



# laetus in praesens

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## Unthought as Cognitive Foundation of Global Civilization

### Implications of God, debt, overpopulation, waste, negligence, encroachment and death?

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Produced in remembrance of the Chthonic deities (including Gaia)  
in anticipation of the forthcoming worldwide celebration of their Olympian counterparts

## Introduction

This is an exploration of the possible nature of an immense cognitive "hole" -- far "beneath" the conventional thought processes characterizing society, relationships and communication. The approach is partly inspired by the work of [John Ralston Saul](#) (*The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995), partly that of [Maurice Merleau-Ponty](#) (*The Phenomenology of Perception*, 1945), and partly that of [Carl Jung](#) on the [collective unconscious](#). As argued by Saul, the paradox of our situation is that knowledge has not made us conscious. Instead, we have sought refuge in a world of illusion where language is cut off from reality.

The concern is to what extent this can be recognized, to some degree and indirectly, through various preoccupations or their avoidance. These can then be usefully considered as cognitive "facets" implying the existence of some such "hole". The variety of such facets is of interest in its own right. It indicates the difficulty within conventional thinking of making unambiguous statements about the "hole".

The possible "facets" are necessarily quite disparate in nature. They constitute a variety of efforts to "get a handle on it" -- in the absence of any clear sense of what that "void" might be. The "facets" may be considered as quite unrelated to one another by those with a particular interest in any one of them. The others may then appear meaningless or irrelevant. The "facet" metaphor has a potentially illusory advantage of suggesting -- as with the cut facets of a precious stone -- that they imply a mutually reinforcing coherence through which glimpses as to the nature of that underlying cognitive void are comprehensible to a degree.

Such facets could point to an underlying and unexamined cognitive foundation. It is therefore curious that the process of globalization has been explicitly framed as a process of effectively "flattening" the Earth. The insight has been articulated -- to widespread acclaim -- in several books by [Thomas Friedman](#) (*The World Is Flat: a brief history of the Twenty-first Century*, 2005; *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, 2008), as discussed separately (*Irresponsible Dependence on a Flat Earth Mentality -- in response to global governance challenges*, 2008).

It is curious that life on the surface of the Earth, seemingly flat for most, should avoid the sense in which the Earth is spheroid. Not only that, but also the fact that the Earth has a deep interior of astounding composition according to science -- magma, etc. This must necessarily be treated as irrelevant to daily life -- it is an unthought thought of a particular kind, as for those who choose to live in earthquake zones.

Such avoidance might be said to accord strangely with the much deprecated [Hollow Earth Hypothesis](#). Cognitively it might indeed be

affirmed that the surface of the globe is centred on a form of emptiness -- whose problematic nature is manifest through the destructive potential of "volcanoes" and "earthquakes" demeaned as "social unrest". Recognition is already given, metaphorically, to the shifting tectonic plates of global society (cf. Robert Davies, *The Shifting Tectonic Plates: facing new community challenges to business in a fragile world of risk and opportunity*, The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum, 2002).

The sense explored here is that the nature of the "hole" is cognitive rather than physical, and all the more elusive for that reason. The play on words also suggests that the integrative "whole" so desperately sought for global civilization may itself be of different nature to that variously assumed.

## Unthought thought

**Phenomenology:** The term "unthought thought" has acquired a degree of salience following the work of the [phenomenological](#) philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 1945), notably in interpreting the insights of [Edmund Husserl](#) and [Martin Heidegger](#) (Etienne Bimbenet, *Merleau-Ponty: Penseur de l'impensé*, *ScienceHumaines.com*). The term in German is *das Ungedachte* and in Spanish *el in-pensado* (*impensado*, or *non-pensado*). Merleau-Ponty borrows Heidegger's term of the "unthought thought" to depict his own relationship to Husserl. As noted by Diane Louise Prosser (*Transgressive Corporeality: the body, poststructuralism, and the theological imagination*, 1995):

The "unthought thought" is commonly recognized as a wealth of latent meaning, indwelling someone's work, but not fully articulated or exploited by the author her/himself. One could regard this as the "remainder" or "supplement" of a work which subverts the original authorial intention and yet, in doing so, calls for further reflection. (p. 49)

Following from the efforts of Merleau-Ponty to articulate Husserl's thinking on the matter, notably in the latter's *Fifth Meditation* on intersubjectivity, one valuable insight into its nature is offered by Richard Doyle:

... as theorist [Mark C. Taylor](#) has pointed out, the unprecedented has the highest information content, and yet is unreadable. A truly singular, unprecedented phenomenon would in some sense make no sense -- we would lack the tools of signification necessary to read or interpret it. This marks out the way in which all communication is tied to unspoken precedent, an "unthought thought," a present absence for which there can be no algorithm, insofar as the algorithmic articulation of the necessary preconditions of communication would itself be unprecedented, unreadable. (*On Beyond Living: Rhetorical Transformations of the Life Sciences*, 1997)

**Philosophy:** In his reflection on the fundamental conceptual challenges of physics -- the unification of the forces of nature and the evolution of the universe -- a phenomenological approach is taken by [Steven M. Rosen](#) (*The Self-Evolving Cosmos: a phenomenological approach to nature's unity-in-diversity*, 2008), arguing that Heidegger is quite explicit about the importance of light to phenomenological thought:

After acknowledging the contributions of Hegel and Husserl in surpassing the old mechanistic objectivism and making subjectivity "the matter of philosophy... Heidegger comments that -- in this thinking subjectivity into its own, "to its ultimate givenness... to its own presence"... something remains *unthought*:

What remains unthought in the matter of philosophy as well as in its method? [Hegel's] speculative dialectic is a mode in which the matter of philosophy [i.e. subjectivity] comes to appear of itself and for itself, and this becomes present. Such appearance necessarily occurs in light. Only by virtue of light, i.e. through brightness, can what shines show itself, that is radiate...

Evidently then, what remains unthought in the history of philosophy is the phenomenon of light, or what Heidegger later calls *energia* ("that which in itself and of itself radiates and brings itself to light") (p. 165)

With respect to the "overcoming of dialectics", [Antonio T. de Nicolas](#) remarks that it:

... simply lets the miracle of light be, it leaves room for the unsaid, the unthought and the unthinkable without despising the dialectical rules, or the place and the proper function of the logos... (*Avatara: the humanization of philosophy through the Bhagavad Gita*, 2003, p. xiii)

De Nicolas argues for an essay to make room for a special awareness:

... an awareness of the unsaid, of the unthought, of that reality which is impermeable to the logos, above all because any translation would kill it outright. (p. xi)

**History of ideas:** In his critical study of the human sciences and thinking, [Michel Foucault](#) indicates:

As a matter of fact, the unconscious, and the forms of the unthought in general, have not been the reward granted to a positive

knowledge of man. Man and the unthought are, at the archaeological level, contemporaries. Man has not been able to describe himself as a configuration in the *episteme* without thought at the same time discovering, both in itself and outside itself, at its borders yet also in its very warp and woof, an element of darkness, an apparently inert density in which it is embedded, an unthought which it contains entirely, yet in which it is also caught. The unthought (whatever name we give it) is not lodged in man like a shrivelled-up nature or a stratified history; it is, in relation to man, the Other: the Other that is not only a brother but a twin, born, not of man, nor in man, but beside him and in the same time, in an identical newness, in an unavoidable duality. This obscure space so readily interpreted as an abyssal region in man's nature, or as a uniquely impregnable fortress in his history, is linked to him in an entirely different way: it is both exterior to him and indispensable to him: in one sense, the shadow cast by man as he emerged in the field of knowledge; in another, the blind stain by which it is possible to know him (*The Order of Things: an archaeology of the human sciences*, 2002, p. 355-6)

**Psychoanalysis:** This can be related to the **unthought known** as framed by **Christopher Bollas** (*The Shadow of the Object: psychoanalysis of the unthought known*, 1987). It represents those experiences in some way known to the individual, but about which it proves impossible to think. At its most compelling, the unthought known stands for those early schema for interpreting the object world that preconsciously determine our subsequent life expectations. In this sense, the unthought known refers to preverbal, unschematised early experience/trauma that may determine one's behaviour unconsciously, barred to conscious thought. For **Michael Robbins** (*Embeddedness, Reflection, Mindfulness and the Unthought Known, Systems Centered News*, 2008):

Basically it refers to what we "know" but for a variety of reasons may not be able to think about, have "forgotten", "act out", or have an "intuitive sense for" but cannot yet put into words. In psychoanalytic terms, it refers to the boundary between the "unconscious" and the "conscious" mind, i.e. the "preconscious mind." In systems-centered terms, it refers to the boundary between what we know apprehensively, without words, and what we know, or will allow ourselves to know, comprehensively with words. (In many ways, although the methods are very different, the psychoanalytic goal of "making the unconscious conscious" is equivalent to the systems-centered goal of making the boundary permeable between apprehensive and comprehensive knowledge)

**Strategic unknowns:** From a strategic perspective this recalls the "poem" regarding the **known unknowns**, given widespread publicity by **Donald Rumsfeld**, former US Secretary of Defense, during a 2002 press conference, as discussed separately (*Unknown Undoing: challenge of incomprehensibility of systemic neglect*, 2008). The psychoanalytic philosopher **Slavoj iek** has extrapolated from the distinctions highlighted by Rumsfeld to introduce a fourth, the **unknown known**, that which we intentionally refuse to acknowledge that we know:

If Rumsfeld thinks that the main dangers in the confrontation with Iraq were the "unknown unknowns," that is, the threats from Saddam whose nature we cannot even suspect, then the Abu Ghraib scandal shows that the main dangers lie in the "unknown knowns" - the disavowed beliefs, suppositions and obscene practices we pretend not to know about, even though they form the background of our public values. (*What Rumsfeld Doesn't Know That He Knows About Abu Ghraib, In These Times*, 21 May 2004 ).

iek also builds the ideas of known unknowns, and unknown knowns, into a lecture on *The Reality of the Virtual*.

**Epistemological ruptures:** Also of relevance is the proposal by **Gaston Bachelard** (*The Formation of the Scientific Mind: a contribution to a psychoanalysis of objective knowledge*, 1986) -- later used by **Louis Althusser** -- for recognition of **epistemological rupture**. This is the sense in which the history of science is replete with "epistemological obstacles"-- or unthought/unconscious structures immanent within the realm of the sciences. Consequently the history of science is to be recognized as consisting in the formation of these essentially unconscious epistemological obstacles, and then their subsequent removal.

Recalling **Viktor Shklovsky's** concern with strangeness, another insight is that of M. K. Bhatnagar (*Encyclopaedia of Literature in English*, 2001):

Like negative theology, both deconstruction and denegation are intended to emphasize the strangeness of the neither/nor unthought/thought.

**Unthought of relevance to Middle East conflict:** The nature of the unthought is the focus of a study by **Mohammed Arkoun** (*The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, 2002), as noted in a **review** by Ameer U. Shaikh (*The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 21, 1, pp. 100-102):

The idea of *unthought* is a creative encapsulation of those diseases that he believes are plaguing Islam. He defines *unthought* as the power employed by the traditional ulama and ideological Islamic states in order to guarantee that a deeply dogmatic and unapproachable version of Islam is protected from all intellectual and scientific analysis. Arkoun uses *unthought* to refer to "an Islam that is isolated from the most elementary historical reasoning, linguistic analysis or anthropological decoding" (p. 308)

Arkoun wants the preferred current mode of analytic evaluation in the social sciences - deconstruction, hermeneutics, and their various poststructuralist relatives - to be applied to Islamic studies. The Qu'ran, he argues, has become heavily loaded by "legalistic instrumentalization, and the ideological manipulations of contemporary political movements". (p. 45).

A concern with the unthought in Palestinian-Israeli relations is the theme of a paper to the International Studies Association by Sean McMahon (*Excavating an Ontology of the Unthought: the discourse of Palestinian-Israeli relations*, 2007). He argues and concludes:

The manner in which scholars speak and write about Palestinian-Israeli relations is governed by unconscious rules, or analytics, of truthful knowledge production. These analytics, together with practices, constitute the discourse of Palestinian-Israeli relations. My paper answers two questions. First, how do truthful statements come to be made about Palestinian-Israeli relations? And second, what are the non-discursive effects of these analytics, and what should be expected of them?...Initiatives such as the Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, the Geneva Accord and Israel's Disengagement Plan (both redeployment around the Gaza Strip and construction of the 'security fence') are articulations, and material realizations, of these analytics and practices. They are, in fact, institutionalizations of these analytics and practices and as such should not reasonably be expected to produce peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

## Indications of a cognitive void of higher dimensionality

**Historical amnesia:** Massacres of major proportions, together with other forms of indescribable violence, are readily suppressed from collective memory -- to an amazing degree, readily to be described in terms of a "gap" or "hole". Their very existence may be denied, or reframed as "details of history", as separately discussed (*Societal Learning and the Erosion of Collective Memory: a critique of the Club of Rome Report: No Limits to Learning*, 1980). How do such major cultural events become "unthought"? What unthinking process facilitates the repression of cultural memories -- possibly to the point of shredding the documentary evidence as historically irrelevant? (George Monbiot, *See No Evil*, 21 May 2012; George Monbiot, *Deny the British empire's crimes? No, we ignore them*, *The Guardian*, 23 April 2012).

Ironically an example is offered by Heidegger, of the omission taking other forms. Marlene Zarader and Bettina Bergo (*The Unthought Debt: Heidegger and the Hebraic Heritage*, 2006) highlight the evolution of an *impensé* -- an unthought thought -- bespeaking a complex debt at the core of Heidegger's hermeneutic ontology. He is shown to recognize only two main lines of inheritance: the "Greek" line of philosophical thinking, and the Christian tradition of "faith", systematically avoiding any explicit or meaningful recognition of the contribution made by the Hebraic biblical and exegetical traditions to Western thought and culture.

**Unsaid:** The increasingly globalized communication society is paradoxically characterized by an increasing number of topics on which little or nothing may be publicly said (*Varieties of the "Unsaid" in sustaining psycho-social community*, 2003). Whilst many of these "zones of the unsaid" have existed in the past, their existence becomes all the more felt in an information-rich environment. They might be compared with the astronomical "black holes" which populate the galaxies (as discussed below) -- or the preponderance of "dark matter" about which so little is known. The earlier exploration raised the question as to the point at which the increase in the number of "zones of the unsaid" may completely undermine conventional hopes for global policy-making, world governance, and the implementation of strategic initiatives in response to global crises (*Global Strategic Implications of the "Unsaid": from myth-making towards a "wisdom society"*, 2003).

**God:** Ironically the debate as to the nature of God continues to rage, frequently with violent consequences -- seemingly completely incompatible with the transcendental beliefs of those who justify such slaughter (although with some expression of "regret"). It has been argued, that if the notion of "God" did not exist, humankind would be obliged by its own dynamic to invent it -- however it is articulated. That human dynamics should be so deeply preoccupied about the nature of "something" which is so variously (mis)understood, is a mystery in its own right.

For many, especially atheists, such statements are necessarily empty and without foundation, as argued by various authors (Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 2006). Curiously some religions, notably Buddhism, place great emphasis on an underlying "emptiness" of a cognitive nature (as discussed below).

**Apophatic theology:** This is understood as *negative theology*, known by mystics as the *via negativa*, an attempt to describe God by negation, to speak only in terms of what may not be said about the nature of God. In negative theology, it is accepted that the Divine is ineffable, an abstract experience that can only be recognized or remembered -- that is, human beings cannot describe in words the divine essence and therefore all descriptions, if attempted, will be ultimately false and conceptualization should be avoided. In effect, it eludes definition by definition. Hence the focus on "unsaying" (Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, 1994) -- with possible implications for any personal sense of identity, as separately discussed (*Being What You Want: problematic kataphatic identity vs. potential of apophatic identity?* 2008).

Whilst apophatic theology focuses specifically on what cannot be said about the divine, this nevertheless implies belief. In *cataphatic theology*, the emphasis is on positive assertions statements as to the nature of God.

**Consensus:** There is a strange resemblance between belief in "God" (with the assumption that all should do so) and the belief in *consensus* -- with the belief that all should subscribe to it as being the "right" thing to do. This is evident with respect to expectations with regard to climate change, resource overshoot, poverty, ignorance, etc., for which urgent appeals for action are made by an "international community" cynically to be caricatured a being as nebulous as any deity. This belief in potentially emergent consensus suggests an intuitive belief in a more profoundly subtle collective condition -- readily denied in practice, as is only too evident in debate on any purported crisis condition (*The Consensus Delusion: mysterious attractor undermining global civilization as currently imagined*, 2011). How might this "attractor" be distinguished from a "hole" -- with dynamics as complex as those hypothesized by physicists? (cf Peter Russell, *The White Hole in Time*, 1992).

The etymology of "consider" ironically implies a process of observing the "stars" -- suggesting that this should either be done together or in order to bring them together. Similarly "consensus" suggests a shared sense -- as characterized by the "sense of a meeting", notably

cultivated by Quakers. Wider use of the prefix "con", notably in the case of "confidence" and "confidentiality", would tend to "confirm" the existence of a more fundamental condition of unrecognized dimensions (*Primary Global Reserve Currency: the Con? Cognitive implications of a prefix for sustainable confidelity*, 2011). The problematic point is however reinforced by recognizing the aspirations of many groups to "convince" the rest of the world of their own preferred truth on some matter, and the remarkable resistance of many to being "converted" to any such belief. The pattern in relation to "God" is thus replicated in other domains.

**Conflict amongst the benevolent:** Conflict is considered natural between those who can be variously characterized as inheriting a legacy of warfare and mutual hostility as a primary means of resolving their differences (nations, tribes, etc). However the very existence of conflict amongst associations explicitly committed to human and social welfare, or the advancement of knowledge, is readily denied:

Considéré comme le lieu par excellence de l'engagement volontaire, de la gratuité et de la construction de liens sociaux, le monde associatif est-il pour autant préservé de la dimension conflictuelle qui traverse toutes les autres institutions sociales? (Yves Lochard, Arnaud Trenta and Nadège Vezinat. *Le conflit, impensé du monde associatif. La Vie des idées*, 22 novembre 2011)

As the title of that article indicates, there would appear to be a form of unthought thought regarding forms of conflict which are believed to be inherently incompatible with the worldviews of those who engage in them -- as noted in the case of the religions. Curiously, although considerable resources are explicitly devoted to "human relations" in the corporate world, little effort, if any, is devoted to that within or between associations or disciplines (cf. Morton Meyers, *Prize Fight: the race and the rivalry to be the first in science*, 2012).

## Systemic negligence in engaging with complexity

In the *The Sage Handbook of Complexity and Management* (2011), a paper by Robert Chia (*Towards an Oblique Strategy for Dealing with the Complex*, pp. 182-198) comments on remarks by Edgar Morin (*Method: towards a study of humankind*, 1977/1992) to the effect that:

Our thought must lay siege to the unthought which commands and controls it... we need a principle of knowledge that not only respects but reveals the mysteries of things. (Morin 1977/1992, 16). It entails recognition that all forms of seeing and knowing involve the simultaneous act of foregrounding and backgrounding: that there is an inevitable blindness in seeing and an unacknowledged "owing" in our "kn-owing". In directing our attention to the unthought, complex thinking heightens awareness of our ignorance. We must start by extinguishing false certainty, says Morin, setting out only in "ignorance, uncertainty, confusion... Uncertainty becomes *viaticum*; doubt of doubt gives doubt a new dimension, the dimension of reflexivity... the acceptance of confusion... becomes a means of resisting mutilating simplification (Morin, 1977/1992, 10). This is the radical starting point for genuinely thinking complexity.

**Lack of systemic analysis:** A theme of this argument is that there has been little systemic analysis of the issues by which governance claims to be challenged -- as argued in justifying the original production of the *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential*. What has been undertaken has been deprecated and marginalized (Graham Turner, *A Comparison of the Limits to Growth with Thirty Years of Reality*, 2007; Brian Hayes, *Computation and the Human Predicament: The Limits to Growth and the limits to computer modeling*, *American Scientist*, 2012).

It can be argued that there are systemic interdependencies which are for various reasons ignored (*Map of Systemic Interdependencies None Dares Name: 12-fold challenge of global life and death*, 2011). Ironically, the focus is now on massive computer simulations -- driven primarily by concerns with potential social unrest and threats to security, narrowly conceived (*FuturICT Living Earth Platform; Synthetic Environment for Analysis and Simulations, Sentient World Simulation*). Arguably these have limited capacity to explore the processes explored below, most notably as a consequence of systematic "scientific gerrymandering" (as mentioned below).

**Negligence:** Whilst individual issues may be recognized as a consequence of human negligence and "lack of oversight", or lack of respect for regulatory provisions, more relevant to this exploration is the nature of systemic negligence. This may be understood as the consequence of designing systems such as implicitly to define some factors as irrelevant "externalities". Having been so defined, they are -- "by definition" -- no longer a matter of any concern.

Such externalities then no longer figure in the awareness of those associated with the initiative (*Disastrous Floods as Indicators of Systemic Risk Neglect: implications for authoritative response to future surprises*, 2011). The recent Fukushima disaster offers one example (*Anticipating Future Strategic Triple Whammies: in the light of earthquake-tsunami-nuclear misconceptions*, 2011). See also Ryan Sayre (*The Un-Thought of Preparedness: concealments of disaster preparedness in Tokyo's everyday. Anthropology and Humanism*, 2011).

When negligence is "systemic", interdependencies engendering vulnerabilities are no longer of any significance (as noted above). The unrecognized systemic negligence may well reach critical proportions in (subconsciously desired) conformity with religious prophecy (*Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon: a heartfelt response to systemic negligence*, 2004). There is a peculiar sense in which the externalities are effectively "unknown" and incomprehensible (*Unknown Undoing: challenge of incomprehensibility of systemic neglect*, 2008). The argument may be extended further by exploring the practices and mindset associated with "remaindering" (*Reintegration of a Remaindered World: cognitive recycling of objects of systemic neglect*, 2011).

**Government incompetence:** The current challenges of global civilization are indicative of incompetence of the highest order in governance. The problematic condition of the global financial system is exacerbated by the case of public indebtedness (considered below). This is however merely one indicator suggesting that there are unexamined assumptions -- based on "unthought thought" --

regarding the capacity to govern a system of increasing complexity challenged by democratic deficit. The issue may be variously argued (*Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy ?* 2011; *Emergence of a Global Misleadership Council: misleading as vital to governance of the future?* 2007).

Curiously, as pronouncements are made by various parties as to "what should be done" these appear increasingly "hollow" -- given the track record of inability to deliver on promises other than in a purely tokenistic manner. Many issues, irrespective of how urgent or controversial they may be, suggest an unthought thought undermining the capacity for collective decision-making (*The Art of Non-Decision-Making*, 1997).

**Overpopulation:** The dramatic increase in the global population over the past decades is a matter about which little is formally said (*Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge: incommunicability of fundamentally inconvenient truth*, 2008). Not only is little said, but it is potentially hazardous to professional and political careers to seek to do so, as discussed separately (*Overpopulation Debate as a Psychosocial Hazard: development of safety guidelines from handling other hazardous materials*, 2009). It might even be said to be the subject of a form of "superinjunction".

Most curious is the manner in which many issues which are a direct consequence of the increase in numbers -- resource shortages, lack of accommodation, energy shortages, pollution, and the like -- are treated as though they had no detectable causative factor within human understanding. In that manner, increasing population is simply beneath the level of collective awareness, and most notably of systemic scientific analysis, as separately argued (*Scientific Gerrymandering of Boundaries of Overpopulation Debate: review of The Royal Society report -- People and the Planet*, 2012).

The consequence is an amazing effort to design global strategies as though that increase was not a causative factor (*Lipoproblems: Developing a Strategy Omitting a Key Problem -- the systemic challenge of climate change and resource issues*, 2009).

## Unexamined derivation and provenance of strategic preoccupations

Curiously there is a well-recognized, so-called [Law of Unintended Consequences](#). However this recognition has not elicited due diligence with respect to the mindset from which the "consequences" derive and by which they are engendered. The approach might be described metaphorically as "downstream thinking" -- a failure to determine "[provenance](#)" with due diligence. It is however even more curious that a major factor in enabling the recent, and ongoing, global financial crisis has been the complex repackaging and mis-selling of so-called [financial derivatives](#). Emerging "under the radar", the associated vulnerabilities and problematic consequences went seemingly unexamined by those acclaimed for the highest expertise in this regard.

Their judgment, and that of their advisors, has not been questioned in this regard. None has been formally accused of criminal incompetence. Protests have focused on the manner in which those implicated continue to be generously rewarded with public bailout funds.

Other examples of relevance include the following.

**Resource overshoot:** Failure to explore the systemic processes engendering the recognized challenges of governance has encouraged preoccupations of governance to focus in a blinkered manner on particular instances of "shortages" -- without any sense that they derive directly from a notable "longage", systematically unexamined. This was a theme of a review of The Royal Society report *People and the Planet* (*Scientific Gerrymandering of Boundaries of Overpopulation Debate*, 2012). The review challenged the failure to take account of what might be described euphemistically as preoccupation with another "hole" -- charged with psychological significance.

**Public debt:** The manner in which [public debt](#) (aka "government debt") has increased to an unimaginable degree is now recognized as increasingly amazing -- especially since this entails repayment by future generations of taxpayers, thereby instituting a form of [debt bondage](#). Yet it is only in the past year or so that this has emerged as a matter of dramatic concern, with major political implications. The manner in which the public has effectively designed itself into this condition -- seemingly unawares -- suggests a particular lack of vigilance, a form of unthinking neglect with which national and international institutions have been remarkably complicit. Frequent reference is made to the "hole" in public finances -- echoing the "holes" in the budgets of corporations, groups and individuals.

What is the "unthought thought" which enabled this?

**Encroachment:** Many forms of "encroachment" may be recognized as essentially unthinking on the part of the perpetrators -- negligent of the consequences for those who are victims of them, and whose "habitats" and livelihoods are thereby affected (*Varieties of Encroachment*, 2004). This is most evident in the case of movement of peoples, whether in the form of colonialism, immigration, or refugees. It can be explored in relation to preoccupation with terrorism (*Errorism vs Terrorism? Encroachment, Complicity, Denial and Terratism*, 2004). In the characteristic claims to innocence by those accused of encroaching, reference is typically made to a "right" to do so, even to a "God-given" right -- irrespective of the degree to which reference to "God" is deprecated by some.

There is seemingly little sense that there might be some form of "hole" in this logic enabling the process.

**Waste accumulation:** The planet is faced with an exponential increase in the quantity of waste, of which only a proportion is susceptible to disposal with currently foreseen technology and budgetary provisions. Most of this waste accumulates "elsewhere" -- beyond human ken. Examples include:

- [marine debris](#): most notably in the so-called [Great Pacific Garbage Patch](#)
- [landfill waste](#):
- waste in areas of scientific interest, with notable examples including that left by scientific expeditions to the polar regions
- waste in wilderness areas, most notably in the case of the Everest area of the Himalayas
- [agricultural wastewater](#):

- [radioactive waste](#)
- [space debris](#): this includes satellites that have ceased operation, but it is estimated that the vast majority of the estimated tens of millions of pieces of space debris are small particles, less than 1 centimetre diameter

The degree of consciousness of any act of littering offers a particular insight into the interface with the "unthought thought". There is a curious widely-held assumption that there is some kind of "hole" into which waste may be freely deposited.

**Overconsumption:** The process of consuming in excess of need -- as the converse of the act of littering -- offers another kind of insight into the interface with the "unthought thought" (Harry Beckwith, *Unthinking: the surprising forces behind what we buy*, 2011) . This is especially evident in [compulsive buying disorder](#). It is similarly evident in [compulsive overeating](#), despite evident vulnerability to obesity and diabetes in increasingly resource-constrained circumstances.

Reference is occasionally made to the manner in which such behaviour "fills a hole" -- readily identified in the case of food -- although the underlying cognitive "hole" is necessarily more elusive.

**Corruption:** The gradual emergence of widespread acknowledgement of corruption has been a curious phenomenon of recent years. Any implication of "corruption" or "malfeasance" was previously treated as "unthinkable", especially with respect to those of the highest authority. One consequence was the manner in which any evidence of its existence was officially denied by those institutions which might otherwise have been concerned at its consequences -- notably intergovernmental development agencies. Evidence to the contrary was treated as exceptional.

Recent years have offered many indications of forms of behaviour and malfeasance by those in highest authority, including elected representatives of the people -- to a degree suggesting the unthought thought that this may well be systemic, as many have variously alleged. It is increasingly recognized that purportedly socially responsible institutions engage systematically in "dirty tricks" and "covert operations", which might otherwise be considered "unthinkable" -- as they endeavour so vigorously to claim.

Again it is in this sense that lack of due diligence on the part of the IMF is so remarkable in relation to its most recent scandal (*Pre-Judging an Institution's Implicit Strategy by the Director's Private Behaviour: remarkable parallels in the case of the IMF and Dominique Strauss-Kahn*, 2011).

**Implication of "peace-keepers" in exacerbation of conflict:** There is a curiously unexamined contradiction between the acclaimed mandate of the UN Security Council, as guardian of global peace, and the role of its Permanent Members as the major manufacturers and distributors of weaponry worldwide -- susceptible therefore to interpretation in terms of crimes against humanity of the most systemic kind. The contradiction is obscured by the suppression of information regarding the origin of weaponry used in ongoing conflicts -- Syria is but one example, the Congo is another. Both conflicts are deplored by the Security Council, without mention of the provenance of the arms used for the purposes of massacre -- a further example of the pattern of "downstream thinking". The issue is further discussed separately (*Identification of Bullets: human right and human responsibility?* 2009). Avoidance of the issue is of a kind with the strange dependence on placing weaponry in civilian hands by the society most anxious to promote democracy worldwide (*Arming Civil Society Worldwide: getting democracy to work in the emergent American Empire?* 2003).

**Abuse within institutions:** Whilst abuse by institutions is widely recognized, if variously deplored, that **within** institutions is incompatible with conventional assumptions regarding their nature, self-image, and self-promotion. Any evidence to the contrary is framed as relating only to exceptions. There is however increasing indication that abuse within institutions is tolerated, even encouraged, and could well be systemic -- however much this is denied, especially in democratic societies claiming to uphold the highest of values, even those of religious inspiration.

That [sexual abuse by Catholic clergy](#) should have been demonstrated to be so systemic is therefore "unthinkable". That prison violence, notably male rape, should be so widespread is dissociated from conventional understanding of humane incarceration -- whether or not those incarcerated are otherwise considered to merit such "supplementary" punishment, unforeseen by penal code provisions (Michael Tonry, *Unthought Thoughts: the influence of changing sensibilities on penal policies, Punishment and Society*, 2001). Similar examples could be cited in relation to those in institutional care (elderly, handicapped, etc), or in educational institutions, or in the military -- hazing rituals being characteristic of the latter.

## Constrained uptake/absorption capacity

It is readily assumed that a variety of social services raise no special issues with regard to their delivery or uptake -- notably in the proposal and design of new strategies. For example, blithe declarations regarding the "rule of law" avoid attention to the backlog of cases, the cost of legal proceedings, and the absence of legal aid. The ideal could be more accurately reframed as the "rule of lawyers".

A more general argument can be made with regard to ["social safety nets"](#) and the lack of attention to the proportion of people who "fall through" them.

Assumptions regarding universal access to information in a global knowledge-based society avoid recognition of the significant copyright and paywall barriers to such access and to effective use. Acclaimed "democratic" procedures for feedback and public consultation avoid attention to whether this is effectively elicited beyond the tokenistic requirements of claims for public relations purposes, and whether a significant proportion of input in fact given due consideration (*Considering All the Strategic Options -- whilst ignoring alternatives and disclaiming cognitive protectionism*, 2009).

A related assumption is that with regard to the openness of institutions to proposals for remedial responses to challenges and crises -- whether furnished by the public or by independent expert groups, as discussed separately (*Enabling Collective Intelligence in Response to Emergencies*, 2010). [Dennis Meadows](#) recently declared:

■

In 1972, and for some time after that, I was very optimistic. I was naively optimistic. I honestly believed in what I called the "doorstep model of implementation." That is to say, you do a piece of work. You learn the "truth." You lay it on the decision maker's doorstep, and when he comes out in the morning, he finds it and changes his behavior. (Megan Gambino, *Is it Too Late for Sustainable Development? Dennis Meadows thinks so*, *Smithsonian.com*, 16 March 2012).

A further consideration is the extent to which the amount of information generated is now such that people have long reached a level of saturation -- marked by selective resistance to new ideas of any kind. Uptake is now widely constrained, leading to information flows of questionable value along unpredictable pathways of "least resistance".

## Existential implications -- of a "hole" in conventional reality?

**Nothingness:** Fundamental physics, together with astrophysics, has given great credibility to the sense in which nothingness in the main characteristic of both matter and outer space (*Emerging Significance of Nothing*, 2012). The possibility of "dark matter" has been hypothesized to give coherence to theories regarding the nature of the universe. This suggests the further possibility that some cognitive form of "nothingness" may underlie that to which the senses so readily attribute substantive reality. This possibility has long been affirmed in various Eastern religions through insights such as the "emptiness of form". Engaging with that nothingness is necessarily a cognitive challenge -- as readily avoided and denied as is the effective denial of the current insight of physics.

The nature of that "nothingness" becomes more mysterious when recognized as a "hole", as remarkably discussed by Roberto Casati and Achille C. Varzi (*Holes and Other Superficialities*, 1994) -- with respect to the borderlines of metaphysics, everyday geometry, and the theory of perception (as they summarize in the [entry on holes](#) in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

**Emptiness:** As a human condition characterized by a sense of generalized boredom, social alienation and apathy, [emptiness](#) is framed by Western sociologists and Christianity as a negative, unwanted condition. A sense of the emptiness of life is recognized as accompanying dysthymia, depression, loneliness, despair, and other mental/emotional disorders, including borderline personality disorder. The feeling is also part of a natural process of grief, separation, death of a loved one, or other significant changes. The sense may well be felt to justify suicide. Associated with despair, a personal sense of emptiness may have wider implications (*Implication of Personal Despair in Planetary Despair*, 2010).

**"Non-existence":** In societies cultivating class and other distinctions to some degree, many may be effectively condemned to a condition of "non-existence" as "nobodies". It is well-recognized in the case of the treatment of servants, as has always been the case with slaves. The attitude has long been evident in relation to treatment of women in many cultures ([Elise M. Boulding](#), *The Underside of History: a view of women through time*, 1976). Such behaviour may strongly reinforce lack of self-esteem and the sense of emptiness described above. It may itself have collective equivalents, as separately explored (*Collective Memory Personified: an Analogy*, 1980). The behaviour has been widely condemned with respect to racial and ethnic discrimination.

**Addictive behaviour:** It is readily acknowledged that substance abuse, most notably in the form of alcohol and drugs, is widely used to compensate for an experiential sense of emptiness in life. The extent of such use is frequently cited. Other forms of addictive behaviour, used for similar reasons, may include gambling and online gaming -- again a topic of frequent comment. Whilst the addictive nature of the behaviour is typically denied, any articulation of the existential reasons for engaging in it -- a sense of emptiness calling for remedial compensation -- may be less evident, as in the case of smoking or sexual abuse.

**Aging, senility and dementia:** In a society in which youth is widely glorified, the process of aging is a source of great anxiety -- especially the physical evidence of it and the progressive loss of libido. This alone elicits a sense of emptiness -- even of "hollowness" -- and considerable resources may be devoted to alleviate that impression, if only in the eyes of others. The experience of progressive diminishment, with the prospect of senility and the associated loss of all personal dignity, is likely to enhance any sense of emptiness -- again encouraging consideration of early demise. Any evidence of dementia, and its progressive emergence (Alzheimer syndrome, etc), evokes further consideration -- to the extent that this remains possible with diminishing faculties and competence.

**Death / Mortality:** Much the strangest form of unthought thought concerns the acknowledgement of personal mortality -- of ceasing to "exist". The experience of the death of others, whether through personal exposure or through the media, is "well-packaged" in a range of categories. The packaging ensures a distance from the reality of death -- possibly reframed through the traditional quest for some form of immortality -- recently reinvigorated by the possibilities of cryogenics and mind downloading (*2050 - and immortality is within our grasp*, *The Observer*, 22 May 2005).

Life can be lived through various conventional frameworks, careers and philosophies. Then there is death -- for which there is a statistical probability at any moment of life -- despite what amounts to a cognitively well-organized denial of it ([Ernest Becker](#), *The Denial of Death*, 1973). Many authors cited in this document are "dead" -- or will soon be -- perhaps after being entangled for years in a condition of dementia. Should that imply more than it conventionally does?

There is therefore a degree of existential exposure to death, but with the heaviest of cognitive insulation from the experience of its nature -- a collapse of the imagined possibilities of continuing to live conventionally. Religion may propose beliefs for a life hereafter, but these also constitute a form of cognitive insulation from an experience of which people are typically terrified, as separately discussed (*Thinking in Terror*, 2005). This is given sharp focus in the current period by the assertion on the part of *ihadis* that they are "not afraid to die" -- in contrast to the worldview of those who endeavour to constrain them.

## Possible characteristics of the unthought

**"Unthinking":** Frequent reference is made to "unthinking" in relation to acts that prove disastrous -- the French term is *inconscient*, the

German *Unbewusst*. This is readily reframed as "**human error**" -- purportedly an innocent technicality regarding "operator malfunction" in the absence of the vigilance required by the task and its responsibilities. It may be explained by fatigue, stress, incompetence, or substance abuse, but it is the nature of the "unthinking process", of which these are symptoms, which merits further reflection.

Any web search highlights numerous references to "unthinking" in a variety of contexts unrelated to "human error". Some of these have been included in the [references](#) (below) to enrich further consideration of insights they may offer with respect to the "unthought".

Quotations of interest include:

- Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth. (Albert Einstein)
- Words ought to be a little wild, for they are the assaults of thoughts on the unthinking. (John Maynard Keynes)
- Unthinking is the ability to apply years of learning at the crucial moment by removing your thinking self from the equation. (Ian Leslie)

As these imply, "unthinking" may also suggest a proactive modality which is the contrary of that deprecated in relation to human error, and much to be valued, as with:

- Peter Bratsis. *Unthinking the State* (2002)
- Wade L. Huntley. *Unthinking the Unthinkable* (2004)
- David Lyon. *Unthinking Modernity* (1996)
- Immanuel Wallerstein. *Unthinking Social Science* (2001)

Especially interesting is a classic text by G. N. A. Vesey (*Unthinking Assumptions and Their Justification*, 1954).

**Unthinkable:** The various references to "unthinking the unthinkable" recall the Cold War preoccupation framed by [Herman Kahn](#) (*Thinking about the Unthinkable*, 1962, *Thinking about the Unthinkable in the 1980s*, 1985) regarding the most brutal strategic possibilities (Jonathan Stevenson, *Thinking Beyond the Unthinkable: harnessing doom from the Cold War to the Age of Terror*, 2008). Consideration of these possibilities has effectively been reactivated, if only in the eyes of conspiracy theorists (Heinz Duthel, *The Trilateral Commission and the New World Order "Thinking The Unthinkable"*, 2011). These are reinforced, for example, by efforts to document the unexplained issues in the official reports on the 9/11 disaster by the [9/11 Truth Movement](#), most notably by [David Ray Griffin](#) (*The New Pearl Harbor: Disturbing Questions About the Bush Administration and 9/11*, 2004; *The New Pearl Harbor Revisited: 9/11, the Cover-Up, and the Exposé*, 2008; *The Mysterious Collapse of World Trade Center 7: Why the Final Official Report About 9/11 Is Unscientific and False*, 2009). Described as "unthinkable thoughts", these highlight the possibility of complicity in the attacks by agents of the United States.

The nature of the "unthinkable" has become variously evident from the [Watergate scandal](#), from the [Cablegate](#) revelations via Wikileaks, and from the [treatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib](#) and other incarceration facilities. Establishment of the "legality" of [enhanced interrogation](#), creatively but questionably, framed as "not-torture" has contributed to recognition that the "unthinkable" is now reasonably probable as documented by such as [Philippe Sands](#) (*Lawless World: America and the Making and Breaking of Global Rules*, 2005; *Torture Team: Rumsfeld's Memo and the Betrayal of American Values*, 2008). The extent to which information is now classified as "secret" does little to alleviate belief that the "unthinkable" is indeed being actively considered (James J. Wirtz, Peter R. Lavoy and Scott D. Sagan, *Planning the Unthinkable: how new powers will use nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons*, 2000). Concerns have for example been expressed at the complicity of pharmaceutical companies with the World Health Organization in promoting an "unjustified scare" in relation to the [swine flu pandemic of 2009](#) according to a report by the Council of Europe (*PACE Health Committee denounces "unjustified scare" of Swine Flu, waste of public money*, 2010). Concerns have been expressed that the [pandemic was deliberately falsified](#) -- possibly even in anticipation of instigating such a pandemic in the future.

Such possibilities have been seen as characteristic of the current era by [Joshua Cooper Ramo](#) (*The Age of the Unthinkable: why the New World Disorder constantly surprises us and what we can do about it*, 2009). The effort to "think the unthinkable" continues to be seen as an appropriate challenge in a variety of domains (Lydia Dotto, *Thinking the Unthinkable: civilization and rapid climate change*, 1988; Wendy Jordan Thomson, *Thinking the Unthinkable: a paradigm for peace*, 2009; H Craft and A Brown, *Thinking the unthinkable: papers on sexual abuse and people with learning difficulties*, 1989; R. J. Parlett, *Provision for Welfare in the 21st Century: thinking the unthinkable conservatively*, 2000; Walid Khalidi, *Thinking the Unthinkable: a sovereign Palestinian State*, 1978; United Nations and United Nations Development Programme, *Thinking the Unthinkable: from thought to policy - the role of think tanks in shaping government*, 2003).

**Gullibility -- susceptibility to confidence tricks:** The notion of a "hole" can be fruitfully associated with a gap in attention, as might occur in the case of "human error". The phrase "I was not thinking" would then apply equally to any vulnerability to a confidence trick. This argument has been developed in relation to the creativity of a Knight's move in chess. Knight's move thinking is much valued in strategic contexts -- being treated as synonymous with lateral thinking. However, as developed, the argument suggested that the "move" effectively traversed a zone which could usefully be represented by a form of "hole" -- characterized by profound inattention on the part of the victim (*Swastika as Dynamic Pattern Underlying Psychosocial Power Processes: implicate order of Knight's move game-playing sustaining creativity, exploitation and impunity*, 2012).

Appropriately, the term Knight's move thinking is also used to describe a pathological condition of dissociative thought disorder potentially characteristic of an "unthought hole" (see [Knight's move thinking: appreciated or deprecated](#)). The animations in that earlier document offer a sense of the "locus" of the hole in relation to strategic creativity. Given that susceptibility to a confidence trick may be framed in terms of failure to "keep one's eye on the ball", of particular relevance in the mathematical articulation of Ron Atkin (discussed below) is the sense in which the comprehension "hole" may also be sensed as an obstruction -- perhaps usefully recognized as a "ball", as is suggested by the visual animations.

**Existential terror:** The nature of "reality" may be too terrifying to contemplate. As suggested above, there is a sense in which the

"unthought thought" is assiduously "unthought" -- because it is too terrifying. This possibility is suggested in various myths, notably that in Greek mythology regarding the encounter of [Perseus](#) with the [Medusa](#) -- using his shield as a mirror, to avoid being "terrified", to the extent of being "petrified".

Curiously such terror has been recently justified by Barack Obama's much-cited affirmation that "evil exists" in his [acceptance speech for the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize](#). Also noteworthy is the very extensive review of four recent studies of evil in the *Financial Times* ([Julian Baggini, \*The Faces of Evil\*, FT, 5-6 June 2010](#)).

**Inexplicability of the unexpected:** The surprise associated with the unexpected may well render it inherently incomprehensible -- as a protection from the existential terror it might otherwise evoke ([Engaging with the Inexplicable, the Incomprehensible and the Unexpected](#), 2010). This would be consistent with the argument above regarding the "unreadability" of the unthought thought.

**Collective unconscious:** The sense in which humanity is characterized by a form of [collective unconsciousness](#) has been extensively explored by [Carl Jung](#) (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 1981) -- further to his work on the [personal unconsciousness](#) (of the individual). As indicated by Michel Foucault (*The Order of Things: an archaeology of the human sciences*, 2002):

As a matter of fact, the unconscious, and the forms of the unthought in general, have not been the reward granted to a positive knowledge of man. Man and the unthought are, at the archaeological level, contemporaries. (p. 355)

As noted above, this argument is echoed from a quite different perspective by the work of [John Ralston Saul](#) (*The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995). It can be explained through an understanding of the individual [human "shadow"](#), of group shadow, or even of the [shadow of humanity](#) (as tentatively explored). In the case of cultures, the manifestation of shadow has been noted in the form of the excesses of Nazism. Its manifestation in the case of colonial powers is necessarily more controversial and subject to denial (as noted above).

**Ignorance:** Recognizing the existence of "[ignorance](#)", and the experience of it, poses the curious problem as to what can be "known" about it and by what means. Whilst much is necessarily known about "knowledge" and the acquisition of it through "learning", ignorance is in many respects inaccessible. The interface between knowledge and ignorance, especially in relation to decision-making, is a fruitful area of exploration with respect to the cybernetics of human knowing (Søren Brier, [Ramulph Glanville: \*The Cybernetician of Ignorance, Cybernetics and Human Knowing\*](#), 2008; Erkki Patokorpi, [Information Pluralism and Some Informative Modes of Ignorance, Information](#), 2011; Didier Dubois, et al., [Representing Partial Ignorance. IEEE Trans. on Systems, Man and Cybernetics](#), 1996; Dirk Baecker, [The Intelligence of Ignorance in Self-Referential Systems](#), 1994).

**Multifaceted unity:** There would appear to be a deeply held assumption regarding essential unity, whether in relation to God, the universe, humanity, or knowledge. In the case of God, this is challenged by the complete incapacity of the religions to surmount their particularities and engender modalities which transcend them -- if only to reduce the bloody conflicts which their convictions currently engender.

The nature of God as multiple has been explored by [Stephen R. Prothero](#) (*God Is Not One: the eight rival religions that run the world*, 2011). This leaves unexamined the nature of any underlying unity, if such exists. Using the periodic table of chemical elements as a metaphor, consideration could be given to an equivalent with respect to the variety of beliefs ([Tuning a Periodic Table of Religions, Epistemologies and Spirituality: including the sciences and other belief systems](#), 2007). Again this would raise the question of the nature of any "belief" in such a framework -- as yet another "model".

With respect to the universe, physicists have long explored the possibility of a [multiverse](#) (meta-universe or metaverse) as the hypothetical set of multiple possible universes that together comprise everything that exists and can exist. In the case of knowledge, despite efforts to articulate interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary frameworks, none such has proven to be universally acceptable, as noted in the commentaries on the [Integrative Knowledge Project](#). How does the intuitive sense of unity relate to the nature and processes of "unthought thought"?

**Implicate order:** The possibility of an "[implicate order](#)" has been creatively explored by the physicist [David Bohm](#) (*Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, 1980) notably in the light of exchanges with an Eastern worldview (*The Limits of Thought: discussions between J. Krishnamurti and David Bohm*, 1999).

**Mathematics:** The mathematician Ron Atkin offers a well-articulated -- and comprehensible -- analysis of the challenge of comprehending a more complex whole through a degree of comprehension of its parts (Ron Atkin, *Multidimensional Man: can man live in three dimensions?* 1981) as summarized elsewhere ([Comprehension: Social organization determined by incommunicability of insights](#), 1995). Technically this is known as [q-analysis](#) (Ron Atkin, *Combinatorial Connectivities in Social Systems; an application of simplicial complex structures to the study of large organizations*, 1977). This is consistent with the possibility of partial comprehension ([Towards the Dynamic Art of Partial Comprehension](#), 2012).

Despite the deprecation of the "somethingness" of God, there is a further irony in the pursuit of physicists of a Theory of Everything -- articulated in the light of the most complex mathematics, calling upon a multitude of "dimensions" beyond human ken. Given the lack of "substance" to such a theory, and its incomprehensibility to most, this would seem to imply a form of unthought thought in the complementarity between these two non-substantial preoccupations.

This suggests the extent to which the nature of "God" may be indicated by some forms of mathematics, especially since "God" has traditionally been a major inspiration for innovative icons of mathematics. As a form of infinity it has notably been understood in terms of the infinite sets of [Georg Cantor](#). He identified the [Absolute Infinite](#) with God. The approach has been discussed by mathematician Sarah Voss (*What Number Is God?: metaphors, metaphysics, metamathematics, and the Nature of Things*, 1995). An obvious approach is of

course to consider "God" as a [strange attractor](#), as explored separately (*Human Values as Strange Attractors*, 1993). The intellectual beauty of [symmetry groups](#) of the highest order offers other possibilities -- together with constraints to such comprehension (*Dynamics of Symmetry Group Theorizing*, 2008).

Such considerations highlight the merit of the allocation of resources to mathematical theology -- in which "theology" is generalized to include any form of belief, as separately argued (*Mathematical Theology: Future Science of Confidence in Belief -- self-reflexive global reframing to enable faith-based governance*, 2011).

**Existential role of the missing:** As discussed separately (*Evolutionary influence of the absent*, 2011), an extremely valuable perspective on the argument here is offered by the recent work of [Terrence W. Deacon](#) (*Incomplete Nature: how mind emerged from matter*, 2011). His point is succinctly made by the distinct titles of his summary of his revolutionary new theory in its print and online variants (*The importance of what is missing*, *New Scientist*, 26 November 2011; *Consciousness is a matter of constraint*, *New Scientist*, 30 November 2011). His theory follows naturally from his previous book (*The Symbolic Species: the co-evolution of language and the brain*, 1997).

**Extraterrestrials:** Whilst the possibility of communication and contact with those from other parts of the universe has been an imaginative exploration for science fiction, and for some scientists, the psychosocial consequences of an encounter with life of a truly "other" nature has not been explored to any degree. This could well be "otherness" of a very high order. Irrespective of physical threats, the question is the nature of any "other consequences". The common tendency is to imagine extraterrestrials as operating out of a recognizable mindset -- whether hostile, amicable or wise. The possibility of quite different priorities -- a missing common denominator -- is ignored, as considered separately (*Communicating with Aliens: the psychological dimension of dialogue*, 2000).

The associated "unthought thought" is especially relevant to any consideration of the problematic nature of the content of communication with hypothetical extraterrestrials, as discussed separately (*Self-reflective Embodiment of Transdisciplinary Integration (SETI): the universal criterion of species maturity?* 2008). This might clarify the failure to initiate "contact" by extraterrestrials -- as has been so optimistically anticipated. Perhaps the very "emptiness" of human civilization is only too evident to them. Humanity may simply be categorized as "boring" at this stage of its evolution -- possibly through its inability to engage consciously with the cognitive implications of that process, including a failure to engage effectively with the "unthought". For humanity the essential referents of extraterrestrials in that respect may be meaningless. The condition is evident in the deprecation by atheists of belief in the spiritual in any form, or the deprecation by science of the significance of [feng shui](#) as appreciated within Chinese culture. Extraterrestrials may prove to be as radical as Islamic fundamentalists with regard to belief in Allah.

Just as the behaviour of youth may be framed as "alien" by adults -- and deprecated as "unthinking" with regard to its consequences -- extraterrestrials may expect a higher order of self-reflexivity on the part of humanity if communication is to be meaningful for them. Of course, a disaffected younger generation -- subjected to debt bondage by the unthinking behaviour of their elders -- may well respond in future in ways as unthinkable as extraterrestrials.

There is the further strange possibility that contact by sophisticated aliens might seek to follow a higher ethical order in responding to local norms. Unthinkingly and in all innocence, humans may be articulating those guidelines through their pattern of behaviour to each other (*Writing Guidelines for Future Occupation of Earth by Extraterrestrials: be done by as you did ?* 2010).

## Clues to strategic engagement with the unthought

**Symbols and myth:** If the "unthought thought" is understood as engendered by the "collective unconscious", the pioneering work of [Carl Jung](#) advocated engagement with its complexity through symbols and myth (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 1981). The case has also been variously made by other authors ([Joseph Campbell](#), *The Power of Myth*, 1988 and *Myths to Live By*, 1972; [Karen Armstrong](#), *A Short History of Myth*, 2005; [Mircea Eliade](#), *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, 1979; Michael Vannoy Adams, *The Mythological Unconscious*, 2011; Edward C. Whitmont, *The Symbolic Quest*, 1969). The sense of a necessary cognitive mirror is evident in the myth of Perseus and the Medusa, as mentioned above. This characterizes the cognitive implications as "monstrous" -- recalling the underworld celebrated in many myths contrasting the "Olympian" deities of heaven with the "Chthonic" deities of the earth (including Gaia).

Of relevance to this argument is the study of the [ouroboros](#) by Michael Bish (*The Uroboric Serpent: water and being and the mythos unthought in metaphysics*, 2008), most notably as it relates to the metaphorical use of the conveyor by Ken Wilber, as discussed separately with respect to the [Great Ocean Conveyor](#) around the globe (*Potential Misuse of the Conveyor Metaphor: recognition of the circular dynamic essential to its appropriate operation*, 2007). The potential significance of the ouroboros has been extensively explored from a phenomenological perspective by Steven M. Rosen (*Dimensions of Apeiron: a topological phenomenology of space, time, and individuation*, 2004).

**Medals:** At a time of worldwide preoccupation with the "Olympic Games" and the "medals" to be won, it is useful to explore the strange symbolic role of the medals awarded in various circumstances, whether in celebration of athletic achievement, heroism in battle, or a lifetime of service. The nature of [track events in a stadium](#), at the very origin of the Olympic Games, is formally reminiscent of the effort of circling a hole, with the medal recalling that effort -- and the associated sacrifice. The stadium also offers a reminder of the dynamics "in the hole" -- subsequently the focus of the games of the Roman Empire ([Ludi Romani](#)), now held to be repugnant through the form they finally took in the [Colosseum](#). Those awarded for [heroism](#) recall a strange "unthinking" modality associated with spontaneously placing oneself in mortal danger to assist others -- with the form of the medal now recalling the implication of a bullet hole. From its origins, as now, heroism gave rise to [hero cults](#). A sense of the "unthought" is evident in those devoting their lives "unthinkingly" to benevolent causes -- possibly to be awarded by a medal of honour, even explicitly associated with an unusual "order" -- of merit. The contemporary implications for values transcending thought have been articulated by [Edward de Bono](#) (*The Six Value Medals: the*

essential tool for success in the 21st Century, 2005).

**Polyhedral faceting:** It was suggested above that the unthought could be best "re-cognized" through "facets" which people found variously meaningful or of concern. This suggests the possibility of imaginatively configuring such facets into polyhedral form -- thereby offering a degree of coherence, a potential container for the unthought. The approach has been previously outlined with respect to categories and values (*Spherical Configuration of Categories to Reflect Systemic Patterns of Environmental Checks and Balances*, 1994; *Psychodynamics of Collective Engagement with Polyhedral Value Configurations*, 2008; *Patterning Archetypal Templates of Emergent Order: implications of diamond faceting for enlightening dialogue*, 2002). Of particular interest is the sense in which the unthought is necessarily at a cognitive distance from the facets, much as in the design challenge for the containment of plasma in nuclear fusion, as separately discussed (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006; *Cognitive Fusion through Myth and Symbol Making: archetypal dimensions*, 2006).

**Creativity:** In a number of domains requiring creativity in the moment a typical injunction is "*don't think*". This is most notably the case in the performance arts and the martial arts. It may apply in sports and other domains in which being "in the zone" framed by [flow psychology](#) is considered appropriate. A classical articulation of this mode is provided in the much-cited classic taoist tale by [Chuang Tzu](#) (*The Dexterous Butcher*):

All I care about is the Way. If find it in my craft, that's all. When I first butchered an ox, I saw nothing but ox meat. It took three years for me to see the whole ox. Now I go out to meet it with my whole spirit and don't think only about what meets the eye. Sensing and knowing stop. The spirit goes where it will, following the natural contours, revealing large cavities, leading the blade through openings, moving onward according to actual form - yet not touching the central arteries or tendons and ligaments, much less touching bone.

Those inspired by this worldview of shamanism would presumably offer equivalent arguments. The question is what is to be understood as the "unthought" with which engagement is enabled in this way.

**Embodiment:** It would appear that there are at least three interrelated strands of exploration endeavouring to transcend thought and engage with the unthought through the body, notably in movement. The body may be explored as an aesthetic, as in the case of Diane Louise Prosser (*Transgressive Corporeality: the body, poststructuralism, and the theological imagination*, 1995). For Prosser such an aesthetic is to be understood as understood:

... as holding "in tension the intentionality of a 'body/subject' against the backdrop of a radically temporalized and spatialized existence.... Thus, one might regard the aesthetic as part of Merleau-Ponty's 'unthought thought'..., just as Merleau-Ponty himself spoke of drawing upon the 'unthought thought' of Husserl's *Fifth Meditation*". (p. 28)

With respect to the nature of the "unthought thought", Prosser cites Michel Foucault (*The Order of Things: an archaeology of the human sciences*, 2002), as noted above, continuing to the effect that:

The "unthought", or that which disturbs and disrupts the Modern project of reflection, prevents "man" from forming a new positivity, and yet, in its displacement of the thinking subject, creates a space for thinking beyond metaphysics. It is in thinking the "limits" of "man", that is, in thinking those forces of the will-to-power which traverse the "warp and woof" of human existence, wherein a new mode of rationality and subject emerge. (pp. 61-62)

Prosser subsequently notes that:

Merleau-Ponty, Foucault and Kristeva, in struggling toward the articulation of a "third term" of the ternary dispositions of existence, present us with the formulation of an alternative "originary site" for philosophical and theological thinking. This site or primal scene of human becoming has three characteristics which distinguish it from the ground of foundationalist projects. First, as set forth by Merleau-Ponty, the site of bodily thinking, akin to the unruly realm of interhuman relations, is not fully present and able to be represented. Rather, it has the quality of a presence/absence, that is, a presence which comes to the fore only against the backdrop of the absent or tacit relations of one's practical action in the world. Therefore, for him, this site is not a stable foundation but a "gap"... Merleau-Ponty speaks of this gap as the "inalienable horizon" of the flesh. Foucault speaks of it as the "unthought" entangled within the "warp and woof" of thought. And Kristeva speaks of it as the "abject", "wound", or "remainder of the "clean and proper body." Although each of these metaphors directs our attention to different facets of this site, they all insist on its irreducibility to full representation. This gap is a limit to symbolic structures, and as its limit, it is near to representation, indeed at its borders, but never fully contained within it. (pp. 126-7)

Prosser continues by noting that the second feature of this site operates through the powers of attraction or repulsion -- namely desire -- resisting the objectifying gaze of the observer, decentering the subject. The third feature noted by those writers is between this power of seduction and the powers of "eros" -- "not of binary thinking but of ternary body thinking" (p. 127)

The relevance to this argument is further apparent in the more recent work of [Mark Johnson](#) on the aesthetics of embodied thinking (*The Meaning of the Body: aesthetics of human understanding*, 2007). This follows from his earlier work in collaboration with George Lakoff (*Philosophy in the Flesh: the embodied mind and its challenges to western thought*, 1999). Other relevant authors include Anthony Chemero (*Radical Embodied Cognitive Science*, 2011) and Lawrence Shapiro (*Embodied Cognition*, 2010). Considerations of physics,

phenomenology and embodiment have been insightfully interwoven by Steven M. Rosen (*Topologies of the Flesh: a multidimensional exploration of the lifeworld*, 2006).

Given the metaphoric use of "body" in relation to human collective endeavours, there is a case for exploring the above significance of "embodiment" with respect to the "body politic", "body corporate", or the "body of knowledge".

**Enactivism:** As an approach intimately related to consideration of embodied cognition, [enactivism](#) has notably been developed by [Francisco Varela](#) (*The Embodied Mind: cognitive science and human experience*, 1991; *Laying Down a Path in Walking: essays on enactive cognition*, 1997), as discussed separately (*Enveloping Development through Cognitive Enactivism: engaging with climate change by changing apprehension of climate*, 2009) (*Navigating Alternative Conceptual Realities: clues to the dynamics of enacting new paradigms through movement*, 2002)

To what extent is a person considered holy through a subtle sense of what they have embodied?

**Mystery and mysticism:** In some Eastern philosophies such as [Buddhism](#) and [Taoism](#), a sense of emptiness ([Sunyata](#)) is highly valued as realized achievement. The Buddhist term emptiness (as noted by *Wikipedia*) refers specifically to the fact that everything is dependently originated, including the causes and conditions themselves, and even the principle of causality itself. It is not nihilism, nor is it meditating on nothingness. Attaining a realization of emptiness of inherent existence is understood as key to freedom and the permanent cessation of suffering. Such emptiness is linked to the Creative Void as a state of complete receptivity and perfect enlightenment", namely the merging of the "ego with its own essence", termed by Buddhists the "clear light". For the school of [Chán](#) Mahayana Buddhism, Frank W. Stevenson notes that the duality of unthought/thought (silence/language) has always pervaded metaphysical and onto-theological discourse (*Sudao: Repeating the Question in Chan Discourse*).

In Taoism, attaining a state of emptiness is viewed as a state of stillness and placidity which is the "mirror of the universe" and the "pure mind". For a person who attains a state of emptiness, the "still mind of the sage is the mirror of heaven and earth, the glass of all things". In relation to the notion of an "unthought thought", Ray Grig suggests:

The Tao is like nothing; an unsaid word, an unthought thought. Because of words, we think there is the Tao but it is not a word, not a thought (*The Tao of Relationships: A Balancing of Man and Woman*. 1988, p. 61)

An alternative expression is that of [Lao Tzu](#) in the *Tao Te Ching*:

*Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub,  
It is the centre hole that makes it useful,  
Shape clay into a vessel;  
It is the space within that makes it useful.  
Cut doors and windows for a room;  
It is the holes which make it useful.  
Therefore profit comes from what is there;  
Usefulness from what is not there.*

## Metaphor, metaphysics and astrophysics

There is a potentially fruitful subtle relationship between these three domains. Each offers a particular form of radical detachment from the substance of conventional reality:

- metaphor makes deliberate use of words relating to a known reality in order to offer insight into subtler and more elusive realities which are perceived to be a challenge to comprehension
- metaphysics explores the subtlety of being and existence as a speculative extension of more conventional forms of philosophy, itself readily held to be disassociated from the concrete challenges of daily life
- astrophysics offers hypotheses (irrelevant to many) regarding the nature of the distant universe in which the planet of daily resource-challenged experience is embedded

The three may therefore be understood as variously exploring the intangible and can therefore be considered -- to some degree -- as complementary "fantasies". Their strength lies in their respective roles in explanation of subtlety and the quality of thinking that has long been invested in their use. However, the function of what are usefully to be understood as "strategic fantasies" merits further attention, as separately argued (*Cultivating Global Strategic Fantasies of Choice: learnings from Islamic Al-Qaida and the Republican Tea Party movement*, 2010; *Globallooning -- Strategic Inflation of Expectations and Inconsequential Drift*, 2009). Again the early study by G. N. A. Vesey (*Unthinking Assumptions and Their Justification*, 1954) merits attention, as with the function of ignorance itself (as mentioned below).

There is a curious case for exploring -- as metaphorical templates -- the powerful subtleties of the mathematics considered appropriate to comprehension of the universe. If such a degree of sophistication is required for that purpose, arguably there is all the more reason to explore its relevance to acquiring a degree of comprehension of the unthought thought that may well underlie psychosocial reality as it is conventionally experienced. There is a degree of irony to this in that the "gravity", which physics is much challenged to explain, has early associations with the "gravitas" admired in the mature -- and equally difficult to explain. The associations are evident to a degree in the mystical writings of [Simone Weil](#) (*Gravity and Grace*, 1952).

The case for some such approach has been extensively argued by [Steven M. Rosen](#) (*The Self-Evolving Cosmos: a phenomenological approach to nature's unity-in-diversity*, 2008), most notably in a concluding chapter on *The Psychophysics of Cosmogony*.

**Insights from astrophysics:** The categories of astrophysics can be explored as metaphors for comprehension of the dynamics of a global knowledge society and the challenges of navigating within it (*Towards an Astrophysics of the Knowledge Universe? from astronautics to noonautics*, 2006; *Entering Alternative Realities -- Astronautics vs Noonautics: isomorphism between launching aerospace vehicles and launching vehicles of awareness*, 2002).

Given the major role currently accorded to "dark matter" in understanding of a space-time ("physical") universe, what might be the role of "ignorance" in relation to a universe of knowledge -- and the evolution of communication within it over time? As explored by Erkki Patokorpi (*Information Pluralism and Some Informative Modes of Ignorance*, *Information*, 2011):

None of the cybernetic conceptions, and only some conceptions within the semiotic-pragmatic approach, can vindicate the elusive intuition of the potential positive role of ignorance.

Curiously "ignorance" is fundamental to the dynamics of a learning society: no ignorance, no possibility of learning. However, the very process of knowledge generation in one sector of knowledge space effectively engenders ignorance elsewhere -- through lack of knowledge there of what has been learned elsewhere.

**Memetic singularity?** Given the collective and individual challenge of issues of knowledge uptake and delivery capacity (information overload, constraints on attention time and memory, etc.), a case can be made for the emergence of what might be termed a "memetic singularity" within knowledge space -- analogous to the [gravitational singularities](#) hypothesized by astrophysics (*Emerging Memetic Singularity in the Global Knowledge Society*, 2009).

**Knowledge dynamics?** There is widespread preoccupation with development of sustainable **business models**, in the emerging context. A stronger case could be made for sustainable "**busyness models**", namely with how time could be better managed when threatened by incapacitating knowledge dynamics (*Strategic Embodiment of Time Configuring questions fundamental to change*, 2010; *Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy? Towards engaging appropriately with time*, 2011).

Whether for the individual or the collective, the challenge may become one of sustaining coherence and identity (*Strategic Complexity ∞ Attracting Consensus: Klein is beautiful ∞ Sustaining identity in time*, 2011). The relevance of the Moebius strip to working with the unthought is helpfully explored by Gavin Kendall and Mike Michaela (*Thinking the Unthought: towards a Moebius strip psychology*, *New Ideas in Psychology*, 1998). Extensive discussion of related possibilities, most notably with respect to the Klein bottle, is variously provided by Steven M. Rosen (*The Self-Evolving Cosmos: a phenomenological approach to nature's unity-in-diversity*, 2008; *Science, Paradox, and the Moebius Principle: the evolution of a "transcultural" approach to wholeness*, 1994)

The preoccupation of astrophysics with information in its most technical sense -- of which "matter" is but one form -- suggests that the [dynamics and lifecycle of stars](#) offer models which merit consideration as metaphors for understanding the identity and lifecycles of individuals and collectives. "Star" is of course readily used as a metaphor to describe the "brilliance" and associated "visibility" of individuals -- whether intellectually or as performers.

**Civilizational collapse:** In the current period, there is widespread concern with civilizational collapse, as articulated by various authors (Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, 2005; Thomas Homer-Dixon, *The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization*, 2006). There is therefore a case for considering the dynamics of how stars collapse as a source of insight into knowledge dynamics in the current civilization. The approach of Homer-Dixon is especially relevant in that he develops a detailed analysis of the challenges to the Roman Empire of sourcing its energy requirements to sustain its integrity -- leading up to its collapse.

In the general terms of astrophysics, "energy" is merely one form of information. There are many current instances in which it has become clear that the capacity to communicate such as to enable appropriate governance is seriously lacking. How might a global civilization be vulnerable to "collapse under its own weight"?

**Black holes and supernova?** Astrophysics offers suggestive insights into the collapse of stars -- offering a "language" through which to discuss the evolution and collapse of psychosocial "stars", as discussed separately (*Conscious creativity sustaining confidence: a solar metaphor*, 2011). With respect to the exploration of such metaphor as a way of "handling" incomprehension, a separate discussion of astrophysical phenomena as "[Paradoxical templates](#)" (*Towards the Systematic Reframing of Incomprehension through Metaphor*, 2012) suggested that:

There is then an intuitive consistency to the sense in which a "universe" is best understood as a coherent "way of knowing". This framing then invites reflection on the cognitive implication of humanity's need to engender adequate explanations of its universe as being characterized by paradoxical phenomena -- and as such relatively "incomprehensible" and beyond normal ken.

This notably explored "[black holes](#)" as a metaphor in the collapse process, especially given their significance for information processing:

This is a region of [spacetime](#) from which nothing, not even light, can escape. Metaphorical use is occasionally made of "black hole", notably with respect to a disastrous financial condition of major undertakings. It may also be used with reference to a personal sense of depression, and potentially to any associated sense of "incomprehension". The formation of a black hole is predicted in astrophysics by the theory of general relativity as being associated with a sufficiently compact mass capable of deforming spacetime. Given the psychosocial significance attributed above to "world", when sufficiently "compact" it might indeed be understood as deforming communication space to constitute a form of "black hole". For astrophysics, a black hole is surrounded by a so-called [event horizon](#) that marks a point of no return. It reflects and emits nothing. This offers a useful way

of exploring certain zones of "incomprehension" -- into which no "light" can enter and from which none can emerge.

Of particular interest in a world characterized by ever-increasing "spin" in public relations, is the role of "spin" in a [rotating black hole](#), namely two of the four hypothesized forms of black hole. Combining considerations of phenomenology and physics, extensive consideration to the role of spin is given by Steven M. Rosen (*The Self-Evolving Cosmos: a phenomenological approach to nature's unity-in-diversity*, 2008).

## Conclusion

The argument with respect to the unthought has suggested that underlying the conventional reality of global civilization is a cognitive modality of unknown and largely unexplored implications for the further development of that civilization. The global financial crisis can be understood as emerging as a consequence of an incompetent lack of vigilance of a very high order -- reinforced by arrogance. This is a failure of governance to "keep an eye on the ball". This failure exemplifies a characteristic of the unthought. Of far deeper concern, however, is **what else may be buried in the depths of the unthought** -- as disruptive and denied as have been the factors engendering the financial crisis.

The implications of the unthought may well be "terrifying" to ordinary awareness -- suggesting that the worldwide preoccupation with "terrorism" may well be a form of surrogate with a prefigurative function. The sense of a "hole" is also remarkably indicated by the current worldwide preoccupation with the global financial crisis and recognition of underlying budget deficits of unprecedented proportions. The repeatedly demonstrated incapacity of governance to engage effectively with this deficit offers further indication of the cognitive significance of the "hole". As with the "dark matter" and "dark energy" of astrophysics, the nature of the "hole" is beyond conventional capacity to "grasp" it. A major dimension of the current tragedy, and intrinsic to the psychodynamics of that cognitive hole, is the manner in which those implicated variously understand what ought to be done to engage with the deficit -- whilst clearly exhibiting no capacity to admit to their limited understanding of its complexity or to the need for another order of insight to enable their differences to be reconciled.

**Leviathan:** Through the metaphorical frames offered by myth the unthought could be understood as "monstrous" in some way. It could then be compared with the [Leviathan](#), common to the mythologies of the Abrahamic cultures, or to the variants in other cultures. The term has been applied to Islam itself by [Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr](#) (*Islamic Leviathan: Islam and the making of state power*, 2001). This usage follows the influential early work of [Thomas Hobbes](#) (*Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill*, 1651) of which edited revisions have been recently published. Of potential relevance to this argument is the focus of the last part of the book, [On The Kingdom of Darkness](#):

*This considered, the kingdom of darkness... is nothing else but a confederacy of deceivers that, to obtain dominion over men in this present world, endeavour, by dark and erroneous doctrines, to extinguish in them the light...* [[Chapter XLIV](#)]

**Subterranean threats:** The Leviathan is recognized in myth as a monstrous, twisted sea serpent -- the gatekeeper of Hell. Such a chthonic primordial role merits attention to the extent that similar roles have been accorded to the deep sea monsters of other cultures, notably in relation to [symbolism relating chthonic serpents to a Tree of Life](#). It is strangely consistent with the concerns of the current period preoccupied as it is by rising sea levels, in addition to the occasional threat of tsunamis provoked by earthquakes. The subterranean threats are also evident in concern with volcanoes and the possibility of [supervolcanoes](#). Both volcanoes and earthquakes are associated with movements of the Earth's tectonic plates -- held to be significant (metaphorically) to the challenges of the times, as cited above ([Robert Davies](#), *The Shifting Tectonic Plates: facing new community challenges to business in a fragile world of risk and opportunity*, The Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum, 2002).

**Twistedness and self-reflexivity:** Especially intriguing with respect to the "serpentine" nature of the Leviathan is its relation to the twistedness of Hobbes "deceivers" -- now to be recognized in the "spin" of news management, as well as in the nature of "covert" operations. This suggests the requirement for corresponding modes of engagement with the unthought (*Twistedness in Psycho-social Systems: challenge to logic, morality, leadership and personal development*, 2004; *Engaging with Questions of Higher Order: cognitive vigilance required for higher degrees of twistedness*, 2004). This could be readily understood to imply a higher order of self-reflexivity, whose absence contributes to the problematic nature of what is then "unthought" -- as variously explored by [Douglas Hofstadter](#) (*Fluid Concepts and Creative Analogies: computer models of the fundamental mechanisms of thought*, 1995; *I Am a Strange Loop*, 2007) and separately discussed (*Sustaining a Community of Strange Loops: comprehension and engagement through aesthetic ring transformation*, 2010). The requisite vigilance is evident in the separate discussion of Knight's move thinking in relation to abuse of confidence (*Swastika as Dynamic Pattern Underlying Psychosocial Power Processes: Implicate order of Knight's move game-playing sustaining creativity, exploitation and impunity*, 2012).

**Imaginative anticipation of surprise:** The sense of the "monstrous" continues to be significant to modern imagination, most notably to the younger generation -- as cultivated in games of various kinds (*Dungeons and Dragons*, etc). The myth has been cultivated in science fiction, most notably in the apocalyptic work of [John Wyndham](#) (*The Kraken Wakes*, 1953) with reference to the deep sea monster of Nordic mythology (the [Kraken](#)), and that of [H. P. Lovecraft](#) (*The Call of Cthulhu*, 1928; etc) with respect to a fictional entity *Cthulhu* -- trapped undersea, but expected eventually to return (and now the focus of the [Cthulhu mythos in popular culture](#)). In this sense the monstrous offers a culturally tolerable framing of the possibility of strategic surprise, as explored with respect to [black swan theory](#) by [Nassim Nicholas Taleb](#) (*The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007). In historical terms the encounter of a culture with such a surprise may be compared to that of the [Aztec Empire](#), under [Montezuma](#), leading to the [Spanish conquest](#) in 1520.

**Symmetry "monsters":** The cognitive challenge of the monstrous emerges quite differently in the reference by mathematicians to the

**Monster Group** -- a surprising discovery of fundamental significance in their [group theory](#) explorations. The group is one of two principal constituents in the mathematical conjecture known as [Monstrous moonshine](#), as discussed separately (*Potential Psychosocial Significance of Monstrous Moonshine: an exceptional form of symmetry as a Rosetta stone for cognitive frameworks*, 2007). Although the beauty of visual renderings of such symmetry may readily be associated with deity ([Lie groups](#), etc), the challenges to its comprehension are truly "monstrous", as noted above (*Dynamics of Symmetry Group Theorizing*, 2008). This polarizing ambiguity might well be recognized as characteristic of reference to the serpentine nature of the mythical variants -- framing the challenge of self-reflexivity in engaging with it, again suggested by the mythical encounter of Perseus with the Gorgon.

**Social unrest:** As a deep sea monster, the myth echoes both current preoccupation with threats from the sea -- and the symbolic connotations of water in relation to the unconscious -- as well as widespread recognition of emergent social unrest. The latter is readily reframed in terms of an "eruption" of volcanic proportions -- for which security services are increasingly preparing in the light of ever more powerful simulations (as mentioned above). As such phenomena illustrate, however, the trigger for the "eruption" of one may well be of little concern to another. One group's inspiration may well be deeply "unthought" for another.

**Black holes?** In its use of astrophysical metaphors, the argument referred to the potential cognitive implications of "black holes", increasingly used with respect to global financial indebtedness of what might well be described as of "astronomical" proportions. As noted, the metaphor is also valued with reference to a sense of individual or collective despair. The concern here is however with the cognitive implications for a global civilization of a massive "black hole" underlying the conventional worldview -- perhaps to be compared with a [supermassive black hole](#), hypothesized as being at the centre of most galaxies. How might the cognitive implications be understood -- as a challenge to the very process of conventional understanding? How might these accord with the framing offered by [Elizabeth A. Grosz](#) (*Of Futures Yet Unthought*, 1998)? In a special sense, the "future" is possibly intimately related to the "unthought", namely as the "yet to be thought".

**Dynamic implications:** The above discussion has been unfortunately biased in accepting the conventional consideration of the "unthought" as a substantive -- with only incidental reference to a dynamic associated with "unthinking". There is however great potential in considering the "unthought" as inherently dynamic, perhaps as implied by David Bohm's consideration of the holomovement associated with implicate order. The potential is evident in the cited proactive uses of "unthinking" -- evident in references below. As with the magma at the Earth's core, it is the associated dynamic -- especially its fluidity -- which points to the potential of this dynamic to "reform" the modalities of conventional thinking, even disruptively through "shifting tectonic plates". This argument may be related to that of reconsidering fundamental human values in dynamic terms (*Freedom, Democracy, Justice: Isolated Nouns or Interwoven Verbs? Illusory quest for qualities and principles dynamically disguised*, 2011). It is also relevant to the obligation to live, in some sense, "between" the Olympian and the Chthonic cognitive realms (*Living as an Imaginal Bridge between Worlds: global implications of "betwixt and between" and liminality*, 2011).

**Engaging with the netherworld:** The reference by Hobbes to a "Kingdom of Darkness" (noted above) of which the Leviathan is a guardian, suggests the merit of further consideration of the role and dynamics of a **cognitive "netherworld"** in Roman and Greek cultures -- and the necessity of according it appropriate attention, as separately discussed (*Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: Patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld*, 2010).

<p style="text-align:center"><i>The Quest Of Merlin</i> <i>Relentlessly we fulfil.</i> <i>Think and we seize the thought;</i> <i>Act and the deed once done</i> <i>Sinks into our iron hands.</i> <i>Only the unthought thought, O man,</i> <i>Is thine own and the deed forborne.</i> <i>Thou canst neither love nor doubt</i> <i>But the doubt and the love alike</i> <i>Pass into the infrangible web of the world</i> <i>That we weave with inexorable fingers.</i> (extract from a poem by <a href="#">Richard Hovey</a>)</p>
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