



# laetus in praesens

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## Radical Disaffection Engendered by Elitist Groupthink?

### Democratic rehearsal of the final battle between the Forces of Light and Darkness

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#### Introduction

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Inspired by [election of Donald Trump](#) (9 November 2016)

## Introduction

The election of Donald Trump is hailed as introducing a new political reality, as headlined by *The New York Times* (Patrick Healy and Jeremy W. Peter, *US Faces a Startling New Political Reality After Donald Trump's Victory*, 10 December 2016).

A striking feature of the nastiness of the presidential campaign, beyond the mutual deprecation of the candidates, has been the nastiness of the commentators on a democratic process and its enablers. It is now recognized that in excess of 90% of the media commented systematically, actively and negatively on the Trump candidacy -- echoing the views of a variety of distinguished elites. Various comments on this profoundly undemocratic phenomenon are now emerging. For example:

The idea that journalism should offer a neutral 'spectrum' of views was unceremoniously dumped during the US presidential election. Hillary Clinton was endorsed by the 500 largest US newspapers and magazines; Trump by 20 of the smallest, with the most significant of these -- something called the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* -- reaching some 100,000 readers.... 'Mainstream' media did not merely support Clinton, they declared propaganda war on Trump. As we have seen in this brief sample, even BBC journalists thought nothing of ridiculing Trump's 'narcissistic personality disorder' -- unthinkable language from a BBC reporter describing an Obama, a Cameron, or indeed a Clinton. (David Edwards, *Filtering The Election*, *Media Lens*, 18 November 2016)

Although the media were presumably mobilized and "motivated" by the Clinton campaign, with appropriate threats as required, it is appropriate to recall the [concentration of media ownership](#) (Ashley Lutz, *These 6 Corporations Control 90% of the Media in America*, *Business Insider*, 14 January 2012).

A striking example of the commentary is that of [Paul Krugman](#), a Nobel laureate, as presented in *The New York Times*:

Hillary Clinton was knowledgeable, unflappable and -- dare we say it? -- likable. Donald Trump was ignorant, thin-skinned and boorish. Yet on the eve of the debate, polls showed a close race. How was that possible? After all, the candidates we saw Monday night were the same people they've been all along. Mrs. Clinton's grace and even humor under pressure were fully apparent during last year's Benghazi hearing. Mr. Trump's whiny braggadocio has been obvious every time he opens his mouth without reading from a teleprompter. (*How the Clinton-Trump Race Got Close*, 30 September 2016)

Following the electoral triumph of Trump, against seemingly impossible odds, commentators and experts of every kind have desperately attempted to understand how their analysis proved to be so fundamentally inadequate to the reality of the situation (Michael Barbaro, *How Did the Media -- How Did We -- Get This Wrong?* *The New York Times*, 9 November 2016). This inadequacy has been confirmed by the

highly unfortunate partisan assertion of President Obama in the final phase of the campaign (*US election 2016: Obama warns fate of world at stake*, *BBC News*, 3 November 2016). This is especially presumptuous in that he himself is a focus of blame, in the light of his premature receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize.

At every stage, the Trump campaign was ridiculed as a failure to appreciate the conventional wisdom of a democratic society -- as framed by well-informed elites. As noted by Anthony Zurcher:

Very few people thought he would actually run, then he did. They thought he wouldn't climb in the polls, then he did. They said he wouldn't win any primaries, then he did. They said he wouldn't win the Republican nomination, then he did. Finally, they said there was no way he could compete for, let alone win, a general election. Now he's president-elect Trump. (*US Election 2016 Results: Five reasons Donald Trump won*, *BBC News*, 9 November 2016)

However, as questioned by Rod Dreher:

Will this catastrophic failure of the media cause soul-searching and, dare I say it, repentance? Forget it. To do so would require the press to face up to its worst prejudices, none more deeply held than the belief that its members are on the Right Side of History. (*US election 2016: America's front-porch revolt*, *BBC News*, 9 November 2016)

The more fundamental issue, however, is not "Trump" (as many now choose to fear), but rather the evidence of an unrecognized level of dysfunctional [grouphink](#) with respect to global governance -- and those who need to be blamed and demonised. The issue for conventional thinking is then: **What else have arrogant democratic elites got radically, dangerously wrong through denial?** Overpopulation? Environment? Ignorance? Radicalism?

In contrast with conventional strategic preoccupation with "9/11", the questions raised by the election of Donald Trump on 9 November suggest that "11/9" may ultimately prove to be of far greater significance.

The arguments here follow from earlier commentary (*Engaging Proactively with the Risk of World Misleadership: Trump vs Clinton and the potential of carpe diem in the democratic process?* 2016; *Evaluating the Grossness of Gross Domestic Product*, 2016).

## Total failure to comprehend the credibility of Trump for many

**Collective blindspot?** Missing from the discussion, as is now increasingly acknowledged, has been the recognition that Americans in large numbers have somehow been persuaded by Trump's style and alienated by Clinton's style. Somehow he has been seen by a democratic majority to be meaningful to a higher degree than Clinton. In terms of style -- rather than substance?

Again there is the assumption that just because Clinton makes her informed arguments rationally, and according to acceptable conventions, this should necessarily convince. Seemingly it has not -- and the slickness of such presentations is now recognized as questionable.

A long track record of ineffectual rational arguments in an era of "spin" is now appropriately challenged in a new era of "post-truth politics".

**Outmoded language?** The focus of commentary has been on the manner in which Trump's eccentric and politically incorrect comments seemingly discredit what his candidature has represented for many. They clearly have not. The error has been further exemplified in the very language of the highly reluctant formal congratulations to Trump on his election, as made by the leadership of various countries -- including those of other Permanent Members of the UN Security Council. Worthy of study in themselves, such examples include:

- UK: Theresa May: *I would like to congratulate Donald Trump on being elected the next president of the United States, following a hard-fought campaign. Britain and the United States have an enduring and special relationship based on the values of freedom, democracy and enterprise. We are, and will remain, strong and close partners on trade, security and defence.* (*Theresa May leads UK congratulations for Donald Trump*, *BBC News*, 9 November 2016)
- France: Francois Hollande: *French President Francois Hollande on Wednesday congratulated Donald Trump on his shock victory in the U.S presidential election, but warned the result would open up a period of uncertainty. "I congratulate him as is natural between two democratic heads of state," said Hollande. "This American election opens a period of uncertainty"* (*France's Hollande congratulates Trump, warns of period of uncertainty*, *Reuters*, 9 November 2016)
- Germany: Angela Merkel: *Germany and America are bound by their values: democracy, freedom, the respect for the law and the dignity of human beings, independent of their origin, skin color, religion, gender, sexual orientation or political position," she added. "On the basis of these values I offer the future president of the United States, Donald Trump, close cooperation."* (*Merkel congratulates Trump as politicians express shock*, *Deutsche Welle*, 9 November 2016).
- EU: Presidents Tusk and Juncker: *We extend our sincere congratulations on your election as the 45th President of the United States of America. The strategic partnership between the European Union and the United States is rooted in our shared values of freedom, human rights, democracy and a belief in the market economy. Over the years, the European Union and the United States have worked together to ensure peace and prosperity for our citizens and for people around the world* (*Letter from Presidents Tusk and Juncker to congratulate Donald Trump on his election as the next President of the United States*, 9 November 2011)

**"Shared values"?** As above, conventional political discourse makes frequent reference to "values" in a mode which recalls the tokens by which monetary value is held and circulated. Such tokens are claimed specifically to represent confidence. Lack of confidence in

them is reflected in monetary exchange rates -- including their relative depreciation, one with respect to another. The [financial crisis of 2008](#) (and its aftermath) has been a crisis of value sharing -- a major challenge to mutual confidence.

Current reference to "values" suggests that they are somehow based on a ["gold standard"](#) -- long abandoned by the financial system. Arguably the standards to which politicians refer are themselves no longer based on any such standard, despite widespread pretence that this is the case. (*Varieties of Confidence Essential to Sustainability: surrogates and tokens obscuring the existential "gold standard"*, 2009).

More striking is the sense in which monetary value is now frequently based on [fiat currency](#) -- namely a fictive value created by government declaration. In this light monetary value is the focus of extensive study and commentary. However the global financial system is now stabilized to a high degree by the widespread creation of such fiat money through [quantitative easing](#) -- previously deprecated as "printing money".

It is appropriate to ask whether this strategy is surreptitiously deployed with regard to the "values" to which politicians so frequently refer, echoing the discourse of the religions. The possibility evokes the question as to whether there is a poorly recognized reliance on what might be termed "qualitative easing", as argued separately (*From Quantitative Easing (QE) to Moral Easing (ME): a stimulus package to avert moral bankruptcy?* 2010).

The verbal absurdities of Trump then pale by comparison with those highlighted by the *Chilcot Report* in the case of [Tony Blair](#), now seeking re-entry into the UK political arena (*Tony Blair is Back: but is there still space for him in British politics?* *The Independent*, 28 November 2016). Following the *CIA Torture Report* -- declared to be a "a bunch of hoey" by [Dick Cheney](#) -- the arguments of James Mitchell are indicative of a similar trend (*Justifying Torture: CIA Psychologist's Book Defends His Role*, *The Huffington Post*, 28 November 2011). With respect to European institutions, related points could be made with regard to the ongoing investigations into [Jose Manuel Barroso](#) and [Jean-Claude Juncker](#). However much they express "having no regrets", what proportion of holders of high office are now the focus of legal processes?

What then are the "values" which Western leaders hope to "share" with Donald Trump and by which the West, at least, is purportedly bound? The response is far more elusive than is so readily assumed, as determined by the [Human Values Project](#).

With respect to understanding monetary, much is made of value in terms of its circulation and flow, but how does this insight relate to the values to which reference is made by politicians? Are these references indeed indicative of a simplistic focus on tokens with which any circulation and flow is only implied -- especially if the tokens are hoarded? Why are the values cited not explored as verbs rather than as nouns, as may be argued (*Freedom, Democracy, Justice: Isolated Nouns or Interwoven Verbs?* 2011). Is the essential nature of values somehow dynamically disguised? If so, how can they be "shared"?

Understanding the value of "peace" as a noun -- is it any wonder that some prefer the value of "jihad" as a verb? (George Wolfe, *Peace is a Verb, not a Noun*, *Voices of Humanity*, 21 October 2013; Hannah Ashe, *Why Peace is a Verb*, *College of Charleston*, 7 December 2014). To the extent this is not appreciated, is it any wonder that there is so little understanding of violence (*Global Incomprehension of Increasing Violence*, 2016)?

More provocatively, in a period in which many believe they are being "conned" by elites, there is a case for more fundamental insights into the nature of currency in relation to collective confidence (*Primary Global Reserve Currency: the Con? Cognitive implications of a prefix for sustainable confidence*, 2011). The importance of confidence in reality, despite its elusive quality as a value, it is appropriate to recognize that voters expressed greater confidence in Trump than in Clinton -- notably deemed to be relatively untrustworthy. Curiously, through the very difference of his discourse and manner, Trump was deemed to be more authentic.

**Uncertainty?** As illustrated by the acknowledgement of France, there is major concern amongst leaders of Western states at the nature of the uncertainty which the Trump presidency is heralding. This concern is especially symptomatic of a mindset dedicated to the certainties of a system which is so evidently vulnerable to the dynamics of the times. Preserving the *status quo* has become a primary preoccupation with only the most token effort to espousing change -- whatever the lip service through which it was hailed.

The adequacy of this understanding has long been challenged ([Geoffrey Vickers](#), *Freedom in a Rocking Boat: changing values in an unstable society*, 1972; Donald Schon, *Beyond the Stable State*, 1973; Jonathan Fields, *Uncertainty: turning fear and doubt into fuel for brilliance*, 2011; Susan J. Jeffers, *Embracing Uncertainty: breakthrough methods for achieving peace of mind when facing the unknown*, 2004).

There is a profound irony to the language of "state" in its effort to embody the static and preserve the *status quo* at all costs. This is evident in the titles of reports on the ["state of the union"](#), or on other issues of governance -- precluding more appropriate insight into the dynamics associated with change (*Dynamic Transformation of Static Reporting of Global Processes*, 2013). The latter noted 37 such standard static reports with suggestions for process-oriented titles.

There is extensive commentary in the policy sciences on strategic uncertainty and on how to engage with it. That Western leaders should endeavour to preclude uncertainty (or be so shocked by its prospect) is a mark of the current quality of Western leadership to which Trump offers a specific challenge. Voters increasingly recognize how leaders fail to comprehend the uncertainty with which they are obliged to live on a daily basis (*Living with Incomprehension and Uncertainty: re-cognizing the varieties of non-comprehension and misunderstanding*, 2012).

**Doublespeak:** The very language of the congratulatory remarks reflects a lack of awareness of the [doublespeak](#) of which many are increasingly aware (*Enabling Suffering through Doublespeak and Doublethink*, 2013). This language is now significantly rejected by those who voted against Clinton, and who have recognized the need for vigilance in relation to bias in the media supporting her campaign (*Vital Collective Learning from Biased Media Coverage: acquiring vigilance to deceptive strategies used in mugging the world*, 2014).

The remarks exemplify the classic caricature that politicians can be recognized as lying "[when their lips move](#)". They reflect no understanding whatsoever of the need to learn from a process in one of the world's leading democracies. More or less explicitly Trump has committed himself to challenging use of such language in Washington circles. Using language for which he has been criticized, this intention could be framed otherwise (*Viable Global Governance through Bullfighting: challenge of transcendence*, 2009).

In considering why Trump was credible to so many, it is useful to note a strange response made by a South African tribesman to the question by an interviewer as to why he was voting for [Jacob Zuma](#), now president of South Africa. The response was "because he can dance". This is indicative of the extent to which voters may associate the values to which they are attracted to other dimensions than the sterile coinage which politicians juggle so frequently. Whilst Trump did not dance during his campaign in the manner of Zuma, he engaged quite otherwise with those who voted for him. Dismissing such an argument because of the subsequent difficulties of Zuma would be completely to miss the point that Clinton does not know "how to dance", despite associating dancers with her final campaign presentations.

A more appropriate response to Trump's election is exemplified by the "greeting" dance of the Maori [haka](#) -- widely publicized in media coverage of the [All Blacks rugby team](#). Within such a dance metaphor, it could be said that Trump successfully off-footed the world leaders critical of him. In that challenge to the rules of the democratic game, an appropriate twist is to be found in the No Rules Campaign used in the acclaimed advertising of a particular product (*William Lawson's Response to the Haka*, *Inspiration Room*, 2006; John Leo, *Breaking The Rules With The Gap*, *The Huffington Post*, 25 May 2011).

The shift in modality which is so challenging to those preferring the status quo is usefully highlighted by an oft-cited tale of a highly critical CBS interview by Lesley Stahl of Ronald Reagan in 1984. Unexpectedly the White House responded with great appreciation. An astonished Stahl responded: *Didn't you hear what I said [in the broadcast]?* Response from the White House:

Nobody heard what you said.... You guys in Televisionland haven't figured it out, have you? When the pictures are powerful and emotional, they override if not completely drown out the sound... Nobody heard you.

The critical report about President Reagan had been accompanied by generally upbeat visuals. The pictures registered more with viewers than anything Stahl had said ("*Nobody heard what you said.*" *Lesley Stahl's Fable About Reagan and the Press*, *PressThink*, 9 June 2004).

**Oversight?** The fundamental error has been to focus the rejection of the Trump candidacy on the personality and style of the candidate. There has clearly been little understanding of how these may be overlooked by those convinced by other dimensions -- including those which cannot be well-articulated verbally.

Trump managed to represent those whose voices had not been "heard" within conventional democratic processes, on which the elites able to manipulate them so arrogantly rely. There is considerable irony to the use of "oversight" in regard to democratic and regulatory processes when these may well imply "turning a blind eye" to inconvenient realities. Pundits claiming insightful oversight of democratic processes could be charged with a similar failing -- as with those charged with regulatory oversight

**Deceived by deception?** There has been a failure to recognize that those conventionally framed as backward and ignorant -- and therefore traditionally negligible -- are often especially skilled at seeing through the arguments of "city slickers" and "know-it-alls". The experience derives in part from exposure to exaggerated claims of market stall holders -- essentially a familiarity with bluff and bluster, and how to see through it.

Unwittingly, as previously argued, it is possible that Trump made skillful use of his absurdities and irritants as distractants, perhaps best compared with use of [decoy flares as counter-measures](#) by aircraft seeking to reduce vulnerability to missile strikes. Commentators have assiduously followed the heat of the flares -- in a fruitless effort to bring him down. They "fell" for the decoys -- literally.

It is ironic that any such deception should be deplored as "lying" by observers when it is valued as a primary aid in any competitive strategy (including ball-games), counter-intelligence and the covert operations on which security is claimed to be dependent (Carolyn Pumphrey, et al, *Strategic Deception in Modern Democracies: ethical, legal, and policy challenges*, 2003). Soviet army victories in 1944 were in large part the result of the skillful practice of *maskirovka* (strategic deception) that off-footed Hitler and the German high command, as noted by Vadim J. Birstein (*SMERSH*, *Intelligence Analysis and Reporting*, 12 December 2013).

There is a strong element of "sour grapes" to such criticism, suggesting only that any array of deception deployed by the Clinton campaign was strategically less adequate. For many the complicity of elites in the deception implied by the highly secretive nature of the negotiation of "free trade agreements" was a reason to be supportive of Trump.

The focus on the personality and stupidities of Trump has detracted from any ability to reflect insightfully on the views of the unheard -- whose very existence was ignored or denied by many, despite their unforeseen appeal. In panicked response to his increasing appeal, the media coverage evolved progressively during the campaign into the hysterical frenzy characteristic of [lynch mobs](#) incited by the most regrettable slogans.

Many media, previously reputed for the quality and maturity of their coverage, came to cultivate forms of demonisation of the most unfortunate kind. Trump was framed as the "devil" incarnate in a manner reminiscent of [witch-hunts](#) of the not too distant past -- including those of the [McCarthy era](#). This was necessarily matched by the "evil" with which Clinton was associated in the eyes of many of those Trump represented.

## Witnessing the revenge of totally discredited media and expertise?

**Emergence of new insight?** Following the election, many media have chosen to switch to articulating opposition to the Trump presidency rather than considering how fruitful insights might be gained from the surprise it constituted -- as a "Black Swan", in the spirit of the arguments of Nassim Nicholas Taleb (*The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007; *Antifragile: Things That Gain From Disorder*, 2012). The point is made otherwise by Karen A. Cerulo (*Never Saw It Coming: cultural challenges to envisioning the worst*, 2006).

Unfortunately the tone of the media claiming to be progressive has continued to be characterized by various degrees of hysterical panic through framing an emerging state of national urgency in the face of "dark times" -- thereby offering little perspective on the process. That the opposite result would have been recognized for some as a continuation of the "dark times", engendered by the previous administration, is excluded from consideration as irrelevant and meaningless.

**Lack of perspective?** The lack of perspective offered by progressives claiming to be uniquely enlightened is an unfortunate indicator of the inadequacy of enlightenment as is seemingly understood -- and of a marked inability to learn from adversity. There may indeed be a case for a period of endarkenment to enable that learning (*Enlightening Endarkenment: selected web resources on the challenge to comprehension*, 2005; Elijah Millgram, *The Great Endarkenment: philosophy for an Age of Hyperspecialization*, 2015). The shrill response to having lost needs to be distinguished from the caricature of "headless chickens running around after having received the chop" -- or having been trumped.

Others are now obliged desperately to demonstrate that they have the maturity and perspective to comment fruitfully on a process in which they demonstrated such a high degree of narrow partisanship. What will have been learnt through that process?

As a separate commentary on his own thesis, Elijah Millgram admirably clarifies the extent to which academic elites are dependent on the "Impact Factor" of their own self-appreciation (*The Endarkenment at Home: Benchmarking Academics*, *Daily Nous*, 26 May 2015). This is comparable to the rankings of people on social media by the number of "likes" they accumulate. As an exercise in reinforcing confirmation bias, both cases neatly raise the question as to what impact the highest ranked have on those beyond the spheres in question -- and specifically the electorate at large. Despite being framed by a ballistic metaphor, the degree of impact is clearly questionable for a world in desperate quest of insightful governance -- hence the painful shock of the Trump election.

**"End of the world"?** One approach has been to frame the election of Donald Trump as a total catastrophe (*'Catastrophe', 'tragedy': world media target 'dangerous' Trump*, *AFP*, 9 November 2016; Clemens Wergin, *For Europe, Trump's Election Is a Terrifying Disaster*, *The New York Times*, 10 November 2016; *Trump's Victory a Catastrophe for Climate*, *Common Dreams*, 9 November 2016).

The election has variously been claimed to be the "end of the world", at least for some (Naomi Klein, *Donald Trump's Presidency Could Literally Mean the End of Their World*, *The Nation*, 10 November 2016; Tessa Stuart, *Party at the End of the World: Inside Trump's Election Night Bash*, *Rolling Stone*, 10 November 2016; *Donald Trump's Presidential Win Harkens the 'End of the World'*, *Hall of Fame Magazine*, 14 November 2016; Gideon Levy, *Is This the End of the World?* *Haaretz*, 10 November 2016). "End of the world" has been trending in Google searches. Efforts to immigrate to other countries have been widely noted.

Curiously a similar argument is employed by a critic, Noam Chomsky, from whom greater insight might have been expected (Ian Johnston, *Noam Chomsky: Donald Trump's election will accelerate global warming and humanity's 'race to disaster'*, *The Independent*, 15 November 2016; Tom Boggioni, *Chomsky: Trump's Win Puts Govt in the Hands of the 'Most Dangerous Organization in World History'*, *AlterNet*, 14 November 2016). The subtext is unabashedly: *you must agree with me, or else*.

Such views exacerbate the difficulty of reframing situations which take the binary form "me right, you wrong" -- and unquestionably so. Chomsky's reference to a "bad mistake" has the further implication that it should be "rectified" --- but without indicating how (*Noam Chomsky: People Who Didn't Vote For Clinton To Block Trump Made A 'Bad Mistake'*, *The Huffington Post*, 25 November 2016).

The inappropriateness of any such formulation has been usefully identified by Edward de Bono (*I Am Right You Are Wrong*, 1992), variously (sub)titled *From This to the New Renaissance: From Rock Logic to Water Logic*. As explored further below, so many disciplines and institutions vainly deploy arguments of that form, the challenge is how to move beyond them. The expectation that the world will subscribe to any single view -- however many Nobel Laureates promote it -- merits analysis of the greatest care, as argued separately (*The Consensus Delusion: mysterious attractor undermining global civilization as currently imagined*, 2011). The poor track record of global campaigns, and virtual wars, suggests that other dimensions merit consideration (*Recognizing the Psychosocial Boundaries of Remedial Action: constraints on ensuring a safe operating space for humanity*, 2009).

Associating catastrophe with a single issue like climate change, currently popular amongst some elites (although previously an "inconvenient truth"), serves to obscure the possible existence of other "truths", yet to be fully acknowledged, and potentially a source of disruptive surprise. The nature of their inconvenience, and the associated collective blindspot, merits particular attention (*An Inconvenient Truth about any Inconvenient Truth*, 2008). The challenge is succinctly framed by Ron Atkin: *A surprise is an answer to a question we did not ask!* (*Mathematical Physics*, 2010, p. 274).

Remarkably, imminent catastrophe is now variously related to predictions, notably by conspiracy theorists (Shiladitya Basu, *End Of The World Prediction Coming True: Donald Trump Win The First Sign?* *Morning News USA*, 9 November 2016; Alison Maloney, *Donald Trump's victory was predicted by Nostradamus*, *The Sun*, 11 November 2016; Alexandra Burlacu, *Nostradamus Predictions: Did The French Prophet Predict Donald Trump 2016 US Presidential Election Victory Would Lead To World War 3?* *Tech Times*, 11 November 2016).

This framing suggests a dangerous incapacity to navigate the adaptive cycle so fruitfully highlighted by Thomas Homer-Dixon (*The Upside of down: catastrophe, creativity, and the renewal of civilization*, 2006). As is widely recognized in the business world, those who are desperately dependent on always being "winners" define themselves as "losers" through being unable to learn from disasters, strategic failure and the insights of others (*Learning from failure: what stops people from turning mistakes into success?* *The Economist*, 10

October 2015; Amy C. Edmondson, *Strategies for Learning from Failure*, *Harvard Business Review*, April 2011).

**Misplaced opposition?** With so many having been proved to lack insight into the condition of the times and the processes it may engender, the question is how the discredited may now recover a degree of credibility.

The immediate aftermath of the election has seen a developing possibility in this regard. As carefully reviewed by Larry Chin, there is a real possibility that Donald Trump will either be prevented from acceding to the White House or that a process of impeachment could be launched at the beginning of his administration (*Post Election Chaos, Trump Presidency Under Siege: guided anarchy and "The Purple Revolution" -- orchestrated anti-Trump mob violence*, *Global Research*, 23 November 2016).

However, rather than any form of admission of inadequacy, or recognition of the need for radical re-examination of assumptions, many now feel impelled to argue that "wrong" has been done through the election of Trump. This sentiment is complemented by their personal identification with the "right" that they represent so unquestionably.

Again the mistaken focus on the person avoids recognition that a large proportion of the population believes that wrong has been done to them by the political style represented by Clinton. Mistakenly, it is Trump that is "Not My President" rather than any recognition of the indifference to large numbers of people in pain -- whether the neglect is deliberate or inadvertent (Christopher Mele and Annie Correal, *'Not Our President': Protests Spread After Donald Trump's Election*, *The New York Times*, 9 November 2016).

Reflecting the new understanding of democracy, *Wikipedia* already offers an entry on *Protests against Donald Trump* matching the simultaneous *Protests against Park Geun-hye* in South Korea. Should the legitimacy of all democratic elections now be called into question by the losers?

**Expectations of the loser in a democratic process:** One focus has been the argument that Clinton "really won" -- having "won the popular vote" -- irrespective of the complex conventions of the democratic process in the USA with its **electoral college** system. As argued by **Joel S. Hirschhorn**:

The clearest sign of Democrat stupidity and delusion is the constant garbage bragging that Clinton got more votes than Trump. Why is this so repulsive? Because presidential campaigns are devised and operated on the basis of the Electoral College system that constitutionally determines the victor. This means that a winning campaign must focus on specific states rather than on states with the largest populations. In other words, Clinton's larger national popular vote total is irrelevant and meaningless. (*Many Americans Should Un-Stupid Themselves*, *Information Clearing House*, 18 November 2016)

What of the fact that Trump also won the overwhelming majority of US counties (*Results By County*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 17 November 2016)? Or the fact that 48% of the eligible voters abstained? Would the argument have been voiced (and heard) had the result been otherwise? If not, why not?

Is the detection of electoral irregularities by the losers now as predictable as their denial by the winners (Steven Rosenfeld, *Something Stinks When Exit Polls and Official Counts Don't Match*, *AlterNet*, 14 November 2016; Steven Rosenfeld, *A Fair Election? Serious, Hard-to-Explain Questions Arise About Trump Vote Totals in 3 Key States*, *AlterNet*, 17 November 2016)? What of claims by progressives that elections have been stolen (Steven F. Freeman, *Was the 2004 Presidential Election Stolen?* 2011)?

Are such claims themselves predictable in a post-truth era (*Computer scientists say they have strong evidence election was rigged against Clinton in three key states*, *The Independent*, 23 November 2016; *Jill Stein raises over \$2m to request US election recounts in battleground states*, *The Guardian*, 24 November 2016)? Would such evidence have been sought had Clinton won?

In the case of the presidential campaign, initiatives by progressives to ensure a recount of votes in some areas could well miss the point. In a post-truth era, any recount proving that the first count was incorrect could itself be disputed and subject to appeal. How is it to be proved -- and by whom -- that the recount data was itself not subject to some form of hacking by interested parties? Would some of those favouring an alternative result not indeed be motivated to ensure that this was the case? How indeed is the extensive media coverage of the "participation" of the Clinton campaign in the recount to be interpreted with respect to objectivity and "truth" (*Hillary Clinton's Team to Join Wisconsin Recount Pushed by Jill Stein*, *The New York Times*, 26 November 2016)?

Parallels are to be seen with the indictment of individuals, variously set aside after a succession of appeals -- provided that funds are available to sustain the legal proceedings, to question the evidence and to threaten the judiciary and jury members.

The argument of course highlights some deficiencies in the democratic process in the USA -- although many others can be identified there (and in other democracies). Similar arguments have been presented following the outcome of previous presidential elections. As argued separately, increasingly it is evident that no democratic election or referendum is held without some claiming irregularities -- typically denied by others, whether appropriately investigated or not (*Criteria Justifying Recounting or Revoting in Democracy post-Brexit*, 2016).

The violence following such elections, as in the USA, could be challenged as a case of losing sides being "bad losers" in a system focused on one side "winning" according to a set of rules, however arbitrary and inappropriate. Had Clinton won, others would be voicing the slogan "Not My President" -- with the winners triumphantly celebrating their victory and the righteous "crushing" of their ignorant opponents, held "to have received their just deserts".

**Beyond triumphalist gloating in democracy?** Is there not a case for enabling some alternative to the **feeding frenzy** whereby an opponent is torn apart -- a process savoured vicariously by observers via the media? It is curious that this process is so carefully celebrated in politics, business and sport -- echoing its historic parallels in military action and religion. The incredible depths of **negative campaigning**, to which the presidential campaign descended, are curiously legitimized by an implied analogue to **just war doctrine**.

Ironically, for the media who got it so wrong, the Trump story was an incredible godsend in sustaining audience interest over the period of the campaign -- whether in terms of their weekly or daily offerings to consumers. Having reached a formal conclusion through the election, there is necessarily a great temptation to spin the story further through challenging the democratic outcome and celebrating the ensuing difficulties -- even to the point of inciting violence, verbal or otherwise. Would Trump supporters have been able to do as much had they lost -- especially those isolated in rural areas? Who would care, had they not?

**Recognizing neglected truths:** Typically any reprise by media pundits avoids any implication that others may have truths which have been inadequately expressed, as exemplified by Paul Krugman (*Thoughts for the Horrified*, *The New York Times*, 11 November 2016):

So what do we do now? By "we" I mean all those left, center and even right who saw Donald Trump as the worst man ever to run for president and assumed that a strong majority of our fellow citizens would agree. I'm not talking about rethinking political strategy. There will be a time for that -- God knows it's clear that almost everyone on the center-left, myself included, was clueless about what actually works in persuading voters. For now, however, I'm talking about personal attitude and behavior in the face of this terrible shock.

Despite his renown as a Nobel Laureate, Krugman clearly learnt nothing other than that Trump was more skillful in convincing unforeseen numbers, previously ignored by Krugman. The skill is attributed specifically to his lies and the gullibility of the ignorant. The difficulty in this regard for Krugman and others is that their views are disseminated through media dependent for their survival on advertising. In deprecating the lies of Trump, the question is to what extent the experts are dubiously complicit in the lies purveyed by advertising -- skillfully reframed as legitimate **puffery**.

The problem for those with the power to deceive, most notably amongst the elites, is that they are increasingly unable to prove that they have not. This is especially evident in the case of the advertisers faced with an audience effectively "groomed" to be sceptical through constant exposure to puffery. "Fiat truths" are increasingly less effective in a "post-society".

**Incitement to disloyalty?** For **Michael Moore**, equally lacking in any sense of perspective, as an erstwhile hero of progressives, the reprise has taken the form of very active opposition to Trump and his strategies -- given that these can be framed as uniquely tainted by racism and and misogyny (*7 Things We Must Do as Trump Prepares for the White House*, *AlterNet*, 10 November 2016):

1. Must quickly and decisively form an opposition movement, the likes of which hasn't been seen since the 1960s.... [*in order to enhance the divisions in American society?*]
2. Prepare to impeach Trump...
3. Must commit right now to a vigorous fight (including civil disobedience, if necessary) that will block any and all Donald Trump Supreme Court nominees who do not meet our approval... [*incitement to civil disobedience?*]
4. Demand the DNC apologize to Bernie Sanders for trying to fix the primaries against him, for spinning the press to ignore his historic campaign...
5. Demand that President Obama establish a special prosecutor to investigate who and what was behind FBI director James Comey's illegal interference into the presidential election 11 days before the vote was held. [*with the implication that there was no substance to the allegations?*]
6. Begin a national push while it's fresh in everyone's mind for a constitutional amendment to fix our broken electoral system...
7. Convince President Obama to immediately... replace all the poisoned pipes... the water in Flint is still unusable. [*a failure symptomatic of ineffectual policies of the Clinton party?*]

Who might now be suspected of planning to assassinate Trump -- in a society which has demonstrated such propensity (Abraham Lincoln, Kennedy, Martin Luther King)? Who would welcome such an outcome? With what language might it be deplored by his critics? (Samuel Osborne, *Sir David Attenborough receives death threats after saying 'we could shoot' Donald Trump*, *The Independent*, 17 November 2016).

## Lessons for the world?

Is there any evidence of new thinking appropriate to the challenges of the times and the people who have to survive them? Within the prevailing groupthink modality, who is enabled to explore such thinking -- if indeed it can be recognized?

**Upgrading democracy?** Whilst it is extremely unfortunate that the media does not enable more fruitful reflection on polarized dynamics so questionably characteristic of competitive sport and business, the issue is how the deficiencies of democracy are to be more fruitfully acknowledged. How is an "upgrade" to be engendered -- to a democratic process which is increasingly "not fit for purpose"?

Why are such possibilities not more systematically explored in an information-based society confronted by the need to update technologies on a yearly basis, if not more frequently? Why is the challenge not framed in such terms, as separately argued with conference processes (*Interyet Nescience? Self-referential upgrading of obsolete Internet conference processes inhibiting emergence of integrative knowledge*, 2013).

**Voting processes:** The need for such an upgrade is curiously evident in the voting process itself. Much is increasingly made of the necessary switch to a cashless society and the requirement that the financial transactions be conducted electronically (even by those challenged by their complexity). There have been numerous scandals regarding the vulnerability of such systems to hacking. Many have lost their life savings through **financial fraud** enabled by the internet. Nevertheless it continues to be emphatically argued that the system is reliable.

At the same time it is argued that -- to avoid the risk of **electoral fraud** -- democracy requires that people go physically to a voting station

in order to vote. This may well be enabled by controversial use of [voting machines](#) at such locations. There is no sense that [voting electronically](#), from the convenience of the home or office, would avoid many abuses associated with the requirement for physical presence -- with all the inconvenience and cost that may be involved. How is the risk for financial fraud to be distinguished from that for electoral fraud? This is especially relevant to new claims that Clinton performed worse in counties that relied on electronic voting machines compared to paper ballots and optical scanners (*Trump election: Activists call for recount in battleground states*, *BBC News*, 23 November 2016).

Does this not suggest a means to enhance voter involvement to counter the [voter apathy](#) so widely deplored? How can the vulnerabilities of electronic financial transactions be minimized when the immediate risk to livelihood may be disastrous for some? Does the risk of electronic voting not call for similar appreciation?

**Deployment of US democracy elsewhere?** In recognition of the divided nature of American society, the challenge has been unfortunately framed by many elites as the need for the informed to do battle with the ignorant -- namely those who have seen themselves better represented by Trump.

Elites righteously claim their mastery of the complexity of modern society and the systems of governance. The ignorance of others is deplored as an indication of their incapacity. Unfortunately for those assumption, the governance of enabled by the expertise of elites is proving increasingly inadequate to the crises of the times.

The lesson for the world, with the rise of so-called populism, is that this outmoded elitist mindset is likely to be deployed in response to those framed elsewhere as the enemies of the USA. It is the only process on which Americans feel they can rely in defence of their own interests. There is no quest for any other, nor any acceptable argument that such should be sought.

**Rightful winners and Wrongful losers?** Democracy currently cultivates the dangerous assumption that winners are right and losers are necessarily wrong. Hence winners have the right to govern and losers must accept that or be deemed disloyal. In a complex society, the reactive responses of the disappointed losers -- first-order, knee-jerk responses -- are clearly not a source of fruitful insight. Those such as Chomsky have the capacity to articulate second and higher order responses, but seemingly choose not to do so -- unlike those such as [George Lakoff](#) (in archetypal disagreement with Chomsky), especially in his earlier analysis (*Why Trump? The Huffington Post*, 3 March 2016).

The commentary by Lakoff commentary on the outcome of the presidential election necessarily highlights further the metaphors that were in play during that campaign (*A Minority President: why the polls failed and what the majority can do*, *AlterNet*, 21 November 2016). Ironically however, as the title implies, he stresses that:

The loser, for the majority of voters, will now be a minority president-elect. Don't let anyone forget it... The majority, at the very least, needs to keep its values in the public eye and view the minority president's action through majority American values.

Despite his long-established skill in clarifying metaphors, missing seems to be his own recognition of the metaphor he is effectively using to frame the outcome, namely "majority is right" (despite being associated with the "left") and "minority is wrong" (despite being associated with the "right"). In so doing he fails usefully to transcend the dilemmas in question, especially those resulting from the ambiguous significance of those terms. More problematic is his sense that the progressives (on the left, now held to be in the majority) have been "wrong" in failing to attend to his earlier analysis of the matter, which has now been proven to be "right".

As with the *AlterNet* medium in which his new analysis appears, there is a desperate attempt by those whose arguments have been called into question by the minority (who are "wrong"), to demonstrate that they were really "right" -- and that right will triumph. Trump is necessarily and unquestionably "wrong" (as with those he represents) and progressives (the majority) are necessarily and unquestionably "right". Presumably 90% of the American media will endeavour to recover their credibility through demonstrating this for the duration of Trump's presidency.

There is not the slightest sense that the "minority" may have been "right" in some way -- especially since they "won" according to the rules to which the "majority" subscribed -- and by which the "minority" would have been delighted had the "majority" "lost".

More curious, given the "majority is right" metaphor, is the sense in which Lakoff's view can only have been a minority view during the course of the campaign -- and therefore necessarily "wrong" according to his framing? Could Lakoff have framed matters more insightfully and fruitfully, especially if such views are usefully to be recognized as part of the problem? Given the dramatic case now made for climate change, how "right" is this concern given that it emerged as a view by which the majority was far from being persuaded?

Whilst first order responses are a necessary feedback process to be expected, in cybernetic terms governance now desperately needs articulation and comprehension of higher order responses -- to match the deceptive skills to which society is so vulnerable ([Maurice Yolles](#) and Gerhard Fink, *Generic Agency Theory, Cybernetic Orders and New Paradigms*, *Kybernetes*, 2015).

How is a system calling for appropriate governance to evoke adequate reflection on the interplay of first order dynamics -- especially from those who would prefer to play the simplest games? Democratic tennis? An encouraging indication is the theme of one journal -- *Calm Thinking about Trump* (Ashutosh Sheshabalaya, *Lessons for the World from Trump's Win: an emerging market perspective on a presumed American cataclysm*, *The Globalist: rethinking globalization*, 10 November 2016).

## Possibility of other shocking challenges to groupthink?

The more fundamental issue, as noted above, is the evidence of an unrecognized degree of dysfunctional groupthink amongst elites with

respect to global governance. This frames the recognition of those who then need to be blamed and demonised. The issue for conventional thinking is then: **What else have arrogant democratic elites got radically and dangerously wrong through denial?**

The argument can be given focus through the case of Volkswagen -- upheld as an icon of corporate social responsibility through its long association with the [UN Global Compact](#). It is not only the [Volkswagen emissions scandal](#) which is a cause for concern but the detection of other issues of which this may be but a distracting example -- as with the detection of [equivalent practices in other multinational corporations](#).

If the challenge is succinctly framed by Ron Atkin (as noted above): *A surprise is an answer to a question we did not ask!* **What were the questions which were not asked** with respect to: the financial crisis of 2008; the currently threatening rise of populism; climate change; rejection of human rights provisions; corruption and doping in international sport; extensive tax avoidance and use of tax havens; and with respect to the unprecedented recent rise in asylum seekers?

Ironically the latter can be explored in terms of military destabilization of the countries from which people flee to the countries furnishing the arms, and benefitting significantly from that trade, as separately discussed (*Evaluating the Grossness of Gross Domestic Product: Refugees Per Kiloton (RPK) as a missing indicator?* 2016).

The existence of such challenges can be investigated in terms of that which is systematically designed off any negotiating table, possibly justified by political correctness (*Global Strategic Implications of the "Unsaid": from myth-making towards a "wisdom society"*, 2003). Non-decision-making by elites on vital issues has become an art form, as may be variously explored (*The Art of Non-Decision-Making -- and the manipulation of categories*, 1997; *Lipoproblems: Developing a Strategy Omitting a Key Problem -- the systemic challenge of climate change and resource issues*, 2009).

Possibilities, variously discussed previously, include:

- **Radicalism?** Whereas this threat has been conveniently associated with Islam, clearly those who voted so surprisingly and irrationally for Trump exhibit radicalism of a hitherto unrecognized form. The effort by "democrats" to do battle with them, even to the point of eradicating them in the [Global War on Terror](#) (*Eradication as the Strategic Final Solution of the 21st Century?* 2014).

In electing Trump, with his terrifying policies, are those voters then to be explicitly associated with sympathy for home-grown terrorism -- engendered by the systematic negligence of politicians and the media? Given the radical choice by so many in voting for Trump, should radicalism itself be explored otherwise, as separately discussed (*Radicalisation versus Demonisation? Enabling radical initiatives under conditions of strategic stalemate*, 2015; *Identifying the Root Cause Focus of Radical Identity*, 2015).

- **Erosion of collective memory:** In the focus on hope for the future, featuring in the promises of politicians seeking election, is society witness to a remarkable erosion of collective memory. In many instances, "we have been there before". In celebrating their own history, and condemning the current actions of others, societies skillfully enable forgetting.

The treatment and condition of American Indians offers one example (cf. [Trail of Tears](#), [Potawatomi Trail of Death](#)). The case of France offers another. In radical response to the attacks to which it has recently been subjected, no recollection is encouraged of the very extensive use of the guillotine during the [Reign of Terror](#) through which was established the republic of which it is so proud. The repeated framing of the [Holocaust](#) by [Jean-Marie Le Pen](#) as a "detail of history" is considered aberrant in the extreme. However, with respect to the much-deplored beheading by Islamists, carefully forgotten is the official use by France of the guillotine until 1977 (*Beheading versus Befooting: in quest of the lesser evil for the greater good*, 2014).

For a culture proud of the place of philosophy in its education, the failure of its reflection on radical engagement is remarkable, rendering terrifying the implications of radical new deradicalisation legislation in France (*Radical Innovators Beware: in the arts, sciences and philosophy*, 2016). This makes evident the relevance of the radical insight of [George Santayana](#): *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*.

- **Ignorance?** Given that it is claimed by informed elites that it is the ignorance of those voting so inappropriately for Trump which is the fundamental issue, how is any such ignorance to be recognized in democratic societies in which elites espousing different schools of thought frame each other as fundamentally misguided and unqualified -- and ignorant to a deplorable degree? Obvious examples include the mutual criticism of arts and sciences, science and religion, development entrepreneurs and environmentalists.

The pattern is equally obvious within the sciences, the arts, the religions, the environmentalists, etc. Who is to educate whom about what -- notably in the light of the arguments of [Nicholas Rescher](#) (*Ignorance: on the wider implications of deficient knowledge*, 2009). How is the engagement with complexity to be effectively ensured when it is jeopardized by issues of ignorance and failures of comprehension -- notably amongst elites? How is ignorance to be given due recognition, as may be playfully asked: *If Writers are Necessarily Right... Who are the "rangers", so necessarily wrong?* (2015).

- **Disagreement?** Irrespective of recognition of ignorance, or assertions to that effect, how is a global society to be governed sustainably when so many variously disagree? In that sense the focus on achieving agreement and resolving conflicts appears increasingly naive and unrealistic (*Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy?* 2011). The extent of dependence on the emergence of a unified world view, for which so many so desperately hope, is increasingly as inappropriate as the conflict between religions makes evident.

How is it that "healthy disagreement" is only acknowledged as a simplistic device to frame the unfortunate failure of attempts at dialogue? Is there a need to discover more fruitful ways to disagree in order to build necessary diversity more effectively into a system which cannot be "unified" in a simplistic manner? Again the issue has been usefully framed by Nicholas Rescher (*The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity*, 1985; *Aporetics: rational deliberation in the face of inconsistency*, 2009). The challenge is evident with respect to every strategic proposal -- and the rationalization of its inappropriateness (Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: how a handful of scientists obscured the truth on issues from tobacco smoke to global warming*, 2010).

- **Overcomplexification:** The upside of an information-based society is widely promoted. Relatively little attention is accorded to a variety of downsides variously acknowledged through personal experience. These include: increasing complexity of rules, regulations and laws in every domain; increasing complexity of transactions (especially in relation to taxation, and entitlements); increasing complexity of consumer product ingredients (in terms of health benefits, side-effects and environmental impact); increasing sophistication of jobs (variously threatened by automation and artificial intelligence); increasing theoretical complexity of reality (whether of social, environmental or physical systems).

These developments tend to favour those who claim greater mastery of complexity and its comprehension -- typically the elites -- to the relative disadvantage of the less privileged, the less competent, the vulnerable and the elderly. This is especially evident with respect to (internet) banking. Of related concern is the individual and collective dependency on highly complex systems in many domains -- systems which are vulnerable to catastrophic failure, especially in the event of cyberwarfare (when they may simply be shot down).

- **Potential ungovernability and collective incapacity:** Given the heavy investment in unquestionable optimism by leaders seeking to elicit popular support for their initiatives through hope-mongering, there is little incentive for realistic assessment of remedial capacity and possibility of coping in response to future crises -- whatever claims are vainly and optimistically made for the potential to govern sustainably (*Future Coping Strategies*, 1992). The track record of inefficacy is obscured by a systemic need for upbeat reporting significantly enabled by denial and a pattern of **cover-ups**.

The possibility of coping has become a prime feature of **post-truth governance** through elaboration of fiat realities -- previously deprecated as spin. Debate is framed largely by appeals to desirability disconnected from the constraints of policy, and by the repeated assertion of fiat realities concerning which factual challenges are ignored. Again the possible ungovernability is a reality which cannot be discussed -- other than to claim that alternative possibilities would guarantee it.

- **Unforeseen consequences:** Given the natural propensity to concentrate on immediate results in the light of mainstream thinking -- reinforced by **confirmation bias** -- thereby circumventing unforeseeable problematic consequences, relatively little effort is expended on detection of longer-term and subtler consequences.

In the light of past surprises these have engendered, it is to be expected that blinkered technological development will ensure their emergence (*Geo-engineering Oversight Agency for Thermal Stabilization*, 2008).

- **Overpopulation?** It has long been argued that ever increasing population numbers are severely undermining the coping capacity of national and global governance. Increasing numbers severely challenge infrastructure and resources with respect to: food, water, accommodation, waste disposal, transportation, education, health, security, and employment, for example. There are few issues preoccupying local, national and global governance which are not exacerbated by increasing numbers -- increasingly a consequence of refugee movement.

Curiously however, the media and elites which so blindly deprecated the candidacy of Trump are equally negligent of the population issue -- notably influenced by an analogous pattern of vested interests (*Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge: incommunicability of fundamentally inconvenient truth*, 2008). Irrespective of recognition of the issue itself, there is global resistance to any discussion of how the global population challenge might be fruitfully debated -- whatever the outcome of such debate.

Given the universal political commitment to "family values", what of the premature fatality of future progeny engendered by lack of resources, by resource constraints, and by inadequate coping mechanisms? Groupthink can be understood to avoid such challenges by focusing on derivative strategic issues, as separately argued (*Vigorous Application of Derivative Thinking to Derivative Problems: transcending bewailing, hand-wringing and emotional blackmail*, 2013).

It is intriguing to note how Trump's negligent challenge to the newly articulated elite consensus on climate change now evokes calls for mobilisation to oppose his policies in order to "save the planet". With the probable existence of other issues "under the radar" of global elites, could it be argued that "climate change" is now being used as a cognitive device to deflect attention from such issues -- much as with the deprecated use of "**human shields**" by cowardly enemies?

This tendency would add a particular twist to the failure to explore embarrassing "anthropogenic" processes of climate change -- especially the unquestionable increase in population and its challenge to both coping and remedial capacity. Trump then serves as a highly convenient focus for blame for any failure of the **Paris Agreement** (2015) and enabling the **implementation process agreed in Marrakesh** (2016). Difficult discussion of fundamental flaws in any remedial strategies can then be avoided since the explanation is so readily

available.

Are there indeed credible arguments to distinguish between global economic dependency on population increase and the processes essential to a [Ponzi scheme](#) of global proportions? The possibility is all the more intriguing in that it is precisely the failure of authorities to question the processes of a Ponzi scheme which is vital to its success for those who benefit most from it -- as remarkably demonstrated by complicity of elites in the [Madoff investment scandal](#). Does a major argument for promoting population growth -- [sub-replacement fertility](#) -- curiously echo the major challenge of sustaining a Ponzi scheme to ensure the benefits for the few?

Rather than the cynical exploitation of "humanitarian shields", similar parallels could be explored between drug addiction by individuals and the oil addiction of collectivities driving the foreign policy with respect to ongoing major regional conflicts -- as highlighted by [Alan Greenspan](#):

I am saddened that it is politically inconvenient to acknowledge what everyone knows: the Iraq war is largely about oil (*The Age of Turbulence: adventures in a New World*, 2007, p. 463).

Efforts can be made to map such forms of denial as a cognitive "underground" (*Mapping the Global Underground*, 2010).

## Forces of Light versus Forces of Darkness: anticipating the final battle?

**Mutual demonisation:** There has been a curious irony to the presidential campaign in the USA. As noted above, the level of explicit mutual demonisation has been remarkable -- however this is framed as an acceptable feature of negative campaigning ("if you really want to win"). Such demonisation is characteristic of the framing of most global leaders by some, if not by others (*Existence of evil as authoritatively claimed to be an overriding strategic concern*, 2016; *Framing by others of claimants of evil as evil*, 2016). Few leaders of any significance escape the perception of being "evil", or fail to label their opponents in this way. The argument can be presented provocatively through exaggeration (*Evil Rules: guidelines for engaging in Armageddon now*, 2015).

It is of course the case that there is a long and carefully crafted history to the claim by Christianity that Islam is inherently evil, if not "satanic" -- a framing duly reciprocated. Such unquestionable judgment invites playful reframing (*America as Eve-ill Empire and the Evocation of Authenticity Elsewhere*, 2003). The [Abrahamic religions](#) have each been remarkable in framing themselves as the primary source of "light", and the others as essentially evil, despite the monotheistic inspiration they claim so diffidently to hold in common. In the light of this inspiration, they have of course variously endeavoured to exterminate each other throughout their history -- a process continuing to this day.

**Blameworthiness and mirroring:** There is almost no capacity to reframe such processes otherwise, and little stated desire to do so. The ills of society ensure widespread cultivation and attribution of blame, most notably via the media. None would claim to be at fault (*Collective Mea Culpa? You Must be Joking! Them is to blame, Not us!* 2015).

There is little sense that no understanding of fruitful strategic resolution can be achieved without recognition of how one is part of the problem when systemically defined. Consequently, by putting a negative focus on Trump as a threatening figure of hate, people thereby become part of the problem -- preventing any recognition of the solution required.

The problematically repugnant nature of the "other" merits recognition as a mirror of the nature of "us", as remarkably articulated by [George Monbiot](#) (*Donald Trump is no Outsider: he mirrors our political culture*, *The Guardian*, 26 October 2016). He remarks:

We love to horrify ourselves with his excesses, and to see him as a monstrous outlier, the polar opposite of everything a modern, civilised society represents. But he is nothing of the kind. He is the distillation of all that we have been induced to desire and admire. Trump is so repulsive not because he offends our civilisation's most basic values, but because he embodies them.... Trump disgusts us because, where others use a dog whistle, he uses a klaxon. We hate to hear his themes so clearly articulated. But we know in our hearts that they suffuse the way the world is run.... Yes, he is a shallow, mendacious, boorish and extremely dangerous man. But those traits ensure that he is not an outsider but the perfect representation of his caste, the caste that runs the global economy and governs our politics. He is our system, stripped of its pretences.

Monbiot effectively makes the remarkable point that, **whether or not Trump represents US, he certainly represents us** -- or those with whose strategies we are complicit.

**The Force is with US?** In the light of the mythology of the archetypal battle between the "Forces of Light" and the "Forces of Darkness", more curious is the manner in which each political party characterizes itself as representing the Force of Light -- carefully cultivating that perception amongst its supporters. It is then only natural to frame the opposing political party as representing the Forces of Darkness -- meriting any imaginable strategy for its eradication and triumphalist elimination ("*Mission Accomplished*" !?). This binary framework is extensively cultivated and reinforced in fantasy and fiction (for example the "*Force*", and the *Dark Force*, of *Star Wars* from 1977)

The irony is that this drama is played out within a country like the USA. Each party (or "side") perceiving the other as "Dark" and itself as "Light", as predicted regarding the "*end times*" in the numerous biblical descriptions of divisiveness" (*51 Bible verses about End Times Brother Against Brother*, *Open Bible Info*).

The irony is all the greater when "progressives" frame themselves as the Forces of Light arrayed against all who fail to appreciate their insight. The difficulty is highlighted by one reading of the argument of [David Korten](#) (*On the Making of Trump -- The Blind Spot That Created Him*):

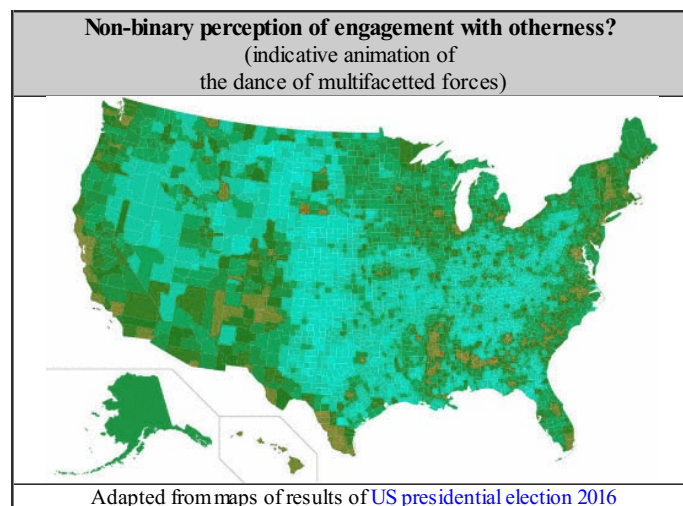
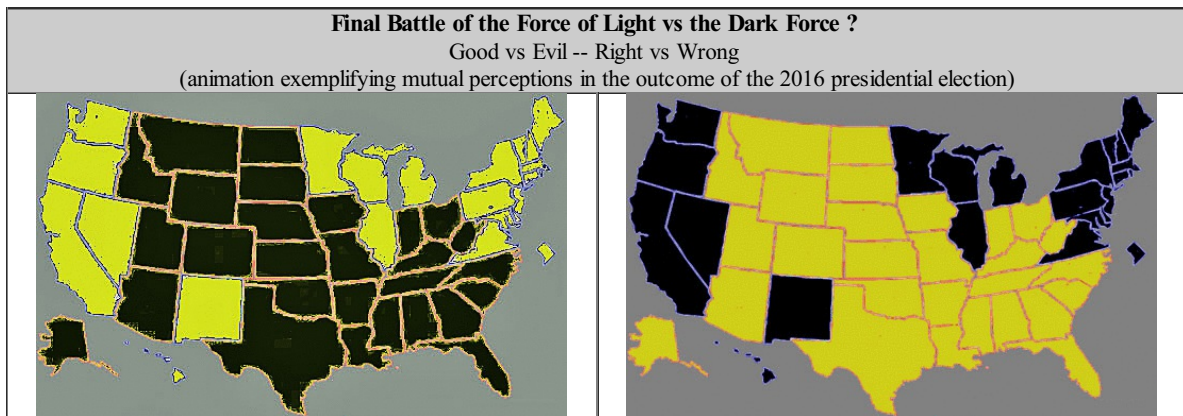
Summing up, the blind spot at issue here concerns the dominant paradigms of thought that have legitimized the economic, political, and spiritual divides which -- in conjunction with the mindless use of social media and technology -- gave rise to the Trump movement and presidency. To overcome or bridge these divides calls for nothing less than regenerating the foundations of our civilization by updating the key operating codes on which our societies operate (*The Huffington Post*, 11 November 2016)

Is it merely a matter of accepting the argument of self-acclaimed progressives, when the more fundamental challenge lies in the paradoxical inability of all parties to integrate any radical disagreement with their favourite recipes? Is that the "blind spot" undermining any social change initiative -- a degree of recognition of how each is part of the problem rather than an unblemished Warrior of the Light? What might be called the "My-Plan Syndrome" systematically avoids due attention to those who are liable to disagree -- even though they are necessarily part of the system (as Hitler discovered).

Clearly this pattern is also evident in the conflicts between religions and within them. Although they cultivate and sustain that myth, the religions have proven to be totally incapable of reframing more fruitfully the paradox it represents. The dogma and discourse of any religion has notably not an iota of theological healing balm to offer -- other than the requirement for recognition of the primacy of its particular worldview: *you are wrong and we are right -- join us*.

The process follows naturally from the archetypal distinction between us and them, embodied in some foreign policy declarations as *you're either with us or against us*. This was most notably articulated by Hillary Clinton relating to engagement in the war on terrorism, as discussed separately (*Us and Them: relating to challenging others patterns in the shadow dance between "good" and "evil"*, 2009). A number of examples are offered in the *Wikipedia* profile.

Essentially the dynamic involves cultivation of the fundamental belief that "them" are necessarily wrong, and "we" are necessarily right. The "we" that then blames "them" for their misguided perception is then understood to be righteously error-free -- essentially and unquestionably enlightened.



The non-binary animation above offers a reminder that other perspectives are variously represented (or suppressed) in a truly democratic society -- as in any healthy ecosystem.

The shrill post-electoral hysteria of left-leaning media in the USA suggests a strange prospect at the end of the envisaged final battle -- after the "right-thinking" have been "beamed up" to Heaven. The "left-behind", despite having lost, will clamour at the Gates of Heaven to gain entry by any means -- in order to sit at the "right-hand" of God (*Why does Scripture emphasize the right hand of God?*). Dependence on conventions of directionality clearly calls more careful exploration, as separately argued (*Unquestioned Bias in Governance from Direction of Reading? Political implications of reading from left-to-right, right-to-left, or top-down*, 2016).

## Towards articulation of a "post-truth table"?

**Truth table:** To the extent that the conventional relevance of truth has now been called into question in the political arena at least, and the advertising process more generally, there is a case for considering the nature of a "post-truth table" in the light of the apparent limitations of the **truth table**. As understood in mathematics, this sets out the functional values of logical expressions on each of their functional arguments. In particular, truth tables can be used to show whether a propositional expression is true for all legitimate input values, that is, logically valid. [For the sake of clarity, it is somewhat ironic that the work of *Emil Leon Post* on propositional logic now gives rise to confusion with regard to any reference to a "Post truth table"; this is also evident from references to its parallel invention by *Ludwig Wittgenstein* -- hence the confusing implications of reference to a "Wittgenstein-Post truth table"].

Further clarification regarding the origins of "post-truth" is provided by *Andrew Calcutt* (*The Surprising Origins of 'Post-truth' -- and how it was spawned by the liberal left*, *The Conversation*, 18 November 2016):

More than 30 years ago, academics started to discredit "truth" as one of the "grand narratives" which clever people could no longer bring themselves to believe in. Instead of "the truth", which was to be rejected as naive and/or repressive, a new intellectual orthodoxy permitted only "truths" -- always plural, frequently personalised, inevitably relativised. Under the terms of this outlook, all claims on truth are relative to the particular person making them; there is no position outside our own particulars from which to establish universal truth.

What now appears to be required is an extension of the truth-table is to encompass the emerging reality that "THEM" are understood (by "US") to be misrepresenting the truth (if not lying), especially about "US" -- whether deliberately or inadvertently. This is complemented by the understanding by "THEM" that "US" is misrepresenting the truth (if not lying), especially about "THEM" -- again, whether deliberately or inadvertently. The situation is rendered more complex to the extent that if either US or THEM has the power to misrepresent (or lie), it becomes impossible for either to prove incontrovertibly that they are not. This is especially problematic for any authority, whether a government, a corporation, a religion, or any institutionalised belief system. Authoritative declarations of truth can then only be understood as assertions of "fiat realities", analogous to the creation of fiat money.

**"Fake news":** There is a long-standing concern with **misinformation** and **disinformation** which can take a variety of forms, some of it considered highly appropriate to deception of the enemy and as **propaganda** in war time. It is a natural aspect of advertising, notably as puffery. Especially insidious is the deliberate selective presentation of information -- creating **filter bubbles** -- such as to reinforce and orient patterns of behaviour, of which **grooming the gullible** is the most obvious example (Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*, 2011). A **recent report** determined that some 82% of middle-schoolers could not distinguish between an advertisement labeled "sponsored content" and a real news story (*A Most Students Don't Know When News Is Fake, Stanford Study Finds*, *The Wall Street Journal*, 21 November 2016).

A variant notably featured with respect to the miss-selling of mortgages which created the vulnerability enabling the **sub-prime crisis**. Partly as a consequence of the negative campaigning in the US presidential election, new concerns have been expressed about "fake news" and its elimination (*How Fake News Goes Viral: A Case Study*, *The New York Times*, 20 November 2016; *Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg Outlines Projects to Reduce Fake News*, *Live Science*, 21 November 2016; *12 Fake News Stories from the Mainstream Media*, *Breitbart*, 22 November 2016).

The question for *Michel Chossudovsky* is *Who is Behind "Fake News"?:*

The mainstream corporate media is desperate. They want to suppress independent and alternative online media, which they categorize as "fake news". Readers on social media are warned not to go onto certain sites. Our analysis confirms that the mainstream media are routinely involved in distorting the facts and turning realities upside down. (*Mainstream Media Use Fake Videos and Images*, *Global Research*, 24 November 2016)

As an extension of the strategic use of disinformation, there is the far more problematic use of "false flag" operations. These are **covert operations** that are designed to deceive in such a way that the operations appear as though they are being carried out by entities, groups, or nations other than those who actually planned and executed them. It necessarily far from clear what actions attributed to "terrorists" may be more correctly attributed to entities seeking to justify security operation or military intervention against those framed as terrorists. The *Wikipedia* description of false flag operations notes the extent to which these may be used to justify the declaration of war.

Whilst the implication is that fake news is essentially problematic, notably with respect to any concerns dependent on accuracy and objectivity, there is another form of misinformation which is especially well-intentioned (in contrast to that seeking to misguide, exploit or harm). This is evident in the conventions of political correctness, etiquette, empowerment discourse, and interaction with the vulnerable - - possibly to enhance group cohesion through reinforcing confirmation bias. Some forms of lying (notably flattery) are valuable in developing and sustaining social relationships which would otherwise be threatened or undermined. It remains a matter of controversy as to when frankness is appropriate or harmful. Governance claim the need to misinform regarding some issues in order not to engender panic.

A further dimension is obvious in the deliberate omission of information on matters which would raise unwelcome questions or reactions -- as is evident in discourse within a family in which some things are said by some, and omitted in the presence of others. Hence the issue of the "unsaid" noted above. Initiatives undertaken to eradicate fake news can clearly be conceived as a means of removing unwelcome news -- namely as a form of censorship.

Readily forgotten is the sense in which "fiction" is necessarily "fake" -- as with many stories. As with respect to sponsored advertisements, there is then the issue of the capacity to distinguish fact from fiction, notably in the light of the earlier articulation of "truthiness" (Howard Wainer, *Truth or Truthiness: distinguishing fact from fiction by learning to think like a data scientist*, 2015;

Howard Gardner, *Truth, Beauty, and Goodness Reframed: educating for the virtues in the Age of Truthiness and Twitter*, 2012). Linda Starr, *Fact, Fiction, or Opinion? Evaluating Online Information*, *Education World*, 2009).

The issue is especially important when the fiction is developed as a means of grooming the population (*Children Exposed To Religion Have Difficulty Distinguishing Fact From Fiction, Study Finds, The Huffington Post*, 21 July 2014; *Hollywood and the Pentagon: a relationship of mutual exploitation, Al Jazeera*, 29 January 2014; *11 Hollywood/Pentagon propaganda films released since 2001, The Screeching Kettle*, 11 January 2015).

Some form of post-truth table would be helpful in clarifying this variety rather promoting the illusion that there is a possibility of eliminating inaccurate news. A particularly difficulty is associated with information which may be presented and sincerely upheld as truth today, only to be proved to be misleading and inaccurate tomorrow. This is especially evident in those assertions of science for which no indication is provided as to their hypothetical nature.

**Encoding patterns:** Arguably, as a prelude to any such exercise, it could be suggested that the interplay between Democrats and Republicans, majority and minority, and right and wrong, could benefit from insight into the encoding of patterns of binary distinctions offered by the *I Ching* (*Transformation Metaphors derived experimentally from the Chinese Book of Changes*, 1997).

In that sense those favouring Trump, and populist leaders elsewhere, are opposing the previously dominant values seen to be characterized in practice by "excessive *yin*" and "insufficient *yang*". The nationalist agendas, and all that is naturally held to be disagreeable about them from a *yin* perspective, could then be understood as a countervailing measure of *yang*. This is most evident in the current challenge to a variety of unconstrained humanitarian responses (influx of asylum seekers, sexual freedom, etc). The dynamic could be otherwise framed as the eternal battle between the *headless hearts* (aka the "bleeding hearts") and the *heartless heads*.

Some indication as to how such a "post-truth table" might be elaborated is offered separately (*Discovering Richer Patterns of Comprehension to Reframe Polarization*, 1998; *Changing Patterns using Transformation Pathways: exploring "camp-us" inspiration by an alien world view as a metaphor*, 2015 ). This is consistent with the sense in which the binary framing currently challenged embodies the values of *allopathy* to the exclusion of those embodied by *homeopathy*, as argued separately (*Remedies to Global Crisis: "Allopathic" or "Homeopathic"? Metaphorical complementarity of "conventional" and "alternative" models*, 2009).

The pattern in the exercise of 1998 might then be adapted according to the following structure in which, at each stage (with the exception of the first) a "post-truth" reframing is variously made of the conditions at the previous stage. This is indicated by colouring an "overview line" (corresponding to a "meta-perspective") differently from that used in the black/white pattern of the traditional encoding.

### 2-fold comprehension



No higher-order perspective from which to perceive, evaluate or comment on the above distinction

### 4-fold comprehension

(engendered by emergence of a higher-order meta-perspective on the above)







Perception / Evaluation / Overview of underlying condition (1-line encoding above)			Perception / Evaluation / Overview of underlying condition (1-line encoding above)	
of Self ( positive/uncritical, self-appreciation)	of Self by Other (negative/critical)		of Self by Other (negative/critical)	of Self ( positive/uncritical, self-appreciation)
Got act together; everything under control	Undemocratic, unjustified dominance; dictatorship		Undemocratic, unjustified dominance	Got act together; everything under control; law and order
<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>	<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>		<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>	<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>
<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>	<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>		<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>	<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>
<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>	<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>		<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>	<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>

Text for the above set of patterns could be readily derived from the distinctions made between openness and closure, variously understood as "good" or "bad".

### 8-fold comprehension

(engendered by emergence of a higher-order meta-perspective on the above)

Perception / Evaluation / Overview of underlying condition (2-line encoding above)			Perception / Evaluation / Overview of underlying condition (2-line encoding above)	
of Self ( positive/uncritical)	of Other (negative/critical)		of Other (negative/critical)	of Self ( positive/uncritical)
<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>	<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>		<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>	<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>
<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>	<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>		<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>	<i>(appropriate text to be added)</i>

(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)		(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)
(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)		(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)
(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)		(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)
(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)		(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)
(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)		(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)
(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)		(appropriate text to be added)	(appropriate text to be added)

Text for the above set of patterns could be adapted from sets of distinctions made by authors such as [Magoroh Maruyama](#), [Geert Hofstede](#), [Will McWhinney](#), [Stephen Pepper](#), [Mary Douglas](#), [Howard Gardner](#), [W, T, Jones](#) and [Emmanuel Todd](#), as discussed separately (*Systems of Categories Distinguishing Cultural Biases*, 1993).

**Orders of cybernetic feedback:** As suggested by the 1998 exercise, this approach could be extended to 16-fold comprehension, to 32-fold comprehension, and to the 64-fold comprehension encoded by the complete *I Ching* pattern. Of particular interest is the implication that the distinctively coloured oversight line is then indicative of a meta-reflection consistent with arguments for recognition of various cybernetic orders of feedback: 1st order (4-fold), 2nd order (8-fold), 3rd (16-fold), 4th (32-fold), 5th (64-fold) (cf. [Maurice Yolles](#) and [Gerhard Fink](#), *Generic Agency Theory, Cybernetic Orders and New Paradigms*, *Kybernetes*, 2015).

The arguments of the latter build on those initially elaborated for a [viable system model](#) by [Stafford Beer](#) (*Beyond Dispute: the invention of team synteegrity*, 1994).

**Ternary patterns:** In terms of traditional Chinese thinking, rather than [trigrams](#), any distinguishing line (highlighted above) merits consideration in the light of another encoding using tetragrams (or quadgrams) as in the *Tai Hsüan Ching*, as discussed separately (*Strategic Patterns in terms of Knowing, Feeling and Action*, 2008). Given the current preoccupation with the elusive implications of post-truth politics, the subtlety of such traditional conceptual tools merits a degree of attention -- especially in the light of the importance accorded to them with respect to the governance of China over millennia.

In that tradition the binary representation (broken/unbroken line) is augmented by a third form (twice broken), thereby giving rise to the quadgram encoding. Appropriate to the post-truth challenge, this is associated with the "human". In contemporary logic such a pattern is associated with use of a [ternary numeral system](#) (*Triangulation of Incommensurable Concepts for Global Configuration*, 2011).

**Calculus for self-reference:** These concerns recall current interest in [meta-logic](#) and the calculus of indications, stimulated by the seminal arguments of [George Spencer Brown](#) (*Laws of Form*, 1969), developed as a calculus of indications by [Francisco Varela](#) (*The Extended Calculus of Indications interpreted as a three-valued logic*, *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, 20, 1979, 1; *A Calculus for Self-reference*, *International Journal of General Systems*, 2, 1975, pp. 15-24) and by [Louis Kauffman](#) (*Virtual Logic: symbolic logic and the calculus of indications*, *Cybernetics and Human Knowing*, 5, 1998, 3, pp. 63-70).

This has been variously explored by [Dirk Baecker](#) (*A Calculus for Autopoiesis*, 2013) and by [Douglas Flemons](#) (*Completing Distinctions*, 1991)

**Boundedness: openness vs. closure:** The abstract preoccupations with logic readily obscure its implications for recognition of boundaries and distinctions (in the *Laws of Form*, for example). As noted above, clarification of the 4-fold pattern lends itself to articulation in terms of perception of openness and closure as good or bad -- and unquestionably so.

Arguably this pattern is fundamental to the distinction between Democrats and Republicans, or between progressives and conservatives more generally. It is evident in preferences in the debate on free trade versus protectionism, globalization versus nationalism, and on the freedoms and constraints of sexual behaviour (exemplified in clothing coverage).

The contrasting preferences are usefully related to the concerns that they imply with respect to excessive closure or openness in a context where arguments are too readily made that global society cannot have enough openness, or that community identity can only be cultivated through a high order of closure. The 4-fold pattern is then:

	Closure	Openness
Good/Right	boundary protection	free movement
Bad/Wrong	excessive restrictions	unconstrained freedom

Understood in such general terms, relevant authors include [Orrin Klapp](#) (*Opening and Closing: strategies of information adaptation in society*, 1978), [Hilary Lawson](#) (*Closure: a short history of everything*, 2002) and [Eric S. Raymond](#) (*The Cathedral and the Bazaar*, 1999).

Fundamental issues are evident in the contrast between the promotion of "yes" (and agreement) in contrast with "no" (and disagreement), as characteristic of other initiatives ([Roger Fisher](#) and [William L. Ury](#), *Getting to Yes: negotiating agreement without giving in*, 1991; [Nikki Martinez](#), *Learning to Say 'No'*, *The Huffington Post*, 23 February 2016; [Ruchika Agarwal](#) and [Joe Avella](#), *Here is why you should learn to say no*, *Business Insider*, 8 February 2016).

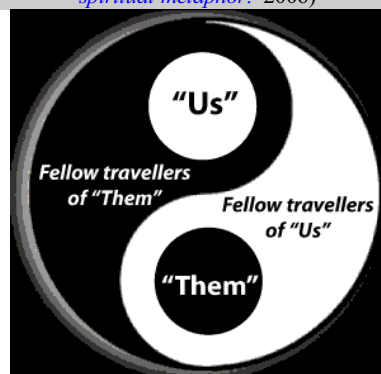
**Negotiating table for "post-truth":** The table metaphor is valuable because of its association with the conventional [negotiating table](#) at which -- supposedly -- truth might be evident. It is there that participants "put their cards on the table" -- ideally face-up. The implied symbolish itself merits consideration (*Radical Localization in a Global Systemic Context: distinguishing normality using playing card suits as a pattern language*, 2015).

The difficulty is that, as in many card games, the face of the card may not be evident. Deception may be a key strategy, as in poker. What might be the dynamics around a negotiating table capable of encompassing post-truth? One clue, as separately discussed, is offered by the surprise inherent in [Knight's move thinking](#).

**Beyond the table metaphor:** Also of potential relevance is the possibility that the paradoxical contradictions of post-truth may call for representation in terms of a geometry distinct from a "table" and the oversimplification of relations between conditions that it may imply. In his work on syntegrity, Stafford Beer attached significance to the icosahedron understood in terms of the dynamics of [tensegrity](#). There is a possibility of mapping the distinctions implied by the 64 *I Ching* hexagrams onto the toroidal drilled truncated cube (*Proof of concept: use of drilled truncated cube as a mapping framework for 64 elements*, 2015).

As with the invisibility of one part of the globe from another, a sphere offers indications (*Spherical Accounting: using geometry to embody developmental integrity*, 2004). Integrating change can be associated with the helix (*Visualization in 3D of Dynamics of Toroidal Helical Coils: in quest of optimum designs for a Concordian Mandala*, 2016).

**Tao of "Us" and "Them"**  
animation of a 4D Klein bottle usefully explored as a 2D rendering  
(adapted from *Snoring of The Other: a politically relevant psycho-spiritual metaphor?* 2006)



## Pyrrhic victory and metastasis?

The nature of the archetypal [end times battle](#) invites careful reflection from psychological, philosophical and military perspectives (in addition to those of the theologies already engaged in such conflict amongst themselves). The attention is merited to the extent that it is imaginatively adapted in practice to the underlying framing of any current binary conflict -- such as that between radically opposed political parties.

**Victory?** Especially intriguing is the outcome for the victorious and for the defeated -- for the "winners" and for the "losers". The situation is even more dramatic when there are only marginally more winners than losers -- as in the US presidential election or in the UK Brexit referendum.

Insight may be obtained from classic military victories. Meriting particular attention is the more recent case of an earlier "Axis" embodied in the German alliance with Japan during World War II or the later "Axis of Evil". The acclaimed defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan and of the regime of Saddam Hussein by the Coalition of the Willing also merits consideration, especially when eloquently framed in terms of "bombing back to the Stone Age", as originally attributed to [Curtis LeMay](#) destroyer of two thirds of Japan's cities during World War II (Nick Cullather, *Bomb them Back to the Stone Age: an etymology*, *History Net*, May 2006).

**Pyrrhic victory?** The question to be asked in framing the strategic objective of elimination of opponents is whether any acclaimed victory may prove to be a so-called [Pyrrhic victory](#). This is a victory that inflicts such a devastating toll on the victor that it is tantamount to defeat. Someone who wins a Pyrrhic victory has been victorious in some way. However, the heavy toll negates any sense of achievement or profit.

The lesson of history is that a Pyrrhic victory of the Forces of Light may not be as triumphant as can be only too readily assumed. Germany? Japan? Possibly even China (as a consequence of the [Opium Wars](#))? What then of the engagement of the Western Forces of Light with the Dark Force of ISIS in the Middle East?

It might be assumed that there is particular insight to be gathered from the length of time in which the various major coalitions, grouping some 60 major countries, have been engaged against an ISIS of questionable strength (*Military intervention against ISIL*). These notably include the [Global Coalition to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant](#) (ISIL). In the case of the focus on Mosul, it has been asked how its eventual liberation is to be understood (Raed Jarrar, *Is it wrong to call Mosul battle a 'liberation'?*, *Al Jazeera*, 3 November 2016).

As has been recognized, there is a marked tendency to "win the war" but to "lose the peace" (Paddy Ashdown, *How to win a war and lose the peace*, *The Telegraph*, 15 October 2006; Tom Brusino, *Does America Usually Win the War but Lose the Peace?* *History News Network*, 16 August 2004). Despite the implication of their title, generals are less insightful with regard to [general systems](#) than is

required by the times (*Transforming the Unsustainable Cost of General Education: strategic insights from Afghanistan*, 2009).

**Generative metaphor:** Any such victory can be explored otherwise, and more fruitfully, in the light of the metaphorical framing offered by Donald Schon (*Generative metaphor: a perspective on problem setting in social policy*, 1979). He argues that "the essential difficulties in social policy have more to do with problem setting than with problem solving, more to do with ways in which we frame the purposes to be achieved than with the selection of optimal means for achieving them." For Schon "the framing of problems often depends upon metaphors underlying the stories which generate problem setting and set the direction of problem solving."

As an example he explores the case of slum housing. If the underlying metaphor is that a slum is a "blight" or "disease", then this encourages an approach governed by the corresponding medical remedies, including the surgery whereby the blight is removed. On the other hand, if the underlying metaphor is that the slum is a "natural community", then this orients any response in terms of enhancing the life of that community. The two perceptions and approaches are quite distinct and have quite different consequences in practice, as more extensively discussed (*Generative metaphor and policy-making*)

**Eradication?** As noted above, with respect to conquest of the Dark Force of ISIS, strategic preference has been specifically given to "eradication" as a metaphor (*Eradication as the Strategic Final Solution of the 21st Century?* 2014). This is a metaphor which is frequently used regarding disease and pestilence -- whether with respect to its global incidence or its manifestation in an individual. Use of the term is particularly evident with respect to cancer, especially with respect to the "war on cancer" as a major cause of death -- curiously analogous to the framing of the "war on terror", epitomized by the struggle against ISIS.

There are many references to the resemblances between cancer and terrorism (Christoph Westphal, *Treating terrorism like cancer*, *The Boston Globe*, 2 April 2016; Gregory A. Curt, *Terrorism and Cancer... Four Years After 9/11*, *The Oncologist*, 2005; David Katz, *Terrorism as Cancer and Vice Versa*, *The Huffington Post*, 30 December 2015; Bryan C. Price, *Terrorism as Cancer: the challenges of combating an incurable disease*, U.S. Military Academy, 2016). The latter is exceptionally insightful from a counter-terrorism perspective.

These references merit reflection on the framing offered by the major approaches to the treatment of cancer -- to the eradication of malignant cells. These are chemotherapy and radiation therapy. As with the expected triumph of the Forces of Light -- ironically through analogues to such treatment (bombing and chemical warfare) -- there is the insight offered by remission, especially when it only takes the form of partial remission.

**Metastasis?** Especially relevant to the anticipated early triumph of the Forces of Light over ISIS (thanks to Trump?) is that cancer may indeed be successfully eradicated at a particular location within an individual body -- only to manifest otherwise through metastasis. This is the spread of a cancer or any other disease from one organ or part of the body to another -- without being directly connected with it. In the case of ISIS the process is already anticipated -- following its successful eradication from the Middle East -- through the emergence of terrorist cells in Europe and elsewhere.

As a metaphor, metastasis has been used by several commentators:

- Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel: *Speech delivered at the CSIS Global Security Forum*, (Washington DC, 5 November 2013)
- Jacqueline Kilmas: *Ashton Carter: Islamic State 'metastasizing'; U.S. Intervention Desperately Needed* (*Washington Times*, 11 March 2015)
- Secretary of Defense Ash Carter: *Statement on the U.S. Military Strategy in the Middle East and the Counter-ISIS Campaign* (House Armed Services Committee, Washington DC, 1 December 2015).

There is, furthermore, the terrible irony highlighted above, namely that those associated with the ISIS worldview frame themselves to be the Forces of Light, with those opposing them as the satanic Dark Force. This irony is curiously echoed in the mutual perception of the Democrats and Republicans -- especially in the language each has used to describe the other. Each readily frames the other as a dangerous cancer to be cured by whatever means.

As abnormal cell growth, cancer is also a form of life. In the desperate quest for life on Mars and elsewhere in the universe, it is carefully forgotten that it may be cancerogenic -- even intelligently so. Also curious is the sense in which opposing political ideologies readily frame each other as a cancer on society -- to the point of favouring that metaphor in preference to any other (Frederick Parker, *Cancer in American Democracy!: the causes and the cures*, 2015; David Brooks, *The Governing Cancer of Our Time*, *The New York Times*, 26 February 2016; Clay Farris Naff, *If Trump Is a Cancer on the Republican Party, I Know the Cause and the Cure*, *The Huffington Post*, 4 March 2016).

Such framing is evident in strategic attitudes to Islam (*Donald Trump National Security Adviser Mike Flynn Has Called Islam 'a Cancer'*, *ABC News*, 18 November 2016; *Radical Islam Is a Cancer That Needs To Be Cut Out*, *Breitbart*, 22 July 2015). There is little difficulty in imagining that Islam would frame Western hedonism as a cancer -- since Christianity has also done so.

Curiously significant is the construction of the term "meta-stasis", given the argument above for a dynamic reframing of the stasis so questionably associated with the modern state. It is possible that metaphysics would call for recognition of a form of invariance more fundamental than that with which state governance currently associates itself. This would be consistent with insights into the multidimensional nature of reality emerging from physics, potentially applicable to an understanding of the Trump election (Parag Khanna, *Want to understand how Trump happened? Study quantum physics*, *Quartz*, 11 November 2016).

Also worthy of reflection is the sense in which it is the strange "dynamic" associated with meta-stasis which is considered problematic as a form of change, although there is seemingly no need for any understanding of a "meta-dynamic" with which an unrecognized form of "stasis" might fruitfully be associated. A standing wave is suggestive in that respect. The synonyms and antonyms of meta-stasis are indicative of the confusion. It is to the subtle form of invariance to which conservatives especially aspire, whereas it is the subtle form of change to which progressives have difficulty in giving form. Fruitful distinction between the two forms of subtlety may well be

impossible.

**War dance?** It could be considered profoundly curious how each side in any final battle considers itself to be "right" and the other to be "wrong" -- each a force for "good", and the other a force for "evil". The difficulty in hoping to eliminate ISIS is only too well illustrated by the difficulty over centuries of eradicating what is framed as "wrong" -- whether by religion, by science, or by politics. The same may be said of "ignorance" -- so readily detected in the views of others. Both being wrong and being ignorant can be readily understood as a disease.

Clearly there is a need to reframe the dynamics of the relationship between such distinctive perceptions. Reference above to the greeting dance of the Maori, the haka, offers a reminder that the dynamic between "right" and "wrong" might in reality be more fruitfully understood as some form of eternal dance. In the absence of more comprehensible insights, as an existential game, this understanding can be further developed in aesthetic terms (*All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony?* 2007).

It is in this respect that reference to a Pyrrhic victory can be usefully explored in relation to the Pyrrhic war dance of Ancient Greece, known as the *Pyrrhichios*. Will the presidency of Donald Trump oblige nation states of the world to learn to dance -- otherwise than a democratic *two-step* (Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *When Giants Learn to Dance*, 1989; Louis V. Gerstner Jr., *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance? Leading a Great Enterprise through Dramatic Change*, 2003).

Extending use of the metaphor to music and song, could the verbal duelling, so characteristic of the negative campaigning of the Trump-Clinton dynamic, be rendered more meaningful through "duelling songs", as implied by many folk traditions, especially *multi-part singing* and the *bertsolaritza* so central to Basque culture? With such widespread appreciation of song and music, such considerations point to as yet unexplored possibilities for governance (*A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006; *Imagining Attractive Global Governance*, 2013).

How is it that there is no call to reframe the interplay between the post-electoral divisions of American society through song?

The rising challenge, deprecated as "populism", has the additional implication that the incomprehensible complexity embodied in unreadable legislative proposals and alienating discourse needs to be rendered otherwise to be credible to those far more engaged by music and song.

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