



laetus in praesens

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20 February 2017 | Draft

Paradoxes of Wilber's Appreciation of the Trump Challenge

Reframing integral possibilities for the future

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Introduction

Few with a philosophical or psychological inclination have as yet commented extensively on the significance of the election of Donald Trump. The insights of [George Lakoff](#) are a valuable exception (*Understanding Trump*, 23 July 2016), although he holds the view that Trump won by somehow breaking the current rules of the American electoral system (*A Minority President: Why the Polls Failed, And What the Majority Can Do*, 22 November 2016). This is a view shared by many, including Lakoff's long-term critic, [Noam Chomsky](#).

On the contrary, Trump won according to the rules, however questionable these may be, and irrespective of the unprecedented proportion of eligible voters who chose not to vote (*Who are the three-quarters of adult Americans who didn't vote for Trump?* *The Guardian*, 18 January 2017). Under the circumstances, ironically, any unqualified assertion that Clinton really won could be considered an "alternative fact" of the kind of which Trump is now accused.

Most controversial has been the endorsement by [Slavoj Zizek](#) who has argued that Trump's election will usefully shake the world out of a dangerous degree of complacency (*Far-left philosopher Slavoj Zizek explains why he supported Trump over Clinton*, *Vice News*, 30 November 2016; *Slavoj Zizek on Trump and Brexit*, *BBC News*, 17 January 2017; *Zizek: Electing Trump will 'shake up' the system*, *Al Jazeera*, 16 Nov 2016; Andre Damon, *The Idiot Speaks: Slavoj Zizek endorses Donald Trump*, *World Socialist Web Site*, 9 November 2016).

At the time of writing a group of "mental health professionals" have decided to express their concern at the behaviour of Donald Trump by addressing a collective letter to *The New York Times* (*Mental Health Professionals Warn About Trump*, 13 February 2017; *Mental health professionals warn Trump is incapable of being president*, *The Independent*, 13 February 2017):

Mr. Trump's speech and actions demonstrate an inability to tolerate views different from his own, leading to rage reactions... Individuals with these traits distort reality to suit their psychological state, attacking facts and those who convey them... We believe that the grave emotional instability indicated by Mr. Trump's speech and actions makes him incapable of serving safely as president.

The group excuse their previous silence on the basis of the self-imposed dictum about evaluating public figures -- the [Goldwater Rule](#) of the American Psychiatric Association. Unfortunately they make no reference to their ability to determine whether anyone is capable of serving safely as president. This is despite having been duly elected following a testing campaign against opposition of every kind, reminiscent of many a legendary tale.

Is the implication that "mental health professionals" should in future be called upon to provide an assessment of presidential candidates?

This possibility follows from current concern expressed by politicians (*Growing number of politicians 'openly questioning Donald Trump's mental health'*, *The Independent*, 17 February 2017; *Is It Time to Call Trump Mentally Ill?* *The New York Times*, 17 February 2017). Of potentially greater relevance is the compilation of views of 18 psychiatrists, psychologists, and university professors on what is going on in the collective unconscious of the USA in this period (Steve Buser and Leonard Cruz (Ed.), *A Clear and Present Danger: narcissism in the era of Donald Trump*, 2016).

Does any such criticism imply that -- other than Trump -- those seeking election to high office (like Hillary Clinton) should be assumed to be "normal" and unworthy of the considered assessment of such professionals? Has the psychological health of leaders of the past been the subject of equivalent professional concern? What of the considered opinion of Angela Merkel given the consequences for Europe of her decisions on refugees?

Especially significant is the criticism made of the ability of a duly elected leader to "distort reality". Effectively engendering a **reality distortion field**, this is increasingly recognized as a characteristic of the most creative forms of leadership (as noted below).

Such criticism is also unfortunate in that the judgment of "mental health professionals" has been recently called into question by their silent complicity in government torture programmes (*How America's psychologists ended up endorsing torture*, *The Economist*, 28 July 2015; David H. Hoffman, et al, *Independent Review Relating to APA ethics guidelines, national security interrogations, and torture*, 2 July 2015). Brainwashing programmes of that nature might well be recognized as designed to distort the reality of critics and opponents.

As originator of **Integral Theory**, **Ken Wilber** has now provided a valuable comment on the electoral surprise (*Trump and a Post-Truth World: an evolutionary self-correction*, February 2017). This will no doubt engender a variety of responses. One of these is provided by **Cynthia Bourgeault** instigator of **The Contemplative Society** (*Wilber's Trump and a Post-Truth World: an overview and critique*, February 2017). As modern day mystic, Episcopal priest, and retreat leader, she nuances her own critique from the perspective of the idealist philosopher **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**.

Wilber's argument is that:

The election of Donald Trump is an evolutionary self-correction that has been decades in the making -- a backlash against the failure of the leading edge of consciousness (postmodernism and pluralism) to acknowledge the lie underlying the progress they've pursued: it's not equal, it's not consistent, and it doesn't make room for everyone. But a new integral force is emerging that can move beyond the narcissism and nihilism of political correctness to offer genuine leadership and move towards a developmental-based wisdom of greater wholeness.

The case made in support of this perspective is valuable in its own right irrespective of limitations which can (and will) be undoubtedly noted. The commentary which follows is one exercise in engaging with the argument as it is necessarily framed by Integral Theory.

The exercise follows from the pre-electoral comment (*Engaging Proactively with the Risk of World Misleadership: Trump vs Clinton and the potential of carpe diem in the democratic process?* 2016). This concluded ambiguously that: *Two wrongs do not make a right. Choosing the worst of the two may however serve to engender the right -- from the people. As with tough love, it is a case of voting for the wrong person for the right reason -- rather than for the right person for the wrong reason.*

Subsequent to the election, the concern was framed otherwise (*Radical Disaffection Engendered by Elitist Groupthink? Democratic rehearsal of the final battle between the Forces of Light and Darkness*, 2016; *Engaging an Opposing Ideology via Martial Arts Philosophy: reframing the challenge of Trump and Jihadism as worthy opponents*, 2016; *Public Enemy #1 as Supreme Leader? Thinking otherwise about framing the engagement with society's worst fear*, 2017).

The argument here with respect to the perspective of Ken Wilber is framed by earlier consideration with regard to integral futures (*Self-reflexive Challenges of Integrative Futures*, 2008). This contrasted Wilber's approach with that of **David Lorimer**, and the Scientific and Medical Network. The differences were presented as arising from stylistic preferences and biases which are usefully clarified with a range of metaphors. These however highlight the challenge of any more integrative understanding, especially in the light of hidden dynamics of exclusion in a questionable effort to demonstrate that one approach is "better" than another in a complex human endeavour - especially when the future is sensed strategically through other metaphors than "vision" and perspective.

Aperspectival madness of the postmodernist mindset

Wilber considers that a major factor contributing to the successful emergence of Donald Trump was a particular failure of the progressive "leading edge" of society on which others have commented in other terms. For Wilber this is described as follows:

Beginning over two decades ago, with the book *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality*, I summarized this postmodern disaster with the term "aperspectival madness", because the belief that there is no truth -- that no perspective has universal validity (the "aperspectival" part) -- when pushed to extremes, as postmodernism was about to do, resulted in massive self-contradictions and ultimate incoherency (the "madness" part). And when aperspectival madness infects the leading-edge of evolution, evolution's capacity for selfdirection and self-organization collapses.

To this he adds:

It's widely acknowledged that postmodernism as a philosophy is now dead; and books are everywhere starting to appear that are written about "What comes next?" (with no clear winner yet, but the trend is toward more evolutionary and more systemic --

more integral -- views). But in academia and the universities, it is a long, slow death, and most teachers still teach some version of postmodernism and its aperspectival madness even if they have many deep doubts themselves. (But it's telling that virtually every major developmental model in existence contains, beyond the stage generally known as "pluralistic," at least a stage or two variously called "integrated," "systemic," "integral," or some such, all of which overcome the limitations of a collapsed pluralism through a higher-level wholeness and unity, thus returning to a genuine "order out of chaos.")

In terms of Integral Theory, Wilber discusses at some length how progressive thinking might heal itself -- if indeed it can acknowledge the condition which has disempowered it and rendered Trump leadership more appealing to wide segments of society, despite his multiple contradictions. It is perhaps necessarily far from clear how this healing process might be engendered. The Trump era may well prove to be the catalyst for the emergence of this understanding -- hence the merit of the subtitle of Wilber's essay: *an evolutionary self-correction*.

Most disappointing is that Wilber does not highlight insights, other than those of Integral Theory, which might help to clarify the nature of aperspectival madness and possible ways forward. Three are particularly worthy of mention, namely relativity theory, mathematical theology, and self-reference.

Relativity theory and its metaphorical insights

It could be argued that over a century ago Albert Einstein elaborated conceptual tools through the [Theory of Relativity](#) in order to deal with frames of reference moving in relation to one another. This was done in response to the challenge of comprehending the movement of light within the universe and the role of gravity in that regard. Whilst astrophysics is necessarily obliged to seek its data from the perspective of the Earth, it was obliged to abandon this constraint in responding to the complexities of the observable universe and the frame of reference of observers anywhere within it.

Rather than being aperspectival, relativity theory is obliged to allow specifically for multiple perspectives. In so doing it endeavours to disassociate itself from any specific perspective -- thus offering a more comprehensive sense of aperspectival. It can be briefly stated that society unfortunately has as yet not been able to adapt such insight to psychosocial organization. Wilber's emphasis on "madness" is therefore highly appropriate.

It is extremely unfortunate that Wilber is obliged to engage with "relativity" solely through deprecation of the [relativism](#) of progressive thinking:

Its broad-minded pluralism slipped into a rampant and runaway relativism (collapsing into nihilism), and the notion that all truth is contextualized (or gains meaning from its cultural context) slid into the notion that there is no real universal truth at all, there are only shifting cultural interpretations (which eventually slid into a widespread narcissism). Central notions (which began as important "true but partial" concepts, but collapsed into extreme and deeply self-contradictory views) included the ideas that all knowledge is, in part, a cultural construction; all knowledge is context-bound; there are no privileged perspectives; what passes for "truth" is a cultural fashion, and is almost always advanced by one oppressive force or another (racism, sexism, eurocentrism, patriarchy, capitalism, consumerism, greed, environmental exploitation); the utter, absolutely unique, and absolutely equal value of each and every human being, often including animals (egalitarianism).

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

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

Astrophysics and general relativity theory suggest the need for caution in interpreting any such analogy. Within the understanding of [mass in general relativity](#) gravity is more consistent with the distinction which Wilber would seemingly like to make with respect to a "massive" model. However any arrogation of the right to categorize through a model, however creative, may now be challenged and contested.

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

Paradoxically the production of a model is typically associated with another fundamental issue which lends itself to clarification by relativity theory, namely the question of copyright claimed with respect to models as intellectual property. Most models are disseminated

under such constraints, especially the images by which they may be illustrated. Ironically, and however universal it claims to be in ordering reality, the model makes no reference to that constraint.

Can a perspective be "universal" when it is considered to be intellectual property and subject to copyright and/or paywalls? What are the implications for its universality if it is constrained by registration as a trade mark, or promoted under franchise -- as discussed separately (*Future Coping Strategies: beyond the constraints of proprietary metaphors*, 1992)? Speculatively it can however be inferred that Einstein's own personal experience in a patent office was an undeclared formative influence in his understanding of the relation between frames of reference (*Einstein's Implicit Theory of Relativity - of Cognitive Property? Unexamined influence of patenting procedures*, 2007).

Mathematical theology and comprehension

In a so-called global civilization, the challenge of the universality of truth can be usefully illustrated otherwise. Two people in telephone communication on opposite "sides" of the globe can obviously disagree as to the truth of whether it is night or day at a particular moment. The reconciliation of their differences calls for a recognition of the spherical surface on which they are differently located.

Unfortunately no such "surface" has been sought to reconcile the multiplicity of psychosocial differences, most notably between philosophers, as articulated by [Nicholas Rescher](#):

For centuries, most philosophers who have reflected on the matter have been intimidated by the strife of systems. But the time has come to put this behind us -- not the strife, that is, which is ineliminable, but the felt need to somehow end it rather than simply accept it and take it in stride. (*The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity*, 1985)

The assumption is too readily made that universal truth is effectively to be sought from a kind of flat-earth perspective, as separately deprecated (*Irresponsible Dependence on a Flat Earth Mentality: in response to global governance challenges*, 2008). Any "planar" representation then implies an interesting challenge for higher orders of insight (*Adhering to God's Plan in a Global Society: serious problems framed by the Pope from a transfinite perspective*, 2014).

As admirably developed by Wilber, Integral Theory has responded to this diversity through elaboration of the [AQAL frame of reference](#). and its integration with the insights of [Spiral Dynamics](#)® -- as elaborated by [Don Beck](#) and [Chris Cowan](#) (Steve Dinan, *Summary of Spiral Dynamics*; Chris Cowan and Natasha Todorovic, *Colors of Thinking in Spiral Dynamics*; *Ken Wilber Summary of Spiral Dynamics model, Rational Spirituality*).

The questionable aspect of this is that the distinctive pattern of quadrants and colours is not further informed by the insights of cognitive psychology as argued by [George Lakoff](#) and [Rafael Nuñez](#) (*Where Mathematics Comes From: how the embodied mind brings mathematics into being*, 2001). Further constraints are evident with respect to the organization of knowledge, as separately summarized (*Comprehension of Numbers Challenging Global Civilization: number games people play for survival*, 2014). Whether as preferred models or otherwise, these may well have psychocultural implications (*Systems of Categories Distinguishing Cultural Biases*, 1993).

Such issues acquire a degree of focus in the light of the conflictual relation between religions, emphasized by the distinctive patterns of categories they prefer to use. Typically there is considerable resistance to any effort to subsume these patterns into any universal pattern as a container for truth. It is however intriguing that these patterns are typically associated with numbers and geometry -- of which any trinity (and its representation) is a primary example.

This suggests that the quest for the progressive representation and communication of universal truth, through all the diversity of its constrained articulation, could be fruitfully explored through mathematical theology (*Mathematical Theology: Future Science of Confidence in Belief -- self-reflexive global reframing to enable faith-based governance*, 2011). It is in this sense that the patterns of AQAL and Spiral Dynamics are very particular instances of how understanding might come to be organized, or of how different groups might prefer to organize it as symbolic of their identity.

Mathematics is especially helpful in endeavouring to engage with higher orders of complexity without purporting to achieve closure on the nature of "universal" or of "truth". Of interest in this respect are the arguments of [Sarah Voss](#) (*What Number Is God? Metaphors, Metaphysics, Metamathematics, and the Nature of Things*, 1995) or the extensive work of [Marie-Louise von Franz](#) (*Number and Time: reflections leading toward a unification of depth psychology and physics*, 1986). Of particular relevance is the latter's exploration of some alchemical symbols indicative of universality, as with *Symbols of the Unus Mundus* (In: *Psyche and Matter: collection of essays*, 1992).

Mathematics calls into question the very nature of "higher" and the comprehension of "order", as may be variously explored (*Engaging with Insight of a Higher Order: reconciling complexity and simplicity through memorable metaphor*, 2014; *Paradoxes of Engaging with the Ultimate in any Guise: living life penultimately*, 2012). Most curiously however, the topics of mathematics as a discipline are themselves ordered simplistically rather on the basis of the topological complexity that might otherwise be considered appropriate (*Is the House of Mathematics in Order? Are there vital insights from its design*, 2000).

With the patterns favoured by Integral Theory as effectively of the simplest in mathematical terms, the pattern of the [Periodic Table of Chemical Elements](#) offers an inspiration to further possibilities (*Tuning a Periodic Table of Religions, Epistemologies and Spirituality -- including the sciences and other belief systems*, 2007; *Periodic Pattern of Human Knowing: implication of the Periodic Table as metaphor of elementary order*, 2009). The struggle of fundamental physics to articulate a universal [Standard Model](#) of particle physics offers another challenging metaphor (*Beyond the Standard Model of Universal Awareness: being not even wrong?* 2010).

Self-reference and mirroring

There is a tantalizing sense in which the developmental stages, which are a focus of Wilber's analysis of the emergence of Trump, could be fruitfully informed by developments in [knowledge cybernetics](#), as most notably articulated by [Maurice Yolles](#) (*Knowledge Cybernetics: a new metaphor for social collectives*, *Journal of Organisational Transformation and Social Change*, 3, 2006; *From Knowledge Cybernetics to Feng Shui*, *Proceedings of the 50th Annual Meeting of the ISSS*, 2006).

Of particular relevance in that regard is the balanced understanding of "[positive feedback](#)" together with "[negative feedback](#)". A peculiar characteristic of postmodernism is that in many respects the only modality which can be validly considered "negative" is any "positive" appreciation of negative feedback. This is implicit to a degree in Wilber's argument, but has been skillfully argued by [Barbara Ehrenreich](#) in variously titled works (*Bright-sided: how the relentless promotion of positive thinking has undermined America*, 2009; *Smile Or Die: how positive thinking fooled America and the world*, 2010). The point can be argued otherwise (*Being Positive Avoiding Negativity: management challenge of positive vs negative*, 2005).

Especially intriguing is the development of the degrees of self-reference as articulated in terms of the [cybernetics of cybernetics](#) and higher order feedback processes, as discussed separately (*Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007). Early distinctions were made between:

- **First order cybernetics:** It is the systems sciences, and notably cybernetics, that explore negative feedback loops between the elements of well-bounded systems leading to an objectivist positivist approach. Cybernetics was initially the study of the "objective" control of machines (artificial and natural). [Heinz von Foerster](#) (*Ethics and Second-Order Cybernetics*, 1991) has suggested a form of "zero-order cybernetics" when activity becomes structured; when 'behaviour' emerges, but without reflection upon the 'why' and the 'how' of this behaviour. Cybernetics is then implicit
- **Second order cybernetics:** However, notably as a result of the work of Heinz von Foerster in the 1950s, the value became apparent of exploring the "cybernetics of cybernetics", the "cybernetics of observing systems", or "eflection on reflection on cybernetics" -- the observation of the observer observing his/her own observations. This was acknowledged in a phrase of von Foerster that is significant to any approach to knowledge organization: "*Objectivity is a subject's delusion that observing can be done without him*". In a keynote speech in 1972, [Margaret Mead](#) consecrated the field as 'Second Order Cybernetics'.

Further insight has resulted in the distinction of:

- **Third order cybernetics**, in principle represents the current state of the art. Here the observer is understood to be part of a coevolving system -- the focus is on how observers and systems co-evolve across different social systems. The dominant discourse is understood to be reproduced and transformed through local interactions. Concern has been expressed that any third order human system configured on the metaphor of autopoiesis would necessarily be oppressive, inhuman, and parasocial ([William P. Hall](#), *Are Third Order (i.e. Social) Autopoietic Systems Necessarily Autocratic?* 2003). Discussion of "observers observing observers", namely certain forms of strategic management consultancy, is held to require such a third order cybernetics by [Vincent Kenny](#) and [Philip Boxer](#) (*The Economy of Discourses: a third order cybernetics? Human Systems Management*, 1990).
- **Fourth order cybernetics:** Helpfully summarizing the contrasts between the above, [M. Zangeneh](#) and [E. Haydon](#) (*The Psycho-Structural Cybernetic Model, Feedback, and Problem Gambling: a new theoretical approach*, *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 1, 2, 2004) propose a fourth order cybernetics as follows:

Central to this effort is the application of a unique, critical theory inspired by the works of [Anthony Giddens](#) (1971, 1990; see discussion on modernity and reflexivity) and [John Francois Lyotard](#) (1979; see discussion on postmodernity) to the cybernetic theoretical framework. The epistemological orientation of the theory proposed here is that of multiple realities shaped by social, cultural, economic, ethnic, gender and disability values, which centralize on the asymmetric power relations in society

Fourth order cybernetics is thus understood as concerned with how multiple realities are shaped by, and impinge upon, power relationships within society.

These considerations of orders of cybernetics are further clarified by [Maurice Yolles](#) and [Gerhard Fink](#) (*A General Theory of Generic Modelling and Paradigm Shifts (part 2): cybernetic orders*. *Kybernetes*, 2015). Could the successful election of Trump be understood as a consequence of the failure of self-reference through fourth order feedback processes?

The self-referential nature of any model or meta-model can be explored otherwise through the work of [Douglas Hofstadter](#) (*Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid*, 1979; *I Am a Strange Loop*, 2007; *Surfaces and Essences: Analogy as the Fuel and Fire of Thinking*, 2013).

Such considerations help to frame a fundamental challenge for the four models framed by AQAL, or for the latter as a meta-model. Whilst the latter can indeed address the challenge of the four to comprehend each other, understood as developmental stages, the tendency is to see the later models as subsuming the earlier ones. So framed this raises the question of how any subsequent stage, though which the current inadequacies of the fourth are now to be healed (in Wilber's terms), is itself to be comprehended -- especially if it is to be subsumed in its own turn.

Paradoxically, in its weakened condition, the fourth stage is effectively its own metaphor -- as suggested by [Gregory Bateson](#) (*Our Own Metaphor: effects of conscious purpose on human adaptation*, 1972). Its aperspectival incoherence is curiously mirrored by the discourse of Trump. This itself echoes the aesthetics with which that stage has been associated. The challenge for the non-self-

referential nature of Integral Theory in relation to alternatives and critics is that it effectively seeks to position itself uniquely as Bateson's "pattern that connects" (*Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, 1972). It has no means of engaging with them other than by seeking to subsume them -- as is characteristic of so many models claiming quarrelsomely to frame universal truth.

It would seem that the need is to discover how any such model can fruitfully mirror other models rather than seeking to subsume them or deny their relevance. This is a characteristic recognized in the symbolism of [Indra's Net](#) -- itself a focus of both philosophy and mathematics ([Rajiv Malhotra](#), *Indra's Net: defending Hinduism's philosophical unity*, 2014; [David Mumford](#), et al, *Indra's Pearls: the vision of Felix Klein*, 2002). The challenge might then be framed as one of *Stepping into, or through, the Mirror: embodying alternative scenario patterns* (2008).

Models, metaphors and reality distortion fields

Models: The conditions distinguished by the AQAL and Spiral Dynamics models can be well understood as distinctive "models" of reality -- with AQAL and Spiral Dynamics then to be understood as "meta-models" of a kind. As argued above, religions invite belief in models they promote as do the creators of models in the range of academic disciplines. The capacity to reconcile models that attract such belief has however proven to be extremely limited in practice.

Wilber offers a valuable articulation of the challenging relationships between four models of reality. He clarifies the inadequacies in that favoured by self-acclaimed "leading edge" thinkers in recent decades and shows how Trump was able to engage the belief of the multitudes subscribing to the other three models -- irrespective of apparent inconsistencies in his discourse (or even because of them).

If only through colour coding of the conditions associated with Integral Theory, there is a subtle association between the academic formality ascribed to models and the comprehension and communication enabled by metaphor -- which may be fundamental to the elaboration of the model.

The challenge for any model, as noted above, is the existence of other models and the challenge that they may represent to universal applicability and coherence.

Metaphors: It has been stressed that, in contrast to other presidential candidates -- whether recent or in the past -- Trump did not rely on any one particular metaphor, as might have been preferred by some (in the absence of any single model).

Various authors have commented on his use of metaphor (*The Metaphors That Played A Role In Trump's Victory*, *Forbes*, 9 November 2016; *Trump's Inaugural Address*, *Metaphors in American Politics*, 26 January 2017). [Andrew Hines](#) concludes his critique of the use of metaphor by Trump:

To those who rally behind Trump, his brash and outrageous statements aren't gaffes, but examples of truth-telling bravery. The reason for this may be not just about the content of Trump's speeches, but their structure. In casual spoken English, our metaphors and our speech are not always perfectly pitched, and can sound more like a series of fragmented ideas... So whether or not Trump is elected, his campaign may yet have a deep and lasting impact on modern political rhetoric. All the rules of functional speech, it seems, can be broken (*Donald Trump's chaotic use of metaphor is a crucial part of his appeal*, *The Conversation*, 2 August 2016).

Hines supports that conclusion by citing [Jennifer Scalfani](#) (*The Idiolect of Donald Trump: his idiosyncratic patterns of speech, not just what he says, are why people tend either to love him or hate him*, *Scientific American*, 25 March 2016) concerning Trump's style in using fragmented sentences and distinctive topic-shifting patterns in his speeches. His rhetoric may appear as incoherent and unintelligible when compared with the organized structure of other candidates. However this style can also help construct an identity for him as authentic, relatable and trustworthy, namely qualities that voters look for in a presidential candidate.

Reality distortion field: Considerable attention has been given to the perceived incoherence of Trump's discourse, the number of "lies" and the "alternative facts" -- leading to recognition of a "post-truth era". This has been further associated with an increasing sense of surreality in contrast to past confidence in "reality". Wilber's analysis can be seen as a valuable articulation of postmodernist tendencies to relativize and contextualize any particular sense of truth. In this sense Trump could be said to have played thought leaders at their own game -- and won.

A primary example of a [reality distortion field](#) (RDF) is associated with the ability of [Steve Jobs](#)'s to convince himself and others to believe almost anything with a mix of charm, charisma, bravado, hyperbole, marketing, appeasement and persistence. RDF was said to distort an audience's sense of proportion and scales of difficulties and made them believe that the task at hand was possible. Jobs could also use the RDF to appropriate other's ideas as his own, sometimes proposing an idea to its originator after dismissing it the week before.

Various commentators are now alluding to an RDF in the case of Trump (*Trump's Reality Distortion Field*, *WNYC*, 13 January 2017; *Trump's Reality Distortion Field will be Stronger with Trump as President than Candidate*, *Pragmatically Distributed*, 23 January 2017; [Matt Dusenbury](#), *The One Thing Steve Jobs And Donald Trump Have In Common: one person's craziness is another person's reality*, 29 March 2016).

More generally it could be inferred that a credible model is effectively a reality distortion field, as could be implied by the argument of [Aldous Huxley](#):

To make biological survival possible, [Mind at Large](#) has to be funneled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive on the

surface of this particular planet... Most people, most of the time, know only what comes through the reducing valve and is consecrated as genuinely real by the local language. (*The Doors of Perception*, 1954)

Performative contradiction of model builders

Wilber usefully frames the aperspectival difficulty of postmodernism as follows:

In short, the aperspectival madness of "there is no truth" left nothing but nihilism and narcissism as motivating forces. The catch-22 here was that postmodernism itself did not actually believe a single one of those ideas. That is, the postmodernists themselves violated their own tenets constantly in their own writing, and they did so consistently and often. Critics (from Jürgen Habermas to Karl Otto-Apel to Charles Taylor) would soon jump all over them for committing the so-called "performative contradiction," which is a major self-contradiction because you yourself are doing what you say either cannot or should not be done.

For postmodernists, all knowledge is non-universal, contextual, constructivist, interpretive -- found only in a given culture, at a given historical time, in a particular geopolitical location. Unfortunately, for the postmodernists, every one of its summary statements given in the previous paragraph was aggressively maintained to be true for all people, in all places, at all times -- no exceptions. Their entire theory itself is a very Big Picture about why all Big Pictures are wrong, a very extensive metanarrative about why all metanarratives are oppressive. They most definitely and strongly believe that it is universally true that there is no universal truth... They believe their view itself is utterly superior in a world where they also believe absolutely nothing is superior. Oops....

The question Wilber seemingly avoids is whether any metanarrative may well be characterized by a performative contradiction -- including that which he articulates, in which he and others variously believe.

Expressed otherwise, does every metanarrative have some kind of blind spot -- paradoxically complementing the perspective it offers -- as explored by [Alec A. Schaerer](#) (*A General Methodology for Reconciling Perspectivity and Universality - Applied to the Discrepancy between Theoretical Economics and Eco-Social Reality*, 2008)? How would an integral perspective integrate the possibility of any associated surprise -- perhaps in the light of the arguments of [Nassim Nicholas Taleb](#) (*The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007)? If living a collective illusion is living a lie, this may be explored otherwise (*Incommunicability of the big lie?* 2016).

As a system builder, the point has been succinctly articulated by [Matthew Melko](#) (*Hazards of System Building, Main Currents in Modern Thought*, 1969) in a provocative comment to a conference on integrative education:

1. You identify with your system. It cost you blood to build it, and if it is attacked, it is your blood that is being shed.
2. You cannot tolerate tentativeness, suspension of judgment, or anything that does not fit the system.
3. You cannot apprehend anyone else's system unless it supports yours.
4. You believe that other systems are based on selected data.
5. Commitment to systems other than your own is fanaticism.
6. You come to believe that your system entitles you to proprietorship of the entities within it.
7. Since humor involves incongruity, and your system explains all seeming incongruities, you lose your sense of humor.
8. You lose you humility.
9. You accept all those points - insofar as they apply to builders of other systems.
10. So do I. (P.S. I hope I believe in the cult of fallibility).

It could be considered a tragedy that Trump seemingly lacks a sense of humour, irrespective of his lack of humility. Potentially even more tragic is the hysterical panic which has recently characterized the response to his successful campaign -- notably by those who perceive themselves in possession of a higher order of insight. Worse still is the manner in which creative use of humour has been focused on mocking his superficial characteristics (*Internet memes mock Donald Trump by making him look small -- literally*, *BBC News*, 18 February 2017; *Here's how countries around the world are mocking Trump*, *Business Insider*, 4 February 2017; *Trump's Press Secretary begs the American people to stop mocking Donald Trump*, *PolitcusUSA*, 1 January 2017; *Nude Donald Trump statues amuse crowds*, *BBC News*, 19 August 2016).

No use of the potential of humour would seem to have been made to reframe the unusual dynamics of the times (*Humour and Play-Fullness: essential integrative processes in governance, religion and transdisciplinarity*, 2005). Tragically, will the future recognize the mockery to have said more about the mockers than the mocked (Sheldon Ungar, *Self-Mockery: an alternative form of self-presentation*, *Symbolic Interaction*, 7, 1984; Matthew Cousineau, *Accomplishing Profession through Self-Mockery*, *Symbolic Interaction*, 22 February 2016; Ralph Rosen, *Making Mockery: the poetics of ancient satire*, OUP, 2007)? Rather than Trump being naked, has the system which elected him been rendered naked -- and worthy of mockery?

Hierarchy, cyclicity and directionality

In framing the attitude of intellectual elites to populism as exemplified by Trump, Wilber usefully draws attention to the catastrophic confusion between what he describes as "dominator hierarchies" and "actualization hierarchies":

Actualization (or growth) hierarchies are not exclusive and domineering, they are inclusive and integrating. With each of the levels of a dominator hierarchy, the higher the level, the more it can oppress and dominate.... With growth hierarchies (or

"holarchies"), it's exactly the opposite. In a growth holarchy, the whole of each level becomes an included part of the whole of the next higher level -- just as, in evolution, a whole quark becomes part of an atom, a whole atom becomes part of a molecule, a whole molecule becomes part of a cell, a whole cell becomes part of an organism, and so on. Each level is a whole/part, what Koestler called a "holon." The ever-increasing inclusiveness -- genuine inclusiveness -- of holons and holarchies demonstrates a direction that is grounded in nature and that has been operative from the first moment of the Big Bang forward, a direction of self-organization through self-transcendence that is the primary drive of evolution itself.

Less evident from this description is how inclusiveness is to be understood, especially if it is inherently a challenge to comprehension rather than being inherently and intuitively obvious. Such a challenge is implied by the progressive nature of development and learning. A characteristic of this challenge is evident in Wilber's description of the currently problematic performative contradiction of aperspectival madness -- now proven to be so vulnerable to Trump's style. The performative contradiction is one in which nobody is perceived as fundamentally "lower" or "needing to actually grow":

... because to suggest that any group truly needs to increase its developmental depth -- implying that some levels are "better" or "higher" than others -- is to be guilty, in a world of aperspectival madness and extreme political correctness, of being "racist" or "sexist" or some horrible crime against humanity. No stance is recognized as superior to any other, and there certainly is no such thing as a "higher" or "better" stance.

Wilber asks how it is to be imagined that people are to develop to any truly "higher" and "more inclusive" insight as is currently acclaimed to be inherent in progressive thinking -- noting that this is itself the product of five or six major developmental stages. For Wilber the fundamental contradiction lies in that this development is seemingly allowed for nobody, with the further implication that it is totally anathema.

It is intriguing that Integral Theory, though its association with Spiral Dynamics, suggests a form for "actualization hierarchies" in contrast to "dominator hierarchies". Less evident is the form of any such spiral of progressive actualization when its spiralling cyclicality might well be more fruitfully characterized as a [coiled coil](#) -- otherwise recognized in terms of "cognitive twistedness" (*Engaging with Questions of Higher Order: cognitive vigilance required for higher degrees of twistedness*, 2004). This would be appropriately consistent with the form of DNA -- a form which could well have cognitive implications, as separately argued (*DNA Supercoiling as a Pattern for Understanding Psycho-social Twistedness*, 2004; *Climbing Elven Stairways: DNA as a macroscopic metaphor of polarized psychodynamics*, 2007).

Such a possibility is a reminder of the significance of the various metaphors highlighted by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980). Especially relevant to this argument are the directionality metaphors up/down and those implying the nature of a container -- namely in/out. Of obvious political relevance -- highlighted by the populism of the Trump era -- are the right/left metaphors, as separately discussed (*Unquestioned Bias in Governance from Direction of Reading? Political implications of reading from left-to-right, right-to-left, or top-down*, 2016).

The question here is whether any model, and especially a meta-model like Integral Theory/Spiral Dynamics, is effectively a "cognitive container" with paradoxical up/down and in/out cognitive implications. As a container, rather than simply as a "framework", the requisite complexity of its form (in cybernetic terms) can be challenged. As so often demonstrated in fundamental physics and astrophysics, ever more complex "containers" may be required to encompass the progression of insight into the [shape of the universe](#). Why should the same not be true of the psychosocial universe, especially with respect to the as yet unresolved issues of we/they and us/them conflictual dynamics?

Clues in this respect are offered by the topological arguments in the work on the [Möbius strip](#) and the [Klein bottle](#) by Steven Rosen (*Topologies of the Flesh: a multidimensional exploration of the lifeworld*, 2006; *Science, Paradox and the Möbius Principle: the evolution of a "transcultural" approach to wholeness*, 1994). The much-cited insight of the poet T. S. Eliot is then of relevance to the experience of a "coiled coil" and the progression of developmental stages:

We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time. ([Little Gidding](#), 1942)

The paradoxes of how identity might then be more appropriately "contained" can be variously discussed (*World Introversion through Paracycling: global potential for living sustainably "outside-inside"*, 2013) notably discussion of the possibility of *Transformation of worldview from "inside-outside" to "outside-inside"*, (2013). Should future imagination be constrained by any particular framework when possibilities are continuing to emerge, however speculative (*Engaging with Everything: emergence of paradoxical forms of identity*, 2012; *Being the Universe : a Metaphoric Frontier -- co-existent immanence of evolutionary phases*, 1999)?

Mandala dynamics beyond AQAL in 3D?

The articulation of the conceptual model offered by Integral Theory is of course primarily in terms of explanatory text in relation to the AQAL quadrant and the spiral form of Spiral Dynamics with its associated colour coding. Only limited use is made of other visual illustrations (typically copyrighted), even though both may be seen as instances of the traditional mandala form in two dimensions, as indicated by M. Alan Kazlev (*Integral Mandala and the AQAL representation*, Kheper; *A New Integral Paradigm: a metaphysical "map" of consciousness/reality*, Kheper).

AQAL Cube? The 2D representation has been challenged by the argument of [Lexi Neale](#) (*Introducing The AQAL Cube Perspectives: transcending and including the AQAL Square*):

This is a difficult paper, because it calls for some key reforms to the AQAL Model. Most of us have no problem changing a bad thing for a good thing, but few would change a good thing for a better thing. Good as the existing AQAL Model is, there may be little need to change it. But like any other evolving entity, Integral Theory will itself periodically break out of outmoded forms into new and liberating dimensions.

That argument questions whether "The AQAL Square", can be transcended and included by differentiating an additional dimension of four additional quadrants, as an 8 Quadrant Model, which he names as "The AQAL Cube".

An argument for a related cubic representation in the light of Chinese categories is made separately with animations (*Succinct mapping of multidimensional psychosocial dynamics?* 2016).

AQAL Mandala? An extensively argued case for a reframing of AQAL as a mandala is variously made by [Rolf Sattler](#) (*Wilber's AQAL Map and Beyond*, 2008; *Healing Thinking and Being*, 2010), summarized as follows:

In sum, in comparison with Wilber's map the mandala offers a still greater range of perspectives, interpretations, and transformations, more dynamics and playfulness, more openness, flexibility and complexity, less linearity, and more emphasis of nonhierarchical holism (undivided wholeness), fuzzy logic, Yin-Yang, continuum and network views.

Elements of Sattler's argument -- of relevance to the critique here -- are further summarized as follows:

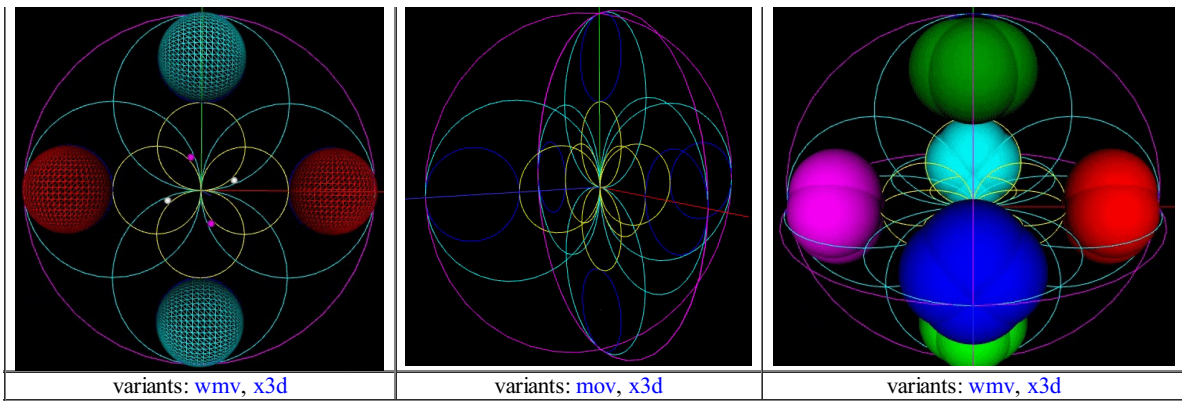
1. Because of the multitude of transformations and interpretations, the mandala does greater justice to the complexity of the manifest world than Wilber's map with only a few versions, all of which are holarchical.
2. Besides Wilber's hierarchical (holarchical) holism, the mandala offers a nonhierarchical holism (undivided wholeness), which at least to some extent overcomes fragmentation of the world into holons (entities) that are then hierarchically (holarchically) ordered.
3. The mandala offers a continuum view in addition to the holarchical view....
4. The recognition of continua liberates us from either/or thinking (categorical thinking) and emphasizes fuzzy thinking (fuzzy logic) in addition to Aristotelian either/or logic that is so prevalent in our culture.
5. In addition to Wilber's hierarchical "Include and Transcend", the mandala also allows a Yin-Yang view with regard to levels, which means that the lower level contains (if only as a germ) the upper and vice versa....
6. The mandala can be interpreted in a linear fashion as Wilber's map, but also in a less linear way, and therefore it allows for more network interconnections.
7. Wilber's map and his thinking are flexible, but because the mandala takes into consideration more alternatives it is still more flexible.
8. Besides the evolutionary arrows from the center toward the periphery as in Wilber's map, the mandala also offers interpretations with involutory arrows in the opposite direction and no arrows at all denoting involution and evolution beyond time in the eternal present.
9. With regard to evolution, the mandala offers perhaps even more room for "regressions" than Wilber's map...
10. The mandala utilizes complementarity and perspectivism to a greater extent than Wilber's map that applies complementarity and perspectivism within the four quadrants and eight zones but not with regard to the basic holarchical structure of his map...
11. Since the mandala is dynamic, it emphasizes movement and dance more than Wilber's map...
12. In general, the mandala is less restrictive than Wilber's map and therefore allows for a greater range of views and experiences....

In a period characterized by discord, there is a case for exploring any integrative forms which are attractive to the imagination, notably in 3D, as argued separately:

- [Con-quest Aesthetically Reframed via the Concordian Mandala: inspired by implications of the systemantics of the Discordian Mandala](#), 2016
- [Concordian Mandala as a Symbolic Nexus: insights from dynamics of a pentagonal configuration of nonagons in 3D](#), 2016
- [Visualization in 3D of Dynamics of Toroidal Helical Coils: in quest of optimum designs for a Concordian Mandala](#), 2016

The following exercises are indicative of possible dynamics between 4 or 6 axial positions using the geometry of the construction of the 4-fold **lauburu** in 2D or 3D -- a form of mandala in its own right, as discussed separately (*Evoking Castalia as Envisaged, Entoned and Embodied: the great game informed by the bertsolaritza cultural process?* 2016). Colour coding has **not** been attempted according to that of Spiral Dynamics. Clearly different "stories" could be mnemonically associated with the various pathways, directions and rates. Access is offered (below) to other formats, including interactive 3D variants.

Experimental animations of dynamics of 2D and 3D mandala forms		
2D (planar) 4-fold	3D (slightly oriented) 6-fold	3D 6-fold

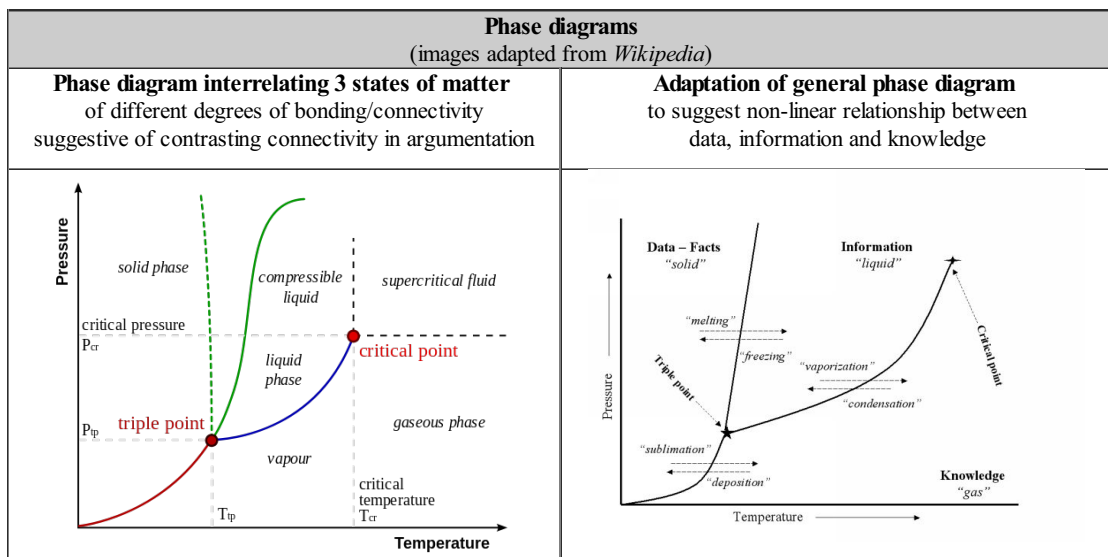


Phase transitions between cognitive modalities

The mapping exercises above are also suggestive of ways of understanding possible relationships between distinctive cognitive conditions -- and the transition pathways between them. These may be indicated either by the geometrical outline or the movement of the spheres through the common origin. In phase, as in the above case, this is suggestive of cognitive expansion of awareness (a "Big Bang") or a complementary collapse (a "Big Crunch") -- readily recognized in the rise and fall of civilizations.

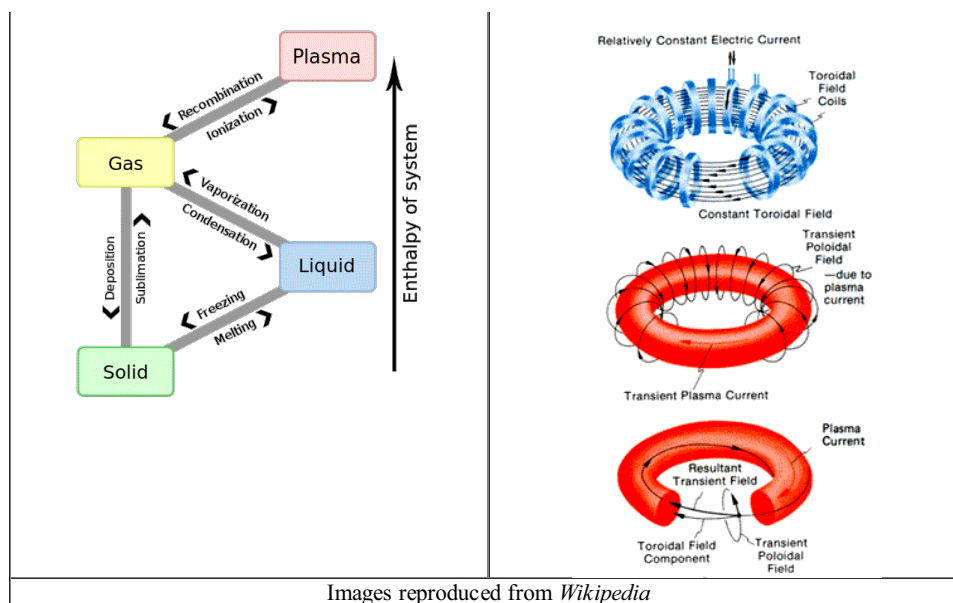
Represented out of phase (possibly in rhythm), the movements could be indicative of corrections to systemic imbalance, as argued with respect to the emergence of Trump by Wilber. The primary concern he addresses is of course the necessary "healing" to forestall such imbalance in the future.

Understood as phases, there is a case for exploring the use of [phase diagrams](#) to indicate transitions between the [states of matter](#) to which the four conditions of the AQAL quadrants can be understood to correspond -- especially in terms of connectivity. The three fundamental states most readily recognized (as in the case of water), are solid, liquid, gas -- interrelated as indicated in the image on the left, and separately discussed (*Phase diagram of degrees of argument connectivity*, 2014). That pattern of phases can be explored as suggestive of the relation between data, information and knowledge, as separately discussed (*Playfully Changing the Prevailing Climate of Opinion: climate change as focal metaphor of effective global governance*, 2005).



The fourth fundamental state is [plasma](#) -- whose relations to the other three through [phase transitions](#) is indicated in the following image (on the left) which emphasizes the high-energy condition of that fourth state in terms of [enthalpy](#). Other states have also been recognized or hypothesized ([non-classical states](#), [low-temperature states](#), [high-energy states](#), [very high energy states](#), [other proposed states](#)). To what might they correspond in Integral Theory?

Phase transitions between four states of matter, with plasma as a high energy state	Toroidal nuclear fusion reactor design using magnetic fields to prevent plasma contact with its container



Images reproduced from Wikipedia

The images above suggest the use of the peculiar characteristics of plasma as a metaphor with which to reframe the healing challenge Wilber identifies as currently necessary for progressive thinking -- especially in its response to the equally peculiar characteristics of Trump. Of particular interest is that in order to "contain" plasma an unusual design is required in order to achieve its potential in a [nuclear fusion reactor](#) -- upheld as the main hope for the sustainable energy requirements of the future.

The paradoxical key to the design is that the plasma should not come in contact with the walls of the container -- thereby losing its energy and destroying the container (disastrously). This "detachment" is achieved by using electromagnetic effects around a torus, notably a [Tokamak](#), through which the plasma circulates, as illustrated in the image on the right.

As a [superconductor](#), plasma may then be fruitfully used as a metaphor for insight or inspiration of a higher order. The "design" challenge is how to ensure that it circulates without being de-energized by the simpler modalities of any cognitive container. Paradoxically however, the design necessarily requires the solidity of the walls of the container, and consideration of the properties of the circulating plasma which combine the characteristics of liquid and gas. Symbolically appropriate, a particular concern is to control the instabilities in the plasma, notably named as "snake-like".

Expressed otherwise, how are the systemically valuable insights, variously represented by Trump and Wilber, to be contained? The metaphor is explored separately in terms of the cognitive fusion which could be understood as an aspiration of any meditation process (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006).

Especially intriguing is any understanding of what "circulates" (*Circulation of the Light: essential metaphor of global sustainability?* 2010).

Reframing Wilber/Trump modalities in musical terms

The challenge of Trump and populism calls for much more clarification in musical terms. A significant contribution to such a clarification has been made by [Frances Dyson](#) (*The Tone of Our Times: sound, sense, economy, and ecology*, 2014). This merits confrontation with the arguments of [Ernest G. McClain](#) (*Myth of Invariance: the origins of the gods, mathematics and music from the Rg Veda to Plato*, 1976; *The Pythagorean Plato: prelude to the song itself*, 1978; *Meditations through the Quran: tonal images in an oral culture*, 1981).

Integral music? Are there distinct styles of music to be recognized as associated with the different cognitive modalities distinguished by Wilber? How might they be related when each may be alienating or incomprehensible to the other? It is appropriate to note that so-called "integral music" is not understood as related in any way to Integral Theory (Aldon Lynn Nielsen, *Integral Music: languages of African-American innovation*, University of Alabama Press, 2004; *Academic Forum: Integral Music Theory*, annual conference series).

However there seems to be a tendency to establish such a relationship, as indicated by [Jessica Roemischer](#) (*Integral Music: the Piano Duet -- a new model for human relationship*, *Integral Life Online*, 2010). This is far more explicit in the argument of Luis E. Loubriel (*Integral Music Performance and Pedagogy: a post-secondary performance and education model*, *MetaIntegral: enacting global futures*, 2009). This is described as:

Integral music performance and pedagogy equalizes the four quadrants of the AQAL model through developmental stages. Accidental or deliberate segmentations result in the split of expressive-artistic and technical-scientific skills, leading to uninspired and faulty performances. An Integral Music Performance, Educational, and Assessment model (IPEA), specifically developed for American post-secondary educational institutions, can bridge this divide by using upward causation (science) and downward causation (art) while tracing a performer's development (quadrant-holon developmental spiral) in relation to a community of practice. This all-quadrant, multilevel model represents a major shift in music performance and pedagogy by addressing the developmental needs of students and performers without corroding their expressive or technical strengths.

Other than the above, curiously missing is any extensive exploration of how the cognitive implications of any AQAL-style form might be articulated and communicated in musical terms, notably the pattern of octaves implied by Spiral Dynamics. If biochemists have recourse to song to offer mnemonic clues to [metabolic pathways](#) (*The Biochemists SongBook*), why is it that Integral Theory/Spiral Dynamics perceives no such need with respect to transformative "cognitive pathways"?

Musical therapy: Given the increasing importance attached to music in contrast to text, the recognized relevance of Integral Theory to musical therapy merits particular attention as a means of enabling progressive cognitive development:

- Lars Ole Bonde (*Steps towards a Meta-theory of Music Therapy? Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 10, 2001, 2) An Introduction to Ken Wilber's Integral Psychology and a Discussion of its Relevance for Music Therapy
- Laurie Rugenstein (*Wilber's Spectrum Model of Transpersonal Psychology and Its Application to Music Therapy*, *Music Therapy*, 14, 1996, 1)
- Leslie Bunt (*On Integration in Music and Music Therapy*, *Voices Resources*, 6 October 2012)
- Brian Abrams (*Evidence-based Music Therapy Practice: an integral understanding*, *Journal of Music Therapy*, 47, 2010, 4)

Categories and tones? The possibility can be simply expressed otherwise in that any set of categories can be represented as a set of notes or tones. Any organization into octaves therefore suggests a way of comprehending relationships between categories. The variety of chordal combinations of notes is especially suggestive of a means of comprehending complexity -- otherwise challenged by conventional explanation in text or visual form. Emphasizing self-reference, aspects of the argument have been explored in detail by Douglas Hofstadter (*Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid*, 1979).

An extensive literature on [sonification](#) clarifies the capacity of the ear to distinguish patterns which otherwise remain elusive. With respect to individual or collective identity, it is remarkable to note the continuing importance attached to "[signature tunes](#)", anthems, regimental marches, corporate songs, and "our tune". Curiously no effort is made to identify a cognitive model in that mode as a means of articulating its distinctive complexity. Would a meta-model only be more widely meaningful if it were to be articulated in musical terms?

There is the potentially delightful association between categories implied by the notes that can be elicited from any flute as the simplest musical instrument. Whereas Integral Theory would seem to emphasize the progression "up the scale", the process of playing a flute calls for the interplay of multiple tones and chords between what are otherwise distinguished as isolated categories -- beyond any implication of those "up the scale" somehow subsuming those "down the scale". Wilber's argument with respect to those critical of Trump, and theiraperspectival madness, could be fruitfully reframed using musical distinctions.

With the distinguished cognitive modalities potentially to be understood as spheres of expression, any such clarification would then offer an association to the traditional understanding of the [music of the spheres](#) (*musica universalis*). As a metaphor, a multi-holed flute and the capacity to play it, also offers an association to the traditional set of [chakras](#) and the nature of the interplay between the energies with which they are each held to be associated when variously activated, singly or in combination. There are multiple accessible references to the use of music in relation to the system of chakras.

The cognitive integration (of the chakras) implied by flute-playing can also be associated with the mythological deities most closely associated with it, including those of Greece and Rome ([Pan](#) and [Faunus](#)) and [Krishna](#) of Hinduism. Mnemonically the association with "pan" is valuable as implying "everything" -- including Wilber's own reference to it (*Theory of Everything: an integral vision for business, politics, science and spirituality*, 2001). Especially valuable is the manner in which nature is embodied and celebrated by flute-playing in such traditions.

Reframed in this way, the question is whether Trump and populism should be considered as a new "sound" -- a sound neglected in recent years -- namely one now calling for expression. For those who deprecate that sound, the question is how it is to be more fruitfully integrated into a more complex soundscape. Integral Theory could explore this more extensively, especially with respect to its own future development -- and the sound by which it may be superseded.

Use of sound rather than text and visual effects, also frames the case for rendering the strategic insights and proposals of governance into memorable form through music and/or song, as separately argued (*A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006). Put bluntly, if any such proposal can only be expressed in text (possibly with a minimum of visual effects), it is effectively instantly forgettable. Further implications can be fruitfully derived from [polyphony](#), and the interplay of different "voices" in multi-part singing through which any staging of cognitive development might be otherwise understood (*All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony?* 2007; *Enabling a 12-fold Pattern of Systemic Dialogue for Governance*, 2011).

Mixing metaphors, with inspiration from biomimicry, if any proposal or policy declaration cannot be popularly "sung", it is unlikely to "fly" -- especially if the expression fails to integrate extremes (*Counteracting Extremes Enabling Normal Flying: insights for global governance from birds on the wing and the dodo*, 2015).

Identity in question via Trump: Narcissus vs Loki?

Trickster? If global governance is now to be recognized as a challenge to comprehension, the archetypal role of the trickster merits attention (Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes the World: mischief, myth, and art*, 1998, [excerpt](#)). The musical metaphor could be extended to encompass archetypal realities embodied in opera. In this respect it is appropriate to note how Trump has been acknowledged as conforming to the [trickster archetype](#) from a Jungian perspective by [Julia Grant](#) (*The Trickster of 2016: understanding the phenomenon of Donald Trump*, *Depth Psychology Alliance*, March 2016), concluding:

In summary, our current environment is a clear example of a [collective shadow](#) that has manifested the Trickster archetype in Donald Trump... The archetype, through the blurring of boundaries and transcending of norms, is able to bring about real transformation if the cycle completes.... While Mr. Trump does not have the psychological maturity to complete the [Trickster cycle](#), his campaign has brought attention to this hidden element of the electorate that demands, much like the suppressed shadow, to be included in the political discourse.

The association of Trump with the collective shadow has also been emphasized by Deepak Chopra (*America's Shadow: The Real Secret of Donald J. Trump*, *The Huffington Post*, 6 June 2016). A more articulated insight is offered by Christopher Miller (*The Man Who Would Be King: why Trump's character matters*, *MythFire*, 1 August 2016).

Loki? Could Trump then be fruitfully recognized as having psychodynamic functions in modern society equivalent to the classic trickster god of Norse mythology, namely [Loki](#) -- rather than the [Narcissus](#) of Greek mythology, as so widely asserted? As noted by *Wikipedia*:

Loki has been depicted in or is referenced in an array of media in modern popular culture.... Famously, Loki appears in [Richard Wagner's](#) opera cycle *Ring of the Nibelung* as *Loge* (a play on Old Norse *loge* "fire"). He is depicted as an ally of the gods... although he generally dislikes them and thinks of them as greedy, as they refuse to return the Rhine Gold to its rightful owners. In the conclusion of the first opera *Das Rheingold* he reveals his hope to turn into fire and destroy Valhalla, and in the final opera *Götterdämmerung* Valhalla is set alight, destroying the Gods.

With respect to *Loge*, [Paul Heise](#), a commentator on the *Ring of the Nibelung*, notes:

Loge, representing the artistic cunning in man's (Wotan's) imagination, the source of man's gift for self-deception in religious belief, collaborated with the Giants (man's egoistic impulses) to create the supernatural realm of the gods, Valhalla. The gods must disavow their debt to *Loge* because religious belief must never acknowledge that it is based on self-deception ("*Loge*" (*man's gift of artistic self-deception*), *Wagnerheim*)

The association of Trump with *Loki* has been specifically suggested by [Corey Pein](#) (*Donald Trump, Trickster God*, *The Baffler*, 4 March 2016):

An election is, at its core, a form of mass ritual. What dreadful forces are being summoned this time? Tremors ripple through the noosphere.... The strangeness of the moment exceeds the descriptive capacity of what passes for civil discourse. Even the people who are right on the particulars are wrong on the whole. What's worse, any attempt to explain Trump's popular ascent is doomed because these events cannot be explained in the empirical fashion to which modern people are accustomed. The election is nothing less than a psychogenic storm. As such it can only be discussed in metaphysical terms that sober, prudent, smartphone-having people are unwilling to countenance....

The key to understanding this election cycle -- and its energetic locus, Trump -- is to accept that we are not dealing with an ordinary man, bound by the rules of decorum and the presupposition of coherence. I have another idea. I propose that Donald Trump is the personification of a Norse god named *Loki*.

Corey Pein's argument was immediately the subject of extensive citation and commentary in an article by [Rod Dreher](#) (*Trump the Trickster*, *The American Conservative*, 8 March 2016). For [Morgan Roberts](#) (*Loki the Trickster*, 1 February 2014):

Loki is a cool god, but one not to be trusted. He is the god of chaos, lies and trickery. He can swing from a 'malicious mastermind' to a good-natured troublemaker. His chaotic nature and impulsive behaviors push him into the realm of deception.

Can the tricky characteristics of *Loki* be usefully understood in terms of those of plasma (as argued above)? So framed, the question could be reversed. Would that opera (and the epic poetry in which *Loki* also figures) have its integrative appeal and validity without *Loki*?

Following his earlier comment (cited above), especially insightful is Corey Pein's summary regarding the collective shadow -- immediately after the election of Trump (*Round-up of Recriminations: after Trump's win, there are more culprits than we can shake a finger at*, *The Baffler*, 10 November 2016):

Recriminations will multiply in the days to come. The finger-pointing won't stop for months, years, maybe decades. After all, it's not every day global empires collapse from within, tweet by inexorable tweet. Given the scale of the disaster, we should expect the arguments to be spiteful and counterproductive. It cannot be any other way, for some people *are* in fact responsible for this historic debacle, and those people *will* try to shift the blame to others less deserving....

Is the Lord of Lies working his mischief on earth once more? Clearly and irrefutably so. Call him Lucifer, *Loki*, Coyote, Trump. Call him what you like. These fables describe the darkness inside of us. Because we understand characters and stories much better than we will ever understand the mysterious mechanics of our own minds, we as a species have given name and form to that darkness. Our inner darkness emerges as the shifting shadow of a man. This shadow, like a reflection, is our own likeness. This darkness within us has emerged and it is a truly terrible thing, a thing to fear.

How should the systemic value of Trump then be recognized and appreciated? Could an opera be imagined in which the psychodramatic implications of Trump are rendered evident -- even possibly in the light of his enthusiasm for gold, as well as echoing the preoccupations of Loki with the [Rhine Maidens](#)? Further insight is offered by Julie Lake (*Loge -- The Ring's evil genius*, *Gardenezi*, 11 January 2014), as author of *Ringtons: the real story behind Wagner's Ring Cycle* (2014).

Narcissism: Does the lack of any appreciation whatsoever, for a person who has been elected to president against every imaginable opposition, say far more in practice about those claiming superior psychological skills and insights -- concluding so definitively that he should be framed as suffering from [narcissistic personality disorder](#)? Lacking any wider systemic perspective (as suggested by the Loki/Trickster archetype, for example), such analyses include:

- [Michael J. Brenner](#): *Narcissism and Trump: the long story* (*The Globalist*, 21 February 2017)
- Kamran Ahmed: *Understanding Trump's narcissism could be the key to opposing him* (*The Guardian*, 17 February 2017)
- [Michael A. Cohen](#): *Trump is an extreme narcissist and it only gets worse from here* (*The Boston Globe*, 24 January 2017)
- [Henry Alford](#): *Is Donald Trump Actually a Narcissist? Therapists Weigh In!* (*Vanity Fair*, 11 November 2016)
- [Dan P. McAdams](#): *The Mind of Donald Trump: narcissism, disagreeableness, grandiosity* -- a psychologist investigates how Trump's extraordinary personality might shape his possible presidency (*The Atlantic*, June 2016)

Such conclusions are usefully called into question by the argument of [Meron Wondemaghen](#) (*Before diagnosing Trump as mentally ill, let's ask what that actually means*, *The Conversation*, 28 February 2017). This notably discusses the [Change.org petition](#) with some 30,000 signatures: *We, the undersigned mental health professionals, believe in our professional judgement that Donald Trump manifests a serious mental illness that renders him psychologically incapable of competently discharging the duties of President of the United States.*

Are all those elected to public office to be subject in future to such definitive judgmental analysis and labelling -- without any consideration of the complex of systemic functions by which history may come to appreciate their role? Given that the need for such analysis is purportedly to determine whether the person is worthy of confidence, there is a curious parallel to the separate pattern of their investigation from a legal perspective -- to determine whether their financial transactions should invite public confidence.

The professional affirmation of Trump's narcissistic personality disorder merits consideration in the light of Wilber's more general recognition of the rise of narcissism amongst the group of purportedly greater personal development:

Its broad-minded pluralism slipped into a rampant and runaway relativism (collapsing into nihilism), and the notion that all truth is contextualized (or gains meaning from its cultural context) slid into the notion that there is no real universal truth at all, there are only shifting cultural interpretations (which eventually slid into a widespread *narcissism*).... You simply deconstruct every single truth and value you find (which, again, usually slid into nihilism and its tag-team member from postmodern hell, narcissism).... And finally, when there are no binding guidelines for individual behavior, the individual has only his or her own self-promoting wants and desires to answer to -- in short, **narcissism**. And that is why the most influential postmodern elites ended up embracing, explicitly or implicitly, that tag-team from postmodern hell: nihilism and **narcissism** -- in short, aperspectival madness. The culture of post-truth.... *Nihilism and narcissism are not traits that any leading-edge can actually operate with.* [emphasis added]

These comments can usefully be compared with other arguments regarding the increasingly narcissistic nature of modern society more generally:

- [Zoe Williams](#): *Me! Me! Me! Are we living through a narcissism epidemic?* (*The Guardian*, 2 March 2016)
- [Lisa Firestone](#): *Is Social Media to Blame for the Rise In Narcissism?* (*Psychology Today*, 29 November 2012)
- [Ales Zivkovic](#): *Narcissism in Narcissistic Society* (11 January 2017)
- [Sam Vaknin](#): *Collective Narcissism: Narcissism, Culture, and Society* (*Tripod*)
- [Beatrice Beauverd](#): *A Self-centered Society: reflection on post-traumatic stress and its effects* (SAS)
- [Sadie F. Dingfelder](#): *Reflecting on Narcissism* (*American Psychological Association*, February 2011)
- *The Zen of Narcissists* (*An Upturned Soul*)

Given such general arguments, what is the credibility of those distinguishing Trump as especially narcissistic -- rather than as an outstanding exemplar of the modern condition -- and engendered by it? Can the phenomenon be better understood as a questionable approach to more complex insights into self-reference and mirroring -- especially in collective terms (as discussed above)? Could the analysis with respect to Trump then be more fruitfully re-read as applicable to society as currently envisaged, as implied by the articulation of [Phil Whitaker](#) (*I am special and I am worthless: inside the mind of a narcissist*, *New Statesman*, 20 February 2017)?

A dialogue between [Jim Garrison](#) and Ken Wilber, subsequent to his initial analysis, concludes (as reported by Corey deVos):

So where is the silver lining hiding in these all-too-ominous thunderheads?... this might end up being very good for the integral project as a whole. Our leading edge, after all, has failed catastrophically, which means that many worldcentric thinkers and leaders are now beginning to look for a brand new leading edge that can save the baby of liberal pluralism (and what a beautiful baby it is!) while flushing all that nasty bathwater. We need a far more integrated and optimistic post-scarcity vision of our shared future, one that can recalibrate and revolutionize the foundational institutions our civilization is resting upon while also creating more security and prosperity for American citizens. (*The State of the World 2017: The Wake of Trump, Integral Life*, 1 February 2017)

Identity: The Trump phenomenon -- and the upsurge of populism -- could be understood as calling the conventions of individual and collective identity into question (*Dutch populist Geert Wilders talks of Moroccan 'scum'*, *BBC News*, 18 February 2017). Notoriously framed as a "basket of deplorables" by Hillary Clinton, the identity of the supporters of Trump, as well as those deploring them, calls for new thinking. This is especially the case in a period in which collective identity, at the local, national and international levels is subject to challenge.

The surreal nature of the Trump phenomenon has already evoked calls for new thinking appropriate to the promulgation of "alternative facts" in a post-truth era. Aside from the articulations of Trump himself, it is appropriate to recall the anticipation of that era by the conventions of propaganda and advertising -- notably characterized and defended as legitimate [puffery](#). How distinct are the claims of tolerated advertising hyperbole from deprecated "alternative facts"? How "alternative" are the "facts" deployed by opposing political parties in democratic discourse?

Given the argument for recognition of Trump in terms of the trickster archetype, especially helpful at this time is the exploration by [Helena Bassil-Morozow](#) (*The Trickster and the System: identity and agency in contemporary society*, 2014):

[This] offers an analytical paradigm which can be used to examine relationships between tricksters and systems, change and stability, in a wide range of social, political and cultural contexts. It covers a range of systems, describes different types of tricksters and discusses possible conflicts, tensions and dialogues between the two opposing sides. One of the central ideas of the book is that social systems use shame as a tool to control and manage all kinds of tricksters -- individuality, agency, creativity, spontaneity, innovation and initiative, to name but a few. The author argues that any society that neglects its tricksters (agents of change), ends up suffering from decay, stagnation -- or even mass hysterical outbursts.

Bassil-Morozow is particularly interested in elaboration of related arguments through imagery (*The Trickster in Contemporary Film*, 2013; *Jungian Film Studies: the essential guide*, 2016). Of potential relevance to engaging with Trump, this helps to frame the trickster role in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, a widely popular TV series, as variously explored (Brita Marie Graham, *Buffy at Play: tricksters, deconstruction, and chaos at work in the Whedonverse*, Montana State University, 2007; Rhonda V. Wilcox and David Lavery, *Fighting the Forces: what's at stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, 2002).

Popular identification with Buffy within the younger generation suggests that the systemic dynamics identified by Wilber are being curiously prefigured and addressed by such imagery -- now exemplified by Trump-related imagery. The Trump phenomenon can then be understood to constitute a complex nexus variously embodying the self-referential functions of Narcissus and the iconoclastic functions of Loki.

However, rather than an external projection of these functions, the identification (evoked by the heroic Buffy) suggests that the individual and collective challenge is to embody those functions in some more appropriate manner yet to become apparent. Trump is perhaps necessarily to be framed as the enemy to be torn down through this process (*Public Enemy #1 as Supreme Leader? Thinking otherwise about framing the engagement with society's worst fear*, 2017). The paradoxical cognitive twist has however been succinctly framed by the *Pogo* comic strip: *We have met the enemy and he is us*. Seemingly there is a need to identify otherwise with the Narcissus / Loki dynamic -- individually and collectively.

In a period in which much is made of the need for change, and the necessary adaptation to it, insight might also be sought from a seemingly more acceptable trickster, namely [Hermes](#) -- a name ironically appropriated as a trade mark of luxury goods. As the god of transitions and boundaries he may outwit other gods for his own satisfaction or for the sake of humankind (Nicole Spencer, *Hermes and Prometheus: morally good trickster gods*, 2014). Of Hermes, [Jeanne Campbell Reesman](#) notes:

Hermes seems uniquely appropriate as a trickster, for his play with language reflects his sense of play as the essential life force. He is a thief of language like everything else, and he teaches us how to "steal" language too. His traits of deceit, trickery, and thieving often have beneficial results for humans... Thus Hermes as messenger-hermeneut (interpreter) reflects play in the chance element of interpretation... Because words both express and disguise the meanings they create, Hermes does not guarantee that his messages are fully stated; he promises "never to tell lies, but not necessarily the whole truth". (*Trickster Lives: culture and myth in American fiction*, 2001, p. xix)

Whether as managing consent or propaganda, the prevalence of lying in relation to governance is a continuing concern (*Existential Challenge of Detecting Today's Big Lie*, 2016). Indifference to lying by Trump is however now framed as surprising (*Trump's 'Dark Brilliance': why he keeps getting away with lies*, *Information Clearing House*, 27 February 2017). The fact that reasonable-seeming people are often totally irrational is addressed by cognitive scientists [Hugo Mercier](#) and [Dan Sperber](#) (*The Enigma of Reason*, 2017). In a review of that work [Elizabeth Kolbert](#) notes how discoveries about the human mind now show the limitations of reason:

If reason is designed to generate sound judgments, then it's hard to conceive of a more serious design flaw than [confirmation bias](#).... The fact that both we and it survive, Mercier and Sperber argue, proves that it must have some adaptive function, and that function, they maintain, is related to our "hypersociability". (*Why Facts Don't Change Our Minds*, *New Yorker*, 27 February 2017)

Change is tricky. Hence Hermes; hence Loki -- and hence Trump? And, paradoxically, if greater degrees of self-analysis are called for -- hence Narcissus? Any assumption of universal simplicity may itself have a paradoxical dimension, as succinctly framed by the

philosopher Paul de Vries: *The universe is like a safe to which there is a combination. But the combination is locked up in the safe. One means of engaging with that enigma may be to "be the change" through [Being the Universe](#) (1999) -- a metaphoric frontier?*

Metaphorical resources: If the methodological insights of [biomimicry](#) do indeed suggest the form of DNA could offer clues to identity, then insight might also be sought in other fundamental biophysical processes with respect to the emergence of individual and collective identity ([Engendering Invagination and Gastrulation of Globalization](#), 2010).

A fruitful initiative may then be to explore the possibility of activating new (or traditional) metaphors which can enchant, empower, explain and orient approaches to the problematique through the user's own comprehension of each metaphor's significance, whether amongst the governors or the governed. Such a use of metaphor is only new in that metaphors have not been deliberately used in this way before, despite the fact that everyone has access to them.

One clue is provided by a reinterpretation of the argument of [Jacques Attali](#) that the currently dominant pattern of social order is reinforced by classical music -- with psychosocial ordering only now in process of adapting to the order inherent in emergent preferences for music ([Noise: the political economy of music](#), 1985). The widespread popularity of "popular music", together with the rise of populism, could suggest otherwise. Is it now such music which is prefiguring and framing the psychosocial order and the sense of individual identity within it -- providing more meaningful vehicles for the "values" to which politicians so meaninglessly refer?

It would seem that the widespread assumption that complexity can be meaningfully articulated and communication through words alone can be usefully called into question, as helpfully clarified in the compilation of 150 contributions to the [2012 challenge](#) of the [Edge Foundation](#) challenge ([John Brockman](#) (Ed.), [This Explains Everything: deep, beautiful, and elegant theories of how the world works](#), 2013). Stories and myths may indeed be of great value. Missing however is the memorability offered by song and poetry through rhyme and rhythm -- a form of resonance holding systemic relationships in an integrative pattern. Little (if any) use would seem to be made by Integral Theory of such modalities -- a contrast with the cultural significance of epic poems such as the [Odyssey](#), [Mahabharata](#) or the [Kalevala](#).

The aesthetic justification has been usefully highlighted by Gregory Bateson in clarifying why "we are our own metaphor" (as noted above):

One reason why poetry is important for finding out about the world is because in poetry a set of relationships get mapped onto a level of diversity in us that we don't ordinarily have access to. We bring it out in poetry. We can give to each other in poetry the access to a set of relationships in the other person and in the world that we are not usually conscious of in ourselves. So we need poetry as knowledge about the world and about ourselves, because of this mapping from complexity to complexity. (Cited by Mary Catherine Bateson, pp. 288-9)

A related clue is to be found in the explosion of social media through which many people now express their identity in cyberspace in a manner which is only elusively linked to any particular physical location. As both a widely acknowledged user of social media, and the subject of unprecedented media coverage via cyberspace, is there a sense in which the location of Trump himself (at any one time) is equally elusive -- as with any coherent sense of his identity?

Such questions suggest a need to explore the nature of identity quite otherwise. There is the significant possibility that individual identity merits framing in terms of some analogue to Heisenberg's [Uncertainty Principle](#), namely that conventional understandings of the "position" and "nature" of identity are increasingly uncertain. Such a possibility was first raised by [Garrison Sposito](#) ([Does a generalized Heisenberg principle operate in the social sciences? Inquiry](#), 12, 1969). This contrasts radically with conventional preoccupation with identity cards and biometrics.

Does the Trump phenomenon, and the response to it, then merit exploration in terms of a "wave theory of identity", as can be variously explored ([Encountering Otherness as a Waveform -- in the light of a wave theory of being](#), 2013; [Being a Waveform of Potential as an Experiential Choice: emergent dynamic qualities of identity and integrity](#), 2013). This would accord with the meaning popularly associated with "vibes" -- whether "negative" or "positive".

In the words of [Kenneth Boulding](#):

Our consciousness of the unity of the self in the middle of a vast complexity of images or material structures is at least a suitable metaphor for the unity of a group, organization, department, discipline, or science. If personification is only a metaphor, let us not despise metaphors - we might be one ourselves. ([Ecodynamics: a new theory of societal evolution](#), 1978, p. 345)

Or, as the poet [John Keats](#) puts it:

A man's life is a continual allegory -- and very few eyes can see the mystery of his life -- a life like the scriptures, figurative.

As noted above, the charm of it, as Bateson stated in concluding a conference on the effects of conscious purpose on human adaptation, is that: *We are our own metaphor*. Unfortunately we have over-identified with the metaphor and have been unable to see ourselves in perspective.

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