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Systemic Reliance of World Religions on Human Sacrifice

Covert use of fatal conflict to ensure vital resource management

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Introduction

This is not intended as a condemnation of religion -- of which there are many, as with that of [Richard Dawkins](#) (*The God Delusion*, 2006). The concern is rather to highlight a mode of operation of systems of belief in general of which awareness appears to be variously discouraged. Scientism and atheism therefore merit related consideration as forms of belief -- as "religions", understood metaphorically. The assumption is that, with respect to such religions, civilization may well be unconscious to a degree which only the future will recognize ([John Ralston Saul](#), *The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995).

As argued separately, the nature of the consensus cultivated and promoted by any system of belief may prove to be as "deluded" as Dawkins claims with respect to religion (*The Consensus Delusion*, 2011). The argument may well extend to sport -- upheld by many as a religion -- especially given the striking manner in which international games are played for worldwide appreciation at times of bloody conflict, as with the FIFA World Cup and the Commonwealth Games in 2014. Video games and social networking may evoke analogous "religious" enthusiasm, especially amongst the young.

In a period in which crises of deliberative governance become ever more evident, notably in response to access to resources (energy, food, water, shelter, etc), the question is whether civilization has an unconscious systemic control mechanism of which it is inherently difficult to be aware. The argument here follows from the manner in which religions, individually and collectively, encourage the "pumping" of more and more people into the system -- despite the manner in which this exacerbates the problems of ungovernability (*Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy?* 2011).

Expressed otherwise, religions encourage unrestricted increase in family size, irrespective of evident constraints in practice on provision of resources to sustain the family. Families of 5, 10 and more children are not uncommon -- especially amongst the impoverished, whose condition it is proving difficult to alleviate (as indicated by progress on [Millennium Development Goals](#)). With the disassociation from nature, reduction of human reproduction rates is no longer triggered by environmental stresses -- as it is with other mammals.

Is it then the case that religions, separately and together, function as a system of covert resource management? Through the periodic conflicts they engender, millions of deaths thereby reduce the demand on resources. Is systemic neglect at a more conscious level effectively remedied by meta-systemic processes of a less conscious form, as separately implied (*Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon: a heartfelt response to systemic negligence*, 2004).

Through inability consciously to take adequate account of resource constraints and challenges to governability, are religions together to be considered as the ultimate covert operation in systemic terms -- a regulatory system of last resort? Can this be understood as systemic reliance on human sacrifice by world religions -- for the long-term benefit of human civilization? Is this the key to understanding the bloody conflicts of today -- termed "massacres" and "genocide" by some -- in which Islam, Christianity and Judaism are variously engaged, as they have done for centuries?

Curiously this suggests that a high level of concern for the future of human civilization may be quite unnecessary. More relevant is whether the systemic processes are inherently instructive as previously explored with respect to media bias (*Vital Collective Learning from Biased Media Coverage: acquiring vigilance to deceptive strategies used in mugging the world*, 2014). Religions are after all both a medium and a message, and -- following Marshall McLuhan -- the medium may indeed be the message to which greater attention may be fruitful (*Investing Attention Essential to Viable Growth*, 2014).

Belief systems challenged by problematic otherness

This argument assumes that the more obvious manifestations of "religion" -- namely belief systems in general -- inhibit recognition of subtler dynamics which only the future will be able adequately to identify.

Systemic preoccupation of individual religions: With a view to clarifying the inter-religious argument, consideration needs to be given to the systemic preoccupations of any individual religion -- still to be understood as extending to atheism, scientism, and any other belief system.

Preoccupations include:

- **saving the system at all costs:** This has been repeatedly made apparent in discussion of the cover-up by the Catholic Church regarding accusations of child abuse by clergy. This can be understood in terms of defence of system boundaries to protect the identity of the belief system and the unique value it represents to its adherents. Science may adopt an equally defensive posture regarding claims of its abuse, as with "scientific whaling", abusive experimentation on humans, vivisection of animals, etc. This has been notably evident in controversy regarding the complicity of the discipline of psychology in torture, as argued by Roy Eidelson and Stephen Soldz (*Hawaiian Mind Games: APA fiddles while psychology burns*, *Psychology Today*, 5 August 2013) with regard to the central role psychologists play in US government torture and abuse of national security detainees, with the apparent protection of the [American Psychological Association](#).
- **privileged association with transcendent values:** This can be seen in the case of the effort by religions to have recognized their divine mandate through whatever evidence they present as legitimate and unquestionable (sacred scriptures, Chosen by God, etc). Failure to accept this unquestioningly is tantamount to blasphemy. This may well be despite the articulation of some paradoxical reservations (apophysis, unsaying, etc). An analogous argument is formulated by science in claiming an unquestionable methodology in pursuit of the highest and most fundamental truth, despite some paradoxical reservations ([Gödel's incompleteness theorems](#)). The sympathy of atheists for this belief system is evident.
- **privileged association with existential reality:** In the case of religions, this is evident in the manner in which efforts are made to ensure that the belief system is intimately represented -- as a source of comfort -- at critical moments in a human life, most notably death. This is especially evident with respect to execution of the death penalty. Such presence is otherwise evident in debates and sanctions relating to contraception, abortion, assisted suicide and euthanasia. Other belief systems may also seek to present their association with human life as vital. In all such cases such involvement is intrinsic to soliciting and ensuring income as well as an honourable place in society. Cynically this preoccupation could be framed as being "in for the kill" whilst providing "comfort at a price"
- **benefitting from adherents to the extent possible:** As an extension of the previous point, religions need to profit from their adherents in some way. This may take the form of donations, legacies, or some form of tithing. In an often desperate quest for funds, this may acquire an exploitative dimension through being framed in terms of a privileged [afterlife](#), as with the [sale of indulgences](#). In the case of science, this is especially evident in the solicitation of funds for medical research, advancing human knowledge, security, etc.
- **insights accessible only to elites:** Cultivation of degrees of insight within the system into which adherents may be able progressively develop and be distinguished for doing so. These gradations can be used as protective mechanisms through which advantage is maintained over those less well informed. The system can then defend its unique skills and identity in the face of criticism by claiming that appropriate knowledge must first be acquired on its terms before any criticism can be upheld as having any validity.

Whilst these points may be challenged by some as poorly framed or exaggerations, the key question is the extent to which they are valid, may be valid -- or may be perceived to be valid by critics. Rather than denying their validity, as has been attempted in specific cases (child abuse, etc), there is a very strong case for recognizing the extent to which they may be valid, and the implications of any perceptions that they may be valid (even if they are not). ***

Belief system in relation to context: In its most general sense, the viability of a system can be understood as organized in such a way as to meet the demands of surviving in the changing environment. One of the prime features of systems that survive in this way is that they are adaptable. Stafford Beer has articulated a "viable system model" (as discussed below).

It is the relation between a belief system and its context that is central to eliciting what so readily eludes understanding (*Eliciting a Universe of Meaning -- within a global information society of fragmenting knowledge and relationships*, 2013). The concern here is the coherence of belief which allows it to be experienced, framed and named as a credible system through which means of engaging with the contextual environment are confidently defined. At best, such a system of belief is experienced as entirely fit for purpose. Few issues then emerge, if any, which cannot be managed within that framework -- and any that cannot can then be framed as in some way incidental and negligible. The relation between system and context is then framed as essentially harmonious -- at least potentially so,

provided belief in it can be elicited universally.

Eliciting universal belief is a characteristic of many religions committed to their own rapid growth and a particular role in the corridors of power. In Christianity this takes the form of the [Great Commission](#) to establish a global community of believers. Equivalents can be variously found in Islam and Judaism. Another variant is evident in the aspirations of science as a belief system par excellence.

Emergence of challenging otherness: Difficulties emerge when it becomes apparent that the belief system is especially and distinctively challenged by the context in some way. Its fitness for purpose is called into question. This may result in some form of internal schism or recognition of a threatening external alternative. It is under these conditions that it becomes appropriate to define some form of "otherness" operating problematically according to a different modality. This is recognized as disrupting aspirations to a harmonious relation between system and context -- as with discovery of another continent populated by unbelievers. The existence of the other then serves as an explanation for perceived inadequacies and a response to challenges regarding any lack of fitness for purpose.

Examples include:

- Recognition of evil:
 - Many religions specifically recognize the existence of evil as undermining fulfilment of the divine plan for which they have been mandated. The evil may be understood as embodied by another faith: Christianity vs Islam; Christianity vs Judaism; Islam vs. Judaism; etc
 - It was to evil that Barack Obama specifically referred in the course of his acceptance of the Nobel Peace prize: *For make no mistake: evil does exist in the world. (Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, 10 December 2009)*. This is consistent with the current controversies regarding evil, variously considered to be embodied by the US, its critics, and its opponents.
- Ideological enemies: as with evil, various ideologies frame the failure of their envisioned strategy as being due to the emergence of a contrary worldview
 - neoliberalism (capitalism) vs socialism (communism)
 - developmentalism vs environmentalism
 - materialism vs spiritualism
- Strategic dilemmas and challenges to strategic commitments, as extensively analyzed separately ([Configuring Globally and Contending Locally: shaping the global network of local bargains by decoding and mapping Earth Summit inter-sectoral issues](#), 1992):
 - business-as-usual vs alternatives
 - science vs religion
 - development vs environment

More generally the phenomenon may be understood as one of "us" (the good guys) challenged by "them" (the threatening bad guys) -- "*you're either with us, or against us*" -- as argued separately ([Us and Them: Relating to Challenging Others -- patterns in the shadow dance between "good" and "evil"](#), 2009).

The phenomenon has also been explored in terms of the need for an enemy in systemic terms. As presented by [William W. Meissner](#) (*Thy Kingdom Come: psychoanalytic perspectives on the Messiah and the Millennium*, 1995):

The need for an enemy arises out of the developmental context, in which the child's developing personalization requires the projection of bad elements to outside objects. These bad elements, primarily aggressive and destructive, are externalized and thus allow a more coherent integration of the child's self with less conflicted and ambivalent internalizations... But as the aggressivized projections develop, the enemy is painted in increasingly dehumanized and demonic colors, so that he easily becomes a monstrous, destructive and evil entity seen as posing a dire threat to the integrity, purpose, and beliefs of the in-group. In religious movements, the enemy become the unbeliever, the infidel, who is colored with the dark shadows of deceit, evil intent, and demonic characteristics that earn him the label of Satan, the Devil, the Antichrist.

In some sense, the finding or creating of an enemy is integral to the consolidation and reinforcement of in-group dynamics. (pp. 258-259)

Meissner notes that the need for enemies had been proposed by a number of previous authors (Boyer, 1986; Meissner, 1978; Pinderhughes 1970-1986; Volkan 1985, 1988). This has since been affirmed by others (Fergusson, et al, 2012; Joseph, 2010)

The condemnation of the other may be framed through terms such as inappropriate, misguided, irresponsible -- or just plain "wrong", in contrast with the "right" way. As noted by Meissner, such condemnation is readily labelled using religious terms like "evil", or as the urgent need for persuasive conversion -- also evident on the part of science.

Failure to believe in the system, as defined and promoted, reinforces the sense of a counter-acting system of unbelief which merits condemnation in the strongest possible terms. Provisions may be made to deal most severely with "unbelievers", especially those who cease to believe, whether or not they engender heretical, schismatic movements from within the belief system.

The dynamics between systems defining each other as variously "wrong" may be handled to a degree within democratic political systems -- through which an "opposition" is formally recognized and tolerated. The challenges of governability may however result in the need to define such dissident political alternatives as disruptively problematic -- meriting their prohibition and suppression ([Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy?](#) 2011).

Multiple others: Matters become far more complex when multiple others emerge, each claiming to be "right" and variously framing

others as "wrong", a "threat", or an "enemy". This is the challenge evident in multi-party systems. Within a global context, the most striking example has been recognition of a [Third World](#) that could previously be subsumed in a variety of ways -- as with the [Fourth World](#). In the case of religion, following the historical framing of singular threats (resulting in crusades, etc), the emergence of a threatening third party has more recently become apparent with the global significance of Israel as a focus for Middle East destabilization.

Conventional systems thinking defines an "environment" (however chaotic) as beyond the system boundaries. The argument here is that this is proving unable to engage effectively (or represent meaningfully) a complex of alternative realities in which others variously believe. The sense in which these may be represented within groups (such as the United Nations, the Parliament of the World's Religions, etc), or systematically documented (information systems, etc), tends only to obscure the fact that **the incommensurability of distinct perspectives is beyond the scope of systematic thinking**.

This inadequacy creates a situation enabling any belief system to excuse and justify its ineffectiveness by reference to the presence of one or more "other" belief systems. These are portrayed as undermining the coherence of its world view and the fruitful engagement with the context that it offers its believers. Religions are especially significant in that (through their influence on government) such belief systems tend to take unchallenged precedence over others -- possibly then to be defined as secondary.

Of greater relevance to this argument, however, is the sense in which primary belief systems -- religions -- effectively constitute a covert ultra-stable system of elusive nature (as discussed below). As argued here, this ensures its survival through human sacrifice -- if only unconsciously.

Comprehending an elusive system of game-playing by individual religions

Recognizing characteristic systemic processes: Stafford Beer (as noted below) points to the possibility of analyzing any such system, and his various books clarify the matter with respect to corporate initiatives -- but not with respect to the greater subtlety of the "irrational" dynamics between belief systems upholding contradictory views.

Recognition may be taken further in terms of the "games" which are variously named, but which tend to elude systemic analysis:

- **blame game:** This takes the form of accusations exchanged among people, each refusing to accept sole responsibility for some undesirable event. As noted by Ben Dattner credit and blame are rarely assigned in an objective or fair manner ([How the Hidden Rules of Credit and Blame Determine Our Success or Failure](#), 2011). Individual psychology, team dynamics, and corporate culture all influence, and are influenced by, how credit and blame are given and received. Within the blame game, the wrong people get blamed for the wrong reasons at the wrong time.

For [Christopher Hood](#) such finger-pointing and mutual buck-passing are familiar feature of politics and organizational life ([The Blame Game: spin, bureaucracy, and self-preservation in government](#), 2013). Often condemned but seldom analyzed, blame avoidance shapes the workings of government and public service. Hood examines different kinds of blame avoidance, both positive and negative. The issue can be framed in terms of question avoidance ([Question Avoidance, Evasion, Aversion and Phobia: why we are unable to escape from traps](#), 2006)

- **demonisation game:** Some references are made to this form, primarily as an extension of the blame game. The process of demonisation is well-recognized, especially where it is possible to draw on religious implications and framing as "evil" (Leslie Lim and Douglas Koh, [Mental Illness or Demonisation? Similarities and Differences](#), 2007; Michael Hayes and Thomas Acton, [Travellers, Gypsies, Roma: the demonisation of difference](#), 2007; Ralph M. Coury, [Demonisation of Pan-Arab Nationalism, Race and Class](#), 46, 2005, 4).

As noted by Meissner with respect to the need for enemies, the opponent becomes the unbeliever, the infidel, associated with characteristics of deceit, evil intent justifying the demonic labels. Critics and unbelievers are readily framed in this way from perspectives believed to be beyond criticism, as discussed separately ([Guidelines for Critical Dialogue between Worldviews](#), 2006). Influence may then be brought to bear -- possibly using "dirty tricks" -- to disrupt careers and funding.

Other familiar dynamics could be readily recognized as taking the form of "games". These include charitable appeals to elicit funding ("appeal game"?), promises by political and religious leaders to elicit support ("promise game"?), protests ("demo game"?), calls for patience ("procrastination game"?), negative campaigning ("mud slinging game"?), highlighting the positive ("bright-siding game"?). The latter has been well described by [Barbara Ehrenreich](#) ([Bright-sided: how the relentless promotion of positive thinking has undermined America](#). 2009).

Pattern of games that religions individually play: Naming **individual "games"** is not sufficient from a systemic perspective. Each corresponds to recognition of only one "track" in a "transportation network", It is how the tracks function together in a system that calls for greater recognition.

A further clue is suggested by the work of [Eric Berne](#) ([Games People Play: the psychology of human relationships](#), 1981). This recognizes a **set of games**, although these only point to the operation of an elusive "system". Some examples are indicated below, but the question is the extent to which these have their collective equivalent -- as played by religions individually. As argued by David Nicholls of the Atheist Foundation of Australia: [Internationally, the power games religions play has taken on a nature threatening the breakout of uncontrollable hostilities](#) (2009). But what are those games?.

Games from Games People Play (linking to Official Website of Eric Berne)		
Life Games	Party Games	Consulting Room Games

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Alcoholic -- Debtor -- Kick Me -- Now I've Got You, You Son of a Bitch -- See What You Made Me Do <p>Marital Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Corner -- Courtroom -- Frigid Woman -- Harried -- Look How Hard I've Tried -- Sweetheart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Ain't It Awful -- Blemish -- Schlemiel -- Why Don't You - Yes But <p>Sexual Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Let's You and Him Fight -- Perversion -- Rapo -- The Stocking Game -- Uproar <p>Underworld Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Cops and Robbers -- How Do You Get Out of Here -- Let's Pull a Fast One on Joey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Greenhouse -- I'm Only Trying to Help You -- Indigence -- Peasant -- Psychiatry -- Stupid -- Wooden Leg <p>Good Games</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Busman's Holiday -- Cavalier -- Happy to Help -- Homely Sage -- They'll Be Glad They Knew Me
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The sense of religions playing games was implied by a provisional paper of [Anas Malik](#) (*Games Religions Play: a strategic forms assessment of interreligious liberative collective action proposals across the Muslim-Christian divide*, 2006), subsequently reframed under one or more different titles. The possibility has been explored otherwise by S. Brent Plate (*Religion is Playing Games: playing video gods, playing to play*, 2010; *Is Religion a Game?* 2009).

If the issue is the recognition of a pattern of games played by religions, there would be a case for further adapting the methodology of [Christopher Alexander](#) (*A Pattern Language*, 1977) to articulate a pattern language of psychosocial games, as an extension of a previous experiment (*5-fold Pattern Language*, 1984).

Cover-up techniques: From a systemic perspective further clues are provided by the manner in which a religion may be caught out in playing some game. This can be explored through the remarkable [typology of cover-ups](#) in the relevant *Wikipedia* entry -- based on analysis of a number of typical cases.

Cover-up techniques	
<p>Initial response to allegation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Flat denial -- Convince the media to bury the story -- Preemptively distribute false information -- Claim that the "problem" is minimal -- Claim faulty memory -- Claim the accusations are half-truths -- Claim the critic has no proof -- Attack the critic's motive -- Attack the critic's character <p>Withhold or tamper with evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Prevent the discovery of evidence -- Destroy or alter the evidence -- Make discovery of evidence difficult -- Create misleading names of individuals and companies to hide funding -- Lie or commit perjury -- Block or delay investigations -- Issue restraining orders -- Claim executive privilege <p>Delayed response to allegation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Deny a restricted definition of wrongdoing (e.g. torture) -- Limited hang out (i.e., confess to minor charges) -- Use biased evidence as a defense -- Claim that the critic's evidence is biased -- Select a biased blue ribbon commission or "independent" inquiry <p>Intimidate participants, witnesses or whistleblowers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Bribe or buy out the critic -- Generally intimidate the critic by following him or her, killing pets, etc. -- Blackmail: hire private investigators and threaten to reveal past wrongdoing ("dirt") 	<p>Intimidate participants, witnesses or whistleblowers (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Death threats of the critic or his or her family -- Threaten the critic with loss of job or future employment in industry -- Transfer the critic to an inferior job or location -- Intimidate the critic with lawsuits or SLAPP suits -- Murder; assassination <p>Publicity management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Bribe the press -- Secretly plant stories in the press -- Retaliate against hostile media -- Threaten the press with loss of access -- Attack the motives of the press -- Place defensive advertisements -- Buy out the news source <p>Damage control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Claim no knowledge of wrongdoing -- Scapegoats: blame an underling for unauthorized action -- Fire the person(s) in charge Win court cases -- Hire the best lawyers -- Hire scientists and expert witnesses who will support your story -- Delay with legal maneuvers -- Influence or control the judges <p>Reward cover-up participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- Hush money -- Little or no punishment -- Pardon or commute sentences -- Promote employees as a reward for cover-up -- Reemploy the employee after dust clears

Many initiatives of the Christian churches could be explored in terms of such games -- most notably as evident in response to accusations of sexual abuse by the clergy. There is a strong case for refining the above sequence of cover ups in the light of other religions, including science -- in which denial is the primary mode of defence.

Cybernetic insights into religious system viability

Le Chatelier's Principle: The scope of the dynamics in which belief systems engage might perhaps best be summarized by [Stafford](#)

Beer in his adaptation of *Le Chatelier's Principle* (even prior to his dramatic experience in the Chile of Allende):

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. (*The Cybernetic Cytoblast - management itself*. Chairman's Address to the International Cybernetic Congress, September 1969)

The question here is the nature of the "secret form of change" in which belief systems may well be complicit together -- in constituting an "ultra-stable system". The latter term currently features in the literature regarding the stability of Chinese and Japanese society.

Cybernetic viability of a system: As developed by Beer, the **Viable System Model** (VSM) expresses a model for a viable system, which is an abstracted cybernetic (regulation theory) description that is applicable to any organisation that is a viable system and capable of autonomy. This is usefully summarized in the *Wikipedia* entry as follows.

Principal functions of the VSM	
<p>A viable system is composed of five interacting subsystems which may be mapped onto aspects of organizational structure. In broad terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems 1-3.[3] are concerned with the 'here and now' of the organization's operations, • System 4 is concerned with the 'there and then' - strategical responses to the effects of external, environmental and future demands on the organization.[4] • System 5 is concerned with balancing the 'here and now' and the 'there and then' to give policy directives which maintain the organization as a viable entity.[5] 	
<p>System 1 in a viable system contains several primary activities. Each System 1 primary activity is itself a viable system due to the recursive nature of systems as described above. These are concerned with performing a function that implements at least part of the key transformation of the organization.</p> <p>System 2 represents the information channels and bodies that allow the primary activities in System 1 to communicate between each other and which allow System 3 to monitor and co-ordinate the activities within System 1. Represents the scheduling function of shared resources to be used by System 1.</p> <p>System 3 represents the structures and controls that are put into place to establish the rules, resources, rights and responsibilities of System 1 and to provide an interface with Systems 4/5. Represents the big picture view of the processes inside of System 1.</p>	<p>System 4 - The bodies that make up System 4 are responsible for looking outwards to the environment to monitor how the organization needs to adapt to remain viable.</p> <p>System 5 is responsible for policy decisions within the organization as a whole to balance demands from different parts of the organization and steer the organization as a whole.</p> <p>In addition to the subsystems that make up the first level of recursion, the environment is represented in the model. The presence of the environment in the model is necessary as the domain of action of the system and without it there is no way in the model to contextualize or ground the internal interactions of the organization.</p>

There are implications that an application of VSM to religion has been considered in passing, but not apparently in any detail (Jon Walker, *The Viable Systems Model: a guide for co-operatives and federations*, 1991). Why not?

More evident is the application of cybernetics to religion, as notably explored by **Norbert Wiener** (*God & Golem, Inc.: a comment on*

certain points where cybernetics impinges on religion, 1964; *The Human Use of Human Beings: cybernetics and society*, 1950). In commenting on Wiener's approach, [Zachary Braiterman](#) (*A Note on Cybernetics and Religion*, 29 January 2013):

It's tempting for a scholar of religion to look at religion as a kind of cybernetic. This would involve a systems based approach to religion and religious phenomena. This would be especially the case with a rule or game based system like Judaism. It's not entirely clear how or if consciousness plays a role here, but clearly religion and religions would add another level of organization to the human organism, even as it posits another, metaphysical, level of organization to the physical world. In the end, consciousness and religion are introduced into cybernetics insofar as cybernetics is based, in the final analysis, on faith.

[Victor Lidz](#) traces the development of the thinking of [Talcott Parsons](#) with respect to the emergence of religion (*Religion and Cybernetic Concepts in the Theory of Action, Sociological Analysis*, 43, 1982). Another valuable summary is provided by [Paul B. Gosselin](#) (*A Cybernetic Approach to the Definition of Religion, Samizdat*, 1986).

The point to be stressed is that this applies to a definable system, not one which is confronted by another challenging the coherence of its worldview. In this sense it may indeed be suggestive of the functioning of Beer's ultra-stable system, but the features and dynamics of that system are difficult to recognize and name. They immediately arouse controversy from simpler systemic perspectives.

To the extent that belief systems are a manifestation of psychosocial life, there is a case for exploring the systemic arguments of [Fritjof Capra](#) and [Pier Luigi Luisi](#) (*The Systems View of Life: a unifying vision*, 2014), especially given earlier appreciation of Capra's interest in religion (*The Tao of Physics: an exploration of the parallels between modern physics and eastern mysticism*, 1975). The asystemic understanding of "unifying" has however been separately questioned in a review of the work (*Transcending an Asystemic View of Life*, 2014).

Missing from the cybernetic systems perspective are the chaotic conditions of mutual incomprehension and accusation characteristic of the encounter between multiple belief systems. These tend to be encompassed more fruitfully through the q-analysis of [Ronald Atkin](#) (*Mathematical Structure in Human Affairs*, 1974; *Multidimensional Man; can man live in 3-dimensional space?* 1982) and its recognition of contrasting forms of understanding (*Social organization determined by incommunicability of insights*, 1995). They may require cybernetics of a higher order, as discussed separately (*Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007).

Especially intriguing is the manner in which Atkin shows how participants engaged in a degree of dialogue may effectively navigate as "traffic" around a central "hole" in the communication geometry. Being potentially terrifying, this hole may be strangely related to the unconscious, covert system dynamics of religions acting together, as variously implied previously (*Thinking in Terror: refocusing the interreligious challenge from "Thinking after Terror"*, 2005; *Existential implications -- of a "hole" in conventional reality?* 2012).

Covert operation of religions collectively -- and unconsciously?

Rather than the asystemic argument of Dawkins with respect to the illusion of a purportedly cyclopean deity, more fruitful from a systemic perspective is that of [Stephen Prothero](#) (*God Is Not One: the eight rival religions that run the world*, 2011). He focuses -- however questionably -- on: Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Confucianism, Yoruba Religion, Daoism and Atheism.

Again, "religion" is used in this argument to refer more generally to any belief system which associates itself with some unquestionable standpoint. This may take a particular form in the case of the scientific method, effectively treated as "sacred" by its principal advocates. The "religious" fervour associated with the pursuit of profit offers another example (*The Profit of God: finding the Christian path in business, Christianity Today*, 1 February 2003). Analogies may be recognized in the defensive responses of the banking community (following complicity in the recent crisis) as well as that of various progressive communities promoting alternatives -- but effectively framing themselves as beyond criticism.

The focus of Prothero on the rivalry between religions obscures the manner in which such **religions may together function at a deeper level as an elusive system -- to run the world**. The argument could be said to have been recognized otherwise by [Nicholas Rescher](#) (*The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity*, 1985) who concludes:

For centuries, most philosophers who have reflected on the matter have been intimidated by the strife of systems. But the time has come to put this behind us -- not the strife, that is, which is ineliminable, but the felt need to somehow end it rather than simply accept it and take it in stride.

By contrast, commentary on the oft-acclaimed competition between multinational enterprises naturally recognizes how such collective enterprises function as part of an economic system -- protective of its collective interests in its efforts to "run the world", as has been frequently remarked. In this case, however, a notable warning was articulated by President Eisenhower regarding the **military-industrial complex**: *we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex*. What of the "government-religious complex"?

It might be asked why competition is so valued with respect to economic values, but is so deplored with respect to transcendental values -- whatever it might then imply as "wars of the gods". This seemingly has to do with the nature of the attachment to an understanding of unity inspired by a single vision which precludes any alternative insights ([Karen Armstrong](#), *The Battle for God: a history of fundamentalism*, 2001). By contrast, it is extraordinary to note the complex subtlety of unity explored by physics through its various schools of thought -- with its own specific limitations as a belief system (*Knowledge Processes Neglected by Science: insights from the crisis of science and belief*, 2012).

What "re-cognition" might be enabled by "polyocular vision", as suggested by [Magoroh Maruyama](#) (*Polyocular Vision or Subunderstanding? Organization Studies*, 2004). The metaphor can be extended to multiple senses (*Cyclopean Vision vs Poly-sensual Engagement*, 2006; *Strategic Challenge of Polysensorial Knowledge: bringing the "elephant" into "focus"*, 2008).

Collective complicity in strategies to "mug the world": Use of "mugging" and "con games" offers a potentially fruitful way of framing the strategic skills which may be deployed by religions acting invisibly together -- even if this process can be claimed to be unconscious. Clues are then provided by the degree of recognition of how a team of people can set up and successfully operate a scam, as reviewed separately in some detail (*Vital Collective Learning from Biased Media Coverage: acquiring vigilance to deceptive strategies used in mugging the world*, 2014). As to how the meta-system might "exist", if unconscious, the team skills of predatory packs of animals offer one indication.

Confidence trickery: The existence of [confidence tricks](#) of every kind is widely recognized as dependent on distraction and diversion. Under the "[stages of the con](#)", the *Wikipedia* entry cites Edward H. Smith (*Confessions of a Confidence Man: a handbook for suckers*, 1937) in listing the "six definite steps or stages of growth in every finely balanced and well-conceived confidence game":

- **foundation work**: The preparations which are made before the scheme is put in motion, including the elaboration of the plan, the employment of assistants and so forth.
- **approach**: The manner of getting in touch with the victim—often most elaborately and carefully prepared.
- **build-up**: Rousing and sustaining the interest of the victim, introducing the scheme to him, rousing his greed, showing him the chance of profit and filling him with so much anticipation and cupidity that his judgment is warped and his caution thrown away.
- **pay-off or convincer**: An actual or apparent paying of money by the conspirators to convince the victim and settle doubts by a cash demonstration. In the old banco game the initial small bets which the victim was allowed to win were the pay-off. In stock swindles the fake dividends sent to stockholders to encourage larger investments are the pay-off.
- **the "hurrah"**: This is like the dénouement in a play and no con scheme is complete without it. It is a sudden crisis or unexpected development by which the sucker is pushed over the last doubt or obstacle and forced to act. Once the hurrah is sprung either the scammer has total control or the con fails.
- **the "in-and-in"**: This is the point in a con game where the conspirator puts some of his money into the deal with that of the victim; first, to remove the last doubt that may tarry in the gull's mind, and, second, to put the con man in control of the situation after the deal is completed, thus forestalling a squeal. Often the whole game is built up around this feature and just as often it does not figure at all.

A *Wikipedia List of confidence tricks*, clusters them into the following categories:

Checklist of confidence tricks		
Get-rich-quick schemes -- Salting -- Spanish Prisoner Persuasion tricks -- Grandparent scam -- Romance scam -- Fortune-telling fraud Gold brick scams -- Pig-in-a-poke (cat in a bag) -- Thai gems -- White-van speakers	Extortion or false-injury tricks -- Badger game -- Bogus dry-cleaning bill scam -- Clip joint -- Coin-matching game -- Insurance fraud Gambling tricks -- Fiddle game -- Glim-dropper -- Lottery fraud by proxy -- Three-card Monte Online scams -- Fake antivirus -- Phishing -- Fake support call	Other confidence tricks and scams -- Art student -- Big store -- Change raising -- Fake casting agent scam -- Fraudulent directory solicitations -- Jam auction -- Money exchange -- Mystery shopping -- Pigeon drop -- Predatory journals -- Psychic surgery -- Recovery room -- Rip deal -- Wedding planner scam -- Blessing scam -- Pay up or be arrested scam

This checklist raises the question as to how **these confidence tricks might be applied by religions together -- acting collectively rather than individually**. These do not require fruitful outcomes to interfaith dialogue as currently framed. Somewhat ironically, such initiatives may even serve as a deceptive disguise for processes "under the table", beyond normal human ken.

Requisite variety for effective confidence trickery: From a cybernetic perspective, there is a case for adapting recognition of the [Law of Requisite Variety](#) necessary to the governability of any system. This holds that, if system is to be stable, the number of states of its control mechanism must be greater than or equal to the number of states in the system being controlled.

In the case of abuse of confidence, "governability" then means operating a successful scam. This raises the question of how many parameters (skill sets or participants) are necessary to ensure such deception successfully -- thereby effectively to "control" the system. The question can be further refined in terms of the complexity, subtlety or elusiveness of the confidence trick.

The issue could be framed by an adaptation of the classic phrase of Abraham Lincoln:

You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time -- *unless you have the support of a team with a skill set of appropriate complexity*

How many factors are required to effect a successful scam in a given situation? Alternatively framed, what kind of confidence trick

requires only two factors, only three, only four, etc? Who can be conned by a scam involving only two, only three, or only four factors?

Recognizing the experience of being conned: What skills are required to detect a scam, like a fraud ring, involving seven or eight factors -- or more? Given the incidence of fraud rings of a complexity beyond ordinary comprehension, **is it possible to live quite comfortably under the illusion that one is not in effect being conned?**

When the challenge of detection is recognized as part of a game, illustrative examples are offered by:

- **shell games** in general, but notably **Three Card Monte** ("find the lady"): Individual religions could be perceived as operating such a scam -- even cynically with respect to the promise of "finding God" and investing confidence (and resources) in any choice. More intriguing is the sense in which the three Abrahamic religions, effectively acting together unconsciously, could be explored in this light.
- **gambling**, most notably as offered in casinos, constitutes another metaphor. Can "the house" be fruitfully understood as the complex of religions beyond effective comprehension -- contextual to the "table"? The recognition of why it always wins is then of relevance, as described by (David DiSalvo, *Why the House Always Wins*, *Psychology Today*, 19 August 2010). Is his focus on the compelling delusion driving the urge to gamble to be compared in any way to that of Richard Dawkins argument (*The God Delusion*, 2007)? More challenging is whether this applies to any quest for consensus, as argued separately (*The Consensus Delusion*, 2011).
- **negotiations** may be understood as part of a game in which the highest art may be to achieve advantage without creating the impression that the other has in any way been deprived of it. Of some relevance is the concept of the so-called **Belgian compromise** as described in the *Principia Cybernetica*. It is a special political modality through which typical solutions are such that complex issues are settled by conceding something to every party concerned, through an agreement that is usually so complicated that nobody completely understands all its implications. The vital role of such compromise could be seen as a factor in the appointment of **Herman Van Rompuy** as **President of the European Council**. Could similar skills be appropriate to interfaith dialogue?

Rendering the existence of deception unmentionable: Far more challenging is the situation in which the context is framed as in itself worthy of confidence and the participants are themselves exemplars worthy of the highest respect -- or of a pattern of tolerance defined by political correctness. Examples might then include:

- a round table of the wise
- an inter-faith dialogue
- an interdisciplinary dialogue

In such situations it may indeed be inappropriate (even insulting) to challenge the integrity of any other participant or belief system. Of concern however is how some key processes may be played out "under the table" -- even unconsciously.

With respect to interfaith systems, what indeed has been designed "off the table" to remain unsaid, or beyond fruitful articulation (*Varieties of the "Unsaid" in Sustaining Psycho-social Community*, 2003; *Civilization as a Global Configuration of Silences: recognizing silence of a higher order*, 2013).

Especially intriguing is the limited interest in exploring the set of religions as an **ecosystem of belief** (as a feature of the noosphere). The many comparative studies of religion are just that. They avoid any effort to map out the "ecosystem" in which the religions are variously embedded. The reason is somewhat obvious in that each frames itself as transcending the "surface" onto which it might be "mapped" with others -- irrespective of the mathematical complexity of that surface and the subtlety of the cognitive integrity it might imply.

A thread for further investigation are the **deep belief networks** in artificial intelligence studies, namely a generative graphical model (or a type of deep neural network) composed of multiple layers of latent variables ("hidden units"), with connections between the layers but not between units within each layer.

Fraud rings and their economic significance: It is helpful to focus on the existence and extent of fraud as recognized only relatively recently. Such tardiness with respect to tangible transactions suggests that a similar lack of vigilance may operate with respect to intangible values -- "transactions" characteristic of religions. Various forms of fraud have achieved notoriety:

- **price fixing rings**, as effectively operated by cartels as an agreement between participants on the same side in a market to buy or sell a product, service, or commodity only at a fixed price, or maintain the market conditions such that the price is maintained at a given level by controlling supply and demand.
- **missing trader fraud** (carousel fraud) is the theft of Value Added Tax (VAT) from a government by organized crime gangs who exploit the way VAT is treated within multi-jurisdictional trading regimes -- effectively resulting in considerable loss of government revenue. (Richard Thompson, *American VAT - The Carousel Fraud Threat: Will the EU Show the US the 'Way Forward'* Boston University School of Law, 2013; European Union Committee, *Stopping the Carousel: Missing Trader Fraud in the EU Report with Evidence*, 2007)
- **financial aid rings** involving groups of individuals, or fraud rings, comprised of straw students that submit multiple student financial aid applications, complete the minimal amount of coursework needed to establish participation in the academic program, receive the associated financial aid disbursements, and disappear without any intention of ever completing the course.
- **Libor scandal** whereby banks were falsely inflating or deflating their rates so as to profit from trades, or to give the impression

that they were more creditworthy than they were

Do these offer metaphors for the manner in which illusion or delusion may be cultivated and sustained by religions acting together -- seemingly at the expense of society as a whole in the shorter term? Can such deception be considered as operating "under the radar" of collective consciousness? Have religions acted together to "fix the price" of some value in ways which might be called into question from a more superficial perspective?

Concern with the cited examples of such fraud relates to monetary value. What kinds of deception or confidence trickery might exist with respect to non-monetary values? Cultural values? Spiritual values? Such questions might be asked in investigation of sects and their dubious [programming](#) of adherents.

Detection of elusive fraud rings: The relatively recent discovery of fraud rings has highlighted the challenge of how they are to be detected, especially if they are complex enough to elude vigilant oversight as conventionally understood. In mathematical terms, focus on the use of "ring" may itself obscure other forms of deception -- as might be revealed by topological analogues, namely "rings" of higher dimensionality (R. V. Mikhailov, *On Some Questions of Four Dimensional Topology: a survey of modern research, Hypercomplex Numbers in Geometry and Physics*, 1, 2004). Given the timeless (eternal) interpretation of religion, a four-dimensional approach merits some consideration.

Considerable effort is however now applied to the development of particular mathematical techniques to circumvent the constraints of ordinary comprehension:

- Scott Mongeau: *The Cutting Edge: Network Analytics for Financial Fraud Detection and Mitigation* (*Business Analytics Management*, 2014)
- Gorka Sadowski and Philip Rathle: *Fraud Detection: discovering connections with graph databases* (2014)
- Philip Rathle: *How Graph Databases Uncover Patterns To Break Up Organized Crime* (2014)

Given such fruitful exploitation of network databases, is it possible that other forms of fraud of a non-monetary nature might be detectable in other network databases? Some use of graph theory has notably been made with respect to relations between religions (Lingzhi Luo, et al., *Modeling ethno-religious conflicts as Prisoner's Dilemma game in Graphs*. 2009).

Clearly the techniques are now extensively applied to detection of threats to security -- criminal and terrorist networks. Might they be usefully applied to discovery of forms of deception in academic citation networks, as partially representative of belief systems? This could be of some relevance to the detection of dangerous forms of [groupthink](#). Is there scope for application of the approach to systems of religions, as might be implied by the discussion of Wittgenstein by Robert Wesley Angelo (*The Method of Language-games and the Philosophy of Religion*, 2011).

One database of extensively networked entities is that of the online *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* ([commentary](#)) covering 56,000 "world problems" as perceived by international constituencies. These were matched with profiles of some 32,000 "strategies" envisaged as remedial responses through . Particular attention was devoted to the detection of [feedback loops](#) amongst the problems. The systemic interconnectedness of the problems profiled encouraged analysis of the extent to which they constituted [feedback loops in a cybernetic sense](#), especially those tending to aggravate problems within the loop.

These loops were termed "vicious" within that context (*Analysis: Vicious cycles and loops; Examples of vicious problem cycles and loops*). The question raised was how to design strategies capable of encompassing and containing those loops (*Sustainable Strategies vs. Cycles of Vicious Problems*, 1995). Also of interest was how to visualize such loops in order to render their vicious nature more comprehensible and to match them with remedial loops of strategies (*Feedback Loop Analysis in the Encyclopedia Project*, 2000; *Feedback Loops Linking World Problems*).

Fraud ring theory and design? Use of graph theory is clearly a fruitful approach to framing the challenge of recognition of possible covert systemic processes between religions. Of particular interest is its use to design covert systemic operations of greater complexity - - even more difficult to comprehend and explain. These may indeed already exist and be inherently difficult to name and comprehend, especially in the case of inter-religious systems preoccupied with intangible values. Understandably it would be in the interest of crime "rings" to explore more complex modes of organization, less susceptible to conventional methods of detection.

Especially challenging is the manner in which the roles of religions may effectively change and evolve in the process of successfully cultivating and sustaining the illusion. At the simplest level this can be understood through use of the [good cop / bad cop](#) interrogation technique. Drama offers many clues through the manner in which characters may change from "good guy" to "bad guy" or vice versa. One pointer to this is the recognition of the challenges to comprehension and memorability of the pattern of [dramatic plots](#) -- as with the categorization by [Georges Polti](#) of every dramatic situation that might occur in a story or performance (*The Thirty-Six Dramatic Situations*).

Operation of a ring of deception: One approach to comprehension is to reinterpret sets of [team roles](#) as identified for management and leadership purposes, such as that of [Meredith Belbin](#) (*Management Teams*, 1981). This can be suggestively juxtaposed with personality types associated through the [enneagram](#) ([Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson](#), *Understanding the Enneagram: the practical guide to personality types*; [A. G. E. Blake](#), *The Intelligent Enneagram*, 1996). The question is how these might compare with the stages required for a successful confidence trick, as noted above (Edward H. Smith, *Confessions of a Confidence Man: a handbook for suckers*, 1937)

Indicative juxtaposition of requirements for deception		
Belbin team roles	Enneagram personality types	Confidence trick stages
Plant	Reformer	foundation work
Resource Investigator	Helper	approach
Co-ordinator	Achiever	build-up

Shaper	Individualist	pay-off or convincer
Monitor Evaluator	Investigator	the "hurrah"
Teamworker	Loyalist	the "in-and-in"
Implementer	Enthusiast	
Finisher	Challenger	
Specialist	Peacemaker	

The juxtaposition raises issues such as how roles and phases may be switched in a deception process. Amongst how many roles can the buck be successfully passed? Especially of interest is how the deception can succeed with a more limited number of roles/phases -- as might be the case with only three religions in play.

Collective dependence of religions on pain and suffering

Religions are intimately associated with the experience of pain and suffering -- and with efforts to alleviate them. Just as medicine, and therapy in general, are dependent on the existence of disease to elicit resources for the associated activity and livelihoods, religions may be said to thrive on pain. It enables them to justify soliciting for resources and adherents -- no pain, no gain! As with any form of therapy, the greater the quantity and quality of pain, the more important the role of religions in society.

Any lack of vigilance in managing human systems appropriately must necessarily result in disaster of some kind -- with the associated pain. This creates a situation in which religions are complicit in avoiding adequate vigilance -- even to be framed by some as "[helping God](#)" by hastening the apocalypse. In this sense, curiously, religions are effectively indifferent to suffering -- because of the role they are able to present themselves as playing in its alleviation.

Religious doublespeak: In this strange context religions are then able to lay claim to the high ground in being responsive to the suffering of individuals and humanity as a whole, whilst at the same time exacerbating conditions which engender such suffering -- to which they are effectively indifferent. This double think leads to what has been variously recognized as [doublespeak](#), as separately discussed (*Indifference to the Suffering of Others: occupying the moral and ethical high ground through doublespeak*, 2013), and more specifically (*Enabling suffering through religious doublespeak*, 2013).

Doublespeak is language that deliberately disguises, distorts, or reverses the meaning of words. It is based on [doublethink](#) defined by *Wikipedia* as:

the act of ordinary people simultaneously accepting two mutually contradictory beliefs as correct, often in distinct social contexts. Doublethink is related to, but differs from, hypocrisy and neutrality. Somewhat related but almost the opposite is [cognitive dissonance](#), where contradictory beliefs cause conflict in one's mind. **Doublethink is notable due to a lack of cognitive dissonance** -- thus the person is completely unaware of any conflict or contradiction. [*emphasis added*]

The term was coined by [George Orwell](#) in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984) where doublethink is a feature of [newspeak](#). Hence the argument above for greater vigilance in response to media bias.

The fine art of religious doublespeak can then be seen in the manner in which the following modalities are intertwined -- if not entangled in ways it is challenging to discern:

- articulation of the highest human sentiments and values through which comfort is offered to the suffering -- with religions defining themselves as their guardians
- articulation of the most vigorous opposition to consideration of means of relieving suffering in the longer term -- framed in terms of the highest principles. This takes the form of avoiding by any means any systemic analysis of how suffering is exacerbated by religion -- or of any exploration of how factors inhibiting such analysis could be circumvented.

The focus is on deploring causes of pain in the shorter term, namely proximate causes -- whilst urging unrealistic remedies, carefully avoiding any focus on circumventing the entrenched pattern of failure (*Recognizing the Psychosocial Boundaries of Remedial Action*, 2009; *Mind Map of Global Civilizational Collapse: why nothing is happening in response to global challenges*, 2011; *Vigorous Application of Derivative Thinking to Derivative Problems*, 2013).

Religious doubleact: In practice -- perhaps to be termed as a "doubleact" -- religions engage simultaneously in:

- offering a response (potentially of token nature) to suffering in the **short term**. This is most evident in sanctimonious appeals -- for peace, for the cessation of violence, and for charitable action towards those in need -- thereby reinforcing the association with the highest values. As in the marketing campaigns of commerce and politics, the fundamental difficulty for a religious spokesperson is to provide proof of sincerity when increasingly suspected of dubious claims and sanctimonious tokenism. All three are victims of the decreasing redibility they engender through the systematic use of "spin".
- ensuring that ever more people are likely to suffer in the **longer term**. This is most evident through the encouragement of population increase -- under conditions of governance which show little indication of being able to circumvent the effective lack of resources sustaining such suffering

Religions thereby ensure their survival -- even their thrive -- in both the short term and the longer term. The pattern of deception cultivated by this "double act" ensures that **in systemic terms religions effectively act covertly together to enable the cybernetic requirement for "human auto-culling"**.

In nature the control mechanisms typical of population dynamics elicit greater predation to reduce numbers if their increase introduces

imbalance. In the absence of such control mechanisms, **religions ensure that humans turn on each other and engender disaster through which many necessarily die.** Human predators are engendered to cull populations deceived into defining themselves as prey -- with populations able to take on both roles in any conflict situation. This might be said to be the unconscious compact between the [People of the Book](#).

Role of religions in enabling suffering and death: The most systematic attempt to document the extent of suffering has been that of [Ralph G. H. Siu](#) (*Panetics and Dukkha: an integrated study of the infliction of suffering and the reduction of infliction*. 1993) through the [International Society for Panetics](#) -- an initiative summarized in *Panetics: the study of the infliction of suffering* (*Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 1988). This resulted in a quantitative measure of suffering (*dukkha*). A "megadukkha" represents the order of magnitude of suffering sustained by 1,000 persons for about 10 hours a day, for a year, with severe stomach ulcers and without medication (cf Johan Galtung, *Panetics and the Practice of Peace and Development*, 1999). A particular focus on suffering is now also provided by the [Algosphere Alliance for the Alleviation of Suffering](#).

The systemic link calling for more vigilant reflection is that between the religious doublet and the engendering of suffering. This is discussed separately with respect to the role of the Abrahamic religions (*Root Irresponsibility for Major World Problems: the unexamined role of Abrahamic faiths in sustaining unrestrained population growth*, 2007). The latter document included the following table as a basis for exploring that link.

Assessment of faith-based death warrants effectively authorized (reproduced from <i>Root Irresponsibility for Major World Problems: the unexamined role of Abrahamic faiths in sustaining unrestrained population growth</i> , 2007)							
Consequence	Questions and Answers			Estimates		Conclusion Faith-based death warrants effectively authorized (per day)	
	Aggravated directly by increasing population?	Suffering and death reduced with fewer people?	Primary opponents of population restraint?	Faith-engendered suffering (megadukkkhas per year)	Associated "mortality" (per year)		
Primary shortages							
Food	hunger (850 mill.), malnutrition, starvation, death	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	15 mill. (children)	24,000 [1]
Water	safe drinking water, thirst, crop failure, disease	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	5.3 mill. [2]	14,500
Health care, sanitation	disease, death	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Shelter, homelessness	exposure, disease, death	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
"Secondary" shortages							
Land (agriculture)	inability to grow food	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Land (infrastructure)	inability to build shelter	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Employment	inability to purchase essential goods	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Non-renewable resources (energy)	wood burning (deforestation), inaccessibility of essential utilities	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Non-renewable resources (materials)	rising cost of goods, inaccessibility of essential utilities	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
"Tertiary" problems							
Immigration	pressure on facilities	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Violence (faith-based)	suffering, death	consequentially	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Violence (resource-based)	suffering, death	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Environment (pollution)	global warming, disease, flooding	consequentially	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Environment (degradation)	extinction of species	consequentially	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Substance abuse	disease, death	consequentially	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Discrimination, injustice, exploitation	suffering, violence	consequentially	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Unprotected sex	population increase, abortion, HIV/AIDS (40 mill.), death	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Inadequate	inappropriate (collective) response,	yes	yes	Abrahamic	?	?	?

education	suffering			faiths			
Poverty	.	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	?	?
Prolonged terminal incapacity	maximal suffering and family expense (prior to death)	yes	yes	Abrahamic faiths	?	(maximal prolongation of suffering)	?

The study included a [comment](#) on the above table, as well as further arguments under the following headings:

[Problem displacement](#)

[Misleading focus on proximate causes](#)

[A Terrifying Truth?](#)

[Euphemisms and spurious rationalizations](#)

[Contradictions associated with "right to life"](#)

[Maximizing suffering -- or "optimizing it"?](#)

[Methodology for requisite analysis](#)

[Assertion of moral authority](#)

["Binding of Isaac": archetypal ethical dilemma for the Abrahamic faiths](#)

[Implications of a founding myth for future faith-based governance](#)

The specific argument with respect to the misleading focus on proximate (short-term) causes has been elaborated further (*Vigorous Application of Derivative Thinking to Derivative Problems: transcending bewailing, hand-wringing and emotional blackmail*, 2013).

Additional arguments concerning irresponsible encouragement of unchecked population growth, as exacerbated by religions, are presented separately:

- [Begetting: challenges and responsibilities of overpopulation](#) (2007)
- [United Nations Overpopulation Denial Conference: exploring the underside of climate change](#) (2009)
- [Overpopulation Debate as a Psychosocial Hazard: development of safety guidelines from handling other hazardous materials](#) (2009)
- [Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge: incommunicability of fundamentally inconvenient truth](#) (2008)
- [Lipoproblems: Developing a Strategy Omitting a Key Problem](#) (2009)

Complicity of religions in weapons manufacture and use

In their collective complicity in cultivating "human auto-culling", it is useful to note the specific complicity of religions with respect to weapons and their use -- as a primary means of engendering maximum pain, suffering and fatality.

It is appropriate to recognize that violent conflict, in recent decades and over centuries, has typically been characterized by:

- **involvement of faith-based cultures inspired by one of the Abrahamic faiths**, whether between them or between factions within them. This merits exploration in detail, notably in the light of the two "World Wars" fought between cultures variously claiming to be Christian. Over the centuries, in which conflicts have the Abrahamic faiths not been complicit?

Especially striking have been the violent conflicts between Christians (Catholics vs. Protestants) and within Islam (Sunni vs. Shiite). This is all the more striking in the light of the inability of the respective faiths to do more than deplore such schismatic violence and claim that it does not represent the essence of the faith. The historical pattern of violence by Christians against Jews currently runs the risk of being replicated in that by Jews against Muslims.

- **effective religious benediction of government and insurgent action in the perpetration of conflict**. Has any large scale war between Christians been fought without the blessing of the Church? Few would claim that the "great powers" failed to invoke the blessing of God in support of those actions, whether or not they included the slaughter of civilians (Hiroshima, Dresden, Faluja, etc). The pattern dates back to the crusades and continues with the framing of *jihad* by ISIS. To what extent is violence by "Islamists" called into question by "Islam", by "Christians" called into question by "Christianity", by "Jews" called into question by "Judiasm"?

Readily framed by others as the evil enemy, it is not to be forgotten that German soldiers during recent "world wars" wore belt buckles with the phrase *Gott Mit Uns*. Also not to be forgotten is the controversy associated with the Pope of the time ([John Cornwell, Hitler's Pope: the secret history of Pius XII](#), 1999; [Ronald J. Rychlak, Hitler, the War, and the Pope](#), 2000; [David G. Dalin, The Myth of Hitler's Pope](#), 2005).

Much has been made of the Christian faith of George Bush and Tony Blair in initiating the action against Islamic Iraq in 2003 -- as men of conscience who experience no remorse (as with their supporters) at the many Muslim deaths ([casualties of the Iraq War](#)). Presumably Barack Obama would claim to be acting with the blessing of God against Islamists in order to rescue Christians in the renewed intervention in Iraq in 2014 (Glenn Greenwald, *U.S. "Humanitarian" Bombing of Iraq: a redundant presidential ritual, Information Clearing House*, 10 August 2014). How is the manipulative use of *Gott Mit Uns* to be appropriately compared with use of *God Bless America* in political speechifying?

How questionable (if not spurious) are arguments relating to [just war theory](#) (*jus bellum iustum*) -- given the vested interests of those engaged in its articulation? As an articulation of military ethics, it is studied by theologians, ethicists, policy makers and military leaders. Its purpose is to ensure that war is morally justifiable through a series of criteria, all of which must be met for a war to be considered just.

How do any such ethical dilemmas play out in the ministry of [military chaplains](#) -- blessing soldiers departing on a killing mission,

offering solace to those engaged in enhanced interrogation (aka "torture"), and possibly even to their victims? How might their ethical postures be compared to those of the men of faith of the Inquisition in putting people to the question -- purportedly in order to save their souls?

- **investment of resources by adherents of those faiths in the development and manufacture of weapons.** Aside from the forms of investment implied above, it is appropriate to note the level of investment by religions individually (through their institutions), and through their adherents, in developing and marketing weapons in support of conflict. The issue for collectives has more recently been recognized in terms of [socially responsible investing](#) (ethical investment) -- acknowledging the extent to which religious bodies have had investment in weapons production (and may consider it appropriate to continue to do so). The complex involvement of Islamic governments and individuals in financing *jihād* (in its various forms) is variously documented. In the case of both individuals and collectivities the current situation can be challenged by questioning the absence of any indication of provenance with respect to the weapons and munitions causing fatalities -- in ironic contrast to the assiduous documentation of provenance of foodstuffs to safeguard health (*Identification of Bullets: human right and human responsibility?* 2009)

Less obvious is the unquestioning involvement of people of faith in the development and use of such weapons. This is especially significant in the case of those of Jewish faith, given their renowned expertise in the sciences required (*List of Jewish mathematicians; Jewish physicists*). More generally, the [Jinfo.org](#) site has comprehensive lists of Jews in other weapons-related disciplines. These lists are framed by the quote: *And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, as dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass.* (Micah 5:6).

Different concerns are potentially raised by controversies surrounding the association of God with the gun culture -- guns as a "God-given right" -- thereby supporting a variety of forms of violence (David Kennedy, *Gods, Guns and the NRA*, *The Christian Post*, 25 January 2013; Jim Wallis, *End the Violence: the NRA's Dangerous Theology*, *Sojourners*, 17 January 2013). The argument may be explored in terms of the promotion of democracy in nation building (*Arming Civil Society Worldwide: getting democracy to work in the emergent American Empire?* 2003).

It is remarkable to note that the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council:

- are mandated and acclaimed as guardians of global peace, despite variously enabling and enacting violent conflict -- or failing to do so
- typically acclaim their divine inspiration -- most notably through some form of Christianity
- are the primary developers, manufacturers and marketers of weaponry -- in vigorous competition with one another to that end
- may be curiously dependent on violent conflict to sustain their economies through their armaments industries

Whereas the preoccupation of governments and the United Nations has been with the production of weapons of mass destruction, is there a case for recognizing the complicity of religions in what are effectively weapons of mass distraction (*Destructive Weapons of Mass Distraction vs Distractive Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 2003).

In the light of the above argument regarding religions, it could be said that these governments together reflect the systemic complicity of religions -- as well as engaging in political doublespeak, as argued separately for a particular case (*Enabling suffering through political doublespeak: Iraq vs. Syria*, 2013) .

Human sacrifice engendered by religions collectively

There is clearly an element of questionable provocation in using the term "[human sacrifice](#)" at this time. And yet "sacrifice" has been the term frequently evoked in recent celebrations of the [centenary of the initiation of the First World War](#). Vast arrays of tombstones in the associated cemeteries have been presented via the media. Religions have been significantly present throughout those solemn celebrations, at a time when conflicts have been raging in Ukraine, Israel-Gaza, Syria, Iraq (ISIS), and elsewhere -- but on a different media channel. It is difficult to escape an impression of sanctimonious hypocrisy of the highest order -- given the extent to which those conflicts are inspired and justified by Abrahamic faiths, or enabled by arms from Abrahamic cultures.

There is of course a long tradition of sacrifice, whether practiced by deprecated "pagan" religions or by religions which have sought to displace them (often violently) byclaiming to represent higher principles. Such practices follow from the earlier traditions of [animal sacrifice](#) of which traces can still be seen -- most controversially, in the [ritual slaughter](#) of animals under Islamic and Judaic law.

However, is the killing of animals as required by the gastronomic arts, then to be compared in any way with such ritual slaughter -- especially when conducted on an industrial scale? Given the extensive use of [laboratory animals](#) in medical and other experiments, few would bother to deny that animals continue to be sacrificed for the greater good of humanity.

The complex notion of sacrifice in its various forms continues to attract attention ((Roger Griffin, *The Meaning of 'Sacrifice' in the First World War*, 2007; J. N. Bremmer, *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice*, 2007; Nigel Davies, *Human Sacrifice in History and Today*, 1981; Ivan Strenski, *Theology and the First Theory of Sacrifice*, 2003; *Sacrifice, Gift and the Social Logic of Muslim ?Human Bombers*, 2003; Richard A. Koenigsberg (Ed.), *Nationalism, War and Sacrifice: dying for one's country*, 2013).

Strenski notes that the terminology of sacrifice is especially rich in Islam. Elsewhere he argues that "sacrifice" is a powerful notion, fraught with complexities that need untangling (*Sacrifice: Bad Math, Bad Grammar*, 2012). Sacrifice defeats many attempts to think about it because "it" is fraught with ironies and conceptual confusions. The ironies concern the "math" of sacrifice; the confusions, its "bad grammar." Underlying both of these is the even more fundamental lack of clarity between *kinds* of sacrifice

Now prohibited in major world religions, the prime example of human sacrifice is that in [Aztec culture](#) (David Carrasco, *City of*

Sacrifice: the Aztec Empire and the role of violence in civilization, 2000). As a practice of faith-based governance, this is frequently cited as characterizing what civilization has long superseded. The re-consecration of the [Great Pyramid of Tenochtitlan](#) in 1487 was alleged to have involved the [sacrifice of some 80,400 prisoners](#) over the course of four days -- half that of Hiroshima/Nagasaki. The abhorrent drama is framed in terms of hearts being torn out by the officiating priesthood clothed in human skin -- with the further implication of the consumption of blood by elites.

Global civilization is now held to have moved on -- with the guidance of the Abrahamic faiths. However, given the enthusiastic daily consumption of death in the media and in video games, it could be asked whether the future will see the virtualization of human sacrifice to constitute its abandonment by global civilization in terms of psychosocial reality.

Given the role of the pyramid in sacrifice in Mesoamerican cultures, it is profoundly curious that the key token of global confidence should now bear the image of a pyramid -- especially when so many sacrifices are made with respect to it.

Global symbol of the human sacrificial process?



With the gap it embodies, the symbol is curiously appropriate to recognition of the increasing gap between elites of whatever faith and the populations which they variously govern and control. Are the proportions of the pyramid, and the presence of the gap in it, indicative of the extent to which the willing sacrifice of those below is held to be appropriate to the manner in which those above expect to thrive? The detachable peak is curiously reminiscent of the [Pyramid Ship](#) -- a "Cheops class warship" -- of the alien [Goa'uld](#), featuring in the widely disseminated [Stargate](#) series. It also recalls the ambitions of dissociated elites to abandon "planet Earth" for gated communities, and for other parts of the galaxy.

Irrespective of the forms of sacrifice cultivated within any given religion, the argument here focuses on the human sacrifice resulting from their interaction -- perhaps to be understood in terms of **a fatal interference pattern between the strange attractors constituted by apparently competing belief systems**. As in the physical form of such patterns, its frequency may be inherently destructive.

Ironically the above argument does not require belief. If such a meta-systemic process is indeed in operation (engendered unconsciously by multiple belief systems in seeming competition), it will continue to enable human auto-culling. Recognizing the evidence for such a process is however instructive in its own right -- an incitement to ever greater vigilance in interpreting voices denying the possibility according to the games they play and the patterns of cover up in which they naturally engage (as noted above).

Personal complicity in human sacrifice

Who would claim to be complicit in some form of human sacrifice? The crew of [Enola Gay bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki](#) (129,000-246,000+ deaths)? Pilots in the carpet [bombing of Dresden](#) or in that of Vietnam? Kamikaze pilots or suicide bombers? Operators of concentration camp gas chambers? Missile launchers in the Israel-Gaza conflict?

Is it appropriate to reframe the question in the light of the argument of [Johan Galtung](#) regarding [structural violence](#)? For Galtung: physical violence is for amateurs, structural violence is for professionals. **Is there a purportedly "non-violent" structural analogue to human sacrifice?**

One mode of individual complicity in human sacrifice is via the media. How many have not participated in sacrificial processes, whether through documentaries on torn bodies in ongoing conflicts, or through the daily representations of forms of sacrifice for purposes of nightly entertainment? For some this is taken further ([Jimmy Lee Shreeve, *Human Sacrifice: a shocking expose of ritual killings worldwide*, 2008](#)).

More intriguing is the manner in which one is effectively invited to identify with either those conducting the sacrifice or suffering therefrom. The issue is complicated by dramas which reinforce "just war" arguments -- thereby legitimating enhanced interrogation of the most extreme forms, leading to sacrifice undertaken for the highest causes. As with the populations of Mesoamerican civilizations and classical Rome, does "civilization" imply deliberate habituation to violence through interweaving entertainment and the violent implementation of law and order? Who could do without a regular dose of violence -- some presented in sacrificial form?

There is a particular irony to the manner in which individuals embody in the moment the fundamental challenge of religions in upholding a particular sense of being unquestionably right -- curiously timeless in the case of the latter. This is evident from any communication around the globe in which (according to the time of day) one individual asserts that it is "day" and the other understandably affirms that it is "night".

Religions have yet to transcend a flat earth mode through which it is expected that all should subscribe to the perception that "day" time is eternal -- even though some elsewhere may affirm that it is "night". A flat earth worldview would see the latter as necessarily "wrong"

-- and with every probability of being "evil" and potentially associated with an underworld (*Irresponsible Dependence on a Flat Earth Mentality -- in response to global governance challenges*, 2008).

The value of engaging with the topology of any such netherworld merits careful consideration (*Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld*, 2010; *Engendering Viable Global Futures through Hemispheric Integration: a radical challenge to individual imagination*, 2014).

Reframing sacrifice as transcendence

Perhaps appropriately, there is a high degree of ambiguity associated with sacrifice. Whether honoured or deplored, it is associated with suffering. Millions are in process of being sacrificed, and may be expected to be sacrificed in the future as a consequence of (non) decision-making at this time. Sacrifice is central to the problematic framing of Islamic *jihad* with all its current implications. The self-sacrifice of others, variously understood, is widely recognized -- however questionable the consequences.

The argument above has focused on the sacrifice inherent in the mutual interference of a variety of belief systems. This strangely entangles painful death with the preoccupation of religions with that which supposedly transcends it. The entanglement is a challenge to comprehension and is inherently controversial -- eluding possibilities of "reasonable" discourse. How to think about it is itself unclear.

Exploring patterns of belief through metaphor: As a concluding exercise here, there is therefore a case for exploring this confusion and incomprehensibility through metaphor, as previously suggested (*Metaphors as Transdisciplinary Vehicles of the Future*, 1991). The argument is that familiar metaphors offer a means of reframing the reality in which people must necessarily live (*Eliciting a Universe of Meaning -- within a global information society of fragmenting knowledge and relationships*, 2013; *Living with Incomprehension and Uncertainty: re-cognizing the varieties of non-comprehension and misunderstanding*, 2012).

Rather than focus on the distinct religions that can be named, for the individual these might be better understood as distinct qualitative and cognitive modalities -- by which the individual may be challenged or engaged. These may well be associated with cultural preferences and styles, as highlighted by various authors (*Systems of Categories Distinguishing Cultural Biases*, 1993). The quest is then for clues as to how to live with this variety (*Living as an Imaginal Bridge between Worlds: global implications of "betwixt and between" and liminality*, 2011; *In Quest of Mnemonic Catalysts for Comprehension of Complex Psychosocial Dynamics*, 2007).

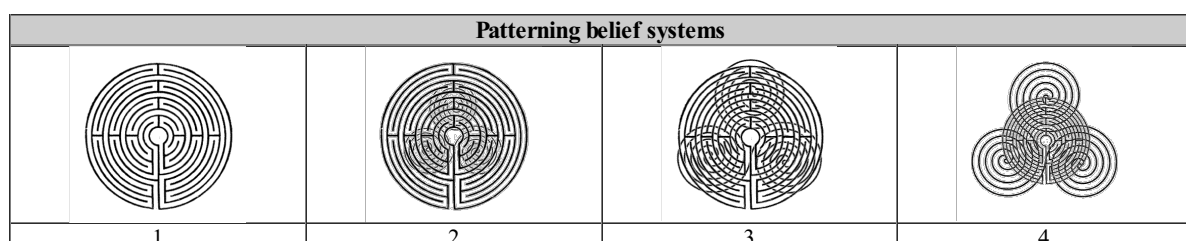
Suppose the pattern of belief systems were to be understood through metaphor which would honour the variety of the distinct qualities those systems represent. With respect to vehicle design as a metaphor, they might be understood as wheels, gears, cylinders or propellers. Whatever the choice, the design issue is how many are required, what is the consequence of more or less, and how are multiple elements to be configured.

Extreme examples might be a single wheel, calling for all the skills of riding a **monocycle**. A single propeller poses other challenges in the design of a helicopter -- a secondary propeller is then required to avoid spinning. A heavy vehicle may have many gears in order to transmit the power of the engine appropriately according to circumstances -- again requiring special driving skills, straining ordinary comprehension. Is the challenge of any singular belief system to be compared to that of riding a monocycle? Is the challenge of two competing belief systems to be compared to that of riding a **bicycle** -- a skill that has only been cultivated for 150 years?

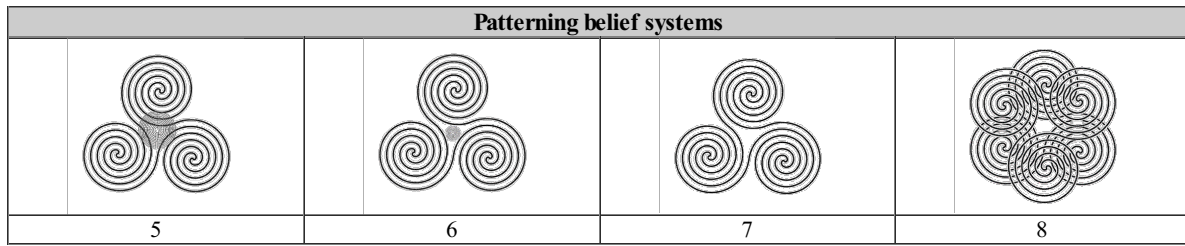
Whatever the example, the challenge is one of achieving balance and ensuring movement -- even "lift off". Of particular concern is the number of distinct modalities required and how they are coherently embodied together. Each belief system readily considers itself to be necessary and sufficient -- complete -- perhaps to be indeed understood as a monocycle. The difficulty comes when this sense is locked into use of a single gear, despite the need to use a higher or lower gear according to circumstance. There is therefore a distinction to be made between the multiplicity of gears and the singular task of coordinated movement. Confusing the two sustains dysfunctional "religious" disagreement when benefit has somehow to be derived from requisite variety.

As a source of familiar metaphor, it is extraordinarily appropriate that the current period is witness to the enthusiasms of the young for **boardsports** involving an unusual degree of coordinated control of complex bodily gyration -- most notably in the use of boards on water, snow or rollers. In parallel, extensive focus is being given to the design and control of **drones** of every kind -- despite their highly controversial applications. Of interest in both cases is the coordination of requisite variety. Controlling balance in movement in drone design may require a configuration of four or more propellers. Of further relevance is the thinking elicited by popular **transformer toys** in which robots could be transformed into a variety of other forms like cars, boats and airplanes.

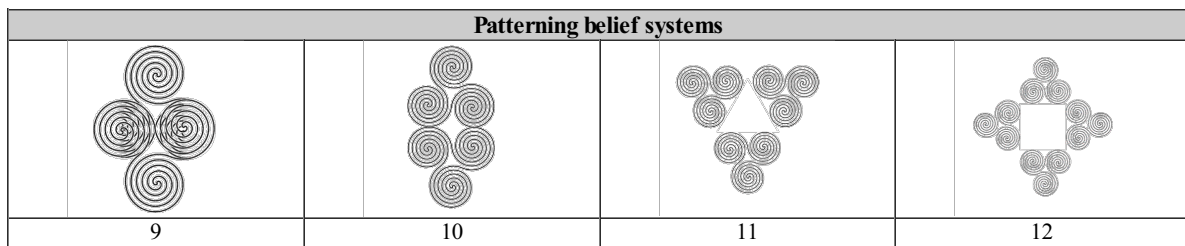
Exercise in patterning of belief systems: The following experimental sequence of images endeavours variously to suggest alternative patterns or conditions of belief system(s) and their comprehension, through a degree of visual resemblance to the kinds of dynamics familiar in the case of configurations of automobile wheels or drone propellers. Clearly other (and better) images could be used to enrich the "story", suggestive of other patterns of significance with respect to any set of belief systems with which many variously engage, or by which they are confronted..



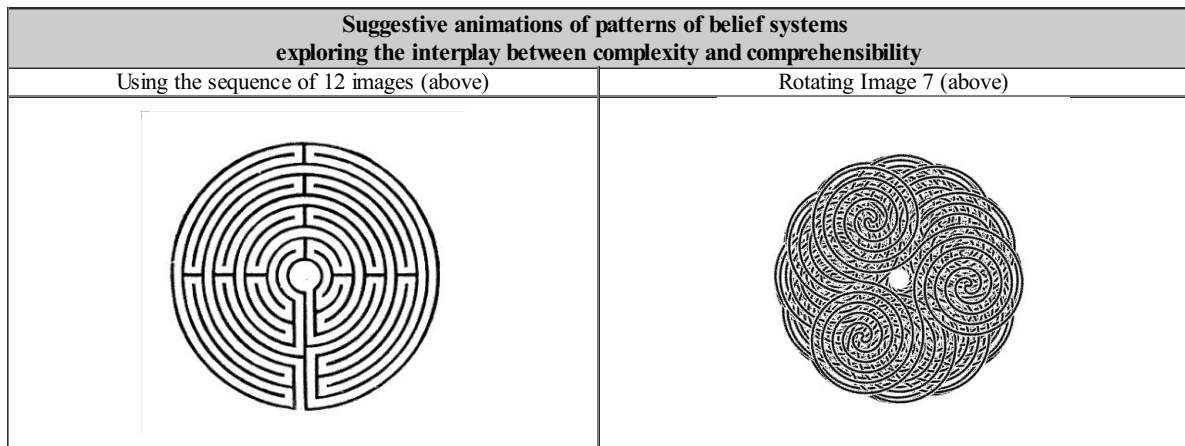
The complex mystery of a singular belief system is suggested by Image 1 -- a [labyrinth](#) -- especially appropriate to a monotheistic religion. Image 2 suggests the emergence of a triadic configuration of beliefs, continued in Image 3 -- usefully recalling the complex entanglement of the three Abrahamic religions, also fruitfully illustrated by [Borromeo rings](#) (*Silence / Ignorance / Uncertainty as fundamentally interwoven?* 2013). With Image 4 the labyrinth of Image 1 remains central but is potentially of less prominence, or less readily comprehended.



Through Image 5 and Image 6, the unitary labyrinth becomes less salient. With Image 7 the traditional triadic pattern of beliefs ([triskelion](#)) only implies the existence of any underlying unitary understanding. In Image 8 the [triple spiral](#) pattern of Image 7 is mirrored -- suggesting a pattern of 6 belief systems between which the confusing interference of [Moiré effects](#) is notably evident. Such effects could be used more extensively in other schematics to highlight the possible extent of entanglement and confusion. This is suggested by the animation on the right below, and in others separately (*Spiraling Trends: cyclones in a climate of change?* 2012).



The complexity of the 6-fold pattern in Image 8 is rendered otherwise through that of Image 9, seemingly reducing the 6-fold complexity to a 4-fold variant. Image 10 offers an alternative 6-fold pattern in which the upper and lower halves are distinct, but the interlinking within each half remains. The approach is extended by presenting a 3-fold configuration of the triadic pattern to suggest either a 9-fold pattern of beliefs, or an emphasis on a 6-fold internal pattern. Image 12 takes the approach a step further with a 4-fold configuration of the triadic pattern. This potentially offers a sense of an 8-fold internal pattern of beliefs, with 4 understood as external in some way. As an 8-fold pattern, this recalls Prothero's selection (above) of 8 religions that "run the world", as well as the Chinese [BaGua](#) configuration, separately animated (*Animation of Classical BaGua Arrangements: a dynamic representation of Neti Neti*, 2008).



Music as indicative of cognitive transcendence through sacrifice: Rather than associating relationships between belief systems with the schematics above, a distinct approach that is meaningful to many is through music. So framed, a set of belief systems can be distinguished as are tones in a [tuning system](#). This is the choice of number and spacing of frequency values used -- of which there are many well-explored possibilities.

Can engagement with the array of belief systems be better understood as the possibility of shifting between tones and tuning systems? Rather than shifting gear (as in the metaphor above), the challenge is then understood as the playful use of tones to express a transcendent melody. Such implications for religion have been extensively explored by [Ernest McClain](#) (*Myth of Invariance: the origins of the gods, mathematics and music from the Rg Veda to Plato*, 1976; *Meditations through the Quran: tonal Images in an oralculture*, 1981).

Such arguments could be related to those of [George Lakoff](#) and Rafael Nunez (*Where Mathematics Comes From: how the embodied mind brings mathematics into being*, 2001) or to more extensive exploration of mathematical theology, as separately discussed (*Mathematical Theology: Future Science of Confidence in Belief -- self-reflexive global reframing to enable faith-based governance*,

2011)

One approach to such an understanding of the "lost language" of pattern-shifting in a process reality can be obtained from insights into the 4,000 year-old chanted hymns of the *Rg Veda* of the Indian tradition (as discussed [elsewhere](#)). A very powerful exploration of this work by a philosopher, [Antonio de Nicolas](#), using the non-Boolean logic of quantum mechanics, opens up valuable approaches to a form of integration. The unique feature of the approach is that it is grounded in tone and the shifting relationships between tone. It is through the pattern of musical tones that the significance of the *Rg Veda* is to be found:

Therefore, from a linguistic and cultural perspective, we have to be aware that we are dealing with a language where tonal and arithmetical relations establish the epistemological invariances... Language grounded in music is grounded thereby on context dependency; any tone can have any possible relation to other tones, and the shift from one tone to another, which alone makes melody possible, is a shift in perspective which the singer himself embodies. **Any perspective (tone) must be "sacrificed" for a new one to come into being;** the song is a radical activity which requires innovation while maintaining continuity, and the "world" is the creation of the singer, who shares its dimensions with the song. (*Meditations through the Rg Veda*, 1978, p. 57) *[emphasis added]*

This insight suggests a reframing of the subtitle of this document: *Covert use of fatal conflict to ensure vital resource management*. Emphasis on musicality rather than vision offers another sense of "covert". Any "fatal conflict" is perceptible to the ear as a form of dissonance -- appropriately avoided as vital to "management" of the energy "resources" engendered by music through variations in patterns of tone, as exemplified by Bach's [Goldberg Variations](#) ([Douglas Hofstadter](#), *Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid*, 1979). The "sacrifice" required is through the transcendence of any particular form -- namely the avoidance of [monotony](#).

Transcending cognitive entrapment: As suggested by de Nicolas, the embodiment of the sacrifice by the singer highlights a transcendence of the subject/object duality by which belief systems are so evidently trapped, most notably in their relation to one another. This calls for further exploration of cognitive paradoxes as discussed separately ([World Introversion through Paracycling: global potential for living sustainably "outside-inside"](#), 2013). Seemingly there is a need to engage otherwise with the vital processes whereby the subjective relationship to context is sacrificed for an objective relationship -- and the corresponding process through which objectivity is sacrificed for subjectivity.

Clues to a strange new self-reflexive modality of cognitive embodiment are provided by authors such as (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy In The Flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*, 1999) and Douglas Hofstadter (*I Am a Strange Loop*, 2007). There is a case for speculating on whether engaging cognitively otherwise with the universe is the frontier of the future ([Being the Universe: a metaphoric frontier](#), 1999; [En-joying the World through En-joying Oneself: eliciting the potential of globalization through cognitive radicalization](#), 2011).

The trap engendered by belief systems can be usefully recognized in terms of the insight of [Geoffrey Vickers](#): **a trap is a function of the nature of the trapped** (*Freedom in a rocking boat: changing values in an unstable society*, 1972). To the extent that belief systems are characterized by claiming unique possession of the answer to humanity's dilemmas, Vickers' insight could be reframed as: **if one does not know how one is part of the problem, one cannot understand the nature of the solution required**.

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