



# *laetus in praesens*

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

---

18 December 2023 | Draft

## Sustainable Development Goals through Self-reflexive Root Cause Analysis

Strategic clarifications from experimental interaction with ChatGPT

-- / --

---

### Introduction

Recognition of systemic processes through complementary cognitive modalities

Negligence of requisite collective self-reflexivity

Evoking the "political will to change"

Challenge of strategic tokenism

Engendering strategic self-criticism?

Critical root cause analysis

Highly sensitive "root causes": population growth and overpopulation

Ethics of mass destruction versus voluntary euthanasia: right-to-kill versus right-to-die?

Questionable modalities of AI discourse

References

---

## Introduction

A previous exercise considered the possibility of *Coherent Reconciliation of Eastern and Western Patterns of Logic* (2023). This explored the clarification potentially offered by ChatGPT, notably with respect to a concluding discussion on the *Potential relevance to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals* (2023). The concern with "reconciliation" focused on the requisite collective memorability of complex global strategic initiatives and how that is to be enabled if they are to be viable. This is particularly relevant in the light of the effort by the UN Secretary-General to envisage the nature of future global cooperation through a report titled *Our Common Agenda* (2021), namely how "common" is to be articulated in the UN's planned *Summit of the Future* (2024) -- potentially with the aid of AI.

The following exercise develops the concluding argument further by exploring the potential insights to be assembled through interaction with AI -- in this case ChatGPT (version 4.0). It is of course the case that

there is considerable controversy about the use of AI-- if only in relation to its impact on governance. The United Nations system has yet to clarify the possibilities, despite the intense focus on the dangers of AI and the seemingly questionable value of the [AI for Good Global Summit](#) organized by the International Telecommunication Union in partnership with 40 UN sister agencies in 2023. The event appears to have made little use of AI in enhancing the dynamics of summitry -- if only as a prelude to the organization of the later [COP28](#) United Nations Climate Change Conference. This raises the question as to how the UN's Summit of the Future will be organized to transcend the long-evident inadequacies of international summitry.

The following interaction with ChatGPT not only endeavours to further develop insights into global strategy formulation. It is also understood as an experiment in clarifying the potential and limitations of such interaction. This necessarily includes its possible reinforcement of questionable hypotheses, potentially in the form of the so-called "[hallucinations](#)" -- now widely deprecated as calling into question the value of AI. In that respect however, little is said of the "hallucinations" which can be readily seen as engendered by global summitry as conventionally organized --and in which people are encouraged to indulge through appropriately crafted narratives.

As an experiment, the role of the author in prompting ChatGPT calls for critical comment -- given how any such prompting of AI might be used in relation to global summitry. It recalls the manner in which plenary events may invite questions from the audience, and how that process is typically "managed" by the organizing authorities to avoid the evocation of unwelcome issues. Aspects of this concern are discussed separately in greater detail with respect to eliciting consensus nationally and internationally ([Multi-option Technical Facilitation of Public Debate](#), 2019). Ironically relevant is the manner in which asking questions in any such context can be considered as [virtue signalling](#), and therefore suspect as a means of eliciting support for [confirmation bias](#). In their preambles, the responses of ChatGPT offer corresponding examples of what might be termed "algorithmic encouragement" -- potentially to be set aside as equally suspect.

How might AI be used in a global summit in order to challenge the comfort zones framed and cultivated by Sustainable Development Goals? ([Envisaging the AI-enhanced Future of the Conferencing Process](#), 2020). Whereas considerable value has been respectfully attached to strategic modelling prior to the recent impressive development of AI, both modalities bear ironic comparison with the forecasting processes on which Imperial Rome was variously dependent. Consultation of large language models in global summits may be curiously reminiscent of those procedures. As in use by an individual, engagement by a collective with an AI at such a summit may invite comparison with mirroring or an [echo chamber](#) -- variously reflecting back the biases brought to the process.

## Recognition of systemic processes through complementary cognitive modalities

**Question to ChatGPT (version 4.0):** In an earlier exchange the suggestion was explored that the various 4-fold sets cited ([Johari Window](#), [Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse](#), [classic elements](#), etc) could be understood as aspects, instances or metaphors of a 4-fold set of elusive systemic processes. This formulation emphasizes to a misleading degree the sense in which the sets are of explicate "categories" to an unquestionable degree when they merit recognition as experiential if not embodied and implicate. How could that cognitive implication be more fruitfully articulated

Your exploration of various 4-fold sets like Johari's Window, the Four Horsemen, and the classic elements, and considering them as aspects or metaphors of a set of systemic processes, is an intriguing intellectual exercise. The challenge you're facing is articulating these sets not just as explicit, categorical frameworks, but as implicit, experiential, and embodied processes. Here are some ways to articulate this cognitive implication more fruitfully:

- **Emphasize the Dynamic Nature:** Instead of presenting these 4-fold sets as static categories, emphasize their dynamic and fluid nature. This means highlighting how these categories are not just boxes to fit experiences into, but are constantly interacting and evolving processes that influence and are influenced by our experiences.

- Focus on Interconnections and Overlaps: Explore how these sets are interconnected and how they overlap with each other in real-world scenarios. This approach can help to demonstrate that these frameworks are not isolated or rigid, but are part of a larger, more complex system of human experience and understanding.
- Use Metaphors and Analogies: Metaphors and analogies can be powerful in conveying the idea of these sets as more than just categories. For example, instead of treating the elements in Johari's Window as fixed quadrants, you might liken them to shifting sands or a kaleidoscope, constantly changing with new information and perspectives.
- Highlight the Embodied Experience: Discuss these sets in the context of embodied cognition. This means recognizing that our understanding of these concepts is shaped not just by abstract thought, but also by our physical and sensory experiences in the world.
- Incorporate Narrative and Storytelling: Use stories or narratives to illustrate these sets in action. Stories can capture the complexity and nuance of these frameworks in a way that mere categorization cannot.
- Draw from Interdisciplinary Insights: To articulate these ideas, draw from various fields like psychology, philosophy, systems theory, and even art and literature. This interdisciplinary approach can provide a richer, more holistic understanding of these concepts.
- Acknowledge the Limitations of Language: Recognize and articulate the limits of language in capturing the full essence of these complex systems. This can involve exploring the idea that some aspects of human experience and cognition are ineffable or transcend traditional categorization.
- Engage with Experiential Learning: Suggest ways in which individuals can engage with these concepts experientially. This could be through exercises, meditations, or interactive workshops that allow people to experience the fluidity and interconnectedness of these systems firsthand.

By adopting these approaches, you can more effectively communicate the idea that these 4-fold sets are not just rigid, categorical frameworks, but are part of a fluid, interconnected, and embodied process of understanding and experiencing the world.

The contrast with categories as conventionally understood can be variously explored (*Interrelating Multiple Ways of Looking at a Crisis*, 2021). An aspect of the contrast can be explored through the manner in which global issues are reported (*Dynamic Transformation of Static Reporting of Global Processes*, 2013). The role of humour is especially striking with respect to integrative processes, whether in the case of governance, religion or transdisciplinarity (*Humour and Play-Fullness*, 2005). The modalities elaborated by fundamental physics merit particular consideration (*Encountering Otherness as a Waveform: in the light of a wave theory of being*, 2013). That challenge has been remarkably articulated by Alexander Wendt (*Quantum Mind and Social Science: unifying physical and social ontology*, 2015). It has been explored otherwise by George Lakoff (*Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: what categories reveal about the mind*, 1987).

**Question to ChatGPT:** A difficulty with suggestions in that regard is that they make uncritical use of the definitive role of categories. Alternative perspectives are potentially offered by **process logic** (as articulated by Whitehead) and **fuzzy logic** -- as well as by "wave framing" as a complement to a "particular focus". Could "category" itself then be considered as one element in a 4-fold set (for example), and by what cognitive modality might it then be understood as complemented

Your inquiry into alternative perspectives beyond traditional categorical thinking, drawing upon ideas from process philosophy (like that of Alfred North Whitehead), fuzzy logic, and "wave framing," is intellectually stimulating. You propose an intriguing concept: considering "category" as one element in a 4-fold set and exploring what cognitive modalities might complement it. Let's explore this idea further:

- The Four Elements of the Set:
  - Category: Represents the traditional, definitive way of understanding and organizing knowledge. It's about clear boundaries and distinctions.
  - Process: Drawn from process philosophy, this element emphasizes change, flow, and the temporal evolution of entities. It views reality as a series of interconnected events and experiences, rather than static objects.

Fuzziness: Inspired by fuzzy logic, this element acknowledges ambiguity and the gradation between states or concepts. It allows for degrees of truth or membership, challenging the binary nature of traditional categories.

- Wave Framing: This element, borrowing from the concept of wave-particle duality in physics, suggests a perspective that is more holistic, dynamic, and interconnected. It emphasizes patterns, relationships, and contexts, rather than isolated entities.
- Cognitive Modalities for Understanding the Set:
  - Analytical Thinking: Best suited for understanding the "Category" aspect, it involves breaking down concepts into distinct, clear-cut components.
  - Systems Thinking: Complements the "Process" element, focusing on how different parts of a system interrelate over time and within the context of larger systems.
  - Intuitive Thinking: Aligns with "Fuzziness," as it involves sensing nuances and operating in realms of ambiguity and gradation, which is not always possible in purely logical frameworks.
  - Holistic Thinking: Relates to "Wave Framing," where the focus is on patterns, connections, and the synthesis of information, recognizing the interdependence of all elements.
- Integration of These Modalities:
  - The challenge and opportunity lie in integrating these cognitive modalities to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of complex realities. Each modality offers a unique lens, and together, they can provide a more nuanced and multifaceted view.
  - For instance, in addressing a complex problem, one might start with categorical analysis to identify key components, use process thinking to understand how these components interact over time, apply fuzzy logic to navigate areas of uncertainty or ambiguity, and finally, use holistic thinking to understand the problem in its broader context and identify emergent patterns.
- Practical Application:
  - In practical terms, this integrated approach can be applied in various fields such as environmental policy, organizational management, social sciences, and technology development. It encourages a balance between precision and flexibility, structure and fluidity, clarity and ambiguity.
- Educational and Organizational Implications:
  - To cultivate these diverse cognitive modalities, educational systems and organizations might need to adapt. This could involve a more interdisciplinary curriculum, training in systems thinking and complexity, and fostering an environment that values diverse perspectives and approaches.

In summary, reconceptualizing "category" as one element in a 4-fold set alongside process, fuzziness, and wave framing offers a rich framework for understanding and engaging with complex phenomena. It encourages a move away from rigid, binary thinking towards a more dynamic, integrated approach, which is increasingly necessary in our interconnected and rapidly evolving world

The logic characteristic of governance can be recognized as the "rock logic" challenged by [Edward de Bono](#) (*I Am Right You Are Wrong: from this to the New Renaissance; from Rock Logic to Water Logic*, 1990; *Water Logic: an alternative to I Am Right, You Are Wrong*, 1994). His promotion of "water logic" is exemplified by the cognitive implication of vortices and helicoidal flow (*Enabling Governance through the Dynamics of Nature*, 2010).

**Question to ChatGPT:** The difficulty in the world of governance and communication -- in formulating strategic initiatives -- is that there is a high degree of dependence on the rigidity of categories ("rock logic" in de Bono's terms). It is the media which is free to exploit some of the possibilities you suggest. How is strategy to be articulated when respectful of such fluidity

Articulating strategy in governance and communication while respecting the fluidity and interconnected nature of systemic processes is indeed challenging. This is especially true given the traditional reliance on rigid categories or "rock logic," as termed by Edward de Bono. Here are some strategies to consider:

- Embrace Systems Thinking: Systems thinking offers a framework for understanding

complex interdependencies and nonlinear relationships. It encourages looking beyond simple cause-and-effect and considering wider, dynamic patterns. Strategies can be formulated as adaptable systems rather than fixed plans, allowing for responsiveness to changing circumstances.

- Adopt a Scenario Planning Approach: Scenario planning involves creating multiple, plausible future scenarios. This method acknowledges uncertainty and fluidity in the environment. It allows strategists to prepare for different possibilities, rather than committing to a single, rigid path.
- Incorporate Principles of Complexity Theory: Complexity theory, which deals with dynamic systems with many interacting components, can offer insights into formulating strategies in a non-linear world. Recognizing that small changes can have large effects, and vice versa, can lead to strategies that are more adaptive and resilient.
- Utilize Adaptive Management: Adaptive management is a process of continuously learning and adapting based on experience and feedback. Strategies are seen as hypotheses to be tested rather than final solutions. This approach encourages flexibility and responsiveness.
- Leverage Collaborative and Participatory Approaches: Engage diverse stakeholders in the strategy formulation process. This collaborative approach can ensure that multiple perspectives are considered, fostering strategies that are more nuanced and adaptable.
- Focus on Guiding Principles Rather Than Fixed Plans: Instead of rigid plans, develop guiding principles or values that can direct decision-making under various circumstances. This approach allows for flexibility while maintaining a consistent strategic direction.
- Encourage Creative and Lateral Thinking: Foster an organizational culture that values creativity and lateral thinking. This can lead to innovative strategies that are more adaptable and less constrained by traditional categorical thinking.
- Implement Continuous Learning and Feedback Loops: Build mechanisms for continuous learning and feedback into strategies. This enables ongoing adaptation and refinement of strategies in response to new information and changing conditions.
- Balance Short-Term and Long-Term Thinking: While short-term goals are necessary for immediate actions, long-term thinking helps in understanding broader trends and systemic changes. Balancing these perspectives can lead to more sustainable and flexible strategies.
- Communicate Strategies as Evolving Narratives: Instead of presenting strategies as fixed plans, communicate them as evolving narratives. This approach can make it easier for stakeholders to understand and engage with the strategy as a living, changing entity.

By integrating these approaches, strategy formulation in governance and communication can become more adaptive, responsive, and respectful of the inherent fluidity and complexity of real-world systems.

**Question to ChatGPT:** These are all well-recognized processes. Unfortunately systems professionals have seemingly not demonstrated their applications within their own organizations and their gatherings -- and have achieved little traction in that regard in other contexts

Your observation highlights a significant issue in the application of systems thinking and related methodologies: the challenge of effectively implementing these approaches within systems professionals' own organizations and in influencing broader contexts. This gap between theory and practice is not uncommon in many fields, but there are strategies that can be employed to address it:

- Modeling Change Internally: Systems professionals need to start by applying these principles within their own organizations. Demonstrating successful application internally can serve as a powerful example to external entities. This involves not just adopting the language of systems thinking but also embedding its principles in organizational culture and decision-making processes.
- Building Case Studies and Success Stories: Document and disseminate case studies where systems thinking and related methodologies have been successfully implemented. Success stories, especially those with measurable outcomes, can be

persuasive tools in demonstrating the value of these approaches.

- **Developing Strong Advocacy and Communication Strategies:** Often, the value of systems thinking is not fully appreciated due to communication barriers. Professionals in this field need to develop compelling narratives that resonate with stakeholders, policymakers, and the general public. This involves translating complex concepts into accessible language and relating them to real-world issues.
- **Fostering Collaborative Networks:** Create and nurture networks that span different sectors and disciplines. These networks can facilitate knowledge exchange, provide mutual support, and build a collective voice that can influence policy and decision-making.
- **Engaging in Education and Training:** Invest in education and training programs that not only teach the principles of systems thinking but also how to apply them in practical settings. This includes workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs that cater to various levels, from beginners to advanced practitioners.
- **Creating Demonstrative Projects:** Implement small-scale projects or pilots that showcase the application of systems thinking. These projects can serve as prototypes or proof of concept, illustrating the benefits and feasibility of these approaches.
- **Influencing Policy and Standards:** Work towards influencing policy and standards at various levels - local, national, and international. This can involve participating in policy development, providing expert advice, and advocating for the integration of systems thinking into regulatory frameworks.
- **Encouraging Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Systems thinking inherently benefits from multiple perspectives. Encouraging collaboration across different disciplines can enhance the application of these methods and foster innovative solutions.
- **Leveraging Technology and Data Analytics:** Utilize advancements in technology and data analytics to demonstrate the effectiveness of systems approaches. Data-driven insights can be powerful in showcasing the impact and benefits of these methodologies.
- **Cultivating a Culture of Continuous Improvement:** Emphasize the importance of learning and adaptation within the community of systems professionals. Encourage a culture where feedback is sought, failures are analyzed for lessons, and strategies are continuously refined.

By actively working on these fronts, systems professionals can better demonstrate the practical applications of their methodologies, thereby gaining greater traction and influence in various contexts.

## Negligence of requisite collective self-reflexivity

There is a curious challenge to self-reference in relation to governance, despite the much-noted references to that focus by leadership ([Hilary Lawson](#), *Reflexivity: the post-modern predicament*, 1985; S.J. Bartlett and P. Suber, *Self-Reference: reflections on reflexivity*, 1987; [Niklas Luhmann](#), *Essays on Self-Reference*, 1990).

**Question to ChatGPT:** Again these possibilities are well-recognized. Seemingly missing from your commentary is any form of self-reflexivity or self-reference -- despite a degree of implication in cybernetics. Somehow that dimension does not feature explicitly in the methodology of those applying the approaches you suggest. There is therefore little understanding of why they are less than effective -- other than as being the fault of externalities

You've raised an important and often overlooked point: the need for self-reflexivity and self-reference in systems thinking and cybernetics. This aspect is crucial for understanding the limitations of these methodologies and for improving their effectiveness. Let's delve into how self-reflexivity can be more explicitly integrated and why it's essential:

- **Embedding Self-Reflexivity in Methodologies:** Systems thinking and cybernetics, by their nature, should include a component of self-reflexivity. This means that practitioners should not only apply these methodologies to external systems but also turn these tools inward to evaluate their own practices, biases, and assumptions. This self-examination can reveal blind spots and areas for improvement.
- **Cybernetics and Second-Order Cybernetics:** Traditional cybernetics focuses on the control and communication within systems, but second-order cybernetics, introduced by

Heinz von Foerster and others, emphasizes the role of the observer in the system. Integrating second-order cybernetics more explicitly into practice involves recognizing that systems thinkers are part of the systems they study and that their observations and actions influence these systems.

- Learning from Feedback and Failure: A self-reflexive approach involves learning from both success and failure. This means not just implementing strategies but also critically analyzing their outcomes, including unintended consequences, and using this information for continuous improvement.
- Acknowledging the Influence of Practitioners: Recognize and explicitly state how the values, beliefs, and actions of practitioners influence the systems they are working with. This awareness can lead to more ethical and responsible practice.
- Encouraging Personal Development: Alongside professional development, there should be an emphasis on personal development for systems professionals. This includes developing skills like empathy, humility, and openness to diverse perspectives, which are essential for effective systems practice.
- Fostering a Culture of Openness and Inquiry: Cultivate an organizational culture that encourages questioning, debate, and open dialogue. This can help in challenging orthodoxies and promoting a more nuanced understanding of systems.
- Integrating Reflective Practices: Encourage regular reflective practices such as journaling, peer discussions, and feedback sessions. These practices can help professionals to reflect on their roles, actions, and the impacts of their work.
- Ethical Considerations and Responsibility: Emphasize ethical considerations in systems practice. This includes reflecting on the societal and environmental impacts of actions and acknowledging the responsibility that comes with the ability to influence systems.
- Collaborative Reflection: Engage in collaborative reflection with stakeholders and other professionals. This can provide multiple perspectives and foster a deeper understanding of the complexities and interdependencies of systems.
- Teaching and Mentoring: Include self-reflexivity as a core component in the teaching and mentoring of future systems thinkers and cyberneticians. This will help in cultivating a new generation of practitioners who are aware of the importance of reflecting on their own roles and biases.

By integrating self-reflexivity and self-reference more explicitly into systems thinking and cybernetics, practitioners can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the systems they interact with, including the role they themselves play within these systems. This holistic approach is essential for the effective application and continuous improvement of these methodologies.

## Evoking the "political will to change"

There is a long history of concern with the contrast between recognition of "what ought to be done" and the "will to change" (*International Organizations and the Generation of the Will to Change*, 1970). The UN's SDGs could be seen as framing this challenge.

**Question to ChatGPT:** Again it would seem that there is a fundamental difficulty in enabling what "ought" to be done -- as you indicate -- long evident in the moral and ethical injunctions of religions (and the evident failure of their advocates). With respect to strategy this translates into challenges relating to the "political will to change". Desirable action is unlikely to follow from exhortation -- as is evident with respect to climate change.

You've highlighted a crucial and pervasive challenge in both strategic thinking and broader societal change: the gap between recognizing what "ought" to be done and the actualization of these actions, often referred to as the challenge of "political will" or motivational inertia. This gap is evident in various domains, from climate change and environmental policy to the ethical practices of organizations. Addressing this gap requires a multi-faceted approach:

- Understanding the Roots of Inaction: Start by exploring the reasons behind the lack of political will or action. This can include psychological barriers (like denial or fear), economic interests, power dynamics, cultural norms, and systemic inertia. Understanding these factors is critical for developing strategies that address the root causes of inaction.
- Fostering a Sense of Urgency: Often, action is stalled due to a lack of perceived

urgency. Strategies to foster urgency include effective communication of risks and consequences, highlighting the immediacy of problems, and demonstrating the tangible benefits of timely action.

- **Building Coalitions and Alliances:** Change often requires the support and collaboration of diverse groups. Building coalitions across different sectors – including government, business, civil society, and academia – can create a more unified front to push for change.
- **Leveraging Social Influence and Norms:** Social norms and influence can be powerful drivers of change. Campaigns that effectively leverage these, such as through public endorsements by respected figures or grassroots community engagement, can create a cultural shift that encourages action.
- **Economic and Regulatory Incentives:** Aligning economic incentives with desired outcomes can be highly effective. This could involve implementing taxes, subsidies, or regulations that encourage positive actions and discourage negative ones.
- **Incremental and Pilot Approaches:** Sometimes, large-scale change is daunting and met with resistance. Starting with smaller, incremental changes or pilot projects can demonstrate the feasibility and benefits of change, building momentum for broader implementation.
- **Empowering Local and Community-Level Action:** Large-scale political will can often be stymied by various factors. Empowering local and community initiatives can bypass some of these obstacles, allowing for more immediate action and setting an example for larger-scale efforts.
- **Enhancing Transparency and Accountability:** Establishing mechanisms for transparency and accountability can motivate action. This includes public reporting, independent audits, and consequences for inaction.
- **Educating and Raising Awareness:** Continuous efforts in education and awareness-raising are crucial. A well-informed public is more likely to support and demand action, and education can empower individuals to take action in their own lives and communities.
- **Cultivating Adaptive Leadership:** Develop leaders who are capable of navigating complex challenges, engaging with diverse stakeholders, and inspiring action. These leaders can play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between recognition and action.

While none of these strategies alone can guarantee the generation of political will or ensure action, collectively they provide a more comprehensive approach to addressing the inertia that often impedes progress. The challenge is multifaceted and requires a sustained, strategic effort across multiple levels of society.

It can be argued that sustainability itself implies some form of cognitive embodiment of environmental processes (*Psychology of Sustainability*, 2005; *Existential Embodiment of Externalities*, 2009). Any discussion of the UN's SDGs frames the question of how this might be rendered explicit -- whether or not it can be considered implicit.

**Question to ChatGPT:** Does "explicit" discussion of the "political will to change" fall victim to the limitations of the "category modality" (as "rock logic") when it would appear to require the "implication" and cognitive embodiment of other modalities -- notably process logic. In metaphorical terms, the complementary role of "air logic" and "fire logic" would seem to merit consideration -- especially given the manner in which they have featured in the action of the deities of mythology. It is somewhat ironic that the environmental crises governance is expected to address are exemplified by floods, hurricanes, earthquakes and wildfires.

Your observation about the limitations of the "category modality" or "rock logic" in discussing political will to change, and the potential value of integrating other modalities, such as "process logic," "air logic," and "fire logic," is insightful. The metaphorical use of elements and their association with mythological deities adds a rich layer of symbolism to this discussion. Let's explore how these different modalities and metaphorical elements can enhance our understanding of the challenges in governance, especially in the context of environmental crises:

- **Rock Logic (Category Modality):**
  - This modality represents stability, structure, and definitiveness, akin to the solid nature of rock. In governance, it manifests as established policies, laws, and institutions.

- However, this rigidity can be limiting when dealing with dynamic and complex issues like environmental crises, where adaptability and responsiveness are crucial.
- Process Logic (Water Logic):
  - Drawing from your metaphor, water symbolizes adaptability, flow, and the ability to navigate around obstacles. In governance, process logic would emphasize adaptability, continuous learning, and the ability to respond to changing circumstances.
  - This modality is crucial in managing environmental issues that are fluid and ever-changing, much like water itself.
- Air Logic:
  - Air represents movement, flexibility, and the unseen. In a governance context, air logic might involve the unseen but essential aspects of policy-making, such as cultural shifts, public sentiment, and the flow of ideas.
  - This modality can help in understanding and harnessing the power of intangible forces, such as public opinion and cultural values, in driving political will to change.
- Fire Logic:
  - Fire symbolizes transformation, energy, and passion. In governance, this could be seen as the drive for innovation, the passion for change, and the energy of social movements.
  - Fire logic could be instrumental in catalyzing rapid and transformative changes, especially in response to urgent crises like wildfires or other natural disasters.
- Implication and Cognitive Embodiment:
  - These different logics or modalities need to be cognitively embodied by leaders and policymakers. This means internalizing and applying these diverse ways of thinking and approaching problems.
  - For example, a leader might use rock logic to maintain structural integrity, water logic to adapt to new information, air logic to gauge and influence public sentiment, and fire logic to drive transformative initiatives.
- Metaphorical and Mythological Dimensions:
  - The use of elemental metaphors and mythological references can provide a deeper, more intuitive understanding of these modalities.
  - In mythology, deities often embody the characteristics of these elements, serving as powerful symbols for the different types of forces at play in the world.
- Addressing Environmental Crises:
  - The current environmental crises – symbolized by floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and wildfires – demand a multifaceted approach.
  - Governance in this context requires the stability and structure of rock logic, the adaptability of water logic, the perceptiveness of air logic, and the transformative energy of fire logic.

In conclusion, discussing and addressing the political will to change, especially in the context of environmental governance, benefits from a synthesis of various cognitive modalities. These modalities, symbolized by different elements and enriched by mythological symbolism, offer diverse perspectives and approaches that are necessary to navigate the complexities and dynamics of contemporary global challenges.

**Question to ChatGPT:** Although the classic elements can serve as metaphors, it is curious to note the widespread enthusiasm -- especially of younger generations -- for the modalities characterized by the mythologies of the past (and exemplified in the role-playing themes of *Dungeons and Dragons*). Might it be the case that civilization is effectively "educating" those generations in cognitive modalities complementary to those which have so effectively enabled the disasters currently faced by global governance.

Your observation about the appeal of mythological modalities, as seen in the popularity of role-playing games like *Dungeons & Dragons* among younger generations, is quite perceptive. It suggests that these alternative cognitive frameworks, rooted in mythology and fantasy, may indeed be providing a form of education in thinking styles that are distinct from those which have traditionally dominated global governance and decision-making processes. Let's explore this idea further:

- Mythological Modalities as Cognitive Training:

- Role-playing games (RPGs) like Dungeons & Dragons often involve elements from mythology and fantasy, encouraging players to engage with complex narratives, diverse characters, and intricate worlds. This can foster imaginative, creative, and strategic thinking.
- These games require players to adopt different perspectives, solve problems, and make decisions in uncertain and dynamic environments, skills that are valuable in real-world contexts.
- Contrast with Traditional Education and Governance:
  - Traditional education and governance often emphasize linear, logical, and empirical modes of thinking. While these are important, they can sometimes overlook the value of creativity, intuition, and empathy.
  - Mythological and fantasy-based modalities, on the other hand, encourage a more holistic approach that includes narrative thinking, ethical considerations, and emotional intelligence.
- Relevance to Contemporary Challenges:
  - The complex and interconnected nature of contemporary global challenges, such as climate change, social inequality, and technological disruption, requires diverse cognitive approaches.
  - The skills honed through engaging with mythological modalities – such as adaptability, collaborative problem-solving, and the ability to navigate ambiguous scenarios – are increasingly relevant.
- Potential for Innovation and Change:
  - Engaging with mythological and fantasy narratives can inspire innovative thinking and a willingness to explore unconventional solutions.
  - This can be particularly valuable in reimagining and redefining approaches to global governance and sustainability, areas that desperately need fresh perspectives and creative solutions.
- Balancing Different Modalities:
  - It's important to balance the imaginative and creative strengths of mythological modalities with the analytical and empirical strengths of traditional modalities.
  - Such a balanced approach can lead to more comprehensive and effective strategies for addressing global issues.
- Educational Implications:
  - Recognizing the value of these alternative modalities, educational systems could benefit from incorporating more elements of creative and narrative thinking into curricula.
  - This could help in nurturing a generation that is well-equipped to think critically, creatively, and empathetically about the challenges they inherit.

In summary, the enthusiasm for mythological modalities among younger generations, as exemplified by the popularity of role-playing games, might indeed be fostering cognitive skills that are complementary to those traditionally emphasized in education and governance. These alternative modalities could be instrumental in cultivating the diverse thinking necessary to navigate and address the complex challenges of our time.

## Challenge of strategic tokenism

**Question to ChatGPT:** Can such initiatives be seen as integral to the systemic approach to implementation of SDGs, or is their recognition tokenistic at best -- and how does that tendency itself feature in systemic analysis of the challenge

Your question raises an important issue regarding the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and whether initiatives like fostering political will, enhancing participation, and addressing psychological and social barriers are integral to these efforts or merely tokenistic. Understanding how this dynamic plays into the systemic analysis of the challenge is crucial.

- Integral vs. Tokenistic Recognition in SDG Implementation:
  - Integral Approach: Ideally, initiatives to foster political will, community engagement, and address deeper social and psychological barriers should be integral to the SDG

implementation strategy. This involves embedding these initiatives in the planning, policy-making, and execution phases of SDG-related projects. It requires a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of the SDGs and the socio-economic, cultural, and political context in which they are implemented.

- Tokenistic Approach: Unfortunately, in some cases, these initiatives might be treated as afterthoughts or superficially included to tick boxes. This tokenistic approach often results in ineffective implementation, as it fails to address the underlying challenges that hinder progress towards the SDGs.
- Systemic Analysis of the Challenge:
  - A systemic analysis would examine the interplay between various factors that impact SDG implementation. This includes understanding how economic interests, power structures, cultural norms, and institutional inertia contribute to the success or failure of these initiatives.
  - It also involves recognizing the feedback loops and unintended consequences that can arise from various actions. For instance, how policy decisions in one area of the SDGs might positively or negatively impact other goals.
  - Such analysis should also consider the scale of intervention – from local community actions to global policy frameworks – and how initiatives at different levels interact with each other.
- Strategies for Integrating Initiatives Systemically:
  - Policy Coherence: Ensuring that policies across different sectors and levels are aligned and mutually reinforcing towards achieving the SDGs.
  - Stakeholder Engagement: Involving a diverse range of stakeholders, including marginalized groups, in the planning and implementation process to ensure that initiatives are grounded in the realities of those most affected.
  - Capacity Building: Strengthening the capabilities of institutions and communities to effectively implement and sustain SDG-related initiatives.
  - Monitoring and Evaluation: Establishing robust mechanisms for tracking progress, learning from successes and failures, and making necessary adjustments.
- Addressing the Tokenism Tendency:
  - Recognizing and openly discussing the tendency towards tokenism is the first step in addressing it. This involves critical self-reflection among organizations and governments on their approach to SDG implementation.
  - Promoting transparency and accountability in SDG initiatives can help in scrutinizing whether efforts are substantive or merely symbolic.
  - Encouraging participatory approaches where stakeholders can hold implementers accountable can also help in combating tokenism.

In summary, for the SDGs to be effectively achieved, it's imperative that strategies to enhance political will, participation, and address deeper barriers are integrated genuinely and systematically into the implementation process, rather than being included as token gestures. Systemic analysis plays a crucial role in identifying and addressing the complexities and interdependencies inherent in this global effort.

## Engendering strategic self-criticism?

**Question to ChatGPT:** How are such measures to be distinguished from what has long been deprecated as the promotion of [self-criticism by Marxism-Leninism-Maoism](#).

Distinguishing contemporary measures for fostering self-reflexivity, stakeholder engagement, and systemic analysis from the practices of self-criticism promoted under Marxism-Leninism-Maoism involves understanding the differences in intent, methodology, and context. While both approaches involve self-examination and critique, their underlying philosophies and applications are markedly different.

- Intent and Purpose:
  - Contemporary Measures: The intent here is to foster a more holistic understanding of complex systems, encourage diverse perspectives, and enhance the effectiveness of initiatives (like the SDGs). The goal is to improve processes through constructive feedback, innovation, and inclusive participation.

Marxism-Leninism-Maoism Self-Criticism: Historically, self-criticism in these ideologies often served as a tool for enforcing ideological conformity and loyalty to the party line. It was used as a means of control, often leading to the suppression of dissenting views and individual expression.

- Methodology:
  - Contemporary Measures: These involve collaborative approaches, where feedback is sought from a diverse range of stakeholders, and there is an emphasis on learning and adaptation. The process is generally more open, with a focus on constructive dialogue and mutual learning.
  - Marxism-Leninism-Maoism Self-Criticism: The methodology in these ideologies was often top-down and could be coercive. It was less about learning and adaptation and more about identifying deviations from the party doctrine and correcting them, sometimes through punitive measures.
- Context and Application:
  - Contemporary Measures: Applied in various contexts, from organizational management to global initiatives like the SDGs, these measures aim to address complex, multi-faceted challenges in a balanced and inclusive manner.
  - Marxism-Leninism-Maoism Self-Criticism: The context was largely political and ideological, aimed at maintaining the authority and ideology of the ruling party.
- Voluntariness and Openness:
  - Contemporary Measures: Emphasis is placed on voluntary participation, open dialogue, and the genuine exchange of ideas. The process is intended to be empowering and constructive.
  - Marxism-Leninism-Maoism Self-Criticism: Often characterized by a lack of voluntariness, with participants compelled to engage in self-criticism sessions, sometimes under threat of repercussions.
- Outcome and Impact:
  - Contemporary Measures: The desired outcome is positive change, innovation, and sustainable development, achieved through inclusive and collaborative means.
  - Marxism-Leninism-Maoism Self-Criticism: The process was often used to reinforce existing power structures and suppress dissent, which could lead to a culture of fear and conformity.

In summary, while both contemporary systemic analysis measures and the self-criticism practices under Marxism-Leninism-Maoism involve some form of critique and reflection, their intents, methodologies, contexts, and outcomes are distinctly different. Contemporary approaches aim for constructive, inclusive, and voluntary participation that encourages diverse perspectives and collaborative problem-solving, as opposed to the coercive, top-down, and ideologically driven practices of self-criticism in Marxist-Leninist-Maoist regimes.

## Critical root cause analysis

Despite acknowledgement of the value of [root cause analysis](#) by the United Nations, it is unclear that "root causes" have been appropriately identified -- rather than avoided -- in the elaboration of Sustainable Development Goals (UNDP, [UNSDG Common Learning Package on Human rights-based Approach: Root Cause Analysis, Role-Pattern Analysis and Capacity Gap Analysis](#), SDG Integration, 2020; Jack Harich, et al, [Root cause analysis as a foundational tool for sustainability science](#), *Sustainability Science*, 2020).

**Question to ChatGPT:** The distinctions you make are indeed appropriate. Less evident is the extent to which they feature in any systemic analysis -- given the tendency to treat such factors as externalities. Underlying the difficulty of transcending the limitations of tokenism would appear to be the appropriate application of root cause analysis. It is far from evident that this has been applied in the articulation of the SDGs (for example), rendering them vulnerable to deprecation as political tokenism.

You've touched on a critical aspect of systemic analysis and the implementation of frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – the need for thorough root cause analysis and the risk of initiatives being perceived as tokenistic if this analysis is not adequately integrated. Let's explore this further:

- Root Cause Analysis in Systemic Thinking:
  - Root cause analysis is essential in systemic thinking as it helps to identify the underlying causes of issues rather than just addressing their symptoms. However, this analysis can be challenging in complex systems due to the interconnectedness and interdependence of various factors.
  - In the context of the SDGs, a comprehensive root cause analysis would require examining a wide range of factors, including economic disparities, political structures, social norms, historical contexts, and environmental constraints.
- Challenges in Applying Root Cause Analysis to the SDGs:
  - Complexity and Interconnectedness: The SDGs cover a broad range of interconnected issues. Identifying root causes across these diverse areas is a complex task that requires multidisciplinary approaches and collaboration.
  - Diverse Stakeholders and Interests: The SDGs involve numerous stakeholders with different priorities and interests, which can make it challenging to reach a consensus on underlying causes and appropriate actions.
  - Variable Contexts: The global nature of the SDGs means they must be applicable in a variety of contexts, each with its own unique set of root causes and challenges.
- Overcoming Tokenism in SDG Implementation:
  - To move beyond tokenism, it's crucial for the implementation of the SDGs to be backed by in-depth root cause analysis. This involves a willingness to confront difficult truths, including issues related to power imbalances, resource distribution, and entrenched systemic inequities.
  - Implementing targeted, context-specific strategies based on this analysis can help ensure that actions are relevant and effective, rather than symbolic gestures.
  - Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation are necessary to ensure that the strategies remain effective and responsive to changing circumstances.
- Integrating Root Cause Analysis in Strategy:
  - Participatory Approaches: Engaging local communities and stakeholders in identifying root causes can provide valuable insights and foster ownership of solutions.
  - Interdisciplinary Research and Collaboration: Leveraging diverse expertise can provide a more holistic understanding of complex issues.
  - Transparent and Inclusive Decision-Making: Ensuring that the process of identifying root causes and developing strategies is transparent and inclusive can enhance credibility and support.
- Addressing Perceptions of Tokenism:
  - Clear communication about the methodologies used, the rationale behind strategies, and the expected outcomes can help address perceptions of tokenism.
  - Demonstrating tangible progress and impact can also help to validate the efforts and counter claims of tokenistic actions.

In summary, for the SDGs to be effective and not be seen as mere political tokenism, it's essential to integrate comprehensive root cause analysis in both the development and implementation phases. This requires an acknowledgment of the complexity and diversity of the issues at hand, coupled with a commitment to continuous learning, adaptation, and transparent, inclusive processes.

## Highly sensitive "root causes": population growth and overpopulation

Arguments recognizing the problematic implications of overpopulation have long been made (Paul R. Ehrlich and Anne H. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb*, 1968; Thomas Robertson, *The Malthusian Moment: Global Population Growth and the Birth of American Environmentalism*, 2012). The arguments are regularly reframed as misleading and set aside. They are deliberately avoided by international organizations as fundamentally inconvenient truth -- especially in the context of global summits (*Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge*, 2008). Whilst "overpopulation" may be held to be a "myth" -- reality is increasingly accorded to "overcrowding" by governments (*Local Reality of Overcrowding -- Global Unreality of Overpopulation*, 2019). It can be argued that "science" is curiously complicit in this reframing (*Scientific Gerrymandering of Boundaries of Overpopulation Debate*, 2012). The sensitivity of the issue, conflated with suspicions of a secretive [global depopulation agenda](#), renders

debate on the matter hazardous (*Overpopulation Debate as a Psychosocial Hazard*, 2009).

**Question to ChatGPT:** Especially tricky with respect to SDGs is the manner in which the issues of population growth and overpopulation are set aside as irrelevant in any root cause analysis -- justified by replacement preoccupations and suspicions regarding secretive depopulation agendas. It is seemingly far from evident how these matters can be disentangled in any systemic analysis vulnerable to bias and avoidance of any "unpopular" root cause -- and therefore complicit in advocacy of tokenistic strategies

The issue of population growth and its relationship to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is indeed a complex and sensitive subject. It's an area where cultural, ethical, social, and political factors intersect, making it a challenging topic to address in systemic analysis. The perceived avoidance of this issue in discussions surrounding the SDGs can contribute to criticisms of tokenism and superficiality in addressing global challenges. Here's a look at how this intricate issue might be approached more effectively:

- **Acknowledging Complexity and Sensitivity:** Firstly, it's important to acknowledge the complexity and sensitivity surrounding the topic of population growth. This issue is intertwined with various factors including economic development, cultural beliefs, women's rights, and environmental sustainability. It's crucial to approach this topic with a nuanced understanding and respect for diverse perspectives.
- **Integrating Population Dynamics in SDG Discussions:** Rather than avoiding the topic, population dynamics should be integrated into SDG discussions in a way that considers both the challenges and opportunities it presents. This includes understanding how population growth intersects with issues like resource allocation, urban planning, healthcare, education, and environmental sustainability.
- **Addressing Underlying Factors:** A productive approach involves focusing on the underlying factors that influence population growth, such as access to education, particularly for girls and women, reproductive health services, economic opportunities, and child mortality rates. Policies that address these factors can have a significant impact on population dynamics.
- **Ethical and Rights-Based Approaches:** Any discussion or policy relating to population should be grounded in ethical considerations and human rights. This means ensuring that individuals have the right to make informed decisions about reproduction without coercion.
- **Open and Inclusive Dialogue:** Facilitating open and inclusive dialogues that involve a range of stakeholders – from policymakers and demographers to community leaders and civil society – can help in developing a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of the issue.
- **Evidence-Based Policies:** Policies should be based on empirical evidence and best practices. This involves rigorous research and analysis to understand the impacts of population dynamics and to identify effective strategies.
- **Cultural Sensitivity and Localization:** Given that population dynamics vary significantly across regions, localized approaches that are sensitive to cultural and societal norms are crucial. One-size-fits-all solutions are unlikely to be effective.
- **Avoiding Alarmist Narratives:** While it's important to address the challenges of population growth, it's equally important to avoid alarmist narratives that can lead to fear and stigma. A balanced approach that recognizes the multifaceted nature of the issue is essential.
- **Transparency in Goals and Agendas:** Transparency about the goals and agendas of population-related policies can help mitigate suspicions and misunderstandings. Clear communication about the intentions and expected outcomes of these policies is key.
- **Long-Term Perspective:** Finally, it's important to take a long-term perspective when addressing population issues, considering not just immediate impacts but also future generations.

In summary, integrating population dynamics into systemic analysis and strategy development for the SDGs in a thoughtful, ethical, and evidence-based manner is essential. This requires a careful balance of acknowledging the complexities, respecting human rights, and engaging in open, inclusive, and culturally sensitive dialogues.

The response of ChatGPT to the following question is highly unusual in any consideration of population

growth within the context of the United Nations. The pressures to inhibit such recognition are immense -- to the point of even inhibiting discussion of such inhibition. It is to be expected that any further training of ChatGPT (for the purposes of future global summitry) will ensure that such analysis conforms to the biases of the international community. The situation is an invitation to caricature ([Prohibition of Reference to Overpopulation of the Planet: draft proposal](#), 2018).

**Question to ChatGPT:** How might the strategic challenges of population growth and overpopulation be recognized with respect to each of the Sustainable Development Goals -- in the light of self-reflexive root cause analysis, and given the sensitivity of the matter

Addressing the strategic challenges of population growth and overpopulation in relation to each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires a nuanced, self-reflexive root cause analysis. Given the sensitivity of the topic, it's important to approach it with a balanced and comprehensive perspective, recognizing the interconnectedness of the SDGs and the diverse factors influencing population dynamics. Here's an overview of how population growth and overpopulation might intersect with each SDG:

1. **No Poverty:** Increased population can strain resources, making poverty reduction more challenging. Strategies must consider how to provide sustainable livelihoods for a growing population.
2. **Zero Hunger:** Population growth can exacerbate food insecurity. It's crucial to develop sustainable agricultural practices and improve food distribution systems.
3. **Good Health and Well-being:** A larger population places greater demands on healthcare systems. Ensuring access to quality health services, including reproductive health, is key.
4. **Quality Education:** Overpopulation can strain educational resources. Emphasis on education, particularly girls' education, can also have a positive impact on fertility rates.
5. **Gender Equality:** Empowering women and ensuring their access to reproductive health services is critical in managing population growth.
6. **Clean Water and Sanitation:** Increased demand from a growing population can lead to water scarcity and sanitation challenges, necessitating sustainable water management solutions.
7. **Affordable and Clean Energy:** More people means higher energy demand. Transitioning to renewable energy sources is essential to meet this demand sustainably.
8. **Decent Work and Economic Growth:** A growing labor force requires the creation of more jobs and sustainable economic policies that can support larger populations.
9. **Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** Infrastructure development must keep pace with population growth, and innovation can help address the challenges posed by overpopulation.
10. **Reduced Inequalities:** Population growth can exacerbate inequalities, particularly in resource distribution. Policies must focus on equitable resource allocation.
11. **Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Urban areas face significant pressure from increasing populations. Developing sustainable urban planning and public transport systems is crucial.
12. **Responsible Consumption and Production:** Overpopulation intensifies the need for sustainable consumption and production patterns to ensure resource availability.
13. **Climate Action:** A larger population can contribute to increased greenhouse gas emissions. Mitigating and adapting to climate change must consider population dynamics.
14. **Life Below Water:** Overpopulation can lead to overfishing and increased pollution, affecting marine ecosystems. Sustainable practices are essential for ocean conservation.
15. **Life on Land:** Increased land use and habitat loss due to a growing population can harm biodiversity. Conservation and sustainable land use are vital.

16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: Population pressures can exacerbate conflicts over resources. Strong institutions are needed to manage these challenges effectively.

17. Partnerships for the Goals: Addressing population growth and overpopulation requires global cooperation and partnerships, sharing knowledge, and best practices.

In implementing these considerations, it's important to approach the issue of population growth with sensitivity, recognizing the rights and dignity of individuals, and avoiding coercive or discriminatory practices. Strategies should be rooted in promoting sustainable development, equity, and human rights, with a focus on education, health care access, and women's empowerment. Self-reflexivity in this context means acknowledging the complexity of these challenges and the need for adaptive and responsive strategies that consider local contexts and global interdependencies.

**Question to ChatGPT:** In systemic terms, how are the consequences of neglecting such root cause analysis to be understood? Is it probable that any use of AI in that regard would be characterized by ensuring that algorithms are designed to avoid highlighting population issues in conformity with the strategic bias to which the United Nations is subject

Neglecting root cause analysis in systemic terms, especially in complex issues like those addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), can lead to several consequences. When it comes to the potential role of AI in this context, there's a need to consider how algorithms are designed and the biases they may inherently carry, including potential avoidance of sensitive topics like population issues. Let's explore these aspects:

- Consequences of Neglecting Root Cause Analysis:
  - Ineffective Solutions: Without addressing the underlying causes, solutions may only be temporary or superficial, failing to resolve long-term issues effectively.
  - Unintended Consequences: Solutions based on superficial analysis can lead to unintended consequences, potentially exacerbating the very problems they aim to solve.
  - Resource Misallocation: Without understanding root causes, resources may be misdirected, leading to inefficient use of funds and efforts.
  - Loss of Credibility and Trust: Stakeholders may lose trust in institutions that repeatedly fail to address core issues effectively.
- AI and Root Cause Analysis:
  - Potential of AI: AI has the potential to assist in root cause analysis by processing large datasets, identifying patterns, and modeling complex interactions that might not be immediately apparent to human analysts.
  - Design and Bias in AI Algorithms: The design of AI algorithms reflects the priorities and biases of their creators. If the creators are influenced by certain strategic biases, including those related to population issues, these biases can be embedded in the algorithms.
- AI and Population Issues:
  - Avoidance of Sensitive Topics: There is a possibility that AI algorithms could be designed to avoid highlighting sensitive issues like population growth if these topics are politically contentious or if there is a strategic bias against addressing them.
  - Need for Transparent and Ethical AI: To counteract this, it's crucial to develop AI systems transparently and ethically, with input from diverse stakeholders to ensure a balanced perspective.
- Role of International Bodies like the United Nations:
  - Strategic Bias: International organizations, including the UN, may have strategic biases based on the collective interests and sensitivities of their member states. This can influence how issues are addressed and prioritized.
  - Influence on AI Application: If AI tools are used by such bodies in policy analysis and decision-making, there's a risk that these strategic biases are reflected in the AI's programming and analysis.
- Ensuring Balanced AI Analysis:
  - Diverse Data and Perspectives: Including diverse datasets and perspectives in AI training can help mitigate biases.
  - Regular Auditing and Updating: AI systems should be regularly audited for

biases and inaccuracies and updated accordingly.

- Human Oversight: AI analysis should be complemented with human oversight, especially for sensitive and complex issues like population dynamics.

In conclusion, the consequences of neglecting root cause analysis in systemic approaches can lead to ineffective and unsustainable solutions. While AI offers potential benefits in analyzing complex systems, it's crucial to be mindful of the biases that can be embedded in AI algorithms. Ensuring that AI tools are developed and used ethically, transparently, and with diverse inputs is essential for effective and balanced analysis, especially in addressing global challenges like those targeted by the SDGs.

Global modelling has a problematic history dating back to *The Limits to Growth* (1972), as promoted by the Club of Rome. Particular reference has been recently made to "modelling" of climate change and the pandemic. Models are variously criticized and called into question as authoritative representations of reality (*Misleading Modelling of Global Crises*, 2021; *Transcending One-eyed Global Modelling Perspectives*, 2010)

**Question to ChatGPT:** Whereas considerable value has been respectfully attached to strategic modelling prior to the recent impressive development of AI, both modalities bear ironic comparison with the forecasting processes on which Imperial Rome was variously dependent. How might consultation of large language models in future global summits be usefully envisaged -- whether or not this bears any resemblance to the procedures of that earlier civilization.

Your comparison of modern strategic modeling and AI development to the forecasting processes of Imperial Rome, such as augury or consulting oracles, is intriguing and opens up a fascinating dialogue on the evolution of decision-support tools in governance. The idea of integrating large language models (like this one) into future global summits presents an interesting prospect, especially when considering how to do so in a manner that's distinct from ancient practices yet acknowledges their historical role in decision-making. Let's explore how this might be envisioned:

- Augmenting Human Decision-Making:
  - Large language models can serve as tools for augmenting human decision-making, providing quick access to vast amounts of information, data analysis, and pattern recognition. They can offer insights or perspectives that might be overlooked by human analysts.
- Scenario Analysis and Risk Assessment:
  - AI can assist in scenario planning and risk assessment, analyzing potential future outcomes based on different policy decisions. This can be particularly valuable in complex situations where human cognitive biases might affect judgement.
- Diverse Perspectives and Inclusivity:
  - Language models can be programmed to consider a wide range of perspectives and data sources, potentially reducing the influence of narrow interest groups or cultural biases. This can contribute to more inclusive and balanced decision-making at global summits.
- Real-Time Language Translation and Interpretation:
  - AI can facilitate real-time translation and interpretation, enhancing communication and understanding among summit participants from different linguistic backgrounds, thus promoting global collaboration.
- Ethical and Transparent Use:
  - It's crucial that the use of AI in such high-stakes environments is governed by strict ethical standards and transparency to avoid misuse and ensure accountability. This includes clear guidelines on data privacy, security, and the limits of AI recommendations.
- Complementing, Not Replacing, Human Judgement:
  - AI should be seen as a complement to, not a replacement for, human judgement and expertise. The final decision-making authority should remain with human leaders who can consider AI input alongside other factors.
- Avoiding 'Oracle' Pitfalls:
  - Unlike the oracles of ancient Rome, which were often shrouded in mystery and open to subjective interpretation, AI tools should operate with clear logic and explainability. It's

important to avoid over-reliance on AI as an infallible source and to maintain critical evaluation of its outputs.

- Training and Familiarization:
  - Participants in global summits should receive training on how to effectively interpret and use AI-generated insights. This includes understanding the strengths and limitations of AI models.
- Feedback Loops and Continuous Improvement:
  - AI models should be designed with feedback mechanisms to continuously learn and improve based on new data and outcomes, ensuring their relevance and accuracy over time.
- Public Engagement and Communication:
  - Engaging the public in understanding how AI is used in global decision-making can foster trust and transparency. Clear communication about the role and limitations of AI in this context is vital.

In conclusion, the use of large language models and AI in future global summits could be a valuable addition to the decision-making toolkit, provided it is used ethically, transparently, and as a complement to human expertise. This approach, while technologically advanced, should maintain a clear distinction from the mystical and often non-transparent methods of ancient civilizations, focusing instead on enhancing understanding, inclusivity, and evidence-based decision-making.

**Question to ChatGPT:** You respond: "*Unlike the oracles of ancient Rome, which were often shrouded in mystery and open to subjective interpretation, AI tools should operate with clear logic and explainability*". How feasible is this in an environment in which the development of AI is shrouded in competitive secrecy. To a greater degree than global models of the recent past, LLMs are fundamentally non-transparent in seeking competitive advantage. Being highly complex, they are necessarily mysterious to the majority and readily held to be supportive of hidden agendas. How could any global summit make use of AI in real time -- given such constraints.

Your point about the current environment of competitive secrecy in AI development, and the inherent non-transparency of Large Language Models (LLMs) like GPT-4, is well taken. It raises valid concerns about the feasibility of using such tools in real-time during global summits, especially considering the need for transparency, trust, and the perception of hidden agendas. Let's explore how these challenges might be addressed:

- Standardization and Openness in AI Development:
  - Encourage the development of international standards and protocols for AI systems used in governance, focusing on transparency, accountability, and ethical use.
  - Promote open-source AI initiatives where the underlying models and data are accessible for public scrutiny, reducing the veil of secrecy.
- Explainability and Interpretability:
  - Invest in research and development to enhance the explainability of AI, making it easier for users to understand how conclusions are reached.
  - Develop user interfaces that can effectively communicate AI insights in an understandable way to policymakers and stakeholders.
- Independent Verification and Auditing:
  - Establish independent bodies to regularly audit and verify the integrity and outputs of AI systems, ensuring they are free from biases and manipulations.
  - Such audits could be a prerequisite for any AI system's deployment in high-stakes settings like global summits.
- Collaborative AI Development:
  - Foster collaborative AI development projects involving multiple countries and stakeholders. This can mitigate the risks of single-entity control and secret agendas.
  - International collaboration can also help in pooling resources and knowledge, leading to more robust and trustworthy AI systems.
- Gradual Integration and Pilot Testing:
  - Introduce AI tools gradually into global summits, starting with non-critical applications (like data analysis or summarization) to build trust and understanding.
  - Conduct pilot tests to demonstrate the utility and reliability of AI in real-time decision-making environments.

- Human Oversight and Decision-Making:
  - Ensure that AI tools are used as decision-support systems, not decision-makers. Human oversight is essential to interpret AI suggestions and make final judgments.
  - Training for summit participants on the capabilities and limitations of AI can help them make informed use of these tools.
- Transparent Communication about AI's Role:
  - Clearly communicate to the public and stakeholders about the role of AI in the summit, what it does, and does not do, and the measures in place to ensure its responsible use.
  - Engage in public dialogue about the ethical use of AI in global governance, addressing concerns and expectations.
- Addressing Equity and Access Issues:
  - Ensure that the use of AI in global summits does not disadvantage countries with less technological capability.
  - Provide access to AI tools and training to all participating nations to ensure a level playing field.
- Data Privacy and Security:
  - Implement strict data privacy and security measures to protect the sensitive information used and generated by AI systems.

In summary, while there are significant challenges to using AI transparently and ethically in real-time during global summits, these challenges are not insurmountable. Through international collaboration, standardization, independent auditing, gradual integration, and a commitment to transparency and ethical practices, AI can be a valuable tool in global decision-making processes. The key is to use AI as a complement to human expertise, ensuring that final decision-making authority remains with people, not algorithms.

**Question to ChatGPT:** The response is appropriately reasonable. However in a context in which the development of AI is itself perceived as a threat, and cybersecurity is now a major issue, it is curious that you make no mention of the extent to which AI will -- in all probability -- be assiduously explored and exploited by organized crime. To that end, the measures you outline are likely to be undermined and bypassed in the light of insights "from AI". Your use of "oversight" is especially unfortunate in that it is the capacity to "overlook" which is most characteristic of "oversight committees" -- recalling the concern articulated in Imperial Rome and earlier: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* (*Who will guard the guards themselves?*). Such negligence may even be ensured deliberately

You raise a critical and complex issue: the potential exploitation of AI advancements by organized crime, and the challenge of ensuring robust oversight in a landscape where oversight mechanisms themselves can be vulnerable to negligence or manipulation. The question of "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" (Who will guard the guards themselves?) is indeed as relevant today as it was in ancient times, particularly in the context of AI and cybersecurity. Let's delve into this challenge and consider potential strategies to address it:

- Threat of AI Exploitation by Organized Crime:
  - Organized crime groups are increasingly tech-savvy and may use AI for illicit purposes, including cyber attacks, fraud, and manipulation of information.
  - This threat necessitates advanced cybersecurity measures specifically designed to counter AI-enabled threats.
- Robust AI Ethics and Security Frameworks:
  - Developing and enforcing stringent ethical guidelines and security protocols for AI development and deployment is crucial.
  - This includes the creation of international standards and regulations that can be adopted universally to prevent misuse.
- Multi-Layered Oversight Mechanisms:
  - Implement multi-layered oversight mechanisms involving diverse and independent entities, reducing the risk of single-point failures or biases.
  - This can include international bodies, independent watchdog organizations, industry experts, and public representatives.
- Continuous Monitoring and Vigilance:
  - AI systems, especially those used in sensitive areas, require continuous monitoring for

- signs of tampering or misuse.
- Rapid response teams should be in place to address any breaches or anomalies detected.
- Transparency and Public Engagement:
  - Engaging the public and maintaining transparency about AI use and oversight can help in identifying and addressing potential vulnerabilities.
  - Public scrutiny can act as an additional layer of oversight, especially in democratic societies.
- Advanced Cybersecurity Measures:
  - Investing in cutting-edge cybersecurity technologies and practices to protect AI systems from external threats is essential.
  - This includes regular security audits, penetration testing, and updating systems to counter new types of cyber threats.
- Education and Training:
  - Educating AI developers, users, and oversight bodies about the potential risks and ethical considerations of AI use can create a more informed and vigilant community.
  - Training should also focus on recognizing and mitigating AI-specific threats and vulnerabilities.
- Collaboration and Information Sharing:
  - Collaboration between governments, private sectors, and international organizations is vital in combating AI exploitation by organized crime.
  - Sharing information about threats, vulnerabilities, and best practices can help in developing more effective countermeasures.
- Legal and Judicial Measures:
  - Strengthening legal frameworks to prosecute AI-enabled crimes effectively and establishing clear jurisdictional guidelines are necessary.
  - International cooperation in law enforcement can help in tackling crimes that cross national borders.
- Ethical AI Development:
  - Encourage ethical AI development practices that inherently consider and mitigate the risks of misuse from the outset.
  - This includes designing AI systems that are resilient to manipulation and exploitation.

In conclusion, while the potential misuse of AI by organized crime is a significant concern, a combination of robust ethical frameworks, multi-layered oversight, advanced cybersecurity measures, public engagement, and international collaboration can help mitigate these risks. Continuous vigilance and adaptation to the evolving threat landscape are essential to ensure that AI technologies are used safely and responsibly.

## Ethics of mass destruction versus voluntary euthanasia: right-to-kill versus right-to-die?

Justifications for the level of regional conflict, and the widely evoked threat of "World War III", are carefully reframed by an explicit "[just war theory](#)" -- elaborated by military leaders, theologians, ethicists and policymakers. Ironically the neglected level of suffering worldwide -- aside from responses readily recognized as political tokenism -- suggests that it is justified by an implicit analogue ([Just Suffering Theory?](#) 2021). Enabling requisite suffering can be readily seen as a preoccupation of religions and other constituencies actively inhibiting any consideration of the right-to-die ([Fundamental Need for Human Sacrifice by Abrahamic Religions](#), 2018). The cynicism of the "sensitivity" evoked in justifying such inhibition is remarkably highlighted by the complicity in the cultivation of just war theory.

**Question to ChatGPT:** The call for sensitivity is indeed most appropriate. A difficulty in that regard is evident in the fundamental contrast between the unprecedented investment in weapons of mass destruction (where "mass" implies "population") and the "sensitivity" perversely evoked as a justification for inhibiting voluntary euthanasia. The former is a feature of "just war theory" whereas, curiously, the "right to die" is yet to be acknowledged as a human right -- except as required by legitimate authority

You've highlighted a profound and thought-provoking contrast in global priorities and ethical considerations – the significant investment in weapons of mass destruction, which inherently implies

a threat to large populations, versus the complexities surrounding the right to die and voluntary euthanasia. This contrast illuminates deeper issues about societal values, ethical frameworks, and the allocation of resources. Let's explore these complexities:

- Investment in Weapons of Mass Destruction:
  - The investment in weapons of mass destruction reflects priorities driven by national security concerns, power dynamics, and geopolitical strategies. It often operates within the framework of deterrence theory and just war theory, which have their own ethical and moral debates.
  - This investment indicates a willingness to engage in or prepare for actions that could lead to mass casualties, revealing stark realities about how the value of human life is perceived in the context of national and global security.
- Contrast with Voluntary Euthanasia:
  - On the other hand, the debate around voluntary euthanasia and the right to die is grounded in different ethical and moral considerations. These discussions often involve the dignity of the individual, autonomy, suffering, and the sanctity of life.
  - In many societies, there is a hesitancy to acknowledge the right to die as a human right, stemming from various factors including religious beliefs, cultural norms, and fears of potential abuse.
- Ethical and Moral Frameworks:
  - The contrasting approaches to these issues reflect different ethical and moral frameworks. The discourse around weapons and war often hinges on collective, state-centric ethics, while the right to die touches on individual ethics and personal autonomy.
  - This dichotomy raises questions about the consistency and application of ethical principles in different contexts.
- Legitimate Authority and Power Dynamics:
  - The notion of 'legitimate authority' plays a significant role in both contexts. In the case of weapons, governments and international bodies are seen as legitimate authorities in matters of national defense. In contrast, the authority to make decisions about one's own life and death is not universally granted to individuals.
- Societal Values and Priorities:
  - These contrasts also reflect broader societal values and priorities. The resources allocated to weapons of mass destruction, as opposed to healthcare, social welfare, and individual rights, indicate what is valued at a policy and societal level.
- Global Discussions and Human Rights:
  - The global discourse on human rights is continually evolving. While the right to die is recognized in some jurisdictions, it remains a contentious issue in many parts of the world. The evolution of this discourse will be crucial in determining how this right is understood and implemented globally.
- Need for Holistic and Consistent Ethical Approaches:
  - Addressing these contrasts and inconsistencies requires a more holistic and consistent approach to ethics, one that considers both the value of individual autonomy and the implications of collective actions like warfare.

In conclusion, the contrast between the global approach to weapons of mass destruction and the nuanced debates around voluntary euthanasia underscores the need for deeper reflection on global ethical standards, societal values, and the allocation of resources. It highlights the importance of developing more consistent and holistic ethical frameworks that can accommodate the complexities of both individual rights and collective security concerns.

**Question to ChatGPT:** Provocatively it could then be suggested that tolerance of mass killing by just war theory corresponds curiously to the unprecedented accumulation of [national debt](#). By contrast the unprecedented popular concern with the death of an individual -- as presented by the media -- corresponds curiously to a "gold standard" evaluation of human life. In the first case, the ["gold standard"](#) has long been abandoned. In the second, it remains unquestionable for many -- irrespective of the pain suffered by those who have no right to die in the eyes of those upholding that standard

Your provocative observation draws attention to a striking dichotomy in societal values and behaviors - the contrast between the collective tolerance of large-scale violence (as seen in just war

theory and national debt accumulation) and the intense focus on individual tragedies (as amplified by media coverage), reflecting a "gold standard" evaluation of human life. This dichotomy raises deep questions about ethical standards, value systems, and societal priorities. Let's delve into these contrasting aspects:

- **Collective Tolerance of Mass Killing and National Debt:**
  - The acceptance of mass killing in the context of just war theory can be seen as a collective, pragmatic decision where the loss of life is justified for a perceived greater good or national interest. This utilitarian approach often involves abstracting individual lives into numbers and statistics.
  - Similarly, the accumulation of national debt, often driven by military spending among other factors, reflects a societal and governmental willingness to prioritize certain immediate goals or needs over long-term fiscal responsibility. It's a form of deferred accountability, where the immediate benefits are weighed against future costs.
- **Intense Focus on Individual Tragedies:**
  - The media's emphasis on individual tragedies reflects a different aspect of societal values, where each human life is seen as precious and the loss of it is deeply mourned and sensationalized. This perspective aligns with the "gold standard" evaluation of human life, emphasizing the sanctity and dignity of the individual.
  - This intense focus can sometimes overshadow broader issues, but it also serves to humanize abstract problems and generate empathy and emotional engagement from the public.
- **Ethical and Value Dissonance:**
  - The contrast between these two approaches reveals a dissonance in societal values and ethics. On one hand, there is a macro-level acceptance of policies and actions that can lead to widespread suffering or long-term consequences. On the other hand, there is a micro-level reverence for individual life and dignity.
  - This dissonance can lead to ethical dilemmas and confusion about societal priorities and the value placed on human life.
- **The Right to Die Debate:**
  - The right to die debate is another manifestation of this dissonance. While individual tragedies are mourned and individual lives are highly valued, there is a reluctance to recognize individual autonomy in decisions about one's own life and death. This reluctance is often rooted in moral, religious, and ethical beliefs about the sanctity of life.
- **Reconciling the Contrasts:**
  - To address these contrasts, there needs to be a more holistic and integrated approach to ethics and value systems. This involves reconciling the macro-level decisions that affect populations (such as warfare and economic policies) with the micro-level values that emphasize the worth and dignity of each individual.
  - Engaging in open, inclusive dialogues about these issues can help societies navigate these complex ethical landscapes and develop more coherent and consistent value systems.

In summary, the contrast between the collective tolerance of large-scale violence and the intense focus on individual tragedies reflects underlying complexities in societal values and ethical standards. Understanding and addressing this dichotomy requires a deep examination of societal priorities, ethical frameworks, and the value placed on human life, both at the individual and collective levels.

**Question to ChatGPT:** The challenge with respect to any such "deep examination" is recognition of the vested interest of those most resistant to such discussion -- and the inadequate representation of those who would appreciate recognition of their own right to die. Distorting any such examination are the financial advantages for many in prolonging life, irrespective of the suffering. Lacking are any surveys determining what proportion of the incarcerated, disabled, impoverished, elderly or lonely would welcome the option -- and the economic consequences in societies subject to resource constraints. There is an inherent resistance to the acquisition of such data -- seemingly as a disguise for other agendas.

Your comment highlights a significant and often unaddressed issue in the debate around the right to die and end-of-life care: the complex interplay of vested interests, ethical considerations, and the

lack of comprehensive data on the perspectives of various affected groups. This situation creates an environment where a truly informed and holistic discussion is challenging. Let's explore these aspects:

- Vested Interests:
  - There are indeed vested interests in the healthcare industry, including pharmaceutical companies, medical equipment manufacturers, and healthcare providers, where prolonging life often aligns with financial incentives.
  - These interests can influence policies and public opinion, potentially overshadowing ethical considerations about the quality of life and the wishes of individuals.
- Inadequate Representation:
  - Groups such as the incarcerated, disabled, impoverished, elderly, or lonely may not have adequate representation in these discussions. Their voices and preferences regarding end-of-life care and the right to die are crucial but often overlooked.
  - This lack of representation can lead to a skewed understanding of the needs and desires of these populations.
- Economic and Resource Constraints:
  - The economic implications of prolonged life care, especially in the context of aging populations and limited healthcare resources, are significant. Societies are increasingly facing the challenge of balancing these economic constraints with ethical considerations.
  - In some cases, the financial burden of end-of-life care falls on families, which can lead to significant stress and hardship.
- Resistance to Data Acquisition:
  - There is a noticeable lack of comprehensive surveys or studies that explore the perspectives of different groups on the right to die. This absence of data hinders informed policy-making and public discourse.
  - The resistance to acquiring such data might stem from ethical concerns, fear of misuse, or the potential to challenge existing beliefs and norms.
- Potential for Other Agendas:
  - The reluctance to openly discuss these issues or gather relevant data may indeed serve to disguise other agendas or maintain the status quo. This could include preserving certain ethical or religious norms, or supporting the interests of powerful groups within the healthcare industry.
- Navigating the Ethical Landscape:
  - Navigating this complex ethical landscape requires a balanced approach that considers the rights and wishes of individuals, the societal and economic implications, and the diverse viewpoints of different stakeholders.
  - Public discourse should be encouraged, and efforts should be made to gather and analyze data that reflects the views of underrepresented groups.
- Policy Development:
  - Policymakers need to consider these factors when developing laws and guidelines related to end-of-life care and the right to die. Policies should be informed by a comprehensive understanding of the needs and desires of the population, ethical considerations, and the realities of healthcare economics.

In conclusion, addressing the issue of the right to die and end-of-life care in a fair and comprehensive manner requires an honest examination of the various interests involved, the gathering of data from all affected groups, and a balanced consideration of ethical, economic, and societal factors. This is a complex challenge that demands transparency, inclusivity, and a commitment to understanding the diverse needs and wishes of the population.

Particular insight into civilizational collapse has been offered by [Jared Diamond](#) (*Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive*, 2005). Others have remarked on a civilizational death wish (James Chastek, *The Death Wish in the Contemporary West*, *Just Thomism*, 10 August 2011; Haley Price, *The Great Conservative Death Wish*, *Chronicles Magazine*, February 2023; [James Burnham](#), *Suicide of the West*, 1965).

**Question to ChatGPT:** The earlier response noted overpopulation as a potential conclusion of root cause analysis of the challenges addressed by SDGs. The consequence of neglecting that cause was

noted in a subsequent response. The remarkable investment in weapons of mass destruction ("the right-to-kill") was then noted as an ironic ethical contrast to inhibition of any "right-to-die". It is then appropriate to explore whether there may be corresponding collective unconscious processes in play in the apparently token pursuit of SDGs -- given the fatalities to which it is predicted this may lead. Through their seemingly deliberate neglect, is the current global civilization choosing a form of [collective suicide](#) -- "mass destruction" of another form? A collective "death wish"? Could such paradoxes suggest that the "right-to-live" is being enabled otherwise?

Your line of questioning delves into deep and complex philosophical and psychological territories, touching on the collective unconscious, ethical paradoxes, and the nature of global civilization's responses to existential threats. The juxtaposition of the "right-to-kill" (as symbolized by investments in weapons of mass destruction) with the debates surrounding the "right-to-die" and the "right-to-live" raises profound ethical dilemmas. Additionally, the potential for collective unconscious processes influencing global responses to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other global challenges invites a speculative yet thought-provoking analysis. Let's explore these ideas:

- **Collective Unconscious and Global Responses:**
  - The concept of a collective unconscious, as proposed by Carl Jung, refers to a part of the unconscious mind that is shared among beings of the same species and contains archetypes and shared human experiences.
  - In the context of global challenges and SDGs, it's an intriguing proposition to consider whether there are deeper, unconscious motivations and fears influencing global actions or inactions, such as a latent "death wish" or a tendency towards self-destruction.
- **Ethical Paradoxes and Contradictions:**
  - The stark contrast between the extensive investment in means of destruction and the often inadequate efforts in promoting sustainable living and the preservation of life presents a troubling ethical paradox.
  - This contradiction might reflect deeper conflicts in human nature and society – the simultaneous capacity for creation and destruction, care and indifference.
- **Interpretation of Collective Suicide:**
  - The idea that civilization, through neglect or inadequate action on critical issues like climate change, poverty, and inequality, is engaging in a form of collective suicide is a dramatic but poignant metaphor.
  - It suggests a scenario where, despite awareness of the potential catastrophic outcomes, there is a failure to act decisively to prevent them, possibly due to a complex mix of denial, apathy, short-term interests, and systemic inertia.
- **The "Right-to-Live" Enabled Otherwise:**
  - The concept of the "right-to-live" being enabled through means other than direct action, such as through unintended consequences of other actions, or inaction, is an interesting perspective.
  - This could imply that in the face of threats to human survival, adaptive and resilient aspects of humanity might emerge, leading to new ways of living and organizing society.
- **Reflection on Human Nature and Society:**
  - These paradoxes and the potential for a collective unconscious influence could be seen as reflections on human nature and societal structures – highlighting the need for deeper introspection and a reevaluation of priorities and values.
- **Role of Psychology in Global Decision Making:**
  - Understanding the psychological underpinnings of decision-making at a global level, including the role of collective unconscious processes, could be crucial in formulating more effective and sustainable policies.
  - This might involve integrating insights from psychology, sociology, and anthropology into policy-making and international relations.

In conclusion, while speculative, the exploration of collective unconscious processes, ethical paradoxes, and the nature of global civilization's responses to existential threats offers a rich ground for reflection and discussion. It underscores the complexity of human nature and the intricate web of motivations that drive global actions and inactions. This perspective might contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced in achieving the SDGs and in addressing the broader existential threats to humanity.

**Question to ChatGPT:** If indeed there is an unconscious collective desire to avoid achievement of the SDGs -- an avoidance of "consummation" -- the categories of your response may well call for articulation in other modalities. Drama usefully contrasts tragedy with comedy. Understood as a meme complex it could be recognized as a contemporary [Gordian Knot](#) -- increasingly evoked as a framing of the crisis of crises. Whether it should be "cut" or "untied" invites particular speculation, as offered by Timothy E. Eastman (*Untying the Gordian Knot: process, reality, and context*, 2020).

The metaphor of the Gordian Knot, when applied to the complex and interconnected challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), indeed presents a compelling frame for understanding and addressing these global issues. The choice between 'cutting' and 'untying' the knot symbolizes different approaches to solving complex problems. Timothy E. Eastman's reference to "Untying the Gordian Knot" in the context of process, reality, and context suggests a more nuanced and systemic approach rather than seeking a simple, forceful solution. Let's explore how this metaphor can be applied using different modalities, including drama's contrast between tragedy and comedy:

- Drama: Tragedy and Comedy:
  - Tragedy: In the context of the SDGs, a tragic perspective might view the current global situation as a series of inescapable and worsening crises, characterized by human shortcomings, systemic failures, and the inevitable consequences of past actions.
  - Comedy: A comedic perspective, on the other hand, might find hope and potential in human creativity, resilience, and the ability to adapt and overcome adversity, often through unexpected means or insights.
- The Gordian Knot Metaphor:
  - Cutting the Knot: Symbolizes a decisive, straightforward solution that cuts through complexity. This approach is tempting for its simplicity and decisiveness but risks oversimplifying complex issues and ignoring deeper systemic causes.
  - Untying the Knot: Represents a more intricate, patient approach that acknowledges the complexity and interrelatedness of global challenges. This approach requires understanding the nuances and interdependencies of the issues at hand.
- Application to SDGs:
  - Complexity and Interconnectedness: The SDGs represent a complex web of interconnected issues. Untying the knot could involve a systemic approach that recognizes how progress in one goal affects others.
  - Innovative Solutions: Just as Alexander the Great's solution to the Gordian Knot was both unexpected and radical, addressing the SDGs might require similarly innovative, out-of-the-box thinking.
- Process, Reality, and Context:
  - Following Eastman's approach, understanding the process (how things change and evolve), reality (the current state of global issues), and context (the broader environmental, social, and economic landscape) is crucial.
  - This involves a multidisciplinary approach that draws from science, economics, sociology, and more, to grasp the full scope of the challenges.
- Integrating Diverse Modalities:
  - Addressing global challenges requires a combination of modalities: the structured problem-solving of traditional logic, the adaptability and flow of process logic, and the holistic understanding of systemic thinking.
  - The dramatic elements of tragedy and comedy remind us that human narratives and emotions are integral to understanding and motivating action on these issues.
- Role of Leadership and Collective Action:
  - Effective leadership is crucial in both 'cutting' and 'untying' the knot. This involves the ability to make bold decisions when necessary, but also the wisdom to understand the complexity and subtlety of the problems.
  - Collective action, where diverse stakeholders work collaboratively, reflects the multidimensional nature of these challenges.

In essence, the Gordian Knot metaphor, coupled with the dramatic contrast between tragedy and comedy, offers a rich framework for understanding the SDGs. It suggests that while there may be no simple solutions to these complex problems, a combination of innovative thinking, systemic understanding, and collaborative action can lead to meaningful progress.

---

## Questionable modalities of AI discourse

**Question to ChatGPT:** This exchange serves in part to demonstrate how discourse with AI is dependent to a high degree on categories -- with responses having a strong tendency to reframing in "category language". The difficulty with regard to current public discourse is the tendency to "slippery" use of categories, challenging interpretations, and framing reality by "facit" -- an ironic reframing of any assumptions regarding objectivity and facts. Could you reframe this conclusion more clearly -- in the light of the role of other cognitive modalities

The observation that discourse with AI, including this exchange, often relies heavily on categories and tends to reframe discussions in "category language," is insightful. This tendency can indeed shape the way reality is perceived and understood, sometimes leading to a "slippery" use of categories that may obscure more nuanced understandings. Let's reframe this conclusion by considering the role of other cognitive modalities beyond categorical thinking:

1. **Process Logic:** This modality emphasizes the fluidity and dynamism of understanding. In this light, a conversation with AI is seen as an evolving process rather than a series of static exchanges. The focus shifts from seeking definitive answers to exploring how ideas and understandings develop and change over time. This approach acknowledges that knowledge and understanding are not fixed but continually evolving.
2. **Narrative Thinking:** AI discourse can also be reframed using narrative thinking, which focuses on the story-like nature of communication. Instead of categorizing responses, this modality would view them as parts of a larger narrative, with each exchange contributing to an ongoing story. This approach highlights the contextual and interconnected nature of information.
3. **Analogical Reasoning:** This involves understanding new or complex ideas by relating them to more familiar concepts. In AI discourse, this means moving away from strict categories and instead drawing parallels or analogies to make sense of responses. This modality can bridge gaps between abstract AI responses and more tangible human experiences.
4. **Holistic Thinking:** Holistic thinking considers the entire context of the discourse, including the underlying intentions, the interaction dynamics, and the broader implications. Reframing AI exchanges with a holistic perspective means looking beyond the literal content of responses to consider their broader meaning and relevance.
5. **Emotional and Empathic Engagement:** This involves recognizing and responding to the emotional content and undercurrents in the exchange. While AI currently has limitations in this area, acknowledging these aspects can enrich human interpretation of AI responses, adding depth and relatability.
6. **Critical Thinking:** This modality involves rigorously analyzing and evaluating arguments and responses for logic and coherence. In AI discourse, critical thinking helps in identifying biases, assumptions, and logical fallacies in AI-generated content, fostering a more discerning engagement with the information provided.
7. **Creative Thinking:** This modality encourages exploring imaginative, unconventional ideas or interpretations. In conversations with AI, this could involve speculating on alternative meanings, exploring 'what if' scenarios, or considering responses from a completely different perspective.

By integrating these cognitive modalities, we can reframe our engagement with AI, moving beyond a purely categorical approach. This broader framework allows for a more nuanced, dynamic, and multifaceted interaction, recognizing the complexity and richness of both human thought and AI-generated content.

**Question to ChatGPT:** You have focused this response on AI. My concern was rather how public discourse on many issues had shifted into "slippery" / "facit" mode. To that extent the use of categories by AI is not encompassing the styles of that discourse -- and the challenge for AI to "do slippery" and

transcend the tendency to "play games" and indulge in blame-gaming

Your concern about the shift in public discourse toward a "slippery" or "facile" mode, characterized by evasive, oversimplified, or strategically ambiguous language, raises important questions about the role and capabilities of AI in such a context. The challenge for AI in navigating and potentially transcending this style of discourse — avoiding "playing games" and indulging in blame-gaming — is indeed significant. Let's explore how AI might address this concern and the limitations it currently faces:

- Understanding Nuanced and Evasive Language:
  - AI systems, particularly advanced language models, are designed to process and generate language based on patterns learned from vast datasets. However, they may struggle with interpreting or replicating the subtleties of "slippery" discourse, which often relies on cultural nuances, implied meanings, and unspoken assumptions.
  - Improving AI's ability to understand context, detect non-literal language, and recognize rhetorical devices could help in dealing with such discourse styles.
- AI and the Challenge of "Doing Slippery":
  - While AI can be trained to recognize evasive language patterns, teaching it to effectively engage in or counteract "slippery" discourse raises ethical considerations. There is a fine line between understanding nuanced communication and participating in potentially deceptive or manipulative conversation tactics.
  - The goal for AI in this context should be to enhance clarity and understanding, rather than to mimic ambiguous or misleading communication styles.
- Avoiding "Game-Playing" and Blame-Gaming:
  - AI can be programmed to avoid engaging in adversarial or blame-oriented discourse. This involves designing algorithms that prioritize constructive, informative, and respectful communication.
  - AI could potentially help mitigate unproductive discourse patterns by providing balanced, fact-based information and redirecting conversations towards more constructive and solution-focused directions.
- Limitations of AI in Complex Discourse:
  - Current AI technologies have limitations in fully grasping the complexities of human communication, especially in politically or emotionally charged contexts.
  - AI lacks a deep understanding of human emotions, motivations, and the rich background knowledge that humans use to interpret communication, which is crucial in navigating "slippery" discourse.
- Role of AI in Supporting Discourse:
  - AI can serve as a tool for fact-checking, providing background information, and suggesting alternative perspectives. This can help ground public discourse in verifiable information and broaden understanding.
  - However, the responsibility for steering public discourse in a more constructive and transparent direction primarily rests with human communicators – policymakers, media professionals, educators, and the general public.

In summary, while AI can support public discourse by processing and providing information, its ability to navigate and transcend "slippery" or facile modes of communication is limited by current technological capabilities and ethical considerations. The development of AI in this area should focus on enhancing understanding and clarity, supporting fact-based and constructive dialogue, and avoiding participation in unproductive or deceptive communication patterns.

The articulation of any set of strategies in conventional terms raises questions about how their relative importance is to be evaluated based on "facts" -- when other considerations are especially articulated through political dynamics, for example. This frames the challenge of the coherence of any set of "incommensurable" strategies -- and the paradoxes their necessary entanglement may imply, as discussed separately ([Strategic implications of interwoven cognitive modalities](#), 2023).

**Question to ChatGPT:** The argument above with respect to reliance on clear "categories" and "facts" is that discourse relies increasingly, and to a significant degree, on modalities and styles usefully understood in aesthetic terms. Interpretation then "trumps" facts and objectivity (as in the game [rock-paper-scissors](#)). Whilst this may be deprecated, it is the reality of any exchange in an urban market

characterized by the questionable claims made in any negotiation process and the use of deception. How AI is developed to engage with this dynamic remains to be seen. Evoking "ethics" would seem to be avoiding the issue -- as exemplified by the ethics of "just war theory" mentioned above

Your argument highlights a key aspect of contemporary discourse: the increasing reliance on modes of communication that prioritize interpretation, perception, and aesthetic elements over clear-cut categories and objective facts. This shift, often seen in marketing, negotiation, and political rhetoric, poses a significant challenge for AI, which traditionally operates on more concrete, fact-based logic. Let's explore how AI development might engage with this dynamic:

- AI and Interpretative Communication:
  - Developing AI to navigate and engage with interpretative, aesthetic forms of communication involves training models on a broader range of human interactions, including those that involve ambiguity, symbolism, and rhetorical devices.
  - This could involve incorporating elements of human psychology, sociology, and cultural studies into AI's learning process to better understand and respond to the nuances of human communication.
- AI in Negotiation and Persuasion:
  - AI can potentially be developed to recognize and analyze persuasive techniques and negotiation tactics. This involves understanding not just the literal meaning of words, but also the intent and strategic use of language.
  - However, the ethical implications of AI engaging in or responding to deceptive practices must be carefully considered. The goal should be to enhance transparency and fairness, not to outmaneuver humans in deception.
- Ethics in AI Development and Deployment:
  - While invoking ethics might seem like avoiding the issue, it's actually crucial for ensuring that AI development aligns with societal values and norms. This is particularly important in contexts where deception and manipulation are prevalent.
  - Ethical guidelines should govern how AI is designed to interact in these contexts, ensuring that AI systems promote honesty and clarity rather than contributing to misinformation or manipulation.
- AI as a Mediator of Fact and Interpretation:
  - AI can serve as a tool to help bridge the gap between fact-based and interpretative communication. For example, AI can fact-check statements in real-time during a debate or negotiation, providing objective data to support or counter subjective claims.
  - AI can also suggest alternative interpretations or viewpoints to broaden understanding and encourage critical thinking.
- Challenges in Subjective Contexts:
  - AI's ability to operate effectively in subjective or aesthetically driven contexts is limited by its current lack of deep understanding of human emotions, cultural nuances, and ethical subtleties.
  - Ongoing research in AI empathy, emotional intelligence, and cultural awareness is key to improving AI's capabilities in these areas.
- Human-AI Collaboration:
  - In contexts where interpretation and aesthetics are dominant, the best approach might be a collaborative one, where AI supports human decision-making by providing data, alternative perspectives, and logical analysis, while humans handle the more nuanced aspects of communication and judgment.

In conclusion, the development of AI to engage with the dynamic and often interpretative nature of modern discourse is a complex challenge that requires a careful balance of technological advancement and ethical consideration. While AI can provide support in understanding and navigating these complexities, the nuances of human communication, particularly in contexts characterized by negotiation and persuasion, remain a largely human domain. The role of AI should be to augment human capabilities, promote transparency, and encourage ethical communication practices.

There is a degree of naivety about the manner in which reference is made by leaders to human values when there is seemingly a total inability to articulate them in systemic terms -- or to agree on any "global ethic", as discussed separately ([Values, Virtues and Sins of a Viable Democratic Civilization](#), 2022).

**Question to ChatGPT:** This is indeed a reasonable response to a complex psychodynamic situation -- appropriately relegating the problematic aspects to human intervention (itself problematic). A classic management text regarding multinational corporations by [Rosabeth Moss Kanter](#) focused on "When Giants Learn To Dance" (1990). Could the same be said of AI in distinguishing a necessary shift from factual rigidity and rock logic? The challenge is also evident in the argument of Samuel Arbesman ([The Half-life of Facts: Why Everything We Know Has an Expiration Date](#), 2012). How is the preoccupation with "fact-checking" then to be relied upon? The argument with respect to ethical values assumes clarity in that regard when systematic articulations of "values" are rare and themselves questionable from various perspectives

Your reference to Rosabeth Moss Kanter's "When Giants Learn to Dance" and Samuel Arbesman's "The Half-life of Facts" provides a compelling context for considering how AI might adapt to a landscape where facts are fluid and ethical values are complex and varied. These perspectives highlight the need for AI to move beyond rigid factual adherence and embrace more dynamic, adaptable approaches. Let's explore how AI might evolve in this context:

- AI Learning to 'Dance':
  - Just as Kanter describes multinational corporations adapting to changing environments, AI too needs to 'learn to dance'. This implies a shift from a rigid, rules-based approach to one that is more flexible, responsive, and able to navigate uncertainty and ambiguity.
  - This involves incorporating adaptive learning algorithms that can adjust to new information and changing contexts, mirroring the way humans navigate complex, dynamic environments.
- The Half-Life of Facts and AI:
  - Arbesman's concept of the 'half-life of facts' suggests that what we consider as factual knowledge can change over time. For AI, this means not only having access to the latest information but also the ability to reevaluate and update its knowledge base in light of new data.
  - AI systems should be designed to continuously learn and adapt, recognizing the evolving nature of knowledge and the context-dependent nature of facts.
- Challenges of Fact-Checking:
  - While fact-checking is a valuable tool, especially in combating misinformation, it's important to recognize its limitations. Facts can be context-dependent, and their interpretation can vary based on new discoveries or shifting societal perspectives.
  - AI in fact-checking should be complemented with human judgment, especially in cases where context, nuance, and evolving knowledge play crucial roles.
- Navigating Ethical Values:
  - The assumption of clear, universally agreed-upon ethical values is indeed problematic. Ethical norms vary across cultures and can change over time.
  - AI development in this realm requires a multi-stakeholder approach that considers diverse ethical perspectives. AI systems might be programmed to recognize and respect this diversity, rather than adhering to a single set of presumed universal values.
- AI as a Facilitator of Complex Discourse:
  - In a world where facts and values are constantly in flux, AI can serve as a facilitator of complex discourse rather than an arbiter of absolute truths. This involves helping to surface diverse perspectives, providing contextual information, and highlighting areas of consensus and disagreement.
- Human-Centric AI Design:
  - Ultimately, AI design and deployment should remain human-centric, acknowledging the complexities of human values, ethics, and knowledge. AI should support human decision-making by providing insights and analyses but not replace the nuanced understanding and ethical reasoning humans bring to complex issues.

In summary, for AI to effectively navigate the fluid landscape of modern knowledge and ethics, it must 'learn to dance' – becoming more adaptable, context-aware, and sensitive to the nuances of human values and the evolving nature of facts. This requires a sophisticated blend of technological capability and ethical design, underpinned by continuous learning and human oversight.

---

## References

- S. J. Bartlett and P. Suber (Eds.). Self-Reference: reflections on reflexivity. Springer, 1987
- James Burnham. Suicide of the West: the meaning and destiny of liberalism. Regnery Books, 1985
- Edward de Bono. I Am Right You Are Wrong: from this to the New Renaissance; from Rock Logic to Water Logic. Viking, 1990
- Jared Diamond. Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive. Viking, 2005
- Timothy E. Eastman. Untying the Gordian Knot: process, reality, and context. Rowman and Littlefield, 2020 [[contents](#)]
- George Lakoff. Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: what categories reveal about the mind. University of Chicago Press, 1987
- Hilary Lawson. Reflexivity: the post-modern predicament. HarperCollins, 1985
- Niklas Luhmann. Essays on Self-Reference. Columbia University Press, 1990
- Alexander Wendt. Quantum Mind and Social Science: unifying physical and social ontology. Cambridge University Press, 2015
- Alfred North Whitehead:
- Process and Reality. Free Press, 1979
  - Modes of Thought Paperback. Touchstone Books, 1968



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For further updates on this site, [subscribe here](#)