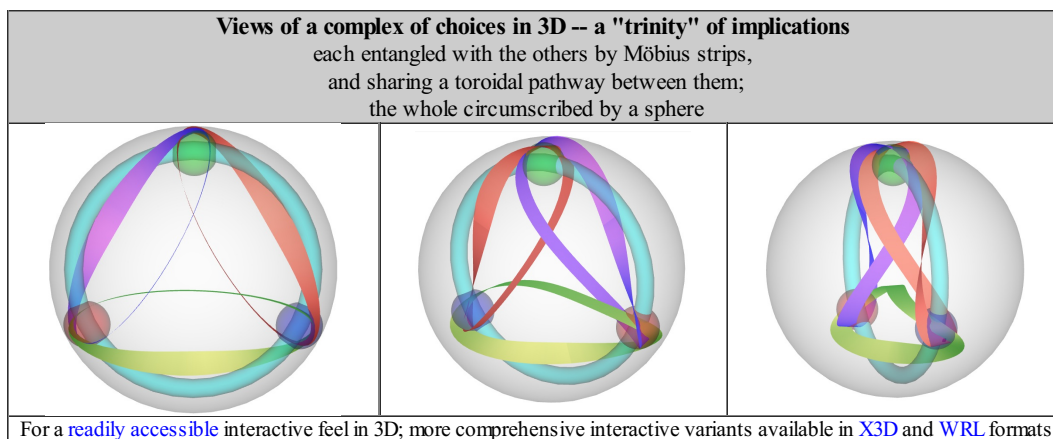
Animations of toroidal complexification		
Torus-to-Sphere transformation	Trefoil knot	Clifford torus
		
Made by User:Kieff	Animations reproduced from <i>Wikipedia</i>	Made by Jason Hise

The animation on the left is especially valuable through the surprising continuity of the relationship established between the topological extremes of the sphere (most reminiscent of a conventional pill) and a torus (most reminiscent of the "trip" which experience of a pill may offer). Two ways of transforming a sphere into a torus are illustrated by Douglas DeCarlo and Jean Gallier (*Surface Morphing: Topological Evolution of Surfaces*. In: *Graphics Interface '96*, pp. 194-203, 1996). Of interest is how people experience the shift between an "oceanic experience" and that of a "trip" -- given the framing offered by that animation.

Paradox and paracycling? The requisite complexification of the dynamic symbolism of a "pill" -- in terms of its cognitive implications -- may be taken further by embodying a degree of paradox appropriate to the relationship between the objective and subjective implications of any "pill". The challenge can be provocatively presented in terms of the inversion of a sphere -- the globe -- namely turning it "inside-out", as discussed separately (*World Introversion through Paracycling: global potential for living sustainably "outside-inside"*, 2013). The latter included the following illustration together with a discussion of the paradoxical implications of the *Möbius strip* (*Paracycling: towards a terminological and visual clarification*, 2013).



Designing a form of "pill" of requisite experiential complexity: The above considerations suggest that a more fruitful understanding of the cognitive implications of a pill could be derived from an appropriate combination of the transformational dynamics of their mutually entangled topologies -- in 3D or 4D. The following is a design exercise to that end. The image in 3D is based on a triangular arrangement of interlocking Möbius strips through which a torus is threaded. The whole is circumscribed by a sphere.



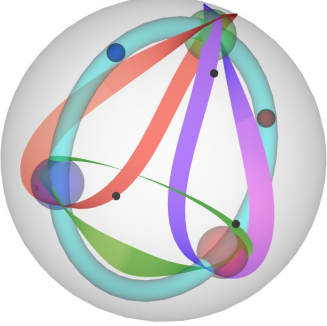
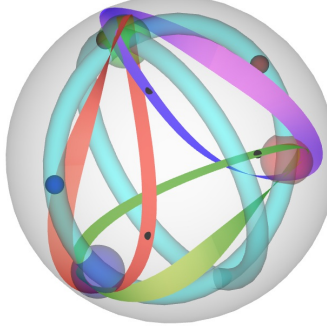
The elements of the design tentatively offer a means of holding and interrelating the cognitive experience of a pill and the choices implied:

- the *smaller spheres*, are indicative of the distinctively coloured pills of any choice -- with addition of a hypothetical "third option" to break out of the binary constraint and take account of any **Third Way**, and the challenging **fallacy of the excluded middle**.
- *Möbius strips* are used to relate each pair of options, indicative of the "alogical", paradoxically intimate experience associated with

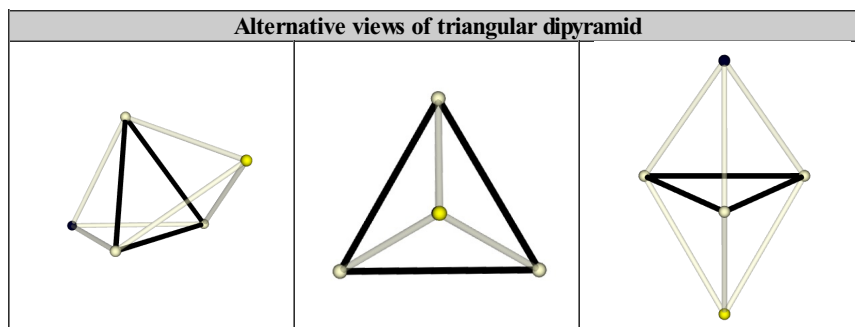
that relationship and their reconciliation in the process of choice -- a "cognitive twist" involving a degree of surprise in the conversion from one option to another through inversion of inside and outside. This may encompass experience of the process of [enantiodromia](#).

- the *toroidal tunnel* is indicative of the cognitive journey" or "trip" offered by any pill -- with the tunnel-like implications of any cycle of [eternal return](#), as with its description by T. S. Eliot: *We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time* ([Little Gidding](#), 1942)
- the *circumscribing sphere* holds the cognitive experience of the [oceanic feeling](#) typically enabled by a psychoactive pill -- also recalling the experiential bubble or [cocoon](#) in which people are obliged and seek to live

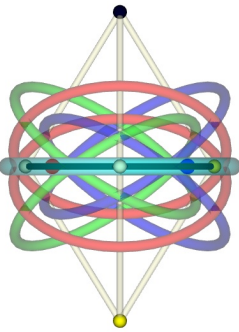
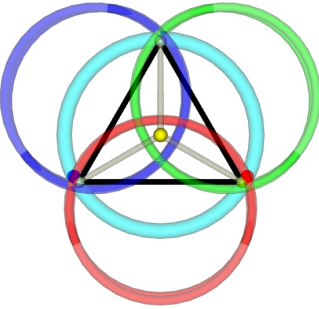
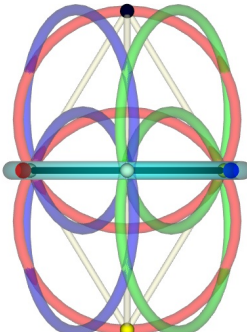
Visualizing a trinity of cognitive dynamics? As a construction using virtual reality software, additional features could be added to hold other aspects of the "pill experience ". These most notably include various kinds of movement -- as suggested by the animations above.

Screen shots of movement of spheres through torus and over 3 Möbius strips (based on the above)		
Single torus		With orthogonal torus
	In this exercise, red and blue spheres circulate through the torus to echo the dilemmas associated with the two "pills" as discussed above. 3 smaller spheres travel around the Möbius strips in a "hesitant" zig-zag motion (perhaps usefully reminiscent of learning and decision-making under conditions of complexity)	
Interactive variants: X3D or WRL	Video MP4	Interactive variants: X3D or WRL

The triangular interlocking of the 3 Möbius strips above, effectively framing a trinity, suggests a further development of the triangular metaphor using the 6-faced [triangular dipyramid](#) (not to be confused with a second polyhedron of the same name with 5 faces of 2 types). Appropriately **implicit** in that figure is a triangle (highlighted in black) within which the above models could be nested. As one of simplest dipyramids (6 faces, 5 vertices and 9 edges) the hexahedral polyhedron offers a valuable means of "mapping" **explicitly** more cognitively accessible aspects of the triangular cognitive dynamic. Especially valuable is the integration of the extremes of the polar duality (black and yellow spheres) so characteristic of potentially disruptive binary thinking -- and the manner in which the 6 triangular faces frame the seventh triangle within, with which any cognitive "trinity" pattern can be associated (as indicated below).



The complexity carried (**internally**) in the model above by the twisting Möbius strips can then be carried (**externally**) by associating 2 regular circles with each side of the triangle as shown in the various images of the model below (reminiscent of those based on the Borromean rings below). Each pair of circles rotates around one bar of the triangle. Each circle in a pair rotates in an opposite direction around that bar. The triangular dipyramid is variously evident in the screen shots.

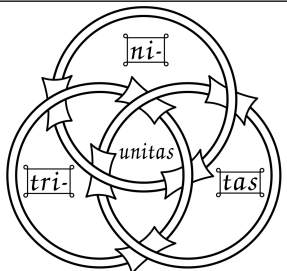
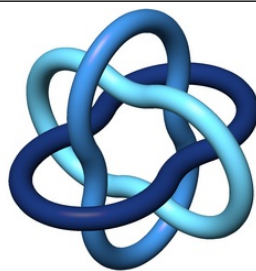
Screen shots of alternative views of 3x2 circles rotating to form a triangular dipyramid		
dipyramid ("side") view	triangular ("top") view	dipyramid ("side") view
		
Interactive variants: X3D and WRL . Videos: triangular view or side view		

Given some imperfections in the above design, it is appropriate to note that various technical improvements could be made to the model.

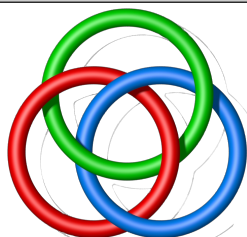


The 6 circles rotate over the 6 faces of the triangular dipyramid, as is more evident in the video. Red and blue spheres circulate through the torus as above (and could also circulate through the 6 circles). The dynamics of the circles are potentially indicative of triadic thinking -- and a form of "expansion" or "projection" of any cognitive trinity.

The morphing process between sphere and torus could also be embodied in such an animation to emphasize the inversion between subjective and objective experience. The [accessible interactive variant](#) is useful fortuitously, because of the manner in which the smaller sphere appear and disappear on rotation -- reflecting a psychosocial reality with especially problematic consequences.

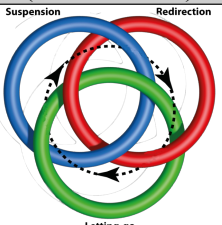
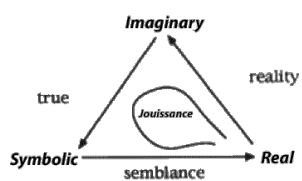
Symbolic trinities: The triangular arrangement follows from the efforts to represent any trinity of religious inspiration. As exemplified by that reproduced below (left), many relatively complex alternatives in 2D are readily accessible on the web -- suggestive of the extensive reflection on its implications.

Depiction of Christian Trinity	International Mathematical Union Logo
	
<p>Illustration from a 13th-century French manuscript, as reproduced in Didron's book <i>Christian Iconography</i>, 1843; from Wikipedia</p>	<p>Design by John M Sullivan (<i>New IMU Logo based on the tight Borromean rings</i>, 2006)</p>

Arguably the 2D variants are necessarily distorted projections of an understanding imagined in 3D or otherwise. As implied by the image on the right (above), it is striking to note how that depiction takes the form of the Borromean ring structure (below left) so valued in mathematics that a 3D variant has been selected as the logo of the International Mathematical Union (above right). Other such symbols are variously indicative of cognitive complexity.

Borromean rings and knots	Triskele (Celtic knot pattern)	Pax Cultura (Nicholas Roerich)
		

As illustrated below, the arrangement also echoes that of various much-cited patterns of significance to the study of cognition and associated experience. The relevant controversies, presumably predictable, are usefully reviewed by Maurizio Meloni (*A Triangle of Thoughts: Girard, Freud, Lacan, Psychomedia*, 14, 2002). That of Jacques Lacan is a version of the triangulated Oedipus complex (mother-child-father) combining Freud's theory with structural linguistics, developed from the theories of Saussure, Levi-Strauss and Jakobson (John Phillips, *Lacan and Language*).

Semiotic triangle of meaning (Charles Ogden)	Phenomenological epoché (Francisco Varela)	Triangulated Oedipus complex (Jacques Lacan)
		

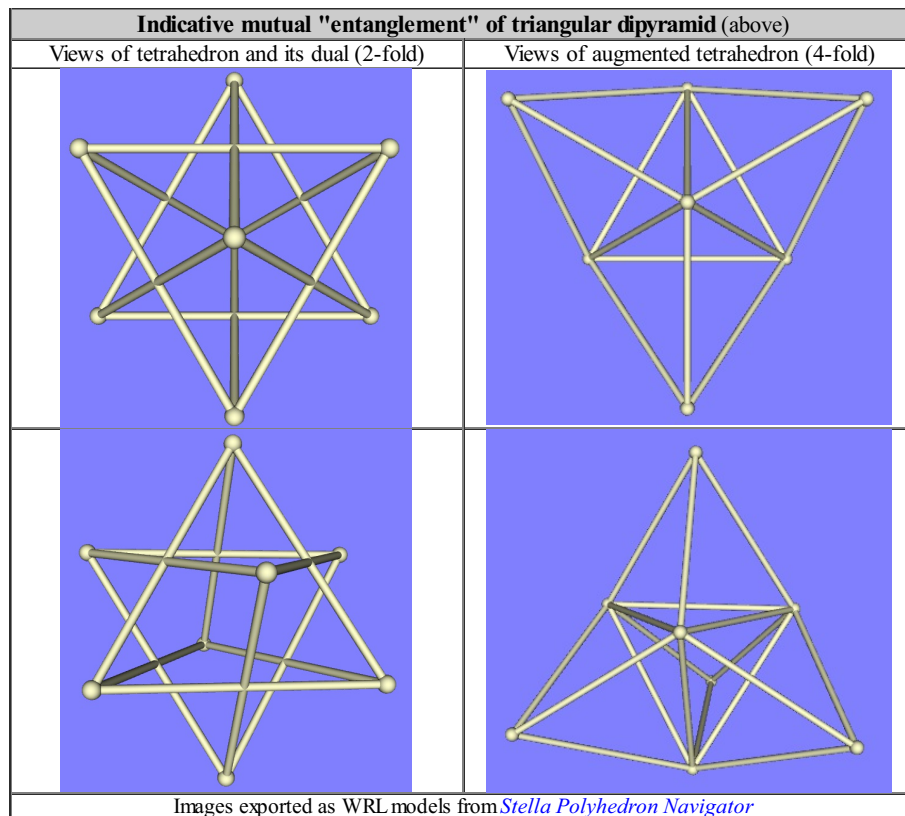
The circulation evident in the two images on the right (above) is consistent with the suggested implications of the torus in the earlier 3D image. That circulation in the Lacanian triangle, centred on "jouissance", is reminiscent of the Golden Pill (*Jindan* or Elixir) as the culminating quest of the Taoist discipline of *Neidan* which itself cultivates a form of cognitive circulation. Other implications for psychosocial transformation are discussed separately (*Triangulation of Incommensurable Concepts for Global Configuration*, 2011),

notably by [Paris Arnopoulos](#) (*Dialectives -- Politics -- Cybernetics: the sociophysics of complex systems*, 1993).

If only in mnemonic terms, the cyclic processes identified in Varela's phenomenological epoché suggest a curious relationship to will-pill-kill as a pattern of triadic associations -- framing a central focus on "ill-usion" as an attractor (*El-Attractor -- Timeless Complex Dynamic*, 2007).

Envisaging the Abrahamic trinity: Whilst the triangle may indeed echo any trinity appropriately -- especially one of religious inspiration -- it may also be understood as representing the "institutional" trinity of the primary Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. In terms of the lens offered by this argument, each may be understood as a remedial "pill" in its own right -- righteously advocated for the salvation of global civilization. Together they can be understood as constituting an "Abrahamic pill" whose unexplored complexity remains to be depicted for wider comprehension.

One approach to enabling such a comprehensible mapping is through "developing" the geometry indicative of contrasting ways of viewing the triangle -- taken as basic to the depictions above. Treating the triangular dipyrmaid (above) as a double tetrahedron, the images on the right are based on partially incorporating one tetrahedron into the other, namely using the tetrahedron with its dual as a mapping surface with which circular movements could be associated (as above). The shape is known as the [stella octangula](#) or [stellated octahedron](#) -- and, as shown, may also be known as a [merkaba](#) (with which "wheels" are associated in some traditions). The images on the left derive from placing 4 tetrahedra on each of the four triangular faces of a tetrahedron (perhaps to be recognized in terms of the [tetramorph](#) of some traditions) .



Such a controversial implication usefully addresses the issue of the complete and utter failure of those religions to rise above their centuries-old pattern of mutual demonisation and bloody conflict. Given the consequences, their indifference in this regard is appropriately described as pathetically irresponsible -- on the part of the siblings they would otherwise consider themselves to be, as may be variously argued (*Root Irresponsibility for Major World Problems the unexamined role of Abrahamic faiths in sustaining unrestrained population growth*, 2007; *Systemic Reliance of World Religions on Human Sacrifice*, 2014). Arguably each is locked into a form of two-dimensional apprehension which precludes any more global reflection on their interrelationships -- potentially more evident in higher dimensions, to whatever extent they accord credence to them.

Further clarification might be sought in mathematical theology (*Mathematical Theology: Future Science of Confidence in Belief*, 2011). However, rather than the equation-based conventions of mathematics with their relative incomprehensibility to most, a more fruitful approach might be found through graphical visualization of their implications with respect to contrasting perspectives. Ironically, so-called [augmented reality](#) technology may contribute to such comprehension.

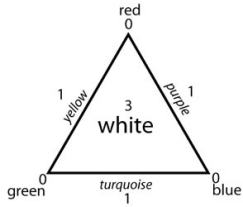

As an example, given the function of the Tao symbol as a complex "pill", an interesting topological challenge is that of providing a rendering of the 2-dimensionality of that symbol in 3-dimensions -- such as to allow for a third focus. As with the triangle, this is a feature of other symbols (*Triple Tomoe and Related Threefold Symbols; Triple deity*). Whilst the 2-dimensional variant holds much of the paradox sought in use of Möbius strips above, a threefold form might make use of the even greater paradox of the 4-dimensionality of the [Klein bottle](#).

Although the cognitive significance of binary thinking has been subtly explored by Taoists in the *I Ching*, it is appropriate to recall the existence of a complementary classic using a ternary encoding, namely the *Tai Xuan Jing* (or *T'ai Hsüan Ching*), as separately discussed (*Conditions of Objective, Subjective and Embodied Cognition: mnemonic systems for memetic coding of complexity*, 2007; *Reframing*

the Dynamics of Engaging with Otherness: triadic correspondences between Topology, Kama Sutra and I Ching, 2011).

Appropriately encompassing confusion in comprehension: The challenge of integration beyond any binary clash is admirably clarified using the mathematics of **q-analysis** as developed by Ron Atkin (*Multidimensional Man; can man live in 3-dimensional space?*, 1981), as separately summarized (*Comprehension: Social organization determined by incommunicability of insights*). Atkin illustrates the challenge of comprehension in relation to experience "within" the geometry of a triangle -- especially with regard to the perspective necessary to comprehend the geometry of the triangle as a whole -- namely the trinity.

The perceptual significance of this approach is well-illustrated by visual sensitivity to colours resulting from the three primary hues (red, green and blue). These may be represented on a simple triangle (below left). Here the vertices (O-simplexes) represent the primary hues, the sides are twofold combinations (1-simplexes), and the combination of the three hues makes the central white (2-simplex). A suggested equivalent of Atkin's triangle in presented here (below right), based on sound, as might be suggestive of the challenge of recognition of silence of a higher order (however that might be understood)

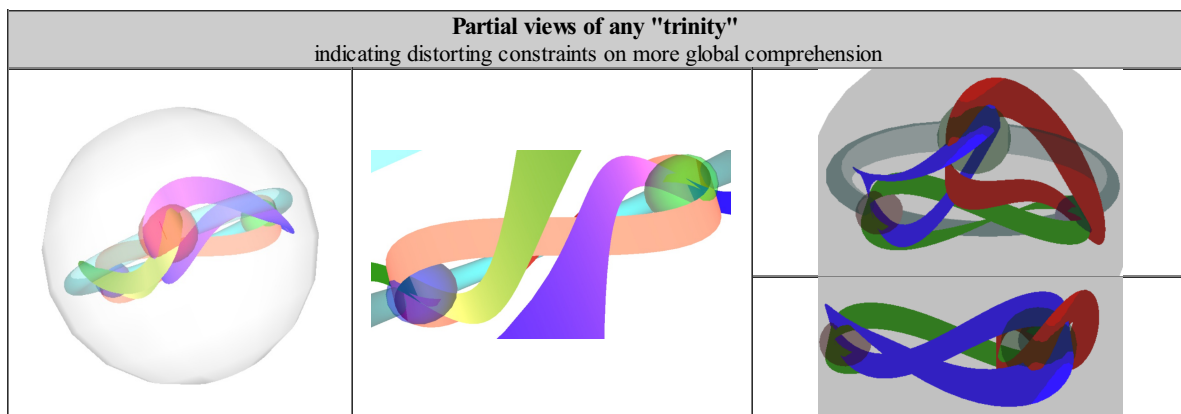
Vision-Light variant	Codification of relative orders	Sound-Silence variant
	<p>0-dimension: Red, Green or Blue</p> <p>1-dimension: Yellow (=Red/Green) Purple (=Red/Blue); or Turquoise (=Blue/Green)</p> <p>2-dimension: White (=Red/Green/Blue)</p>	
<p>Reproduced from separate commentary on <i>Civilization as a Global Configuration of Silences: recognizing silence of a higher order</i> (2013)</p>		

Atkin's argument is a valuable articulation of the consequences of the breakdown in three-fold comprehension -- a disastrous reduction down to the limitations of binary thinking in contrast to what is now acclaimed as "**joined-up thinking**". As a form of "dumbing down", this has been described as subunderstanding by Magoroh Maruyama (*Polyocular vision or subunderstanding? Organization Studies*, 25, 2004).

The wings of a bird -- commonly exploited in the metaphor of "political wings" -- raise the question of whether the red-pill and blue-pill extremes merit consideration in relation to a third intermediary perspective enabling a bird to fly (*Counteracting Extremes Enabling Normal Flying: insights for global governance from birds on the wing and the dodo*, 2015). Hence the value of the "green" circle in the depictions above.

As suggested by several triangular images above, and the torus in the 3D depiction, there is a cyclic dynamic cognitively vital to global health (*Circulation of the Light: essential metaphor of global sustainability?* 2010). As holons within that global context, each person could be considered as a "pill" for the others (rather than a **pillock** !?). This recalls the image of **Indra's net**, as explored mathematically (David Mumford, et al, *Indra's Pearls: the vision of Felix Klein*, 2002).

The cognitive confusion so usefully addressed by Atkin's argument can be clarified visually otherwise -- using perspectives from within the virtual reality display of the 3D image above. Bearing in mind the manner in which portions of the Earth's globe are in shade, other effects might also be used to indicate how the perspective from one "pill" perspective could be constrained in viewing another as being "in the shadow".



From FaceBook to PillBall ? Given its worldwide role at the present time, it is appropriate to recall that it was only in 2004 that "FaceBook" was launched. The curious combination of "face" and "book" could well have been considered ridiculous in its early years -- in contrast with current appreciation. Rather than the antiquated technology of "book", there is a case for benefitting from the forthcoming explosion of interactive virtual and augmented reality. The primary interface could well be a "ball" -- possibly multifaceted, like a "football".

Rather than the superficialities of "face", this could enable an unusual degree of interaction with "pills". The cognitive "pills" of people and groups -- and of institutions -- could be presented spherically, rather than constrained to the flat surface of a screen. Rather than the current process of flicking through images, as with the pages of any book of the past, the "pills" could be pulled out of the interior of the

ball onto the interactive surface -- or allowed to sink back into its interior. Facets could be used to allow interaction with configurations of "pills". Ridiculous in 2017? In 2027?

*** *Is the argument above not a "pill" in its own right?* ***

My Pill ?

"Pill tales" from the writer's childhood of potential relevance ?		
<i>Parental dispute</i>	<i>Drug efficacy</i>	<i>Drug acceptance from authority</i>
Exposed to her parental quarrelling, my mother describes how my grandmother took her aside and indicated " <i>Don't worry, I have put some laudanum in his tea</i> ". Subsequently taken aside by my grandfather, he indicates to my mother " <i>Don't worry, I have put some laudanum in his tea</i> "	Working regularly as a nurse in a Red Cross clinic in the African bush, my mother recounts that only those pills were considered efficacious by patients when they were obliged to pay an exorbitant price -- if not one they could ill afford.	Mother, as a registered nurse, when it is necessary to dose me with pills in response to some health condition, made it clear that only the brave took prescribed pills without hesitation and without any need for water.

References

Paris Arnopoulos:

- Braiding the Triadic Codex and Triple Helix: the sociophysics of nature-culture-nurture and academy-industry-polity, 2000
- Sociophysics: paradigmatic metaphors. 2003 [[text](#)]
- Sociophysics: cosmos and chaos in nature and culture. Nova Science, 2005 [[contents](#)]
- Dialectives -- Politics -- Cybernetics: the sociophysics of complex systems, 1993 [[text](#)]

Ron Atkin. *Multidimensional Man; can man live in 3-dimensional space?* Penguin, 1981

Fabrizio Benedetti. *Placebo Effects: understanding the mechanisms in health and disease.* Oxford University Press, 2014

Jerome Bruner. *Self-Making and World-Making.* *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 25, 1991, 1, pp. 67-78 [[abstract](#)]

L. B. Clarke. *Mission Improbable: using fantasy documents to tame disaster.* University of Chicago Press, 1999

Edward de Bono:

- The Six Value Medals: the essential tool for success in the 21st Century. Ebury Press, 2005 [[summary](#)]
- Six Frames For Thinking About Information. Vermilion, 2008 [[summary](#)]

F. William Engdahl. *Full Spectrum Dominance: totalitarian democracy in the New World Order.* Third Millennium Press, 2009 [[review](#)]

Mikhail Epstein. *The Art of World-Making.* *Philosophy Now*, 119 April/May 2017 [[text](#)]

Dylan Evans. *Placebo: Mind over Matter in Modern Medicine.* Oxford University Press, 2004

Nelson Goodman. *Ways of Worldmaking.* Hackett, 1978 [[text](#)]

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: the political economy of the mass media.* Pantheon, 1988

Douglas Hofstadter:

- Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid. Basic Books, 1979
- Fluid Concepts and Creative Analogies. Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995
- I Am a Strange Loop. Basic Books, 2007
- Surfaces and Essences: Analogy as the Fuel and Fire of Thinking. Basic Books, 2013

Darryl S. Inaba, William E. Cohen and Michael E. Holstein. *Uppers, Downers and All Arounders: physical and mental effects of psychoactive drugs.* CNS Productions, 1996

Sumeet Jain and Sushrut Jadhav. *Pills that Swallow Policy: clinical ethnographyography of a community mental health program in northern India.* *Transcultural Psychiatry* [[text](#)]

Nathalie Karagiannis and Peter Wagner. *Varieties of World-making: beyond globalization.* Liverpool University Press, 2007

Magoroh Maruyama:

- Polyocular vision or subunderstanding? *Organization Studies*, 25, 2004, pp. 467-480. [[abstract](#)]
- Context and Complexity: cultivating contextual understanding. Springer Verlag, 1992
- Mindscapes, social patterns and future development of scientific theory types. *Cybernetica*, 1980, 23, 1, pp. 5-25 [[text](#)]

Jonathan M. Metz and Michelle Riba. *Understanding the Symbolic Value of Medications: A Brief Review.* *Primary Psychiatry*, July 2003 [[abstract](#)]

Hilary Lawson. *Reflexivity: The Post-Modern Predicament.* Sage, 1985 [[review](#)]

Maurizio Meloni. *A Triangle of Thoughts: Girard, Freud, Lacan.* *Psychomedia*, 14, 2002 [[text](#)]

Richard K. Moore. *Beyond Left and Right: Escaping the Matrix.* *New Dawn Magazine*, 62, 2000, September-October [[text](#)]

David Mumford, Caroline Series and David Wright. Indra's Pearls: the vision of Felix Klein. Cambridge University Press, 2002
[[summary](#)].

Susan Sontag. Illness as Metaphor and Aids and its Metaphors. Anchor, 1990

Paul Virilio:

- The Information Bomb. Verso, 2006
- The Administration of Fear. Semiotext(e), 2012

Glenn Yeffeth. Taking the Red Pill: science, philosophy and the religion in the Matrix. BenBella Books, 2003



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For further updates on this site, [subscribe here](#)