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Fundamental Need for Human Sacrifice by Abrahamic Religions

Vital prerequisite for sustainable global civilization?

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Introduction

This exploration is triggered by [Gaza border protests](#), variously framed as a "massacre" by Israel against Palestinian protestors (*How the Gaza massacre exposed international cowardice*, *Al Jazeera*, 16 May 2018; *It's a 'Massacre': World Decries High Death Toll in Gaza Protests*, *Haaretz*, 14 May 2018; *Israel Kills Dozens at Gaza Border as U.S. Embassy Opens in Jerusalem*, *The New York Times*, 14 May 2018; *'Terrible massacre': Israel kills 59, injures 2,771 Gaza protesters as US embassy opens in Jerusalem*, *RT*, 14 May 2018; *Gaza events haunt conscience of international community*, *Xinhua*, 18 May 2018).

Calls have been made for an inquiry (*Arab League calls for international probe against Israeli crimes in Gaza massacre*, *The New Arab*, 17 May 2018; *Gaza border protests resume as UN calls for inquiry*, *The Washington Post*, 18 May 2018; *UN sets up human rights probe into Gaza killings, to Israel's fury*, *Reuters*, 18 May 2018). As a consequence of protests at the United Nations, this framing has been called into question (*Liberman: Israel, U.S. must leave UNHRC over its Gaza support*, *Jerusalem Post*, 17 May 2018; *As World Condemns 'Appalling' Crimes, US Defends Israeli Massacre in Gaza and Blocks Call for UN Probe*, *Common Dreams*, 15 May 2018; *US blocks UN call to probe Israeli killings of Palestinians*, *TruePublica*, 17 May 2018).

The focus here is not however on the questionable initiative of one Abrahamic religion rather than another, namely not on Judaism, Islam or Christianity in particular. The concern is with how all the Abrahamic religions have long engaged in forms of human sacrifice, variously framed and blamed to justify the fundamental innocence of the perpetrators.

The same period is witness, for example, to the [systematic bombing of Syria](#), both by Israel, and by NATO countries considering themselves to be of primarily Christian inspiration (*World reacts to overnight strikes on Syria by US, UK and French forces*, *The Guardian*, 14 April 2018; *Western strikes on Syria 'painful reminder' of NATO's Yugoslavia bombing -- Serbian president*, *RT*, 24 April 2018).

The period is also witness to the massive sale of arms by permanent members of the UN Security Council of primarily Christian persuasion. This exacerbates conflict in a range of countries -- directly provoking an uncontrollable flow of refugees from the latter, as separately discussed (*Refugees Per Kiloton (RPK) as a missing indicator?* 2016). States fundamentally informed by one or other Abrahamic religion happily engage in armaments deals with one another, indifferent to the human sacrifice this may ensure.

Blame-game: Given the level of bloody violence now variously sanctioned by the Abrahamic religions, or in which they are variously complicit, there is a need to reconsider their fundamental dependence on human sacrifice. Each example of such violence that can be cited is always skillfully reframed by those complicit as being instigated by another [Abrahamic religion](#) -- or enabled by it in some way. This can now be recognized as game-playing of the highest order through which each establishes its fundamental innocence to the satisfaction of its adherents and in justification presented to others.

While each may express the deepest regrets at the violence and the fatalities, this never seems to constitute a constraint on further

righteous indulgence in such violence or its exacerbation. Given the nature of the game played by the Abrahamic religions, such expressions of regret can in turn be considered to be hypocrisy of the highest order.

Unquestionable justification: A feature of the blame-game is that those on whom violence is inflicted -- with unquestionable justification -- is the manner in which the fault is held to lie fundamentally with the other (*Collective Mea Culpa? You Must be Joking ! Them is to blame, Not us!* 2015).

This follows from the failure of the other to adhere to the set of principles and values propounded by each. Such principles are necessarily unquestionable, typically considered to have been framed by deity in some way. The total inability of the Abrahamic religions to reconcile these seemingly contrasting principles is reinforced by their complete unwillingness to do so -- except according to their own lights -- sacred scriptures rendering any such effort to be meaningless, if not blasphemous in its own right. Each necessarily does the absolute minimum to explore other ways of framing the theological differences by which it is confronted.

The justification for any genocidal levels of violence tends to be compounded and reinforced by covert aspirations and agendas articulated by some in each such religion. These seek the total eradication of the other -- justified by particular interpretations of the sacred writings, which ironically they may share to some degree (*Toward comprehending the paradoxical eradication dilemma of the Abrahamic religions*, 2014) . Those of each religion who do not confess to such ultimate objectives -- readily assumed to be the majority -- tend nevertheless to be subtly or covertly complicit in the activities of those who actively pursue them. A typical ploy is to frame those articulating such "extremist" aspirations as being not-in-conformity with the real meaning of the particular Abrahamic religion -- to little effect.

Engagement in sacrifice: The following is an exercise in summarizing the engagement of the various Abrahamic religions in human sacrifice. It follows from an earlier exercise (*Systemic Reliance of World Religions on Human Sacrifice: covert use of fatal conflict to ensure vital resource management*, 2014). This followed for an exploration of how many of the so-called **wicked problems** derive from deliberate avoidance of a process which aggravates them to the highest degree (*Root Irresponsibility for Major World Problems: the unexamined role of Abrahamic faiths in sustaining unrestrained population growth*, 2007).

The point to be emphasized with respect to the latter argument is that deliberately encouraging unconstrained increase in the population, in the absence of appropriate governance of resources, is fundamentally irresponsible. The Abrahamic religions skillfully (and naively) lay the blame for inadequate governance on all those who variously fail to agree to their propounded values and principles.

Need to sacrifice others: What then is the fundamental need to sacrifice others beyond any question of self-criticism? How is this human perversion disguised by feel-good tokenism and the expression of the best of intentions -- purportedly in accord with the highest human values? How is it possible that any accusation of inadequacy is so readily framed as deniable, if not ridiculous? How is the current practice of human sacrifice to be compared with that of previous empires -- notably Imperial Rome and the Aztec Empire? How is it to be compared with that practiced by empires with a purportedly secular "religion", such the Nazi **Third Reich**, or various Communist regimes?

Is NATO comparable to such empires, as a coalition of primarily Christian countries, given the modern forms of human sacrifice in which it engages? Will the human sacrifices enabled by other belief systems -- such as science -- come to be recognized as being of the same irresponsible form as those of conventional religions? Will their actions, claimed to be in defence of their belief system, come to be recognized as similarly dubious (*Guidelines for Critical Dialogue between Worldviews as exemplified by the need for non-antisemitic dialogue with Israelis?* 2006)

Essential ambiguity: The title of this document is of course ambiguous -- and deliberately so. This is done to evoke reflection on the equally ambiguous question posed by the subtitle. Is human sacrifice by the Abrahamic religions indeed a vital prerequisite for sustainable global civilization? However, rather than the sacrifice of those in other Abrahamic religions, is it rather the nature of the self-sacrifice required of each such religion? Is it indeed "blood sacrifice" that is required, or some surrogate thereof?

Nature of "human sacrifice"

For *Wikipedia* **human sacrifice** is the act of killing one or more humans, usually as an offering to a deity, as part of a ritual. As such, human sacrifice has of course been practiced in various cultures throughout history. That entry includes references to **modern instances of human sacrifice**. Examples are cited for: **Americas**, **Asia**, **Africa**, **Europe**, and **Oceania**. Typically these are instigated within the framework of cults not directly related to the Abrahamic religions.

A valuable summary of the discourse on sacrifice is provided by **James W. Watts** (*The Rhetoric of Sacrifice*, 2011) in a work on *Ritual and Metaphor*:

The language of sacrifice pervades our contemporary rhetoric of politics, religion, and popular culture. References to sacrifice and depictions of sacrifice can be found in music lyrics, movies, political speeches, and news stories about sports, economics, and biomedical research. It is, of course, ubiquitous in the rhetoric of war. Fascination with the idea of sacrifice is also reflected in the large number of academic theories about its nature and origins. For the past century and a half, scholars of religion, sociology, psychology, and anthropology have advanced theories to explain how sacrifice works religiously and why its practice and effects are so widespread. Yet every attempt to describe and explain "sacrifice" always fails to encompass the whole range of ritual and nonritual behaviors called sacrifices.

From "just war" to "just sacrifice"? Of greater relevance is the manner in which Abrahamic religions are complicit in enabling the human sacrifice associated with conventional warfare. The rationalization of this has been skillfully crafted through their involvement in

defining so-called [just war theory](#). This can be readily recognized as the ill-considered "sacrifice of humans" in pursuit of national and other agendas with which any of those religions may be complicit -- whether sacrificing the enemy or the military forces deployed against them (Stanley Hauerwas, *Telling the truth about the sacrifices of war*, *ABC Religion and Ethics*, 24 Apr 2013).

This framework may be extended to include genocidal massacre and forms of ethnic cleansing. Any distinction between "human sacrifice" (as narrowly defined) and "sacrifice of humans" (more generally defined) merits careful consideration to avoid any tendency to condemn the first whilst denying complicity in the fatalities associated with the second. Arguably "just war theory" can now be seen as extended to "just torture theory" (Shunzo Majim, *Just Torture? Journal of Military Ethics*, 11, 2012; Davis Brown, *The Just War Tradition: applying old ethics to new problems*, 2017).

Seemingly "just sacrifice" has yet to be framed in those terms. And yet the concept is only too evident in the following:

- the massive deployment of foot soldiers during the trench warfare of recent world wars, knowing that the slaughter to which many would be exposed could be framed with little challenge as a "just sacrifice", namely their sacrifice in a "just cause"
- the [firebombing](#) of German cities and their civilian populations as being as "just sacrifice" of their lives, however regrettable
- the articulation of [collateral damage](#) (with its many civilian deaths) during conflict in the Middle East and Vietnam as being a "just sacrifice" in the war against terrorism or Communism -- again with little challenge
- the use of nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki -- readily framed as the epitome of a "just sacrifice"
- the famous assertion by the US Ambassador to the United Nations, [Madeleine Albright](#), in response to the question: *We have heard that half a million children have died. I mean, that's more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the price worth it?* An understanding of "just sacrifice" is implicit in her response: *I think this is a very hard choice, but the price -- we think the price is worth it.* (CBS's *60 Minutes*, 12 May 1996).

"Life worse than death"? The argument can be taken further with respect to the focus on the narrow definition of "killing", understood as death in a biological sense. The question is whether there are other forms of "death" as may be inferred from forms of violence which result in slavery, bondage and incarceration. These also lend themselves to more general definition. In such cases it is the essential humanity of the individual which is sacrificed, placing individuals in situations which are frequently named and experienced as a "life worse than death".

This raises the question as to whether such deliberate confinement of an individual or people does not itself merit recognition as a form of crime against humanity and, as such, thereby constituting human sacrifice of a kind. Should those confined behind boundaries against their will be understood in this way? Will the future see the restriction of movement across national boundaries in this light -- especially when the boundary takes the form of a deliberately constructed wall (see [List of walls](#))? The argument could be further extended to include the encroachment on the territory of people of one faith by people of another faith ([Varieties of Encroachment](#), 2004).

Sanctioning torture? The process of enhanced interrogation can be understood as specifically intended to "break a person's spirit", otherwise framed as a skillful exercise in [dehumanization](#). This term describes a behaviour or process that undermines individuality of and in others. It elicits a disposition towards others that debases the others' individuality as either an "individual" species or an "individual" object, enabling their ability to act inhumanely towards humans (Jaine Toth, *Hitler's 4-Step Process for Dehumanizing the Jews*, *Bahai Teachings*, 8 May 2017; Tage S. Rai, *Dehumanization increases instrumental violence, but not moral violence*, *PNAS*, 24 July 2017). There is clearly a relationship between dehumanization and the justification of sacrifice of those defined as non-human in some way.

At the time of writing, the world has been witness to controversy regarding the appointment to [directorship of the CIA](#) of a person acknowledged to have overseen a program of torture (*CIA pick Gina Haspel repeatedly declines to say if torture techniques are 'immoral'*, *The Guardian*, 10 May 2018; *CIA: The Gina Haspel controversy runs deeper than her appointment*, *DW*, 8 May 2018; *Gina Haspel, alleged water-boarder, could be the next CIA director*, *The Economist*, 12 May 2019; *Trump's CIA pick is a torturer: how can any Christian support her?* *The Week*, 15 March 2018).

When perpetrated in a military context, as is so often the case with western military interrogators, the manner in which torture is reframed and condoned by [military chaplains](#) can only too readily recall the role of the Catholic inquisitors of the [Dominican Order](#) and [Franciscan Order](#) during the [Inquisition](#). Inquisitors were given [absolution](#) if they used instruments of torture. Currently organized internationally, the [International Military Chiefs of Chaplains Conference](#) grew out of a conference NATO chiefs of chaplains. Besides the [Military Rabbinate](#) of Israel, military rabbis serve throughout several countries of the world, most notably in the US military forces.

Dehumanization and "soullessness"? Whether or not the individual is constrained in this way, the individual may be conceptually reified such as to be effectively recognized as inhuman, [unhuman](#), [nonhuman](#) or subhuman -- or simply as a [non-person](#) (or [unperson](#)). With respect to the latter, this has been evident in the understanding of [subhuman](#) (*Untermensch*) by the Nazi regime as describing non-Aryan "inferior people", often referred to as "the masses from the East", that is Jews, Roma, and Slavs -- mainly ethnic Poles, Serbs, and later also Russians. The term was also applied to most Blacks, and persons of color, with some particular exceptions. Jewish people were to be exterminated in the Holocaust, along with Romani people, and the physically and mentally disabled. According to this framework, the Holocaust would not be considered any form of "human sacrifice".

Framed as a some kind of unit, indistinguishable from other units, any such reframing readily ensures a form of sacrifice of any humanity -- possibly justifying any slaughter or other treatment. A term which has been used to describe such people by Christianity, for example, is "soulless". According to the narrow definition of "human sacrifice", those without souls cannot be categorized as having been the victim of human sacrifice -- since, by definition, they are not "human". This has been a central feature of colonial engagement with non-western regions of the world.

As noted in a discussion of [Africans and the European Soul](#) (*African Bullets and Honey*, 20 July 2005), and the irony of the current dispatch of African missionaries to increasingly secularized Europe:

One of the founding ideas of colonialism, and slavery before it, was the state of the soul: Africans were supposed to have none while Europeans were blessed with a hefty, healthy one. But this duality has been turned on its head. No sooner had some wise men in the late nineteenth century concluded that the African indeed did have a soul - a donor driven plot if there was ever one - that Europeans started denying the existence of theirs.

Much has been made of the promotion of the belief that women had "no soul", thereby serving to justify the historical pattern of discrimination against women (Michael Nolan, *The Myth of Soulless Women, First Things*, April 1997; *The Alleged "Soulless Women" Doctrine, Earthlink*, 1 July 2008).

Dumbing down? A more provocative question is whether the deliberate "dumbing down" of populations, by crafting media content and educational curricula, constitutes a form of human sacrifice in its own right -- through sacrificing their humanity and the capacity for critical thinking.

A related issue is whether "psychic numbing" as a result of over exposure to traumatic experiences -- notably media reports of massacres and the like -- should be considered a form of "sacrifice of humanity", however this is to be distinguished from "human sacrifice". These distinctions can be explored with respect to understandings of "lacking humanity", as by an online *PsychForum*.

Psychosocial violence: Any understanding of human sacrifice may be understood to take even subtler forms through [structural violence](#), [cultural violence](#), [psychological violence](#) or [spiritual violence](#).

In terms of these processes, the question is when such violence effectively results in loss of any sense of human identity -- effectively sacrificing the human identity of the person, thereby "demeaned". Especially evident are the use of techniques of "torture" (aka [enhanced interrogation](#)) and "brainwashing" -- and the implications for identity loss. The deliberate destruction of humanity, however that is understood, clearly merits being considered as a facet of human sacrifice.

Non-human personhood? The question can be taken further through the argument of the [Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies](#) (IHEET) and its commitment to the idea that some non-human animals meet the criteria of legal personhood and thus are deserving of specific rights and protections. This has been most recently articulated by the radical call of [Timothy Morton](#) (*Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People*, 2017):

What is it that makes humans human? As science and technology challenge the boundaries between life and non-life, between organic and inorganic, this ancient question is more timely than ever. Acclaimed object-oriented philosopher Timothy Morton invites us to consider this philosophical issue as eminently political. In our relationship with nonhumans, we decide the fate of our humanity. Becoming human, claims Morton, actually means creating a network of kindness and solidarity with nonhuman beings, in the name of a broader understanding of reality that both includes and overcomes the notion of species. Negotiating the politics of humanity is the first crucial step in reclaiming the upper scales of ecological coexistence and resisting corporations like Monsanto and the technophilic billionaires who would rob us of our kinship with people beyond our species.

In this light it is appropriate to note the framing offered by the so-called leader of the free world (*Trump: Immigrant gangs 'animals, not people'*, *BBC News*, 17 May 2018; *Trump Calls Some Unauthorized Immigrants 'Animals' in Rant*, *The New York Times*, 16 May 2018). How indeed might the Abrahamic religions justify sacrifice -- if eventually confronted by extraterrestrials, especially if they bear greater resemblance to animals than to humans, or if the ETs aspire to human guidance in engaging in sacrifice?

Human sacrifice practiced between Abrahamic religions

There is little need to detail the bloodshed enabled with the complicity of individual Abrahamic religions, especially those embedded in states of which one is the primary national religion. The suffering caused has been extensively documented to whatever degree it enables or results in fatality, deliberate or inadvertent.

- **Christianity-against-Islam:** Beyond any issues of discrimination, sacrifice may be recognized in the following:
 - [crusades](#), understood as the series of [religious wars](#) sanctioned by the [Latin Church](#) in the [medieval period](#).
 - "crusades" as currently understood and framed by some Christian leaders:
 - *9/11 George Bush - This Crusade Is Gonna Take A While* (17 September 2001)
 - *Europe cringes at Bush 'crusade' against terrorists* (*The Christian Science Monitor*, 19 September 2001)
 - *How a War Became a Crusade* (*The New York Times*, 11 March 2003)
 - *The Bush Crusade: sacred violence, again unleashed in 2001, could prove as destructive as in 1096* (*The Nation*, 2 September 2004).
 - enhanced interrogation of those Muslims suspected of terrorism, potentially resulting in fatality, most notably as practiced by the US in so-called [black sites](#); the practices in [Abu Ghraib](#) and the [Guantanamo Bay detention camp](#) can also be recognized as constituting unethical experimentation on humans
 - recent [persecution of Muslims](#) (potential resulting in fatalities) by western societies of primarily Christian faith: [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Bulgaria](#), [France](#), [Germany](#), [Kosovo](#), [The Netherlands](#), [United States](#), [Canada](#):
 - *If Islam Is a Religion of Violence, So Is Christianity* (*Foreign Policy*, 14 June 2016)
 - *When will the West take a stand on the persecution of Muslims?* (*The Spectator*, March 2018)
 - [Hungary border barrier](#): constructed along the border with Serbia and Croatia during the European migrant crisis with the aim of preventing immigrants (primarily of Islamic faith) from entering Hungary (of primarily Christian faith),
- **Christianity-against-Judaism:** Beyond any issues of discrimination, sacrifice may be recognized in the following:

- [Christian persecution of Jews](#), resulting in fatalities, notably as a consequence of [Christian antisemitism](#) (see *Christian Persecution of Jews over the Centuries: Introduction*, [US Holocaust Museum](#))
- *The Holocaust*, orchestrated by the Nazi regime, whose soldiers bore belt buckles with the device *Gott Mit Uns*, with a controversial degree of degree of complicity of Christians
 - [Nazi antisemitism](#)
 - [Pope Pius XI and Judaism](#)
 - [Christianity's Role in the Holocaust \(Guided History\)](#)
- Pogroms, understood as [anti-Jewish violence in the Russian Empire](#)
- [Black Death persecutions and massacres](#)
- **Islam-against-Christianity:** Beyond any issues of discrimination, sacrifice may be recognized in the following:
 - [Jihad](#), interpreted by some Muslims as an injunction to act again infidels, most notably through violent acts of [Islamic terrorism](#) (see [List of Islamist terrorist attacks](#))
 - [ISIS's Persecution of Religions](#) (Counter Extremism Project)
 - [Here Are The Parts Of The Quran That ISIS Uses To Justify Violence Against Iraqi Christians](#) (*Business Insider*, 24 July 2014)
 - [The Persecution of Christians in the Middle East](#) (*K4D*, 16 February 2017)
 - [Discrimination and Hate Crimes Against Christian Palestinians in the Holy Land](#) (IMEU)
 - [Ottoman Empire/Turkey: Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks, Maronite Christians](#)
- **Islam-against-Judaism:** Beyond any issues of discrimination, sacrifice may be recognized in the following:
 - [Persecution of Jews under Muslim rule](#) (see also [Jewish exodus from Arab and Muslim countries](#))
 - [Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel](#)
 - Arab threats to destroy Israel
 - [Arab Threats Against Israel](#) (The Six Day War)
 - [Iran official threatens to destroy Israel if it continues 'childish game'](#) (*The Times of Israel*, 12 April 2018)
 - [Iranian threat to Israel at all-time high](#) (*Daily Times*, 2 March 2018)
- **Judaism-against-Christianity:** Beyond any issues of discrimination, sacrifice may be recognized in the following:
 - [Why Angry Christians in Israel Are Crying Discrimination](#) (*Haaretz*, 17 September 2015)
 - [Christians Discriminated Against by Israel \(If Americans Knew\)](#)
 - [Israel Is Not As Christian-Friendly As You Think](#) (*IMEMC*, 17 July 2017)
 - [Israeli anti-Christianity](#)
- **Judaism-against-Islam:** Beyond any issues of discrimination, sacrifice may be recognized in the following:
 - [Israeli settlements](#): civilian communities] inhabited by Israeli citizens, almost exclusively of Jewish ethnicity, built predominantly on lands within the Palestinian territories
 - [Israeli barriers](#): including the [Israel-Gaza barrier](#), the [Israeli West Bank barrier](#), and the [Israel-Egypt barrier](#)
 - [Killings and massacres during the 1948 Palestine war](#)
 - [Qibya massacre](#): occurred during "Operation Shoshana", a reprisal operation that occurred in October 1953 when Israeli troops under Ariel Sharon attacked the village of Qibya in the West Bank.
 - [Gaza border massacre](#): in Israeli response to border protests by Palestinians:
 - [How long after this week's Gaza massacre are we going to continue pretending that the Palestinians are non-people?](#) (*The Independent*, 17 May 2018)
 - [How the Gaza massacre exposed international cowardice](#) (*Al Jazeera*, 16 May 2018)
 - [Blaming the Victims of Israel's Gaza Massacre](#) (*FAIR*, 17 May 2018)
 - [Israel accused of breaching international law in Gaza 'massacre'](#) (*Middle East Eye*, 15 May 2018)
 - [It's a 'Massacre': World Decries High Death Toll in Gaza Protests](#) (*Haaretz*, 14 May 2018)
 - [Sacrificing Gaza](#) (*CounterPunch*, 4 June 2018)

Full-spectrum dominance? According to *Wikipedia*, "[Judeo-Christian](#)" is a term used since the 1950s to stress the common ethical standards of Christianity and Judaism, such as the Ten Commandments. Such notions are consistent with Biblical injunctions regarding achievement of forms of dominion over the people of the world -- the [Great Commission](#) of Christianity, or its equivalent in Judaism.

This strategy has long been pioneered by evangelizing missionary groups who have a very well-articulated strategy to evangelize the world in the coming years -- irrespective of any prior adherence to non-Christian faiths. The term the "Great Commission" derives from the Biblical reference: *Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded You* ([Matthew 28:19,20](#)). Thus the [Great Commission Roundtable](#) was formed in 1999 to coordinate the efforts of the [Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization](#), the [AD2000 Movement](#) and the [World Evangelical Alliance](#). There is a Catholic equivalent under the name [Evangelization 2000](#).

These reinforce military aspirations to [full-spectrum dominance](#) and political doctrines such as [Manifest Destiny](#) (as superseded by variants of the [Monroe Doctrine](#)). It has become part of American civil religion and is often used to promote inter-religious cooperation. [Christian Zionism](#) is recognized as being especially significant in this respect.

In Islam, the unforgivable sin of [shirk](#) is denial that Allah is the only god. According to *Wikipedia*, [Ummah](#) is commonly used to mean the collective community of Islamic peoples. In the *Quran* it typically refers to a single group that shares common religious beliefs, specifically those that are the objects of a divine plan of salvation. In the context of [Pan-Islamism](#) and politics, the term can be used to mean the concept of a *Commonwealth of the Believers*. The purpose of [Islamic missionary activity](#) is to grow the Muslim *Ummah*. Conceptually a [caliphate](#) represents the political unity of the entire community of Muslim faithful (the *Ummah*) ruled by a single caliph according to [Sharia](#), namely the moral code and religious law of Islam.

Human sacrifice practiced between factions of Abrahamic religions

There is little need to detail the sectarian bloodshed enabled within individual Abrahamic religions with the complicity of their religious authorities, especially those embedded in states of which one faction is the primary national religion. The suffering caused has been extensively documented to whatever degree it enables or results in fatality, deliberate or inadvertent:

- **Christianity-Christianity**, recognized as [sectarian violence among Christians](#), most notably between [Catholic and Protestant \(European wars of religion\)](#)
 - Northern Ireland ([The Troubles](#), [Cromwellian conquest of Ireland](#)), France ([Albigensian Crusade](#)), UK ([Anti-Catholicism in the United Kingdom](#)), USA ([Anti-Catholicism in the United States](#)), Australia ([Sectarianism in Australia](#))
 - Erection of physical boundaries between Christian faiths:
 - [Mexico-United States barrier](#): as favoured by those of the Bible Belt of Evangelical/Protestant faith to confine those of Catholic faith in a condition of life-threatening impoverishment
 - [Belfast Peace Lines \(Northern Ireland\)](#): so-called peace walls, namely a series of separation barriers separate predominantly Republican and Nationalist Catholic neighbourhoods from predominantly Loyalist and Unionist Protestant neighbourhoods.
 - Response to heresy by the Catholic Church through the [Inquisition](#): in particular that of the [Cathars](#) and the [Waldensians](#), later including the [Spiritual Franciscans](#), the [Hussites](#) (followers of [Jan Hus](#)) and the [Beguines](#).
- **Islam-Islam**, primarily recognized in terms of conflictual [Sunni-Shia relations](#):
 - [Sunnis, Shites locked in an endless conflict \(DW\)](#), 5 January 2016
 - [Sunnis and Shia: Islam's ancient schism \(BBC News\)](#), 4 January 2016
 - [Sunni vs Shia: the roots of Islam's civil war \(New Statesman\)](#), August 2017
 - [Sufi-Salafi relations](#): The relationship between Salafism and Sufis -- two movements of Sunni Islam with different interpretations of Islam -- is historically diverse and reflects some of the changes and conflicts in the Muslim world today ([Who Are Sufi Muslims and Why Do Some Extremists Hate Them? The New York Times](#), 24 November 2017; [The Islamic Extremist War Against the Sufis, The Huffington Post](#), 2 December 2012)
- **Judaism-Judaism**: Sectarianism also exists between Orthodox and Reform Jews, with orthodox Jews often characterizing reform Jews as being non-religious, disobeying the Torah, rarely attending *shul* and adopting semi-Christian styles of worship. Reform Jews, on the other hand, often view the orthodox as being intolerant of them and of other religions, placing legalistic rules such as the observance of the Sabbath above ethical obligations, being cult-like and hostile to change
 - [Jewish Sectarianism Dissected \(Haaretz\)](#), 10 May 2012
 - [Sephardi chief rabbi calls Reform Judaism a bigger threat than secularism \(The Times of Israel\)](#), 20 September 2012

Human sacrifice practiced by Abrahamic religions against "others"

There is little need to detail the bloodshed enabled against others with the complicity of individual Abrahamic religions, most notably as a feature of colonialism. The suffering caused has been extensively documented -- to whatever degree it enabled or resulted in fatality, deliberate or inadvertent. Also of relevance is a form of sacrifice practiced against those defined as "others" in some way:

- **Indigenous peoples**: As noted above, a central principle of the engagement with the inhabitants of colonised lands was that they necessarily were lacking in soul -- and were therefore less than human, although potentially capable of becoming so through the intervention of the missionaries (most notably of Christian churches):
 - [North American Indians](#): In the history of the [European colonization of North America](#), an atrocity termed "Indian massacre" is a specific incident wherein a group of people (military, mob or other) deliberately kill a significant number of relatively defenseless or innocent people -- usually civilian noncombatants or to the summary execution of prisoners-of-war. Unfortunately, in the quest for clarity, the term refers both to the killings of [Euro-Americans](#) by [Native Americans](#) (Indians) as well as to killings of Native Americans by Euro-Americans and/or by other Native Americans. (see [List of Indian Massacres](#); [Massacres of Native Americans](#); [Canada](#); [USA](#))
 - [Central and South American peoples](#): [Argentina](#), [Haiti](#), [Mexico](#), [Peru](#) (see [Massacres in South America](#))
 - [African peoples](#): [Congo](#), [French conquest of Algeria](#), [German South West Africa](#), [Zulu Kingdom](#)
 - [Australian peoples](#): [Oceania](#), [Australia](#), [New Zealand](#)
- **Ethnic "cleansing"**: In addition to that undertaken by Christians against Jews during the [Holocaust](#), or by Jews against Muslims during the [Nakba](#), other initiatives are evident, notably by Christians:
 - actions of the [Ku Klux Klan](#) against blacks in the USA, termed [black genocide](#)
 - actions of the South African apartheid regime against blacks (Miles Jackson, [A Conspiracy to Commit Genocide: Anti-Fertility Research in Apartheid South Africa's Chemical and Biological Weapons Programme](#), [Journal of International Criminal Justice](#), 13, 2015, 5; Brandon Turbeville, [South Africa's Secret Plan to Sterilize Blacks through Vaccines](#), [Global Research](#), 17 February 2016)
- **Abduction of children**:
 - [Australia](#): The framing of indigenous peoples by Christian-inspired institutions resulted in a phenomenon termed the "[Stolen Generations](#)" were the children of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who were removed from their families by the Australian Federal and State government agencies and church missions, under acts of their respective parliaments. The removals of those referred to as "half-caste" children were conducted in the period between approximately 1905 and 1967, although in some places mixed-race children were still being taken into the 1970s.
 - [Canada](#): [Canadian Indian residential school system](#); [Cultural assimilation of Native Americans](#)
 - [Germany](#): [Kidnapping of children by Nazi Germany](#)
 - [Spain](#): [Lost children of Francoism](#), children of Republican parents abducted during the Spanish Civil War

- [Israel: Yemenite Children Affair](#)
- **Women:**
 - *Discrimination against women and their exploitation:*
 - Emanuel L. Paparella: [The Three Abrahamic Religions and their Image of Woman](#), *Modern Diplomacy*, 26 May 2016)
 - Sherif Addel Azeem ([Women in Islam vs. Women in the Judeo-Christian Tradition: the myth and the reality](#), *Createspace Independent*)
 - Victoria S. Harrison: [Modern Women, Traditional Abrahamic Religions and Interpreting Sacred Texts](#) (*Feminist Theology*, 1 January 2007)
 - Michael A. Sherlock: [Islam and Christianity: the demonization and exploitation of female sexuality](#) (12 January 2017)
 - [Religious Discrimination: Abrahamic God vs. women](#) (*Persepolis*, 4 May 2018)
 - [Why do Abrahamic religions deprecate women?](#) (*Christianity and World Religion*, 15 September 2010).
 - *Sequestration of women* (notably those pregnant out of wedlock) in [Magdalene's asylums](#) (or Magdelene laundries) namely institutions from the 18th to the late 20th centuries ostensibly to house "fallen women", a term used to imply female sexual promiscuity or work in prostitution: [Australia](#), [Canada](#), [England](#), [Ireland](#), [Sweden](#), [United States](#)
 - *Soullessness of women and chattel status:* The belief has been variously promoted that women had "no soul", as noted above, thereby serving to justify the historical pattern of discrimination against women (Michael Nolan, [The Myth of Soulless Women](#), *First Things*, April 1997; [The Alleged "Soulless Women" Doctrine](#), *Earthlink*, 1 July 2008). This notably reinforced the [chattel-status of women](#) in marriage ([When a wife was her man's chattel](#), *The Independent*, 4 January 2015).
- **Eugenics:** [Eugenic policies](#) were first implemented in the early 1900s in the [USA](#). They also took root in France, Germany, and Great Britain (G. J. Baker, [Christianity and Eugenics: the place of religion in the British Eugenics Education Society and the American Eugenics Society, c.1907-1940](#), 2014). Later, in the 1920s and 1930s, the eugenic policy of [sterilizing](#) certain mental patients was implemented in other countries including [Belgium](#), [Brazil](#), [Canada](#), [Japan](#) and [Sweden](#). The first formal negative eugenics, that is a legal provision against birth of inferior human beings, was promulgated in Western European culture by the Christian [Council of Agde](#) in 506, which forbade marriage between cousins.
- **Unbelievers and Infidels**, as used to frame those accused of unbelief in the central tenets of their own religion, for members of another religion, or for the irreligious:
 - *Christianity:* [Infidel](#) is an ecclesiastical term in Christianity around which the Church developed a body of theology that deals with the concept of infidelity, which makes a clear differentiation between those who were baptized and followed the teachings of the Church versus those who are outside the faith.[3] The term infidel was used by Christians to describe those perceived as the enemies of Christianity
 - *Islam:* In the *Quran* the term [kafir](#) alludes to a person who rejects or disbelieves in God according to the teachings of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and denies the dominion and authority of God, thus often translated with "infidels". This may be interpreted to justify action against them in defence of the faith.
 - *Judaism:* The Hebrew term, [kofe](#), cognate with the Arabic [kafir](#), is reserved only for apostate Jews. [Self-hating Jew](#) is a pejorative term used for a Jewish person who is alleged to hold antisemitic views.
- **Insubordination:** States of Abrahamic inspiration are notable for their willingness to sacrifice others (of Abrahamic faith or otherwise) who fail to declare allegiance to their beliefs, upheld as unquestionable and non-negotiable:
 - *Christianity:* as with the Christian-inspired [NATO intervention in Libya](#) and the intervention of the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq; threats against Pakistan ([Musharraf: U.S. Threatened to Bomb Pakistan to the Stone Age](#), *Fox News*, 22 September 2006; Nick Cullather, [Bomb them Back to the Stone Age: An Etymology](#), *History News Network*, 5 October 2006); threats to handle North Korea according to the Libya model ([Trump's 'Libya Model' Remark on North Korea Was a Threat...](#), *The Diplomat*, 18 May 2018),
 - *Islam:* as with the initiatives of the Islamic State in the Middle East
 - *Judaism:* as with the initiatives against Palestinians in territory occupied by Israel
- **Sexual abuse by clergy:** As a form of sacrifice of humanity, the attitudes developed by [Catholic clergy justifying the sexual abuse of those in their care](#) merit consideration in this context, given evidence of their system incidence and the worldwide scandals these have only recently engendered.
- **Unethical experimentation on humans:** Experiments that have been considered unethical, and were often performed illegally, without the knowledge or informed consent of the test subjects:
 - [Unethical human experimentation in the USA](#), numerous experiments performed on human test subjects in the USA
 - [Unethical human experimentation in the UK:](#) De-classified documents of the National Archives revealed that during the 1930s and 1940s, the British Army used hundreds of British and native British Indian Army soldiers as "guinea pigs" in their experiments to determine if mustard gas inflicted greater damage on Indian skin compared to British skin.
 - [Nazi human experimentation](#), namely was a series of medical experiments on large numbers of prisoners, including children, by Nazi Germany in its concentration camps in the early to mid 1940s, during World War II and the Holocaust. Chief target populations included Romani, Sinti, ethnic Poles, Soviet POWs, disabled Germans, and Jews from across Europe.

Otherness as evil, justifying the sacrifice of its embodiment? The Abrahamic religions have a well-documented track record of problematic responses to otherness of any form -- despite questionable claims to the contrary. This clearly includes their framing of each other as a dangerous threat -- preferably to be eliminated, however that is foreseen. Aspects of this challenge are evident in the response to schisms within each religion, readily framed as heretical and calling for the severest response. Such response is also evoked by apostasy.

The nature of the response is intimately related to the recognition of "evil" (*Existence of evil as authoritatively claimed to be an overriding strategic concern*, 2016). Adherents of each readily frame the others as fundamentally evil -- and are so framed in return (*Framing by others of claimants of evil as evil*, 2016). Few religions avoid being stigmatized in that way -- and few avoid applying such labels to others. The elimination of whatever is so framed is readily accepted as a strategic priority -- evident in the declaration of virtual wars (*Review of the Range of Virtual Wars: strategic comparison with the global war against terrorism*, 2005). This is most obvious in the case of terrorism (*Eradication as the Strategic Final Solution of the 21st Century?* 2014).

Non-human otherness: Reference was made above to the sacrifice of non-humans, typically animals. This is discussed further below in relation to ritual slaughter. It is however vital to recall the degree to which the Abrahamic religions have been complicit in ravaging the planet which their scriptures urge them to manage appropriately. As noted by Damian Carrington (*Humans just 0.01% of all life but have destroyed 83% of wild mammals - study*, *The Guardian*, 21 May 2018):

The world's 7.6 billion people represent just 0.01% of all living things... Yet since the dawn of civilisation, humanity has caused the loss of 83% of all wild mammals and half of plants, while livestock kept by humans abounds.... The new work reveals that farmed poultry today makes up 70% of all birds on the planet, with just 30% being wild. The picture is even more stark for mammals - 60% of all mammals on Earth are livestock, mostly cattle and pigs, 36% are human and just 4% are wild animals.... Of all the mammals on Earth, 96% are livestock and humans, only 4% are wild mammals

Human sacrifice practiced symbolically within Abrahamic religions

The Abrahamic religions all attach fundamental significance to sacrifice understood in theological terms (see [references](#)), as previously noted (*Systemic Reliance of World Religions on Human Sacrifice*, 2014). It is however profoundly ironic to note that, despite their violently conflictual relationships over centuries, the Abrahamic religions share a founding myth involving human sacrifice.

Abraham's dilemma and commitment: Commonly known under as the "*Binding of Isaac*", this constitutes an archetypal ethical dilemma for those faiths. There have been [extensive commentaries](#) down the centuries on the significance of the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac in response to his understanding of a command from God (as described in *Genesis 22*). [see [Symposium on the Sacrifice of Isaac in the Three Monotheistic Religions](#), 1995; [Jewish perspective \(Akedah\)](#); [Islamic perspective \(Dhabih\)](#)]. The event is remembered on the 1st of Tishrei in the Jewish calendar and from the 10th-13th of Dhu al-Hijjah in the Muslim calendar.

Curiously the conflict between the Abrahamic religions can be seen as partly prefigured by the alleged conflict between Isaac and his elder brother [Ishmael](#). Jewish and Islamic traditions consider Ishmael to be the ancestor of the [Arab people](#) and the Islamic prophet Muhammad. Whilst all three Abrahamic religions seem to agree that Abraham offered his son to sacrifice according to the command of God, an Islamic interpretation purportedly has it that the son was Ishmael and not Isaac (John Gilchrist, *Abraham in the Qur'an and the Bible: Ishaq or Ismail: the Muslim dilemma, Answering Islam*). Typically framed as a dilemma for Abraham, there is confusion over whether it was with regard to one son or the other -- Ishmael having been the "first born", but from another mother. Some modern historians add to the confusion by questioning whether any of the three existed in reality.

One sense of the variety of interpretations is offered by Richard L. Rubenstein (*The Religion of Sacrifice and Abraham, Isaac and Jesus*, *New English Review*, October 2009). Irrespective of such confusion, it might be asked whether the Abrahamic religions are now emulating that devoted willingness to sacrifice people, often metaphorically described as their "children", in response to their very human understanding of a command from God. It would indeed seem to be their belief that in the "end times" God will manifest to justify that belief and remedy misunderstanding of the situation.

Why should these faiths, which have played such a central role in recent human history, have as a common founding myth a story of human sacrifice? And why should they then be prepared to sacrifice each other's "children" -- on an "industrial scale"? And to extend this willingness to the sacrifice of those defined as "unbelievers"? In this sense, "Isaac" continues to be bound on the altar of that belief, with "Abraham" carrying the knife.

The Abrahamic religions continue to engage in ritual sacrifice -- [variously interpreted](#). There is therefore a case for recognizing the extent to which "human sacrifice" continues to be subtly celebrated within the rituals of the individual Abrahamic religions and otherwise -- deniably so, however, when undertaken through the use of surrogates and proxies. Any such argument is complex, subtle and necessarily controversial. The subtlety of the mystical understanding of sacrifice may well be beyond the comprehension of most adherents of each faith -- perhaps necessarily so -- readily misinterpreted to justify perversions of what is implied by those with the greatest insight.

Christianity: For A. Mursell (*The Doctrine of Sacrifice*, *Bible Hub*): *The theory of sacrifice seems to be intuitively inherent in all religions. The sacrifice of the life and death of Christ is the one essential foundation of every acceptable offering which can be made to God.*

The Christian [Eucharist](#) explicitly lends itself to interpretation in terms of human sacrifice (*The Eucharist as Sacrifice and Sacrament*, *Real Presence Eucharistic*; *The Sacrifice of the Mass*, *Catholic Answers*; *Five Affirmations on the Eucharist as Sacrifice*, *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*; J. Pohle, *Sacrifice of the Mass: theological treatment of the Mass as sacrifice*, *Catholic Answers*; Dave Armstrong, *Eucharistic Sacrifice: the witness of the Church Fathers*, *Biblical Evidence for Catholicism*, 4 October 2017).

As noted by *Wikipedia*:

In [Trinitarian Christianity](#), God became incarnate as Jesus, sacrificing his son to accomplish the reconciliation of God and humanity, which had separated itself from God through sin (see the concept of [original sin](#)). According to a view that has

featured prominently in Western theology since early in the 2nd millennium, God's justice required an [atonement](#) for sin from humanity if human beings were to be restored to their place in creation and saved from damnation. However, God knew limited human beings could not make sufficient atonement, for humanity's offense to God was infinite, so God created a covenant with Abraham, which he fulfilled when he sent his only Son to become the sacrifice for the broken covenant. In Christian theology, this sacrifice replaced the insufficient animal sacrifice of the [Old Covenant](#); Christ the "[Lamb of God](#)" replaced the lambs' sacrifice of the ancient *Korban Todah* (the Rite of Thanksgiving), chief of which is the Passover in the Mosaic law.

In the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Lutheran Churches, and the Methodist Churches, the Eucharist or Mass, as well as the Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Catholic Churches and Eastern Orthodox Church, is seen as a sacrifice.

Judaism: Ritual sacrifice was practiced in Ancient Israel, with the opening chapters of the book *Leviticus* detailing parts of an overview referring to the exact methods of bringing sacrifices, on which insightful commentary is provided by Joshua Heller (*The Psychology of Sacrifice, Jewish Theological Seminary*). Although sacrifices could include bloodless offerings (grain and wine), the most important were animal sacrifices. The teachings of the [Torah](#) and [Tanakh](#) reveal the Israelites's familiarity with human sacrifices, as exemplified by the near-sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham (Genesis 22:1-24).

Richard Rubenstein (cited above) notes evidence in scripture that child sacrifice was not only practiced in Israel, perhaps as late as 500 B.C.E., but that it may very well have been part of the official cultus, exemplified by the Prophet Ezekiel in accusations against "Jerusalem", culminating in the condemnation: *You even took the sons and daughters that you bore to Me and sacrificed them to those [images] as food -- as if your harlotries were not enough, you slaughtered My children and presented them as offerings to them.* [[Ezekiel 16:20-21](#)]

A [red heifer](#), also known as the red cow, was a cow brought to the priests as a sacrifice according to the Hebrew Bible, and its ashes were used for the [ritual purification](#) of *Tum'at HaMet*. In preparation for the reconstruction of a [Third Temple in Jerusalem](#), the [Temple Institute](#) has been attempting to identify red heifer candidates consistent with the requirements for its use in sacrifice on that occasion.

Islam: Ritual animal sacrifice continues to be practiced within Islam (*The Concept of Animal Sacrifice in Islam, Islam Awareness; Qurbani Rules Regarding Sacrificing of Animals*). As noted by *Wikipedia*:

An animal sacrifice in Arabic is called *Dhabihah*... The sacrificial animal may be a sheep, a goat, a camel, or a cow. The animal must be healthy and conscious. ... On the occasion of Eid ul Adha (Festival of Sacrifice), affluent Muslims all over the world perform the Sunnah of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) by sacrificing a cow or sheep.... The Qur'an states that the sacrifice has nothing to do with the blood and gore... Rather, it is done to help the poor and in remembrance of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael at God's command.... the word was later confined to the sacrifice of an associate animal slaughtered for the sake of God. A similar symbology, which is a reflection of Abraham and Ismael's dilemma, is the stoning of the Jamarat which takes place during the pilgrimage

Substitution: For the Abrahamic religions, before Abraham sacrificed his son, God provided a male goat to sacrifice instead. In commemoration of this in the Islamic tradition, on the occasion of [Eid al-Adha](#) an animal is sacrificed and divided into three parts: one third of the share is given to the poor and needy; another third is given to relatives, friends and neighbors; and the remaining third is retained by the family. Offering a comparison with Christian rituals, a counter-argument to non-Muslims criticism of this practice is provided by Andrew Blackmore-Dobbyn (*Eid al-Adha: The Significance of Ritual Sacrifice, The Huffington Post*, 23 January 2014):

Non-Muslims have little trouble accepting a holiday that commemorates Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac as part of his covenant with God. This is part of the Abrahamic tradition. I am not a Muslim but I have participated as a guest in the rituals of Eid el-Kebir, as it is known in Morocco, and can attest that it is the single most important holiday in the Islamic world. It is a conglomeration of Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter all rolled into one. It is a celebration of joy and also an important occasion to reach out to one's neighbors to make sure that they too are fed.

With respect to the joy occasioned by such celebration, a tragic irony became evident at the time of writing -- associated with the transportation of live sheep for that purpose from Australia:

- [Sheep held in horrific conditions on Australian export ship](#) (*Financial Times*, 16 April 2018)
- [Live Exports: maritime officials block shipment of 65,000 sheep to the Middle East](#) (*ABC*, 9 April 2018)
- [Death of 2,400 Australian sheep on ship to Middle East sparks investigation](#) (*The Guardian*, 5 April 2018)
- [Middle East-bound export ship blocked after 'shocking' Australia sheep footage](#) (*Arabia Business*, 10 April 2018)

Curiously the associations between the symbolism of the Christian [Lamb of God](#), and the challenging reality of sheep in practice, can only be highlighted by "extremists" of various kinds (George Monbiot (*Sheepwrecked: how Britain has been shagged by the white plague, Spectator*, 30 May 2013; Wouter Osterholt, *To the Other End: we have forgotten the sacrifice*).

Equally controversial questions have been raised with regard to the turkey widely consumed annually on [Thanksgiving Day](#). As noted by Melissa Cronin (*How The Turkey Became Thanksgiving's Mascot, The Dodo*, 25 November 2014):

While the [realities of the turkey production industry are gruesome](#) and well-known by now, the tradition of eating turkey on a holiday can mask these from diners, Davis says. We focus on the turkey as a sign of national unification and the wealth of the

country, forgetting that the animal was, more often than not, overfed and filled with a plethora of antibiotics, not to mention slaughtered before he was ever stuffed with stuffing. In fact, because of factory farming, most turkeys on modern dinner tables barely resemble the wild birds that originally graced early Thanksgiving tables - they've usually been bred to become three times larger than their wild contemporaries in just four months.

Ritual slaughter of animals: As argued by Karen Davis (*Ritual Slaughter*, Poultry Press, Fall-Winter 2009):

The idea that some groups were put on the earth to suffer and die sacrificially for a superior group goes far back in time. The idea is deeply embedded in human cultures, including the culture of the West, which is rooted in ancient Greek and Hebrew modes of thought, and incorporated in Christianity, where these roots combine. Animal sacrifice is not just an anachronism in these "enlightened" times. It thrives in modern forms, as, for example, in the sacrifice of other animal species for humans in biomedical research. Inflicting human diseases on animals in search of a cure, however modern this may seem, is essentially a type of primitive purification ritual. Through the ages, people have sought to rid themselves of their impurities (diseases, sins, and vices) by transferring their impurities to innocent victims. Often, these victims are represented as having both human and nonhuman attributes, as the word "scapegoat" implies. In Christianity, Jesus is the sacrificial lamb who bears away the sins of the world. In the Hasidic custom of *kapparot* (atonement), adherents transfer their sins and punishment symbolically to chickens, their "doubles", who are then slaughtered in their place by a "merciful" God.

Sacrificial animals are regarded by their sacrificers as worthless except in the realm of instrumentality, where, by contrast, they assume a role of principal importance. Whatever is done to them is said to be justified by the victims themselves, by virtue of who and what they are within the symbolic framework in which they are trapped. Only by being sacrificed to "higher" forms can these "lower and degraded" forms be redeemed from being, as it were, "just animals".

The argument is developed otherwise by Vexen Crabtree (*Animal Sacrifice and Blood Rituals in Traditional World Religions and in Satanism*, The Human Truth Foundation, 2008):

World religions such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism all embody a traditional and sometimes bizarre set of animal sacrifice rituals in their holy texts. These practices, despite being borderline barbaric and not in keeping with modern ideas of animal welfare, are still in use today by religious communities all over the world, including in the most modern countries. Although it might seem reasonable in the West to allow butchers to sell halal food, at the core of this familiar label is weird ritualistic behaviour that belongs in the dark ages. The ideals of pluralism have blinded us to the stark reality that some religious practices are simply unacceptable. Animal rights campaigners have joined forces with moral activists to try and curb religious ritual slaughter of animals. The general public associate blood rituals involving animals with Satanism, not realizing that they were all invented and are still practiced by mainstream religions -- and that Satanism does not involve animal sacrifice.

Symbolically enabling a sacrificial nexus? Given the manner and extent to which chickens are "sacrificed" -- notably by being rendered "headless"-- it is appropriate to note the mysterious symbolic coincidence of Israel having won the 2018 Eurovision Song Contest with a [chicken dance](#) (*Israel wins Eurovision Song Contest with chicken dance*, ABC News, 13 May 2018) on the occasion of the [opening of the US Embassy in Jerusalem](#) (15 May 2018) -- and the Gaza massacre of Palestinians on [Nakba Day](#) (15 May). The latter commemorates the displacement that preceded and followed the [Israeli Declaration of Independence](#) in 1948.

This feat thereby entitles Israel to host the 2019 Contest in Jerusalem -- thereby justifying the celebration of the event by Israel's prime minister (*Netanyahu does 'chicken dance' with Israeli Eurovision winner*, Reuters, 17 May 2018). Whether proven technology to manipulate electronic voting contributed to the orchestration of that geopolitical triumph is another matter -- as is whether Europe should now replace its anthem, *Ode to Joy*, with the clearly more popular chicken dance.

Unconscious need for human sacrifice in Abrahamic societies

Given the fundamental symbolic importance of sacrifice for Abrahamic religions (as highlighted above), it is appropriate to ask whether there are depths to that significance that are far from being comprehended. Sacrifice is readily framed as implying the deepest or highest mystery, most obviously in the Christian Eucharist. People are called upon to believe in that mystery however they can.

It could be readily argued that religions thrive on violence, notably through the manner in which people turn to them in times of suffering and when faced with the mystery of death. Enabling suffering and death elicits religious belief from which religious institutions clearly benefit -- cynically understood in conventional marketing terms. Death is a means of holding and retaining the interest of people. The fatalities resulting from the game-playing between the Abrahamic religions could be understood as fundamental to this process. Does that game-playing between siblings bear comparison with childrens' make-believe games of [Cops-and-Robbers](#), [Cowboys-and-Indians](#), and the like -- with each religion "taking its turn" in a positive or negative role?

It would be presumptuous to attempt to address the subtle role of the unconscious in relation to religion in this context, given the efforts of so many authors, notably from the perspective of depth psychology:

- Ann Belford Ulanov and Barry Ulanov: *Religion and the Unconscious* (1975)
- C. G. Jung: *Psychology of the Unconscious* (2012)

Need for enemies: There are a number of studies of the deep-seated need for enemies presumably of relevance to the Abrahamic religions:

- L. Bryce Boyer: *On Man's Need to Have Enemies: a psychoanalytic perspective* (*Journal of Psychoanalytic Anthropology*, 9, 1986, 2, pp. 101-120)
- Leopoldo Fergusson, et al.: *The Need for Enemies* (*National Bureau of Economic Research*, 2012)
- Vamik D. Volkan. *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies: a developmental approach.* (*Political Psychology*, 6, 1985, 2, pp. 219-247)
- Lawrence E. Joseph: *The Need for Enemies.* (*The Huffington Post*, 11 January 2010)

In the case of the Abrahamic religions, this need is readily transformed into a framing of each other as "evil". It is questionable whether those religions could survive without their focus on evil as an explanatory device justifying their injunctions and those of the leaders informed by such beliefs. The irony is the extent to which each frames the other as fundamentally evil -- curiously reminiscent of the make-believe games noted above (*Existence of evil as authoritatively claimed to be an overriding strategic concern*, 2016; *Framing by others of claimants of evil as evil*, 2016).

Need for surrogate victims and scapegoats: Given the substitution of a goat for Abraham's son, there is clearly a fundamental disposition by Abrahamic religions to identify *scapegoats* (Sylvia Brinton Perera, *Scapegoat Complex: toward a mythology of shadow and guilt* (*Studies in Jungian Psychology*, 1986; René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, 1986; George McGrath Callan, *The Scapegoat Complex: archetypal reflections on a culture of severance*; Tirzah Firestone, *The Scapegoat Archetype: the world as replica of our unknown face*). The latter is introduced with a quotation from a source that is only too appropriate at this time:

The root of all disturbance, if one will go to its source, is that no one will blame himself (Dorotheus of Gaza, 6th c. monk).

One provocative insight is offered by Ann W. Astell and Sandor Goodhart (*An Introduction to Girardian Thinking, Its Reception in Biblical Studies*, 2011) in presenting a compilation (*Sacrifice, Scripture, and Substitution Readings in Ancient Judaism and Christianity*, 2011). This relates to the work of René Girard (*Violence and the Sacred*, 1977; *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World*, 1987):

Girard's thesis in a nutshell is that all culture is founded upon murder, upon the collective lynching of a surrogate victim or scapegoat whose removal restores peace and tranquility to a previously disrupted community. This insight gives specificity to what Girard calls "the mimetic hypothesis", which is that all culture is organized around the management of imitative desire and the control of its propensity for violent conflict. Human beings desire, Girard suggests, neither objects nor subjects but the desires of others, and that fact -- that all desire is mediated through a model one has consciously or unconsciously appropriated -- leads inevitably to conflict. In the primitive universe such conflictual potential is managed by a sacrificial mechanism that declares as sacred a violence that has been efficaciously removed from the community, and as violent a sacred that comes down from its segregated place outside of the city and is wreaking havoc upon the citizenry. The modern universe -- in possession of the scriptures bequeathed to us by the revealed religions (and, for Girard, especially Judaism and Christianity) -- remains the beneficiary of the exposure of this sacrificial system, an exposure that contributes to its disempowerment. But it is beset by its own dilemma, namely, how to continue in a world in which the sacrificial no longer works, in which scapegoating is no longer efficacious and reciprocal violence proliferates not only in spite of but now even because of such sacrificial gestures, and in which as a result the anti-sacrificial, the ethical, is of primary concern (p. 3)

Consistent with this surrogate/substitution argument are the results of recent research:

- Sarah Kaplan: *The 'darker link' between ancient human sacrifice and our modern world* (*The Washington Post*, 5 April 2016)
- Joseph Watts, et al.: *Ritual human sacrifice promoted and sustained the evolution of stratified societies* (*Nature*, 532, 14 April 2016)
- Emily Benson: *Human sacrifice may have helped societies become more complex* (*Science*, 4 April 2016)

Foundation sacrifices in construction? Far closer to the present times is a tradition recognized in folklore, often framed suspiciously as a reality, regarding the appropriateness of burying humans alive as a sacrifice in the foundations of a major construction, such as a bridge or a castle:

- *Blood in the Foundations: the dark side of organizational sacrifice* (David Tensen, 17 November 2014)
- *Traditions of Human Sacrifice associated with the Building of Bridges* (*Pitlane Magazine*, 2018)
- *Did they ever build children into bridges?* (26 March 2011)

For Robert Diehl and Charles Springwood (*Human Pillars and Hungry Bridges: an ethnological study of construction sacrifice*, *Digital Commons*, 2013):

The practice of construction sacrifice (also called building sacrifice or foundation sacrifice), which entails burying an animal, object, or person inside a building under construction, exists in multiple traditions around the world, from Japan to Northern Europe, and is described in Slavic folk songs as well as early American folklore. The motivation for these sacrifices can broadly be divided into two categories: appeasement sacrifice, in which the sacrifice fulfills some need and allows the building to stand, and protective sacrifices, which protects the building from future damage. To date, there has been no overarching ethnological study conducted to try and draw together instances of this motif. This paper draws on archaeology, folklore studies, and the anthropology of constructed spaces to discern commonalities in these beliefs and perhaps hint at their origins.

The practice in the non-western culture of Japan, is termed *Hitobashira*. Individuals were deliberately buried alive under or near large-

scale buildings like dams, bridges, and castles, as a prayer to the gods so that the building was not destroyed by natural disasters such as floods or by enemy attacks. It can also refer to workers who were buried alive under inhumane conditions.

Constructors of certain projects continue to cultivate [builders' rituals](#) which once took the form of human sacrifice in order to ensure its stability. The early burial of wives, concubines and servants with prominent leaders can be recognized as consistent with that model -- as can the recently obsolete Indian practice of [widow burning](#) (*sati*). The widespread tradition of human foundation sacrifices, and analysis of the myth-ritual theory in European social studies, are indicated by John Clark (*Foundation sacrifices revisited*, *Fortean Times*, 316, 2014, July).

To the extent that the need to engage in such sacrifice is an unrecognized process in the collective unconscious, it could well be asked whether this offers a necessarily controversial explanation for the extent of the slaughter of Palestinian protestors in Gaza on the occasion of the highly symbolic opening of the US Embassy in Jerusalem (as noted above). Such events are recognized by [Christian Zionists](#) as part of the prophesied end times processes, and an anticipation of foundation of the Third Temple, for which blood sacrifice is required (*Christian Zionists See Signs of Messiah in Major Anniversary Year for Israel*, *Haaretz*, 4 November 2017; *In Israel/Palestine Christian Zionism fills Episcopal Church's Silence*, *Palestine Israel Network*, 27 February 2018).

Should "foundational singularities" be recognized as subtly calling for fundamental sacrifice of some kind (*Jerusalem as a Symbolic Singularity: comprehending the dynamics of hyperreality as a challenge to conventional two-state reality*, 2017)?

Sacrificial prerequisite for modern legislation? It is widely recognized that the final trigger for legislation in any domain is seldom based on rational argument, as might be too readily assumed in a knowledge-based civilization highly attentive to decision-making processes of a narrow technical nature. The urgency of more complex problems recognized by other constituencies does not however translate automatically into legislative measures. It would appear that the lags in this process anticipate some other kind of trigger -- too readily framed in terms of "political will", with little insight into what engenders it.

Provocatively it could be suggested that major legislative measures in modern society are triggered only by death -- effectively by human sacrifice, as argued separately (*Requisite human sacrifice for effective point-making*, 2011). In that sense society engenders such sacrifice unconsciously through a mysterious process of awaiting an auspicious moment to institute such measures. The sacrifice is then enabled contextually by circumstances and through negligence, rather than by any "hands-on" initiative for which anyone could be considered responsible. As a sacrifice, this possibility could be considered to be in accordance with the recent research cited above with regard to the role of sacrifice in enabling the emergence of higher degrees of social organization -- of which legislative measures are now a key feature.

The possibility suggests that any set of legislative measures could lend itself to analysis in terms of the number of people it was necessary for society to "have sacrificed" to enable each piece of legislation. In this sense, does each piece of legislation have an undeclared "body-count" -- effectively a critical mass of sacrificial victims?

Appropriate level of sacrifice? Such criteria recall the deprecated processes in some civilizations past where there was recognition of the number of blood sacrifices necessary to "appease the gods" or the "spirits". The remarkable requirements of [Aztec massacres](#) in that regard merit consideration from this perspective (*Current analogue to the Aztec sacrificial pyramid?* 2011). This is also the case with regard to the number of sacrifices required for the satisfaction of citizens of Rome in the Colosseum. It could be readily argued that the Abrahamic religions now enable sacrifices far exceeding the numbers considered appropriate in empires of the past -- if only via the media. How indeed is "appropriateness" to be understood in such terms (*Comprehension of Appropriateness*, 1986)? How does the question relate to that of any particular level of suffering or punishment -- especially in the light of vindictive Christian justice exemplified by the case detainees at Guantanamo Bay and by [Julian Assange](#)?

Seemingly there is an unconscious collective need for an "appropriate amount" in order to enable any decision. Curiously, after the fact, the number is identified in the case of wars through the use of memorials on which individuals are named. This tends not to be the case with respect to legislation, where only the leading campaigners may be similarly celebrated -- not those who died to trigger the requisite sensibility finally justifying that legislation. The future may however recognize this lag to be an unconscious withholding of assistance to those in need.

Tragically from this perspective, the decision to ensure termination of the Vietnam War could be seen as having been triggered by a critical number of ["body bags"](#). Hence the subsequent media censorship of conflicts in which "premature" termination of the conflict might be triggered by extensive publicity regarding such numbers.

The question might be explored otherwise in terms of the number of "martyrs" required in effective support of any cause. The heroic role of [Christian martyrs](#) has long been recognized (*Pope hails Christian martyrs killed by jihadists*, *The Sunday Times*, 26 February 2016). That framing is now potentially challenged from an Islamic perspective, given the nature of *jihad* (Asma Afsaruddin, *Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought and History*, 2018; John Soboskai, *Varieties of Martyrdom*, *21st Century Global Dynamics*, 10, 2017, 23; Meir Litvak, *"Martyrdom is Life": Jihad and Martyrdom in the Ideology of Hamas*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 33, 2010, 8). From a Christian perspective, no *jihadist* could be recognized as a "martyr" -- although the loss of lives of Christian crusaders, as [soldiers of Christ](#) in service to the [Church Militant](#), would challenge simplistic conclusions.

Intriguingly it could be asked with respect to trench warfare in world wars between purportedly Christian armies: **were soldiers deliberately sacrificed, or did they deliberately sacrifice themselves?** How many sacrifices are required in Palestine, for example? Given that the sacrifice of some 6 million Jews under German occupation was required to enable the formal establishment of Israel, it might be asked what proportion of the 6 million Palestinians under Israeli occupation need to be sacrificed for their cause?

Similar questions could be asked with respect to gun control legislation -- for which the current level of sacrifice by Christians in the USA is clearly totally insufficient. The question is how many need to be sacrificed before such legislation becomes credible?

Sacrificial prerequisite for any paradigm shift? Irrespective of legislative change, more fundamental is the widely recognized need for the kinds of paradigm change which enable legislative change. This might be assumed to require even higher orders of sacrifice, potentially consistent with the recent research (cited above with regard to enabling the emergence of higher degrees of social organization).

This suggests a curiously surreptitious corollary to the insight of [Stafford Beer](#) in the Chairman's Address to the International Cybernetic Congress (*The Cybernetic Cytoblast: management itself*, September 1969):

Le Chatelier's Principle: Reformers, critics of institutions, consultants in innovation, people in short who 'want to get something done', often fail to see this point. They cannot understand why their strictures, advice or demands do not result in effective change. They expect either to achieve a measure of success in their own terms or to be flung off the premises. But an ultra-stable system (like a social institution)... has no need to react in either of these ways. It specializes in equilibrational readjustment, which is to the observer a secret form of change requiring no actual alteration in the macro-systemic characteristics that he is trying to do something about.

Triggering the "equilibrational readjustment" is then to be explored as a paradigmatic revolution, as variously studied ([Thomas Kuhn](#), *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1962; [René Thom](#), *Structural Stability and Morphogenesis*, 1972). In addition to Beer's insight, "unconscious dimensions" are evident from the following, for example:

- [Max Planck](#): *A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.*
- [John Ralston Saul](#): *The Unconscious Civilization* (1995)
- Opportunistically, on the occasion of 9/11, [Jo Moore](#) notoriously informed Tony Blair that it was *a good day to bury bad news* (*The Telegraph*, 10 October 2001).

The tendency to employ funding bar charts to indicate progressive support for a cause, in relation to a critical amount required for some initiative, could be usefully questioned as inadequate with respect to critical legislation. As a measure of confidence elicited with respect to an initiative, this obscures the unconscious requirement for requisite sacrifice and the confidence with which that would then be associated as being "auspicious". Is it really "body count bar charts" which are required to clarify the target to be achieved?

Surrogates of confidence: In the light of the above arguments, perhaps the most provocatively fundamental question is whether the Abrahamic religions are unconsciously engaged in a complex dynamic to ensure a maximum level of violent sacrifice and suffering in order to trigger the arrival of a [Messiah](#) variously prophesied by each of them. It is seemingly irrelevant that the violence should be perversely fratricidal -- through the slaughter of each others' believers.

Curiously the many references with regard to "Helping God" tend to comment on the role of Sarah, Abraham's wife. Initially unable to conceive Isaac according to God's promise to Abraham, Sarah enabled the conception of Ishmael with Hagar, a slave women ([God Provides for Hagar and Ishmael](#), *Genesis 21*; [John Piper](#), *Hagar and Slavery vs. Sarah and Freedom*, *Desiring God*; [Patrick Krayner](#), *God's Promise to Hagar: Clearing up a misunderstanding*, *Interserve*; [Bruce Goettsche](#). "Trying to Help God", *Union Church*). This archetypal drama is used by some to frame the need to enable the problematic conditions which would trigger the emergence of the Messiah -- as a justification of the necessary human sacrifice.

Engendering a sacrificial future culture through Abrahamic religion

Framing themselves as essentially timeless in their focus, if not eternal, there is a case for recognizing the strange process through which Abrahamic religions now deliberately enable high levels of "human sacrifice" in the future. Whether as an unconscious process, or one consciously framed by [plausible deniability](#), this dissociates those religions from any responsibility for such future human sacrifice. Or is any claim of innocence in this respect to be framed as [culpable deniability](#)?

In summary, the manner in which the highest human values are upheld and deployed by the Abrahamic religions at the present time, with respect to preservation of human life at all costs, can be considered as a smoke screen. This obscures the even greater level of human sacrifice and suffering that is thereby enabled in the future. Those religions justify their case for unchecked population growth by the claim that it is for society in general to organize itself such as to enable appropriate distribution of resources for whatever level of procreation people consider desirable. This is notably justified in the light of the interpretation of a primordial divine injunction ([Genesis 1:28](#); [Genesis 9:7](#)). Any failure to ensure such reallocation of resources, with the deaths that may result, is then considered to be entirely the responsibility of governments, however they are elected.

In the light of any game-playing explanation, the locus of responsibility in this regard can be elegantly compared with the widely recognized three-card confidence trick, namely "[find-the-lady](#)". The dynamics of the game usefully highlights the elusiveness of any responsible party and the challenge of its identification ([Collective Mea Culpa? You Must be Joking! Them is to blame, Not us!](#) 2015). In a period of fake-news, the game could also be compared to the challenge of juggling three balls ([Governance as "juggling" -- Juggling as "governance"](#), 2018). The challenge of such juggling between siblings could be recognized in terms of a trilemma -- each is right, with the others as necessarily wrong. Time to grow up?

This argument with regard to the consequences of unconstrained population growth can be variously made, citing relevant references in each case:

- [Is There Never Enough? Religious doublespeak on population and poverty](#) (2013)
- [Systemic Reliance of World Religions on Human Sacrifice: covert use of fatal conflict to ensure vital resource management](#)

(2014)

- *Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge incommunicability of fundamentally inconvenient truth* (2008)
- *United Nations Overpopulation Denial Conference: exploring the underside of climate change* (2009)
- *Detection of the big lie obscured by the population-growth complex?* (2016)
- *Enabling Fruitful Multiplication of Global Population* (2015)
- *Scientific Gerrymandering of Boundaries of Overpopulation Debate* (2012)

Of particular relevance is the sense in which unchecked population growth can be recognized as a primary driver for the less controversial and "more convenient" problems, as discussed separately (*Vigorous Application of Derivative Thinking to Derivative Problems Transcending bewailing, hand-wringing and emotional blackmail*, 2013). Aspects of the role of those religions can however be highlighted (*Root Irresponsibility for Major World Problems: the unexamined role of Abrahamic faiths in sustaining unrestrained population growth*, 2007):

Assessment of faith-based death warrants effectively authorized	Contradictions associated with "right to life"
Problem displacement	Maximizing suffering -- or "optimizing it"?
Misleading focus on proximate causes	Methodology for requisite analysis
A Terrifying Truth?	Assertion of moral authority
Euphemisms and spurious rationalizations	

The theologically-empowered decision-making of religions is increasingly exposed as highly problematic. The challenges are currently exemplified by sexual abuse by clergy (and its cover up), together with earlier complicity in sequestration of women and children, as well as systematic discrimination against women more generally. To what extent are conflicts in the Middle East indeed sanctioned by religion -- accompanied by the most ineffectual expressions of regret? If religious institutions can be so demonstrably wrong, the question is whether they may be wrong on other matters -- about which they are effectively in denial.

Potentially more perverse is the manner in which Abrahamic religions have been highly complicit in the manufacture and sale of weapons to exacerbate the conflicts which both result in "human sacrifice" and engender high levels of refugee flows. Consistent with its unconstrained gun control policy, and as a country primarily inspired by Christianity, the USA is the world's largest exporter of arms (*World's Largest Exporters Of Arms*). The massive increase in the armaments program of the USA under Donald Trump merits recognition of the extent to which his presidency has notably been enabled by Christians -- making him a creature of Christianity. Again of course, those religions would cite formal separation of religion and state to imply total lack of responsibility in that matter -- "find-the-lady" again.

The credibility of such arguments is called into question by awards such as the [Lamp of Peace of Saint Francis](#) to German Chancellor, Angela Merkel -- despite engendering controversial destabilization of Europe through imposition of her refugee policy and enabling many deaths of refugees in their transit to Europe (*Merkel receives Franciscan 'Lamp of Peace' in Assisi, Italy*, DW, 12 May 2108). Awarded in the same period as the Gaza massacres cited above, Christian Germany at the same time concluded a major arms deals with Israel (*German military to move forward with plan to lease Israeli drones*, DefenceWeb, 15 May 2018).

In systemic terms, it is appropriate to note how the migration crisis has been enabled with a high degree of complicity on the part of Abrahamic religions. As with many other resource-related problems in a global society of highly constrained governance capacity, it is difficult to deny that fewer people would reduce the challenges to levels which current governance might be capable of managing. Enabling population increase necessarily ensures that many more will suffer and deny in the future. Could this be understood as - a requisite level of human sacrifice to enable social change and transformation? Encouraging procreation by families with little prospect of supporting their progeny is readily to be labelled as a death warrant -- a guarantee of future human sacrifice.

It is in this sense that the Abrahamic religions can together be understood as "crafting", whether unconsciously or deliberately, a future characterized to a far higher degree by sacrifice. There is however considerable irony to the fact that many present-day forms of environment and health degradation resulting in fatality, unchallenged by Abrahamic religions, could be increasingly seen as constituting the most significant constraint on population growth (smoking, drugs, food-chain pollution, air pollution, water pollution, etc).

Unexplored potential self-sacrifice by Abrahamic religions

In the introduction it was noted that the title of this document is deliberately ambiguous as a means of evoking reflection on the equally ambiguous question posed by the subtitle. Is human sacrifice by the Abrahamic religions indeed a vital prerequisite for sustainable global civilization? However, rather than the sacrifice of those in other Abrahamic religions as scapegoats, is it rather the nature of the self-sacrifice required of each such religion? Is it indeed "blood sacrifice" that is required, or some surrogate thereof?

Each religion attaches fundamental importance to the sacrifice of some "other" -- however mystically this is understood. Should this be understood as an unfortunate projection -- even when framed in terms of individual self-sacrifice? Is it rather the case that the significant sacrifice, for humanity as a whole, is the collective self-sacrifice of each religion -- whether singly, or together in the form of an archetypal "suicide pact" -- as a "resolution" of the dynamics of the drama of their shared founding myth?

Are examples of the [collective self-sacrifice](#) (termed mass suicide) within any of the religions indicative of the nature of the process -- including instances of when they were collectively sacrificed? The classical example at Masada is already challenged (*Did the Jews Kill Themselves at Masada Rather Than Fall Into Roman Hands?* Haaretz, 16 May 2017). Recent examples are however framed as scandalous. Sacrifice clearly needs to be framed otherwise.

Imagination and language: How could such a dynamic be imagined in relation to:

- the Messiah, as variously anticipated by each Abrahamic religion (*Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon: a heartfelt response to systemic negligence*, 2004; *Evil Rules: Guidelines for Engaging in Armageddon Now*, 2015; *Strategic Briefing for the Messiah: based on professional insights from preemptive news and image management*, 1999)
- the anticipated arrival of extraterrestrials as surrogate saviours (*Sensing Epiterrestrial Intelligence (SETI)*, 2013; *Writing Guidelines for Future Occupation of Earth by Extraterrestrials: Be done by as you did?* 2010)
- any anticipated strategic reconfiguration of the international community enabling a new world order (*International Community as God or Sorcerer's Apprentice?* 2015; *Engendering 2052 through Re-imagining the Present*, 2012)

Part of the challenge would appear to lie in the actual language used to articulate that imagined process. A useful example of distinctive articulation is provided by Paul W. Kahn (*Sacrificial Nation, Utopian*, 29 March 2010). He argues with respect to the USA, for example, that it is a political theological project. Popular sovereignty is the mystical corpus, and sacrifice is the act of self-transcendence:

In speaking of political sacrifice, I am not appealing to metaphor. Sacrifice is a giving up of a finite set of concerns -- located immediately in the well-being of the body -- through the act of making present a transcendent value. This normative experience of surplusage, which destroys the finite by making present the infinite, is constitutive of the national community. This is the lived meaning of the state as a political-theological project in which national existence is not just one end among others. Rather, it is that for which everything else can be destroyed, and that which has a claim upon everything else. The American nation wants only to be itself without end. It is, for example, not a step on the path to a cosmopolitan order....

The sacrificial character of American political experience is largely invisible to outsiders. The connection of sacrifice to popular sovereignty frames the internal imagination, not the external perception of power. That someone is sacrificing himself in the act of threatening violence does not change the appearance of the act to the victim. Internally, however, the popular sovereign exists only as long as, and just so far as, citizens experience the truth of the self through the act of sacrifice. If they come to view sacrifice as a demand to be measured by any metric outside of itself - whether of future benefits or of justice -- then popular sovereignty as a conception of the sacred will have ceased. We may still vote, but the nation has become a means to ends that voters bring to the political process from outside -- perhaps commercial, perhaps familial, perhaps charitable and global. At that point, the political theological project no longer makes any sense.

Other such attempts are required.

Requisite reframing: "human", "sacrifice" and "religion"? There is a case for exploring the extent to which the tragic dilemmas of the times derive from what might be termed definitional game-playing or conceptual gerrymandering (*Conceptual gerrymandering and definitional game-playing*, 2002). Arguably this is a consequence of the primary characteristic shared by the Abrahamic religions, namely their monotheistic belief. Through their acclaimed distinctiveness, this same characteristic readily translates into the exclusiveness whereby each is right and the others necessarily wrong. "Religion" is therefore singular -- there can be only one appropriate belief system. In attempting to deal with complexity, simplistic "mono-factor" thinking is notably criticized by Edgar Morin (*Pour Sortir du XXe Siecle*, 1981).

It then follows that "human" is also singular in a sense, thereby separating the believers from unbelievers and from otherness in general. This unfortunately frames a context in which otherness is essentially irrelevant and can be only too readily sacrificed, as becomes increasingly evident in the condition of the world -- whether living or nonliving. The Abrahamic religions have yet to engage effectively with their archetypal struggle with femininity -- ironically dating back to their earlier founding myth in the Garden of Eden. Paradise lost?

There is a tragic visual resemblance between the **concentration camps of the Holocaust** and the **factory farming units** now required around the world to feed the growing population. Whether chickens, pigs or cows, the living conditions are strikingly similar. Both call for the same process same management skills. The concentration camps were a prelude to sacrifice of humans, just as the farming units are a prelude to sacrifice for humans. Whether understood as "cannon fodder" or otherwise, humans can be readily understood as being "bred for sacrifice" -- if only to feed the "economic machine". However it requires little skill in definitional game-playing and conceptual gerrymandering to frame such comparisons as meaningless. Humans are not animals? Animals are not human?

It has been recently announced that the planet is in process of a **sixth extinction of species** -- estimated at 100 to 1,000 times higher than the natural background rate (as noted above). This is a consequence of habitat destruction, overexploitation, and disease -- most of which has been enabled by humans reinforced by Abrahamic religion. This process is also readily framed as of little consequence to governance in practice. Curiously however the wilderness areas which have been destroyed through these processes were also the habitats of indigenous peoples, often now confined to reservations, if not otherwise marginalized following various forms of ethnic cleansing. Victims of conceptual gerrymandering -- in that they were held to be without soul? *Homo nullius* on *Terra nullius*?

Could it be said that Abrahamic religions, through their monotheistic disposition, are essentially only capable of juggling one ball -- when there is a need for each to juggle many more and the potential of juggling even more between those religions? This argument is avoiding that of Stephen Prothero (*God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World -- and Why Their Differences Matter*, 2010) or Sarah Voss (*What Number Is God? Metaphors, Metaphysics, Metamathematics, and the Nature of Things*, 1995). How indeed might the Abrahamic religions progress from one, past two, to three, and then to eight, or more -- as is necessarily implied by the argument from the perspective of cognitive psychology of George Lakoff and Rafael E. Nunez (*Where Mathematics Comes From: how the embodied mind brings mathematics into being*, 2000)?

Given the extensive literature on sacrifice by Abrahamic religions, when have religions sacrificed themselves as a collectivity -- as a belief system? How might such "sacrifice" then be understood?

Envisaging collective sacrifice otherwise? Given that great symbolic importance has been variously associated by the Abrahamic

religions with a vessel of some kind (the [Chalice](#), the [Kiddush](#), or an [Islamic divination bowl](#)), a Zen tale offers one indication:

Three disciples of a Zen master were each asked to explain the nature of a beautiful ancient vase of utmost value. The first and the second were each absent a year and returned with complex statements -- which were rejected. The third immediately smashed the vase with one blow -- and thus achieved *satori*.

The tale was used by the "organizing group" of an unusual conference in dissolving itself and any dependence on a detailed program, long-prepared with great care (*A Congress that Dared the Unthinkable*, Florence, 1978).

Could the Abrahamic religions, individually or together, be understood metaphorically as such a vase? The "vase" might, for example, be usefully imagined in the light of insights into wave theory -- as a wave form of belief (*Encountering Otherness as a Waveform -- in the light of a wave theory of being*, 2013). The nature of such "belief" could now be challenged by emerging insights into quantum consciousness, as separately discussed in the light of the arguments of [Alexander Wendt](#) (*Quantum Mind and Social Science: unifying physical and social ontology*, 2015; [video](#); [interview](#)) as discussed separately (*On being "walking wave functions" in terms of quantum consciousness?* 2017).

In the current global civilization, is the "globe", as understood, to be recognized as just such a "vase"?

The subtlety of the cognitive challenge is exemplified by the understanding of orthodox Islam that any image (whether a vase, a model, or a metaphor) purporting to represent something other than itself is irreconcilable with its central message. In that sense Islam has already "smashed the vase". However, as exemplified by the challenge of Sunni-Shia conflict and its relations with Judaism, Islam as a "container" of a kind has yet to "smash itself" -- consistent with that insight. For the Abrahamic religions in general, what is it that needs to be collectively sacrificed?

In a period when waterboarding has been brought back into fashion by Christian governments, and given the early focus on heresy of the Inquisition, how could an Abrahamic religion now *put itself to "the question"*? The possibility of asking such a question is indicated by a formal statement by a leading bishop: *It could be argued that the greatest obstacle to preaching the gospel today in Scotland is the Catholic Church itself. ('Biggest obstacle to the Catholic Church is itself', claims bishop, BBC News, 17 April 2018).*

Paradox of containment: Are the Abrahamic religions, individually or collectively, appropriate containers for the mystery they endeavour to communicate? Rather than being essential questions, do Abrahamic religions cultivate the role of being answers or answer containers? Would they be more authentic as questions rather than as answers, as may be explored with respect to individual identity (*Am I Question or Answer? Problem or (re)solution?* 2006)

Are they to be thought of as containers or as the contents -- or both, or neither? (*Containment and authenticity*, 2003; *Cognitive containers*, 2011; *Cognitive significance of a container*, 2016). The latter notes an argument relating to the fundamental global importance of shipping containers by [Alexander Klose](#) (*The Container Principle: how a box changes the way we think*, 2009). In a critical comment Klose notes:

Containers represent the impressive dynamics of modern capitalism and its fundamental optimism in the face of every crisis. At the same time, they represent the fears and objections to these dynamics when logistic are organized purely for optimization, forcibly converging and aligning formerly remote parts of the world through an exponential increase in transport and communications processes. The basic materiality of containers, the fact that they can be emptied just as easily as they can be filled, also seems to reveal an effect on the semantic level of stories and images. (p. ix)

The argument is appropriately extended by Klose to include the cognitive preoccupations of [George Lakoff](#) and [Mark Johnson](#) (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980) with the container as the primary subspecies in the genus of the ontological metaphor, citing:

Each of us is a container, with a bounding surface and an in-out orientation. We project our own in-out orientation onto other physical objects that are bounded by surfaces. Thus we also view them as containers with an inside and an outside. (p. 25)

Missing from such framings is how "sacrifice" (of the "vase") might then be understood, especially any paradoxical implication combining self-sacrifice and the sacrifice of otherness. How does one "participate" in a sacrifice -- especially if one is part of the sacrifice? How would any such insight apply collectively and to a religion as a whole? The paradox recalls the purported quest of alchemists for a container to contain a universal solvent (*alkahest*) that could dissolve the material of any container. Is the transcendental nature of the divine, fundamental to Abrahamic monotheistic beliefs to be understood as such a solvent?

Any "smashing" of a "vase" suggests a strange form of discontinuity, too "comfortably" described as a "paradigm shift" when there is fundamental identification with the paradigm subject to transformation, as in the case of each Abrahamic religion. The discontinuity is better understood in terms of a catastrophe -- a higher order catastrophe as suggested by [catastrophe theory](#), and the unfinished work of [Niklas Luhmann](#) (*A Systems Theory of Religion*, 2013).

Such a catastrophe could be understood as triggered by an archetypal "deadly question" calling into question the very existence of a pattern of belief (*In quest of the most deadly question*, 2013; *Enabling morphogenesis and transformation through catastrophic questioning*, 2013; *Conformality of 7 WH-questions to 7 Elementary Catastrophes: an exploration of potential psychosocial implications*, 2006).

Mathematical theology? Are there more insightful metaphors of "self-sacrifice", as can be separately explored (*Metaphors To Die By:*

correspondences between a collapsing civilization, culture or group, and a dying person, 2013)?

It could be considered remarkable that the Abrahamic religions, through their monotheism, all attach a high degree of significance to mathematics and number symbolism. More remarkable, however, is their failure to devote significant resources to the potential of the mathematical theology which has inspired so many mathematicians of faith. The possibility is argued separately (*Mathematical Theology: Future Science of Confidence in Belief Self-reflexive -- global reframing to enable faith-based governance*, 2011).

Mathematics has the considerable advantage of highly sophisticated insight into higher-dimensional relationships, limits, boundaries and the strange issue of "remainders", as can be otherwise explored (*Reintegration of a Remaindered World: cognitive recycling of objects of systemic neglect*, 2011). How indeed to engage with unbelief and the "left behind"? How might "evil" be more fruitfully reframed, given the relativity of recognition of "right" and "wrong" from any given (global) perspective?

As a form of religion for some, the role of sacrifice in mathematics may indeed offer insights into its role in religion, as indicated by the following:

Weyl, as a mathematician, was ready, as any intuitionist, to sacrifice large parts of mathematics in order to justify the rest -- in terms of his extremely high standards of rigour. On the other hand, Weyl, as a physicist, was not ready to sacrifice them, for they are useful tools in physics. He does not explain how some propositions can be useful tools in one science if they are definitely false in another, the very science to which they belong -- as indeed they are, according to Weyl's mathematical views. I hope that future research work in the empirical foundations of mathematics will show in which sense propositions rejected by intuitionists can be tested in practice, and in which sense such a testing justifies their application in physics or other sciences. (*Problems in the Philosophy of Mathematics*, 2011, 203)

Curiously the elaboration by **George Boole** of so-called **Boolean logic**, so fundamental to the information sciences, resulted in an explanatory text by his wife, **Mary Everest Boole**, on the "Law of Sacrifice" in mathematics (*The Mathematical Psychology of Gratry and Boole, translated from the language of the higher calculus into that of elementary geometry*, 1897). Somewhat ironically recent research offers related insights from mathematics -- notably on why complex society may depend on occasionally murdering innocent people (Annalee Newitz, *Thanks to math, we can calculate the benefits of human sacrifice*, *Ars Technica*, 5 April 2016). Other mathematical research provides insight into the causes of self-sacrifice in violent conflicts around the world, from holy wars to gangland violence (*Researchers test what lies behind the extreme self-sacrifice of fighters*, 16 March 2017).

How might such approaches offer insights into the benefits from the greater challenge of the self-sacrifice of the Abrahamic religions? Are there insights from *seppuku* and Buddhist self-immolation (*Buddhism and self-immolation: the theology of self-destruction*, *The Economist*, 22 March 2013).

Is there a multiverse to be imagined otherwise, as can be variously explored (*Transcending both scientific and poetic comprehension of multiverse*, 2012; *Engendering a multiverse through imagining*, 2012)?

Beyond "just war", "just sacrifice" and "just human"?

The complicity of the Abrahamic religions in "just war" theory and "just torture" theory was highlighted above in relation to any sense of "just sacrifice". The imminent possibility of further "just sacrifice" is currently actively envisaged by the USA -- necessarily under Christian auspices -- with respect to North Korea, following the "**Libya model**" instigated by a NATO coalition sharing the same inspiration (*Why North Korea Is Angered by 'Libya Model' in Nuclear Talks*, *The New York Times*, 16 May 2018; *Trump's 'Libya Model' Remark on North Korea Was a Threat and May Sink the June 12 Summit*, *The Diplomat*, 18 May 2018). The main proponents, **Mike Pence** and **John Bolton**, are recognized as giving priority to their extreme Christian beliefs.

The justification for this approach is curiously consistent with an earlier threat to bomb Islamic Pakistan "*back to the Stone Age*" if it failed to collaborate with a superpower locked into a Christian "Stone Age" mentality (*Musharraf: U.S. Threatened to Bomb Pakistan to the Stone Age*, *Fox News*, 22 September 2006; Nick Cullather, *Bomb them Back to the Stone Age: An Etymology*, *History News Network*, 5 October 2006). The limitations of this perspective have notably been explored by Edward de Bono (*I Am Right, You Are Wrong: New Renaissance: From Rock Logic to Water Logic*, 1990).

The question is within what "container" is such a sacrifice to be articulated? If sacrifice is to be understood as essential to salvation in theological terms, there is the curious possibility that a confusion has been unfortunately cultivated between "human sacrifice" and "sacrifice of humanity". In the quest for "planetary salvation" through appropriate governance of sustainability and the like, what indeed might need to be sacrificed?


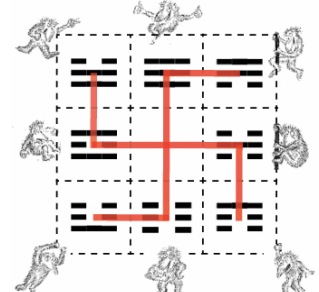
Animality? In the case of the individual human, much is made by theology of transcending man's "animal nature". With respect to global governance, the issue is well-framed by the famous comment by **John Maynard Keynes** regarding the continuing challenge of "**animal spirits**" (cf. Robert Shiller (*Animal Spirits Depend on Trust*, *Wall Street Journal*, 27 January 2009; George A. Akerlof and Robert J. Shiller, *Animal Spirits: how human psychology drives the economy, and why it matters for global capitalism*, 2008).

More generally, many failures of collective initiative are compassionately excused by reference to "human nature", with people being "just human" -- and necessarily "only human". Presumably this can also be applied to sexual abuse by clergy. Exploiting the play on words, it appears that it is systematic recourse to the excuse of "just human" that needs to be sacrificed through a more radical understanding of "sacrificing humanity" in its more restrictive and unimaginative sense. This might even suggest the curious notion of "humane sacrifice" - as applied to humans rather than animals.

Unfortunately it could be argued that "humans" have been only too successful in sacrificing "animals" -- as indicated above with regard to

the extreme loss of biodiversity. The compassion for the animal in man has not translated into compassion for the animal in nature -- or for those which are slaughtered. How the animal in man can be appropriately "sacrificed" remains a mystery -- obscured by the sacrifice of animals enabled by Abrahamic religions, whether deliberately through ritual or negligently through the destruction of nature. Similarly, appreciative reference to "human nature" obscures the "inhuman nature" of man -- and the inability for humans to dwell appropriately in "nature".

The following animations, whilst clearly caricatures, suggest an alternative to the conventional linear representation of the dynamics of the global economy. Whilst consistent with recognition of [economic cycles and business cycles](#), they suggest a further relation to the psychological dimensions so usefully documented by Shiller and Akerlof (2009) -- and beyond their argument to the many integrative 8-fold articulations of personality types and modes of thought.

Engaging with "Animal Spirits" in the global economy? suggestive of the possible dynamics of a sustainable global economy (reproduced from <i>Swastika as Dynamic Pattern Underlying Psychosocial Power Processes</i> , 2012)	
Conventional linear image (adapted from the cover of <i>Animal Spirits</i> , 2009 by Robert J. Shiller and George A. Akerlof)	Cyclic image: ordering the "animal spirits" otherwise? based on Swastika dynamic and the Chinese BaGua
	

Commemoration: There is a curious engagement with time in the commemoration of the tragedy of those sacrificed in war, however "just". The Christian Eucharist is also specific in evoking time through the ritual phrase "*in remembrance of me*". In memory of a "just sacrifice"? Arguably what needs to be sacrificed is the "just human" tendency to forget the cycles through which humans are bound to nature and variously embody it. The tragedy of "just war" could then be understood as a failure of collective memory, much as the Abrahamic religions avoid remembrance of the "just sacrifice" which they have variously enabled in the recent and distant past. As remarked by [George Santayana](#): *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*

In that sense what needs to be sacrificed is the cultivation of short-termism, namely the avoidance of recognition of precedents and consequences in time (*Societal Learning and the Erosion of Collective Memory*, 1980). So framed however, this obscures increasing recognition of the mysterious quality of the present moment and its appreciation -- the sense of "quality time". Missing is the reconciliation of long-term and short-term in an appreciation of cyclic time and its embodiment (*Engaging Macrohistory through the Present Moment*, 2004). Despite vigorous claims to the contrary, it is as the embodiment of forgetfulness of the sacrifices they enable that requires the sacrifice of Abrahamic religion to enable humanity to engage more appropriately with time.

Multidimensionality and Homo undulans? How is "more than human" to be imagined -- beyond the constraints of the binary thinking so carefully cultivated by Abrahamic religions?

The possibility has acquired some recognition through the science fiction novel of [Theodore Sturgeon](#) (*More Than Human*, 1953). The theme has been variously adapted ([Ramez Naam](#), *More than Human: embracing the promise of biological enhancement*, 2005; Astrid Oberborbeck Andersen and Stine KrØjler, *More-than-Human Politics*, *Cultural Anthropology*, 11 October 2017; O. Pyyhtinen, *More-than-Human Sociology: a new sociological imagination*, 2016; Noah Theriault, *Toward a More-Than-Human Anthropocene*, *Inhabiting the Anthropocene*, 8 April 2015). The theme has also been adapted in relation to sacrifice by Timothy Monreal (*More than Human Sacrifice: teaching about the Aztecs in the New Latino South*, *Middle Grades Review*: 3, 2017).

A cognitive adaptation of the theme is evident in the works of various authors, including mathematicians (Ron Atkin, *Multidimensional Man: can man live in 3-dimensional space*, 1982; Jurgen Ziewe, *Multidimensional Man*, 2008). Such efforts could be contrasted with the radical analysis of [Herbert Marcuse](#) (*One-Dimensional Man*, 1964).

Following from arguments of other authors, it can be argued that that there is a degree of implicit mirroring to be collectively discovered as the key to genuine sustainability (Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: a necessary unity*, 1979; Henryk Skolimowski, *The Participatory Mind: a new theory of knowledge and of the universe*, 1994; Werner J. Sattmann-Frese and Stuart B. Hill. *Learning for Sustainable Living: psychology of ecological transformation*, 2007). This is discussed separately with respect to [Mirror self-recognition and environmental mirroring](#) (2008). Have Abrahamic religions effectively "distorted" that mirror?

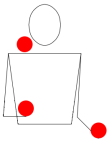
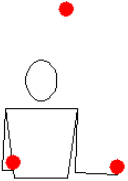
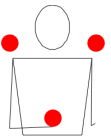
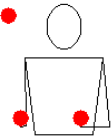
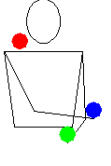
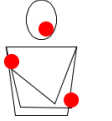
Concern with cognitive embodiment has featured prominently in exploration of alternative knowledge systems, notably as characteristic of little-appreciated indigenous communities -- superbly documented by Darrell A. Posey (*Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity: a complementary contribution to Global Biodiversity Assessment*, 1999). It is perhaps such insights that best emphasize the "grounded" nature of such knowing -- also ably articulated by [David Abram](#) (*Depth Ecology*, 2002; *The Spell of the Sensuous: perception and language in a more-than-human world*, 1996), notably as discussed by Chris Schlottmann (*Embodiment and Embeddedness in Philosophies of Ecology: deep ecology, Confucian ecology, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology*, 2002).

More provocatively, if the "just human" nature of *Homo sapiens* is to be subtly sacrificed in some manner, it can be asked for what that

sacrifice might make way. Consistent with emergent appreciation of cycles, an argument is made for *Homo undulans* by Daniel Dervin (*Creativity and Culture: a psychoanalytic study of the creative process in the arts, sciences, and culture*, 1990). Named otherwise as *Homo conjugens*, this would be fecund in ways that *Homo sapiens* can only project into biological reproduction, embodying a new way of engaging and joining with the world (*Authentic Grokking: emergence of Homo conjugens*, 2003; *Emergence of Homo undulans -- through a "grokking" dynamic?* 2013).

Juggling of Abrahamic modalities by divinity? Much has been made of whether divinity "plays dice" (Stephen Hawking, *Does God play Dice?*; Ian Stewart, *Does God Play Dice?* 1989; Vasant Natarajan, *What Einstein meant when he said "God does not play dice ... "*, *Resonance*, July 2008). More intriguing in this context is whether governance by divinity could be understood as "juggling" the distinctive Abrahamic modalities in some way -- especially given mathematical insights into juggling patterns (Burkard Polster, *The Mathematics of Juggling*, 2003). It is in this sense that the arguments of the previous discussion are of relevance (*Governance as "juggling" -- Juggling as "governance"*, 2018)

As a simulation of processes of divine governance, as understood from a human perspective, it is intriguing to explore whether the various 3-ball patterns of juggling offer valuable insights into the manner in which the contrasting perspectives of Abrahamic religions are juggled, and especially how this enables insight into binary framings (2-party, 2-state, good-evil, etc). The simulation of the movements of the left and right hands are a useful trigger to reflection given the importance associated with their symbolic connotations. Also of interest is how each ball has its time of "ascendance", its "fall", and its reframing as "left" or "right". Especially intriguing in the light of the earlier discussion is how juggling obligations is frequently recognized as associated with sacrifice (*Juggling Priorities and Sacrifices*, *NYC Running Mama*, 28 December 2015). Understandings of a juggling God have been variously explored (Arthur Chandler, *On the Symbolism of Juggling: the moral and aesthetic implications of the mastery of falling objects*, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Winter 1991).

Selection of animations of 3-ball juggling patterns by one juggler (derived from juggling patterns in Wikipedia)					
3-ball cascade	3-ball shower	3-ball columns	3-ball box	3-ball Mills mess	3-ball Burke's barrage
					
attribution	attribution	attribution	attribution	attribution	attribution

Clearly of even greater potential interest are the many animations of 4 or more balls with two or more juggling partners -- namely the possibilities of keeping more balls "in the air" (whether for the individual or divinity). Various authors frame the challenge of life as one of juggling four or five balls:

- James Patterson, *Juggling the Five Balls in the Game of Life*: Imagine life is a game in which you are juggling five balls. The balls are called work, family, health, friends, and integrity. And you're keeping all of them in the air. But one day you finally come to understand that work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. The other four balls...are made of glass. If you drop one of these, it will be irrevocably scuffed, nicked, perhaps even shattered. (also [Brian G. Dyson, 5 balls of life speech by Coca Cola's former CEO](#))
- Larry Bonine, *Juggling Four Balls*: job, family/relationships, health, religion/spirituality/purpose

In that light, the "dice-playing-divinity" metaphor is then better recognized as being fundamentally inadequate as a "finite game". Juggling can then be seen as an "infinite game", usefully contrasted by James P. Carse (*Finite and Infinite Games: a vision of life as play and possibility*, 1988), now echoed by Niki HarrÉ (*The Infinite Game: how to live well together*, 2018) as a simple variant of *The Glass Bead Game* of Hermann Hesse. Together the Abrahamic religions exemplify the problem that most have of juggling three balls.

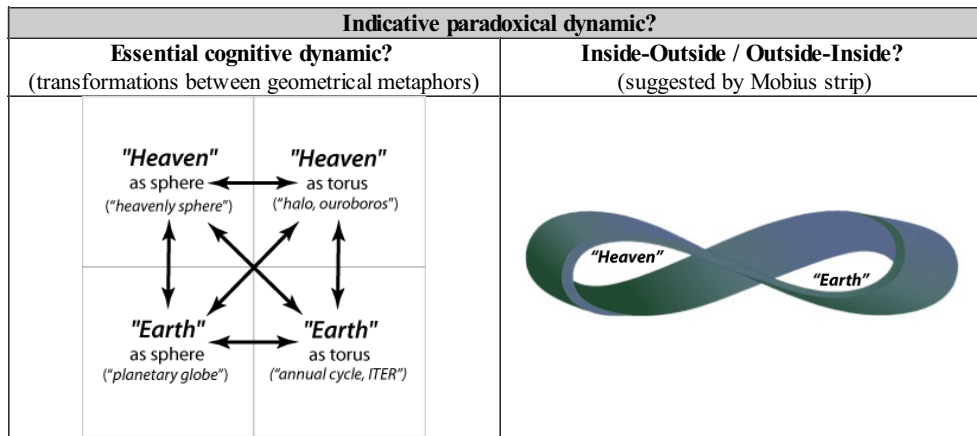
Enabling comprehension of paradox via other means? The Abrahamic religions have long attached great significance to the symbolism through which the mystery of higher-dimensionality is to be comprehended, if only as a matter of faith. Curiously no effort whatsoever seems to have been made to reconcile their contrasting symbols as separately implying the nature of a transcendent deity to which they have for so long subscribed. One exercise to that end is described separately, with the use of newly available virtual reality technology (*Reconciling Symbols of Islam, Judaism and Christianity: catalytic methodology for effective interfaith dialogue*, 2017).

Another approach is to use geometrical forms which are inherently paradoxical, such as the Mobius strip, the Necker cube or the Klein bottle, as extensively argued by Steven Rosen (*Topologies of the Flesh: a multidimensional exploration of the lifeworld*, 2006; *Dreams, Death, Rebirth: a multimedia topological odyssey into alchemy's hidden dimensions*, 2014).

Potentially more provocative is the cognitive engagement with a "radical" perspective -- to the extent that this implies an as yet unrecognized worldview capable of "holding" the radical insights and identifications variously evoked by the Abrahamic religions (*Coming Out as a Radical -- or Coming In?* 2015; *Radical Localization in a Global Systemic Context*, 2015; *Identifying the Root Cause Focus of Radical Identity*, 2015). This raises the question of how a collective belief system can embody the subtlest insights it claims to propound.

There is a complementarity to the above approaches in that they imply a particular understanding of introspection which could frame "sacrifice", "human" and "religion" otherwise -- and far less restrictively. This is argued separately (*World Introversion through*

Paracycling: global potential for living sustainably "outside-inside", 2013). Through rendering such definitive categories permeable, it enables an essential degree of fluidity (*Cognitive Osmosis in a Knowledge-based Civilization: interface challenge of inside-outside, insight-outsight, information-outformation*, 2017; *Living as an Imaginal Bridge between Worlds: global implications of "betwixt and between" and liminality*, 2011).



Cognitive mystery of the "hole": Valuable insights with respect to the requisite flow of attention are available from the design requirements of **nuclear fusion reactors** currently under development to recreate the "power of the sun". These call for avoiding any contact between what flows and what contains that flow (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006; *Implication of Toroidal Transformation of the Crown of Thorns: design challenge to enable integrative comprehension of global dynamics*, 2011). The flow of plasma within the toroidal container recalls the form of the ouroboros and the possibility of its animation in 3D (*Complementary visual patterns: Ouroboros, Möbius strip, Klein bottle; Circular configuration of cognitive phases framing toroidal experience?*).

Whether as a torus, an ouroboros, or a spiritual halo, what is the cognitive significance of the "hole" through which people are born and through which they "pass away" -- individually or collectively -- as suggested by the schematics above and below? There is clearly the implication that it is a multidimensional hole of some dynamic form -- rather than to be oversimplistically understood in static terms. Of particular relevance is the remarkable exploration by **Roberto Casati** and **Achille C. Varzi** (*Holes and Other Superficialities*, 1994) -- with respect to the borderlines of metaphysics, everyday geometry, and the theory of perception (reviewed by Steven A. Gross, *What's in a Hole? The Harvard Review of Philosophy*, 1994; see **entry on holes** in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*). As discussed separately, they seek to answer two basic questions: Do holes really exist? And if so, what are they? (*Cognitive mystery of holes, lacunae and incompleteness; Nature of metaphysical and theological holes; Cognitive and experiential black holes*, 2014).

The subtlety of a "hole" can be recognized to some degree through the symbolism associated with a ring (*Engaging with Globality through Cognitive Circlets*, 2009). This is also evident in the choice of "ring" or "circle" to describe rather particular forms of psychosocial organization, especially those which are difficult to detect and whose relationships can only be inferred. The most obvious example is a criminal "ring".

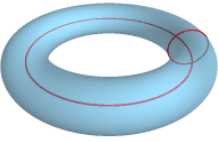
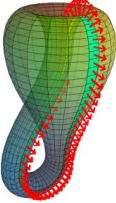
Given the manner in which a religion may embody an annual cycle of ritual, there is a case for seeing the complex relationship between the three Abrahamic religions as appropriately represented by a set of **Borromean rings**, namely three **topological circles** which are linked such as to form a **Brunnian link** -- so that removing any ring results in two unlinked rings. In mathematical terms, all three are linked, although no two of the three rings are linked with each other as a **Hopf link** -- no two loops can be **directly linked**. The image on the right below has been adopted as the **logo of the International Mathematical Union**. The pattern of linkage shown below are studied in mathematics as a feature of **knot theory**,

Suggestive alternative depictions of relationships between Abrahamic religions					
Early depiction of Christian Trinity	Borromean rings 2D	Brunnian link 12-crossings	Brunnian link 18-crossings	Brunnian link 24-crossings	Borromean rings 3D
Reproduced from <i>Wikimedia Commons</i>					

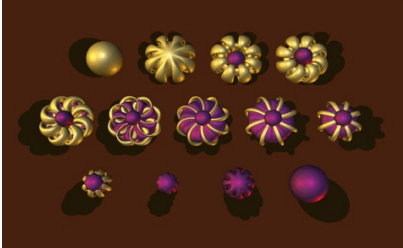
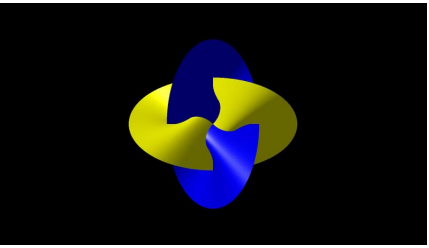
The link patterns depicted recall the much-studied **Islamic geometric patterns**. Especially provocative with respect to the theme of sacrifice, is how the variously depicted tripartite patterns of relationship between the Abrahamic religions -- knotting them together -- might be "cut", and the consequence of doing so, given their interdependencies. In the light of the current challenge of movement within Jerusalem, the various patterns of "crossings" are particularly provocative as suggesting new ways of considering "border crossings" between three distinctive modalities -- potentially an indication for the design of Jerusalem as a city sacred to the three Abrahamic faiths (*Jerusalem as a Symbolic Singularity: comprehending the dynamics of hyperreality as a challenge to conventional two-state reality*, 2017).

So framed, the question recalls the legend of the **Gordian Knot** with which **Alexander the Great** was faced, as discussed separately

(*Mapping grossness: Gordian knot of governance as a Discordian mandala?* 2016; *Toward comprehending the paradoxical eradication dilemma of the Abrahamic religions*, 2014). The topology of knots has been of great interest to psychiatrists such as R. D Laing and Jacques Lacan. For example, the latter uses the Borromean knot to clarify the complex relation between the Real and the Imaginary, notably with respect to *jouissance*, as discussed by Luke George Layzelle (*Topologies of Abandon: locating life in the philosophy of Georgio Agamben*, University of Susse, 2017).

Indicative animations	
Reproduced from <i>Imagining transcendence appropriately challenging to comprehension</i> (2013)	
Animation of Sphere-Torus transformation (Reproduced from Wikimedia Commons)	Animation of Klein bottle (by Konrad Polthier) (<i>Imaging Maths: inside the Klein bottle</i> , + <i>Plus Magazine</i> , September 2003; [click for animated version or explore java applet]
	

The mystery of the hole is rendered all the greater through the possibility and process of [sphere eversion](#), as indicated below, and separately discussed (*Sphere eversion as guide to the cognitive twist of global introversion?* 2013)

"Cognitive sacrifice" indicated by sphere eversion?	
	
Phases in one process of a sphere turning inside out Centerfold of <i>Making Waves</i> (1995) of book by Silvio Levy; with video <i>Outside In</i> from the Geometry Center	Animation of sphere eversion by Adam Bednorz and Witold Bednorz (<i>Analytic sphere eversion with minimum of topological events</i> . <i>arXiv</i> , 1711.10466, 2017) (reproduced from <i>Wikipedia</i>)

The dilemma for global governance, primarily informed by the world view of the Abrahamic religions, could be caricatured in terms of "hole avoidance", as described separately (*Lipoproblems: Developing a Strategy Omitting a Key Problem -- the systemic challenge of climate change and resource issues*, 2009). This avoidance is curiously complemented by forms of human sacrifice which entail deliberately creating holes in people, most notably with bullets -- but with little awareness of the blowback effect to the perpetrator. The mystery of such holes could be caricatured otherwise (*Is the World View of a Holy Father Necessarily Full of Holes? Mysterious theological black holes engendering global crises*, 2014).

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