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Paradoxes of Durable Peace, Heaven and a Sustainable Lifestyle

Mysterious dynamics fundamental to hopeful anticipation of enduring viability

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Introduction

There is a widespread familiarity with the aspiration to "peace in our times". Some form of equivalent is anticipated by many in the afterlife -- a "heavenly peace". The condition may well be imaginatively associated to some degree with holidays and retirement. It takes particular form in the expectation of the outcome of marriage -- "living happily ever after", as widely celebrated in fictional endings. There are echoes of these expectations and aspirations in reference to sustainability. A primary characteristic of such expectation is its enduring nature -- over the longer term -- even eternity in the case of heaven. Sustainability is translated into French as "*développement durable*". All these are a focus of hope, inviting speculation by "hope-mongers", especially in time of crisis -- the "light at the end of the tunnel".

Some sense of the commonality calling for attention is the publicised declaration by President Macron of France, on the occasion of his historic visit to President Xi of China, namely that the objective of any negotiation must be "*a durable peace that respects internationally recognized borders and avoids all forms of escalation*" (*Xi and Macron Call for Ukraine Peace Talks, but the Path Is Murky, The New York Times*, 12 April 2023).

Curiously missing from all these imagined possibilities is consideration of the nature of any activity or dynamic with which the enduring experience might be associated -- and by which it might be sustained. Religious guides may offer sermons on the nature of heaven -- especially in contrast to hell -- but with little sense of the sustainability of the experience, as with sitting "on the right hand of God". Reference may be made to heavenly choirs and possible participation in them. There may be some suggestion of engaging in the eternal war against God's enemies -- more comprehensible in the light of the familiarity with battles framed in that way at present.

Although the challenge of the afterlife may be dismissed as hypothetical and a matter of superstition, the question acquires much greater reality with respect to holidays and the possibility that they may be associated with particular problems and unwelcome stresses -- with some very happy to return home. Family gatherings on holiday occasions are acknowledged to be a potential source of tension and stress. Potentially even more problematic is any well-earned retirement, and how time is then to be spent -- even in the most ideal environments. To the extent that many elites are able to avoid the conventional stresses of work, their challenge may also be how to occupy their days -- especially when resources are no constraint (*Strategies of Hyper-Elites as Admired and Deprecated*, 2022).

Other than by implication and allusion, the marital realities of living "happily ever after" do not invite much attention -- in contrast to the high level of divorce (when this is permitted). Degrees of infidelity are also indicative of failure to give meaningful content to "ever after" or "until death do us part".

These various situations can be considered of limited relevance when the urgent collective preoccupation is with achieving sustainability.

Here too, however, it remains mysterious how fulfilling and enduring is a lifestyle held to be sustainable -- whether for an individual, a collective, or global civilization. Curiously no experiments appear to have been undertaken on the durability of sustainable lifestyles. This could be readily assumed to be research of no great complexity, especially if resources are no constraint for the experiment. It is however possible to refer appreciatively to selected long-standing communities typically upheld as indicative of durable dynamics. Less evident is their seemingly limited attraction and replicability -- with a tendency of a younger generation to leave them -- inexplicably? The point is however readily made that ideal environments are vulnerable to external forces which ensure their demise -- an only too convenient excuse?

Given what appears to be missing in the imaginative exploration of what is deemed to be so highly desirable, the question here is whether there are paradoxes to be acknowledged with respect to particular conditions or in common with all of them. Whilst envisaging a heavenly afterlife may be deemed by some as somewhat ridiculous -- despite widespread commitment to such belief -- that of retirement (a form of socio-economic afterlife) is a concern for many in an ageing population. For many, the challenge of living "happily ever after" is one that is then widely encountered -- if only through recognition of the problematic condition of ageing relatives.

If there are learnings from this apparent failure of imagination, might they indeed be relevant to enabling sustainable lifestyles as envisaged by the UN's 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#), and notably to the emerging consideration of [Inner Development Goals](#)? Of potential interest is the possibility that such learnings are indeed associated with paradoxes, with those more explicable with respect to sustainability offering implications for the imagination of an enduring peace and for any heavenly equivalent.

Ironically it could be asked whether people are more preoccupied with sustainability, peace or heaven -- or simply on enduring their daily lives in hopeful anticipation of the proverbial "light at the end of the tunnel".

The emphasis here is on the presentation of insights into the associated paradoxes from disparate perspectives. The focus is on the under-explored complementarity between a pattern of aspirations of what constitute four [strange attractors](#) -- given the paradoxes with which they are variously associated. Realization of these aspirations is a focus of hopeful anticipation -- itself seemingly paradoxical -- evoking a need for particular vigilance. The fourfold pattern is contrasted by another --configuring conflict, hell, chaos and despair -- by which the aspirations of the first are challenged and negated. There is the further possibility that these aspirations might be appropriately explored as [hyperobjects](#).

Paradoxes of sustainability

It is perhaps surprising that it is concern with the relatively tangible recent focus on sustainability which evokes the most articulated insight into the paradoxes associated with aspirations to the "[everlasting](#)". These are best summarized by the following (with the term "[paradox](#)" highlighted for reader convenience).

Jason Jay, et al: [Navigating the Paradoxes of Sustainability](#) (*The Oxford Handbook of Organizational Paradox*, 2017):

“Sustainability” is a domain of theory and practice in which people seek "win-win" opportunities for business and society, short- and long-term prosperity, humans and the natural environment. Lurking within the concept are some challenging **paradoxes** surrounding these parts and wholes of social systems that lead to tragedies of the commons. These **paradoxes** become salient when natural and organizational resources become scarce, when diverse societal stakeholders give voice to their interests and perspectives, and when efforts at organizational change bring these latent concerns to light. As people navigate these **paradoxes** of sustainability, they can manage them defensively, or actively engage **paradox** toward two positive outcomes. One is trade-off-breaking innovation that achieves win-win solutions. The other is flourishing of people who realize their contradictory sets of cares and motivations. Achieving the goals of the sustainability paradigm may therefore require "champions of ambivalence" who foster paradoxical thinking and action in organizations.

[The Paradox of Sustainability](#) (*Medium*, 21 January 2014):

A number of contradictions are apparent: sustainability advocates have deemed exponential population growth as unsustainable, but the related economic circumstance is not addressed; ironically, sustainable concepts promote population control but no consideration is afforded to the detrimental economic effect and subsequent decrease in standards of living. Sustainable standards of living have not been defined, assuming this equates to lower standards of living, such concepts will not readily be accepted.

Daniela Argento, et al: [The Facets of the Sustainability Paradox](#) (*Meditari Accountancy Research*, 30, 2022, 7):

This paper aims to examine why the sustainability **paradox** exists and how it unfolds by focusing on intraorganizational dynamics. It explores how organizational actors perceive and make sense of sustainability and thereby contribute to the sustainability **paradox**...The sustainability **paradox** comprises various facets. Directors and middle managers interpret sustainability differently depending on their role within the organization and their perceptions of the concept itself. Different interpretations thus occur within and across organizational levels and functions, impacting how sustainability is implemented and monitored. The use of parallel management control systems (MCSs) reflects multiple and fragmented sensemaking, which explains the facets of the sustainability **paradox**... Organizations claiming commitment to sustainability must establish communication forms on the practicalities of sustainability throughout the organization to stimulate shared sensemaking and the design and use of inclusive MCSs. This paper explains why and how organizations unconsciously enact various facets of the sustainability **paradox**.

Paige Brown: *The "Sustainability" Paradox: interview with Paul Ehrlich* (*Scientific American*, 10 July 2012):

"You can't negotiate with the environment," Ehrlich said. "A standard footprint analysis shows that if you want to be sustainable with the kind of civilization we have now – that is with seven billion people, about a billion of them hungry and about another two billion living more or less in misery – you have to have one and a half Earths." According to Ehrlich, humans are not living on the interest from Earth's natural capital, but rather on the capital itself. We can't change the physics of climate and the laws of nature, he points out, but we can change our social and economic systems.

Rob Krueger and David Gibbs: *The Sustainable Development Paradox* (Guilford Press, 2007):

Sustainability -- with its promise of economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental integrity -- is hardly a controversial goal. Yet scholars have generally overlooked the ways that policies aimed at promoting "sustainability" at local, national, and global scales have been shaped and constrained by capitalist social relations. This thought-provoking book reexamines sustainability conceptually and as it actually exists on the ground, with a particular focus on Western European and North American urban contexts. Topics include critical theoretical engagements with the concept of sustainability; how sustainability projects map onto contemporary urban politics and social justice movements; the spatial politics of conservation planning and resource use; and what progressive sustainability practices in the context of neoliberalism might look like

David A Chambers, et al: *The Dynamic Sustainability Framework: addressing the paradox of sustainment amid ongoing change* (*Implementation Science*, 8, 2013, 117):

Despite growth in implementation research, limited scientific attention has focused on understanding and improving sustainability of health interventions. Models of sustainability have been evolving to reflect challenges in the fit between intervention and context.

Vladimir Dimitrov: *Paradox of Sustainability: a complexity-based view* (Centre for Systemic Development, 2003):

We can talk a lot about precautionary principles, preventative approaches, extended producer responsibilities, clean production, corporate accountability, national public hearings, community participation and many other issues related to sustainability, but the effect of all these talks will be insignificant unless we are able to grasp to idea of unity and work with it in our every day life.

Simone Carmine, et al: *The Importance Being Paradoxical: a paradox approach to foster sustainability* (*Academy of Management*, 26 July 2021):

In addressing sustainability issues, companies face many conflicts between the three dimensions of sustainability (e.g., environmental and social economic goals and demands versus economic ones)... The analysis reveals that experiencing corporate sustainability tensions negatively affects sustainability performance of companies, and a **paradox** approach helps to moderate this negative impact, even if it is not able to reverse it completely.

Robert Kowalski: *Sense And Sustainability: the paradoxes that sustain* (*World Futures: the journal of new paradigm research*, 69, 2013, 2):

The Royal Society report updates the anthropogenic impacts on ecosystems services and our inability to rise to this challenge. Sustainable development is argued to be a linguistic device that has been instrumental in deflecting us from addressing the **paradox** at the heart of the oxymoron. The relationships between the social, environmental, and economic are explored together with the utility of the I = PAT equation, with reference to the Hardin Taboo, Jevons's, and Easterlin's **paradoxes**. A more prominent role for phronesis in the management of human affairs and the adoption of ethics as the language for dealing with such issues are advocated.

Patrick Haack and Andreas Rasche: *The Legitimacy of Sustainability Standards: a paradox perspective* (*Organization Theory*, October 2021)

Sustainability standards have proliferated widely in recent years but their legitimacy remains contested. This paper suggests that sustainability standards need to cope with an important but unexplored **paradox** to gain legitimacy. While standard setters create low entry barriers and requirements for adopters so that standards can diffuse quickly and achieve a status of cognitive legitimacy, standards also need to ensure that adopters create high levels of impact, thereby acquiring moral legitimacy. While the need for diffusion and impact occurs at the same time, they cannot be achieved simultaneously. We unpack this **paradox** and show that its salience for standard setters differs depending on (a) the growth trajectory of a standard and (b) the perceived intensity of the demands for diffusion and impact.

Mark Falinski: *The Sustainability Paradox: the pros and cons of doing 'Good'* (*Finch*, 5 March 2021)

Graeme Reekie: *The principles and paradoxes of sustainability* (*The Lasting Difference*)

Andreas Rasche: *The Legitimacy of Sustainability Standards: a paradox perspective* (*Academy of Management*, 26 July 2021)

John Ripplewood: *The Effort Paradox: Navigating the Paradox of Sustainability: a guide to connecting with the fundamentals* (Independently published, 11 February 2023)

Paradoxes of peace

With current rumours of **World War III**, of ironic relevance at this time is the perspective of a century ago -- prior to **World War I** -- by Commander E. Hamilton Currey (*Paradoxes of Peace: perpetual preparation for war*, *Naval and Military Record / The Examiner: Launceston*, 1 March 1913):

Paradox is the note of the international politics of to-day. Never since the beginning of time has there been a greater desire amongst those who call themselves "the Great Powers" to avoid war; never has there been such ceaseless and costly preparation for the one thing above all others that everybody desires to avoid. It is a curious, and to the moralist a saddening, reflection, that men in the mass -- that is to say, nations -- attribute to others sinister and treacherous designs that they would never accuse individual units of these nations of harbouring. At the moment when this is being written the whole civilised world is on tiptoe of strained expectation and anxiety as to what is going to happen concerning the aspirations of Serbia and the ambitions of Austria-Hungary; whether the greater nation will concede to the smaller "the little window" that she desires on the Adriatic, or whether the Dual Monarchy is about to repeat the coup of Bosnia-Herzegovina and impose her will on the Balkan League...

At least, that is what we think, but we, the men in the street, are quite unaware of the manner in which these men -- the apparently mighty ones of the earth -- are swayed by forces of which we have no conception. These forces are many, and take various forms. In England there is the force of pacifism -- so-called -- an idea formulated by persons whose hearts are so much better than their heads that they imagined all their country has to do is to disarm, and then all the nations, stimulated by so excellent an example, will go and do likewise...

There is also in this country of ours, and all the other countries, both civilised and uncivilised, one power in the present day which in reality transcends all others; this is the power of the financiers, the money men, without whose concurrence the fleets and armies cannot be moved, almost, one might say, cannot be constructed. And yet even here we light on another **paradox**; for to speak generally, the interest, the supreme and paramount interest, of great traders is peace, yet are there those who live by war, not directly, but indirectly.

In Germany there is what is known as "the armour-plate press". The duty of this press is to magnify and distort from its proper perspective all international incidents, in order that they may present as sinister an aspect as may be. Construct your crisis, and then announce to the world the miserable and contemptible weakness of the fatherland on the sea....

The **paradox** of peace is that it can only be maintained by perpetual preparation for war, and it is not alone in the fatherland that those who are engaged in this work are the persons who make the biggest fortunes of modern times. The armour-plate people, speaking of them generally by this term, buy all the best brains in the market, and do not grudge the price they have to pay for them; therefore the race never ceases and fresh devices are placed on the market almost weekly.... and we are faced with another **paradox**: that of a nation with whom we profess ourselves to be on terms of the greatest love and intimacy, assisting to arm our enemies...

There is one **paradox** of the present armed peace of Europe which is decidedly unfavourable to our own country. In the last two decades, and more particularly in the last, we have seen a remarkable change. The saying is attributed to Bismarck, who was commenting on the ill will between England and Russia and the possibility of war between those countries, that it was not possible for there to be a conflict between an elephant and a whale. Now, all the elephants of the continents have been developing into whales -- that is to say, they are building up large and formidable navies....

Perhaps the greatest **paradox** of peace in the present day is the spectacle of people in the United Kingdom wrangling as to whether it is, or is not, the duty of the manhood of the country to fit themselves for the defence of their women folk, their children, their property, all, in fact, that they hold dear in the world. There remains, however, this much to be said on the matter, that the politicians by whom we are governed have never placed this question before the country as a straight issue. Some day it is to be hoped they will, for even the veriest pacifist would surely be ashamed to say, outright that on his shoulders there rested no responsibility whatever. [*extracts of immediate relevance*]

Complementary insights are offered by Alice Holmes Cooper (*Paradoxes of Peace: German Peace Movements Since 1945*, 1996) and Nicholas Mosley (*Paradoxes of Peace, or, The Presence of Infinity*, 2009). For Thomas Hippler and Milos Vec:

'Peace' is often simplistically assumed to be war's opposite, and as such is not examined closely or critically idealized in the literature of peace studies, its crucial role in the justification of war is often overlooked. Starting from a critical view that the value of 'restoring peace' or 'keeping peace' is, and has been, regularly used as a pretext for military intervention, this book traces the conceptual history of peace in nineteenth century legal and political practice. It explores the role of the value of peace in shaping the public rhetoric and legitimizing action in general international relations, international law, international trade, colonialism, and armed conflict. Departing from the assumption that there is no peace as such, nor can there be, it examines the contradictory visions of peace that arise from conflict. These conflicting and antagonistic visions of peace are each linked to a set of motivations and interests as well as to a certain vision of legitimacy within the international realm. Each of them inevitably

conveys the image of a specific enemy that has to be crushed in order to peace being installed. This book highlights the contradictions and **paradoxes** in nineteenth century discourses and practices of peace, particularly in Europe. (*Paradoxes of Peace in Nineteenth Century Europe*, 2015)

Kelly Isola: *A Paradox of Peace* (*Progressive Christianity*, 2 February 2019):

Peace is one of those seemingly intangible, shape-shifting things in life, such as love, that molds our lives so intensely. It's not necessarily something I can hold in my hand or perhaps physically give to you, and there are no words to adequately define the experience or even give a "correct" definition. Yet it is the foundation for all sacred wisdom...

Thinking of peace as a **paradox** often times makes the manifestation of peace challenging or confusing, yet like all spiritual truths, it is indeed a **paradox**... **Paradox** means "beyond opinion, beyond belief". The meaning exists beyond what I know. It's not that the **paradox** is unbelievable, it's just part of a larger order that I have yet to experience or know. Peace is an invitation to stand in what we think we know and hold the creative tension that exists when another person tells us what peace is and how to achieve it and their explanation is seemingly so opposite of our own. **Paradox** is at the heart of all reality.

David A. Bell: *The Peace Paradox* (*The New York Times Magazine*, 4 February 2007):

Historical analogies have always been popular in foreign-policy debates, and the present day is no exception... Yet since history never repeats itself so neatly, the most useful historical analogies are not those that promise to predict the future but those that may reveal unexpected things about the present... Could it be, then, that dreams of an end to war may be as unexpectedly dangerous as they are noble, because they seem to justify almost anything done in their name? What the history of the late 18th century shows is that talk of fighting "so as to destroy and annihilate all who attack us, or to be destroyed ourselves" justifies a slide into "the laws of the jungle" that usually contributes more to polarization than to real security. It magnifies the importance of our enemies and swells their ranks. In short, it actually increases the danger of bloodshed on a massive scale. As the French Revolutionaries learned to their terrible cost, talk of the apocalypse can easily be self-fulfilling.

James Page: *Philosophy of Peace* (*Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*):

Peace is notoriously difficult to define, and this poses a special challenge for articulating any comprehensive philosophy of peace. Any discussion on what might constitute a comprehensive philosophy of peace invariably overlaps with wider questions of the meaning and purpose of human existence. The definitional problem is, **paradoxically**, a key to understanding what is involved in articulating a philosophy of peace. In general terms, one may differentiate negative peace, that is, the relative absence of violence and war, from positive peace, that is, the presence of justice and harmonious relations. One may also refer to integrative peace, which sees peace as encompassing both social and personal dimensions....

In considering a philosophy of peace, the phenomenon of empire presents a **paradox** for peace theory. The establishment of an empire may be seen as establishing a form of peace... Critics of imperialism, however, point to violence being moved to the periphery of the empire; there is the problem of inter-imperial rivalry; and there is also the problem that empires frequently engage in the violent suppression of minorities within the borders of the empire.

Garrett FitzGerald: *Pluriversal Peacebuilding: Peace Beyond Epistemic and Ontological Violence* (*E-International Relations*, 27 November 2021):

To address the **paradoxical** danger of perpetuating epistemic and ontological violence while seeking to promote peace, critical scholars of peacebuilding have begun to grapple in substantive and sustained ways with various strains of decolonial thought... While vital for excavating the field's participation in harmful ideological, economic, and political formations, these encounters have produced lamentably few practical tools for unsettling peacebuilding's problematic epistemic politics or mitigating their material consequences

Oliver P. Richmond: *The Paradox of Peace and Power: contamination or enablement?* *International Politics*, 54, 2017, 1):

In debates about peace most discussions of power implicitly revolve around four types... Each type of power and its related site of authority has implications for making peace. This paper examines in theoretical terms how types of power block, contaminate, or enable peace of various sorts.

Charles Webel: *Toward a philosophy and metapsychology of peace* (*Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 2007):

Consequently, in large part because of the modernist and postmodernist shifting of peace analysis and research to the fringes of 'elite' professional discourse and outside the institutional reward structure of mainstream academia and politics, a philosophical theory of 'outer' peace and a depth psychological comprehension of 'inner' peacefulness seem as desirable today as they did thousands of years ago. And just as evasive and elusive. Hence we are confronted with a seeming **paradox** -- peace is something we all desire, and yet, except for relatively brief intervals between wars, seem unable to attain (except on paper). And peace

studies, peace research, peacekeeping and peacemaking are almost universally acclaimed to be laudable activities, but not for 'serious' scholars and clinicians doing their 'day' jobs... The antithesis of peace is not conflict. Conflicts appear historically inevitable and may be socially desirable if they result in personal and/or political progress. Conflicts may, perhaps **paradoxically**, promote and increase peace and diminish violence if the conflicting parties negotiate in good faith to reach solutions to problems that are achievable and tolerable, if not ideal.

David Krieger: *Nuclear disarmament* (*Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 2007):

Paradoxically, disarmament has even been used as a justification for resorting to war...The establishment of a neo-liberal world order could therefore entail the **paradox** of fighting wars for the sake of disarmament. Hence the plea of disarmament advocates -- namely, that weapons themselves cause war -- might come to have a new, more ominous meaning. Arms and their use might be justified as instruments for disarming other countries by attacking them

Appropriately understood as a paradox is the range of conflicts which have been suspended in practice but have not been associated with a formal recognition of peace for a variety of reasons (*List of wars extended by diplomatic irregularity*, Wikipedia). These include **frozen conflicts**, where an armistice (ceasefire) is signed or fighting comes to an end, but there is intentionally no peace treaty because the underlying political conflict has not been resolved. Particular instances may be understood as a "paradoxical peace":

- Abbas Farasoo: *Dilemmas in Afghanistan's paradoxical peace drama* (*The Interpreter*, 4 December 2018)
- Ariel Heifetz Nobel: *A Paradoxical Peace in Northern Ireland* (*Praxis: The Fletcher Journal of Human Security*, 26, 2011)
- David P. Honig: *Paradoxical Peace in the Middle East* (*The Harvard Crimson*, 10 January 2000)
- Venu Menon: *Little serendipity in island's paradoxical peace process [Sri Lanka]* (*NZ Herald*, 16 September 2005)
- Benjamin Mwadi Makengo: *Versailles Treaty and Struggle of Allied Powers' Interests: a paradoxical choice for lasting peace* (*Conference: Seminar Presentation, History of International Relation*, Central China Normal University, 2021)

Religion may be considered inherently paradoxical in its own right (Herman Roborgh, *Paradoxes of Christianity and Islam*, *Eureka Street*, 25 June 2009). The comprehension of peace from the perspective of particular religions may be noted:

- From a Christian perspective:
 - As Paul tells us in *Ephesians*, Jesus is our peace. When we allow His presence to reign in our lives, we enjoy true peace, whether the world around us is peaceful or not. (Diana Derringer, *Paradoxical Peace*, *Christian Devotions*, September 2014)
 - Only Jesus can give you that peace, and its a paradoxical peace because its free -- you can't earn it or buy it (Michael Youssef, *Receiving Divine Peace*, December 2018)
 - Jen Pollock Michel: *Christian Life Is Paradoxical. Embrace It* (*The Gospel Coalition*, 16 April 2019).
- From an Islamic perspective:
 - Kuranda Seyit: *The paradox of Islam and the challenges of modernity* (*Negotiating the Sacred: Blasphemy and Sacrilege in a Multicultural Society*, 2006)
 - Dallas M. Roark: *Some Paradoxes of Islam* (*Answering Islam*)
 - Mario Alexis Portella: *Is Islam Really a Religion of Peace?* (*National Catholic Register*, 31 January 2020)
 - Maulana Wahiduddin Khan: *Peace in Islam* (*Centre for Peace and Spirituality International*)
 - Hayati Aydin: *Islam: The Religion Of Peace* (*The Journal of Rotterdam Islamic and Social Sciences*, 2, 2008, 1)
 - Reuel Marc Gerecht: *The Islamic Paradox: Shiite Clerics, Sunni Fundamentalists, and the Coming of Arab Democracy* (1 January 2004)
 - *Islam is a peaceful religion with those who are peaceful* (*Islam: Question and Answer*, 6 June 2014)
- From the perspective of Judaism:
 - Lee Bender: *The Israel Peace Paradox* (*The Jerusalem Post*, 17 November 2016)
 - Elyakim Haetzni: *The Peace Paradox* (*Ynetnews*, 19 July 2010)
 - Mohammed Abu-Nimer: *The Peacebuilder's Paradox and the Dynamics of Dialogue: psychosocial approaches to Israeli/Palestinian peacebuilding* (*Beyond Bullets and Bombs: Grassroots Peacebuilding between Palestinians and Israelis*, 2007)
 - *Judaism and Peace* (Wikipedia)

Paradoxes of heaven

As might be expected, speculation on the nature of heaven -- and assertions in that regard -- are many and varied, as profiled by Wikipedia: *Heaven in Christianity*; *Jannah* (Heaven in Islam); *Heaven in Judaism*. Such assertions have long been the prerogative of theologians and religious leaders who are especially definitive with respect to the right of entry of believers in their particular faith and the probability of exclusion of those of other faiths. Tragically a similar mindset is evident with respect to the condition of peace and sustainability.

Jerry L. Walls: (*Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy*, 2002):

The Christian doctrine of heaven has been a moral source of enormous power in western culture. It has provided a striking account of the ultimate good in life and has for two millennia animated the hope that our lives can be fully meaningful. Recently, however, the doctrine of heaven has lost much of its grip on the western imagination and has become a vague and largely

ignored part of the Christian creed. Not only have our hopes been redefined as a result, but our very identity as human beings has been altered... Walls argues that the doctrine of heaven is ripe for serious reconsideration. He contends not only that the orthodox view of heaven can be defended from objections commonly raised against it, but also that heaven is a powerful resource for addressing persistent philosophical problems, not the least of which concern the ground of morality and the meaning of life. Walls shows how heaven is integrally related to central Christian doctrines, particularly those concerning salvation, and tackles the difficult problem of why faith in Christ is necessary to save us from our sins. In addition, heaven is shown to illumine thorny problems of personal identity and to be an essential component of a satisfactory theodicy. Walls goes on to examine data from near-death experiences from the standpoint of some important recent work in epistemology and argues that they offer positive evidence for heaven. He concludes that we profoundly need to recover the hope of heaven in order to recover our very humanity.

However attaining heaven is not the final pursuit in Hinduism as heaven itself is considered ephemeral and related to the physical body -- with other planes to which access may be possible in the after life. Judaism, unlike other world religions, is not focused on the quest of getting into heaven but on daily life and how to live it. Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism are notable in cultivating understanding of [nirvana](#) as an ultimate state of realization.

For believers in any form of afterlife, their personal reflections on the matter may well be a major preoccupation -- especially as they face the possibility of death and are confronted by that of relatives. Religious leaders are expected to address any paradoxes to which people are potentially sensitive in that regard:

- C. M. Morgan: *The Paradoxes of Heaven: how might God balance competing priorities* 19 July 2020
- Jeff Speaks: *The Paradox of Heaven and Hell -- theological paradoxes* University of Notre Dame, 2013
- Han Baltussen: *The Paradox of Heaven and Hell (Neos Kosmos, 11 May 2016)*
- David Ocegüera: *The Paradox of Heaven (Spectrum Conversation, 6 August 2008)*

Atheists are expected to cite any perceived paradoxes as indications of the ridiculous nature of religious superstition ([Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion, 2006](#); [The Heaven Paradox, 14 August 2010](#))

For [Slavoj Žižek \(Heaven in Disorder, 2021\)](#):

One of Mao Zedong's best-known sayings is: "There is great disorder under heaven; the situation is excellent". It is easy to understand what Mao meant here: when the existing social order is disintegrating, the ensuing chaos offers revolutionary forces a great chance to act decisively and take political power. Today, there certainly is great disorder under heaven... But does this chaos still make the situation excellent, or is the danger of self-destruction too high? The difference between the situation that Mao had in mind and our own situation can be best rendered by a tiny terminological distinction. Mao speaks about disorder *under* heaven, wherein "heaven", or the big Other in whatever form -- the inexorable logic of historical processes, the laws of social development -- still exists and discreetly regulates social chaos. Today, we should talk about *heaven* itself as being in disorder...

The bearer and instrument of this "division of heaven" is language as the medium that sustains the way we experience reality -- language, not primitive egotistic interests, is the first and greatest divider. It is because of language that we (can) "live in different worlds" to our neighbors, even when they live on the same street.

In a period in which recourse is increasingly made to artificial intelligence -- potentially with respect to sustainability and peace -- it is appropriate to note the uninteresting perspective of one such application on the matter:

The concept of heaven is a complex and deeply personal one, and different people may have different beliefs and understandings of it. Some people believe that heaven is a place of eternal peace and happiness, while others may see it as a state of being rather than a physical location. Some religious and philosophical traditions also speak of a **paradoxical** nature of heaven, where it exists beyond our understanding and is both present and absent in our world. Ultimately, whether or not heaven is a **paradox** is a matter of individual interpretation and belief. (*Is heaven a paradox?* Sage, AI bot)

Sustainability metaphors of relevance to heavenly dynamics?

Given the articulations offered with respect to sustainability, of some interest is the manner in which conventional preoccupations with food, energy, and health may "translate" into functional equivalents in a heavenly environment. Especially intriguing are potential equivalents to products which tend to evoke attachment -- variously deplored in some religious traditions. The question extends to the sustainability of any heavenly organization -- given insights into the viability of collective organization.

"Food"? Andreas Exner, et al: *Addressing the Sustainability Paradox: the analysis of "good food" in everyday life* (*Sustainability*, 12, 2020, 8196):

This paper investigates food consumption in terms of socio-spatial practices as complex patterns of meanings, competencies and materialities that shape daily life. The praxeological approach that we advise might improve food sustainability policies by tackling the current sustainability **paradox**: persisting unsustainable food consumption despite significant media coverage of food sustainability issues and considerable political attention to this matter. Acknowledging the importance of both individual action and collective conditions in shaping food routines, we argue that the sustainability **paradox** might be overcome through

integrating the analysis of social structures and individual behavior, and consequently addressing the determinants of sustainability in daily life

"Health"? Eivind Engebretsen, et al: *Paradoxes of sustainability with consequences for health* (*The Lancet*, 4, 2016, 4):

An important aspect of the conceptual transformations is that the term sustainability has gradually changed from being a goal (durability) to acquiring connotations that serve as a selection criterion for development aid. Using sustainability as a selection criterion risks privileging recipients who have the capacity to gain control over health and living conditions and exclude others as unworthy needy. It would be a **paradox** if emphasis on sustainability ended up in preventing global equity and justice instead of promoting it.

"Transportation"? Zinette Bergman, et al: *A Case Study of the Sustainable Mobility Problem-Solution Paradox* (*Sustainability* 11, 2019, 10): Rhonda Daniel, et al, *The Paradox of Public Transport Peak Spreading* (*International Journal of Sustainable Transportation*, 7, 2013, 2):

The characteristics which make public transport attractive and contribute to high public transport use by specific market segments create the **paradox** in which encouragement of peak spreading of public transport services may lead to lower overall use of public transport.

"Environment"? Cathy La: *The Paradox of Environment Governance* (*Demos Journal*, 5 May 2021):

With the capacity to "evade and soften government rules", eco-businesses are gaining power in governance, as well as in supply chains and markets. The result is the **paradox** – while big brands laud the release of "new" and "sustainable" goods, the total environmental harm resulting from the cycle of production, consumption, and disposal continues to increase... Although communities may seek to live more environmentally conscious lifestyles, corporations may manipulate this trend to further their own financial gain.

"Tourism"? *Travelling Light: the paradox of sustainable tourism* (*The Economist*, 27 August 2015)

"Consumer products"? James Dean: *Meaningful but unused products hinder sustainability* (*Cornell Chronicle*, 4 January 2023)

Custom sneakers, vintage dishware, a limited-edition car -- each is an example of a product owners may regard as special and irreplaceable, fostering strong feelings of attachment. From a sustainability standpoint, designers have long believed that attachment was a good thing: If people keep products they care about longer, they'll consume less and send less waste to landfills. New Cornell research provides a more nuanced understanding, showing that product attachment can also unintentionally encourage less sustainable behavior.

Sara Alghanim, et al: *The Paradox of Sustainability and Luxury Consumption: the role of value perceptions and consumer income* (*Sustainability*, 14, 2022, 14694):

For many years, the concept of sustainability and luxury has been considered a **paradox**. Despite scholars' efforts to highlight the compatibility between sustainability and luxury, the limited studies have shown mixed and inconclusive evidence. By adopting the luxury-seeking consumer behavior framework, this study examines the relationship between luxury value perceptions (i.e., conspicuous, unique, social, emotional, and quality values) and sustainable luxury products consumption.

"Collective organization"? Tobias Hahn, et al: *A Paradox Perspective on Corporate Sustainability: descriptive, instrumental, and normative aspects* (*Journal of Business Ethics*, 148, 2018):

The last decade has witnessed the emergence of a **paradox** perspective on corporate sustainability. By explicitly acknowledging tensions between different desirable, yet interdependent and conflicting sustainability objectives, a **paradox** perspective enables decision makers to achieve competing sustainability objectives simultaneously and creates leeway for superior business contributions to sustainable development. In stark contrast to the business case logic, a **paradox** perspective does not establish emphasize business considerations over concerns for environmental protection and social well-being at the societal level. In order to contribute to the consolidation of this emergent field of research, we offer a definition of the **paradox** perspective on corporate sustainability and a framework to delineate its descriptive, instrumental, and normative aspects. This framework clarifies the **paradox** perspective's contents and its implications for research and practice. We use the framework to map the contributions to this thematic symposium on **paradoxes** in sustainability and to propose questions for future research.

"Business models"? Koen Van Bommel: *Paradoxical thinking and sustainable business models* (*Academy of Management Proceedings*):

In this article we build on the paradox literature to argue that managing sustainability's tensions is an important element of

transitioning towards sustainable business models. We empirically examine sustainability tensions and find that organizations that rely primarily on an instrumental or narrow 'business case' logic shy away from embracing these tensions. They view sustainability as an "either/or" scenario and make limited use of paradoxical thinking.

Sara B. Soderstrom, et al: *From Paradoxical Thinking to Practicing Sustainable Business* (*Organization and Environment*, 34, 2019, 1):

Individual entrepreneurs committed to sustainability experience paradoxes: interdependencies and conflict between social, environmental, and economic goals. Whereas prior research focuses on direct responses to paradoxes, we examine multi-level dynamics between organizations and individuals in responding to sustainability paradoxes.

"Growth"? Mark Edwards: *The Growth Paradox: sustainable development, and business strategy* (*Business Strategy and the Environment*, 30, 2021, 2):

Economic growth is a two-edged sword. Expanding economies and industries create wealth and employment, but global economic expansion is having unprecedented deleterious impacts on vital planetary systems. Despite this, the core strategic goal of all economies and many businesses continues to be the pursuit of ongoing economic growth... Transformative firm-level responses to the growth **paradox** are needed if sustaining forms of organizational growth are to be achieved...

Paradoxes of hopeful anticipation

Despite the problematic conditions of life as experienced by many -- or because of them -- there is considerable investment in hope and the anticipation of any valued outcome of present experience. Religious leaders and politicians have long adopted a mode of discourse which can be deprecated as hope-mongering. This may be valued as a contrast to **doom-mongering** in its various forms.

Disappointments associated with false hopes and hope-mongering can be understood as undermining credibility, as separately explored (*Credibility Crunch engendered by Hope-mongering*, 2008). This framed the challenge as *blowing bubbles of confidence and trustworthiness*, accompanied by a *dangerous neglect of underlying patterns*. An effort was made to articulate the variety of forms of hope-mongering, as indicated below.

| Varieties of hope-mongering | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God as a focus of hope-mongering • Incitement to sacrifice as hope-mongering • Hope-mongering in expectation of intangible values • Technical hope-mongering • Military and security hope-mongering • Mis-selling and misrepresentation as hope-mongering • Political hope-mongering • Systemic hope-mongering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope-mongering by the financial system • Luck: gambling and lottery hope-mongering • Hope-mongering through postponing fulfillment • Relationship hope-mongering • Hope-mongering through distraction • Hope-mongering through reframing • Exceptionalism as hope-mongering |

Hope may also be understood as focused on the anticipation of particular events, also discussed separately (*Emerging Memetic Singularity in the Global Knowledge Society*, 2009). Whether anticipated as desirable or a matter of concern, this distinguished between singularities and end times scenarios, as follows.

| Varieties of singularity | | |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technological singularity • Cognitive singularity • Metasystem transition • Communication singularity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globality as singularity • Symmetry group singularity • Subjective singularity • Spiritual singularity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Singularity of planetary consciousness • Metaphorical singularity |

Ironically a singular singularity evokes the primary recognition of this form of paradox. For Roman V. Yampolskiy (*What to Do with the Singularity Paradox? Philosophy and Theory of Artificial Intelligence*, 2013) this is framed as: *Superintelligent machines are feared to be too dumb to possess commonsense*.

| End times scenarios | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of history • 2012 • Timewave theory • Eschatological scenarios • End of science • End of culture • End of religion • End of civilization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of security • End of privacy • End of intelligence • End of ignorance • End of knowing • End of abundance • End of confidence • End of hope | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End of truth • End of faith • End of logic • End of rationality • End of modernism • End of wisdom • End of tolerance • End of nature |

End times scenarios are primarily evoked by prophecies in spiritual scriptures -- more recently supplemented by observation of problematic convergences in society and communication. These have been integrated to a degree in the philosophical reflection of **Pierre**

Teilhard de Chardin and his conception of the [Omega Point](#) (*The Phenomenon of Man*, 1955).

Potentially paradoxical is the hopeful projection of reflection into an anticipated future as a resolution of challenges of the present -- most evidently made by the promises of politicians and leaders in cultivation of their followership. This may be recognized as a distraction from the necessary vigilance required for viable existence in the present (*Vigorous Application of Derivative Thinking to Derivative Problems*, 2013).

The focus on an anticipated future contrasts **paradoxically** with any focus on the immediate present, whether as a conscious practice or inadvertently (*Now as the Ultimate Cognitive Strange Attractor*, 2014; *Presenting the Future*, 2001). The latter highlighted ways of *Making (the) Present and Thriving in the Moment* and the *Exploration of Nowness*, as advocated by various authors. That focus calls for distinction from the widespread commitment, variously deprecated, to habitual "business-as-usual" (BAU).

With respect to heaven -- and even to peace and sustainability -- there is potentially another paradox associated with any illusion that hope is associated with movement or transformation to a more desirable condition distinct from the here-and-now. This arises from the possibility that cognitively one is "already there" and that the anticipation associated with hope is illusory in some radically fundamental sense (Robert Gregory, *You Are Already There: an experience in consciousness*, 2013; Lawrence Berger, *Being There: Heidegger on Why Our Presence Matters*, *The New York Times*, 30 March 2015). Indulging in hopeful anticipation is then to be construed as a misleading distraction from appropriate experience of engagement with the present.

Paradoxes of achievement and cognitive engagement thereafter

The inspiration for this exploration has been consideration of the cognitive situation when enduring peace and sustainability are achieved - - exemplified by the fulfillment with which heaven is associated. For individuals this might be understood as exemplified by that of winners of a major lottery. It could be assumed to be that of the hyper-elites, as discussed separately (*Strategies of Hyper-Elites as Admired and Deprecated*, 2022).

Curiously this condition has recently been provocatively framed by the assertion of Klaus Schwab in relation to the Great Reset currently held to be instigated by the World Economic Forum. As widely publicised the assertion is: *You will own nothing and be happy* (*In 2030, You'll Own Nothing And Be Happy About It*, *Medium*, 9 December 2020; *"You Will Own Nothing and Be Happy"*, *Klaus Schwab, America Out Loud*, 6 July 2021; *The Deadly 2030 Master Plan: "You Will Own Nothing – and Be Happy". Klaus Schwab, Global Research*, 25 April 2022).

Happiness The fulfillment anticipated may be readily associated with a condition of enduring happiness (especially in heaven) -- as with fictional implications of couples "living happily ever after". The "Pursuit of Happiness" is considered an inalienable right found in the United States Declaration of Independence, although it is nowhere to be found in the U.S. Constitution (Randy McClure, *What Does the Pursuit of Happiness Mean in the Constitution? Unvarnished Facts*, 15 January 2023). The country of Bhutan is renowned for its governance being guided by an indicator of [Gross National Happiness](#) rather by the [Gross Domestic Product](#) which is the focus of other countries.

Following Aristotle, *eudaimonia*, is now translated as "happiness", although for him it is understood to be a particular mode of activity rather than a state or condition. The point may well be argued more generally with respect to other values typically understood as static conditions (*Freedom, Democracy, Justice: Isolated Nouns or Interwoven Verbs?* 2011; *Human Values as Strange Attractors*, 1993).

As discussed separately, the question with regard to enduring happiness might be more appropriately explored in terms of the ways in which happiness might be considered as an activity -- in the absence of any verb "to happy" and avoiding the limited sense of "to pleasure" (*Embodying the Paradoxes and Contradictions of the Pursuit of Happiness*, 2011). The activity framed as its "pursuit" might be better understood as a simplistic projection of an inherent (higher-dimensional, complex) dynamic into a three-dimensional framework.

Confluence of value goals: With values more appropriately understood as implying distinctive dynamics, rather than in static terms, they suggest emergence -- surprising happenings rather than predictable events.

The puzzle calling for reflection is the nature of the condition characterised by freedom (absence of constraints), justice (absolute equity), love (in the absence of hate), health (in the absence of pain), and prosperity (in the absence of poverty). This is curiously associated with the purported striving of governments for peace, of religions for (heavenly) spirituality, of sustainability (in socio-economic terms), and happiness (as sustained by entertainment).

Boredom and excitement: Key questions include how to deal with boredom and the potential tediousness of daily life in the assumed absence of concerns of any kind (Richard Sima, *Boredom is a warning sign: here's what it's telling you*, *The Washington Post*, 22 September 2022; Erin C. Westgate, *6 things you can do to cope with boredom at a time of social distancing*, *The Conversation*, 27 March 2020; Aleid ter Weel, *10 Things To Do In The Evening Instead Of Watching Netflix*, *Medium*, 16 February 2022).

The condition has been exemplified by the classical phrase of the symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé: *La chair, hélas, est triste, et j'ai lu tous les livres*. French students employed a relevant slogan in protesting the monotony of the lives they could expect (*French Expression "Métro, Boulot, Dodo" Explained*, *Thought Co*, 28 April 2019). Challenging routine is tragically evident in zoo animals, especially primates (*Primate Environmental Enrichment: Automated reconfiguration of zoo enclosures*, 2011).

How is the curious challenge of "interestingness" and its sustainability to be explored (*Interestingness, suggestiveness, memorability and presentation*, 2014; *Relative interestingness and boringness of forms of coherence*, 2022). One approach is the fascination with "happening" as a criteria for an engaging environment -- for entertainment. Are peaceful, sustainable and heavenly environments

essentially boring in the light of current understanding -- potentially evoking anticipation of some form of happening.

The concern takes particular form in prisons and retirement homes -- and hence the development of occupational therapy. Would a variant of such therapy be necessary for the viability of a heavenly environment?

Not doing and being "at peace": The question seldom addressed is with respect to the nature of the dynamic when the aspirations to sustainability and heavenly peace have been fulfilled -- with no conceivable need to hope for greater fulfillment. This could be framed in terms of the mysterious "art of doing nothing" -- especially when there is nothing conceivable to do (Iona Heath, *The Art of Doing Nothing*, *European Journal of General Practice*, 18, 2012, 4; Colleen Long, *The Art of Doing Nothing*, *Psychology Today*, 2 September 2014; *Niksen Is the Dutch Lifestyle Concept of Doing Nothing*, *Time*, 12 July 2019).

This has been framed in relation to "being at peace", despite the challenges it may imply, as described by Charles Webel:

Being-at-peace is possible but improbable in an environment that is impoverished. Being peaceful is an enormous challenge when others with whom one interacts are hostile, aggressive, very competitive, and violent. And living in peace is almost inconceivable in desperately poor and war-ridden cultures. (*Toward a philosophy and metapsychology of peace*, *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, 2007)

The condition is curiously anticipated in the widely experienced process of waiting (*Waiting as an Experience of Fundamental Significance*, 2018). Much commentary has been evoked by the dramatisation of Samuel Becket (*Waiting for Godot*). However waiting necessarily implies anticipation, whether hopeful or otherwise -- an implication at variance with any sense of fulfillment. That discussion offered clues to a condition of "meta-waiting" potentially cultivated by hermits (*Degrees of "meta-waiting" recognized as "deep waiting"?* 2018).

The sense of being at peace is especially related to one of "inner peace" by various authors (Shih Cheng Yen, *Being at Peace: Lessons on Living and Dying*, Jing Si Publications 2016; Ahanaf Sakil, *170 Quotes About Being At Peace With Yourself*, 19 February 2021; *75 Bible Verses about Being At Peace*, *OpenBible*). A new scale has been proposed in that regard (Juan Xi and Matthew T. Lee, *Inner Peace as a Contribution to Human Flourishing: a new scale developed from Ancient Wisdom*, *Measuring Well-Being: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from the Social Sciences and the Humanities*, 2021).

Such speculation avoids the often agonising challenge for the retired, no matter how ideal their living conditions.

Paradoxical thinking: Many of the references above suggest the necessity of paradoxical thinking -- in contrast to the "either/or" modality so widely promoted misleadingly as the basis for the enduring viability of peace and sustainability (and potentially of any anticipated form of heavenly experience):

- Loizos Heracleous and David Robson: David Robson: *Why the 'paradox mindset' is the key to success* (BBC, 12 November 2020)
- David A. Waldman, et al: *The role of paradox theory in decision making and management research* (*Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 155, November 2019)
- Long Le: *Teaching with Paradox: A Pedagogical Strategy for Thriving in the Pandemic Classroom* (*Faculty Focus*, 8 April 2022)
- Faye Miller: *Navigating paradoxical tensions through both/and thinking* (*Integration and Implementation Insights*, 17 November 2020)
- Ella Miron-Spektor: *Overwhelmed? Adopt a Paradox Mindset* (*INSEAD Knowledge*, 5 May 2020)

The coherence of the enduring experience anticipated as "heavenly" may well be inherently paradoxical (*Comprehension of Unity as a Paradoxical Dynamic*, 2019; *World Introversion through Paracycling: global potential for living sustainably "outside-inside"* 2013).

Experiential challenge: The fulfillment of the pattern of aspirations paradoxically frames an existential question, namely what is the question to be faced in that condition, if any. In mythological terms it is the mysterious question to be faced on the Day of Judgment. It can be explored otherwise as a "deadly question" capable of radically transforming conventional expectations (*In quest of the most deadly question*, 2013).

With respect to the **Fermi Paradox** -- regarding the failure of extraterrestrials from the immensity of the universe to enter into contact humanity -- it could be provocatively asked whether this is due to the failure of humanity to ask "interesting" questions. Humanity may be inherently boring by galactic standards, as separately envisaged (*Quest for Intelligent Life on Earth -- from a Future Perspective*, 2023).

The paradoxical dilemma in a condition of fulfillment may be one of *Sustaining the Quest for Sustainable Answers* (2003).

Disparate insights into enduring experience

In considering the nature of enduring experience -- and any aspiration to its "everlasting" or "eternal" nature -- calls for a contrast between objective explanation of how it may be described (especially when experienced by others) and subjective experience, whether individual or inter-subjective.

Religious perspective: Clearly theology has invested heavily in objective explanation for potential believers, as indicated by the following:

- Christianity:
 - Erika Dannel: *Christian Theology On Heaven And Hell* (*Christian.net*, 1 October 2021)
 - Walter A. Elwell: *Heaven, Heavens, Heavens* (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1997).
 - John Gilmore: *Probing Heaven: Key Questions on the Hereafter* (1989)

- Klaas Schilder: *Heaven, What Is It?* (1950)
- Calvin R. Schoonhoven: *The Wrath of Heaven* (1966)
- Ulrich E. Simon: *Heaven in the Christian Tradition* (1958)
- Wilbur M. Smith: *The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven* (1958)
- Peter Toon: *Heaven and Hell: A Biblical and Theological Overview* (1986)
- Arthur E. Travis: *Where on Earth Is Heaven?* (1974)
- Islam:
 - Christian Lange: *Paradise and Hell in Islamic Traditions* (Cambridge University Press, 2016)
 - Nerina Rustomji: *The Garden and the Fire: Heaven and Hell in Islamic Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2009)

Emphasis may be placed on enlightenment and how it is facilitated; Eastern religions may notably frame the merits of *nirvana* and its attainment (*Varieties of Rebirth: distinguishing ways of being "born again"*, 2004).

The challenges play out in the dynamics of interfaith dialogue (Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Interfaith Dialogue: Managing Paradoxes, Global Perspectives on Dialogue in the Classroom*, 2021; Faizullah Mohamed, *Interfaith Dialogue: The Paradox of Interfaith Secularism*, Humanist Society Singapore, /12 November 2022; Robert M. Randolph, *The Paradox of Interfaith Dialogue*, HuffPost, 2 April 2013). These are presumably to be acknowledged as anticipating those in heaven -- as they do the dynamics of any everlasting peace.

Necessarily elusive in relation to explanation are the dynamics associated with enlightenment or nirvana -- as implied by heaven or its enactment -- reference to "sitting on the right hand of God", celebration of the divine, and "heavenly choirs" are far from satisfactory for the unconvinced. Communication of their implications could be understood as analogous to that of communicating the experiential dynamics of "peace" and "sustainability". The difficulty is increased by any sense of limitations on the seating capacity of heaven -- exemplified by one limitation to 144.

Aesthetic articulation: Considerable effort has been devoted over millennia to the aesthetic representation of heaven and the heavenly. Art, music, poetry and dance are readily described as "heavenly". Such representations offer a means of indicating the attraction of peace and its harmonious associations. They are notably embodied in the architecture within which the transcendent is worshipped.

Of particular interest, as potentially indicative of the enduring ("happily ever after"), are the many references to the possibility of "endings", especially in novels:

- Marc Chacksfield: *Literature's greatest closing paragraphs: best book endings of all time* (ShortList, 26 February 2022)
- Abi Jackson: *The 100 most powerful and poignant closing lines from literature* (Stylist, 2019)
- Fija Callaghan: *How to End a Story: 7 Different Kinds of Endings* (Scribophile, 10 May 2022)
- *Book Endings: The 6 Ways That All Stories End* (Reedsy, 17 March 2023)

There is however considerable difficulty in "translating" such aesthetic representation into modes capable of rendering such experience meaningful in the here and now -- as might be expected with respect to sustainability. This is exemplified by inadequacies in the cognitive appreciation of music, despite the importance attached to anthems, as in the case of the *Anthem of Europe*, for example (*A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006; *Reversing the Anthem of Europe to Signal Distress*, 2016).

Considerable importance is attached to *Guernica* (1937) as a painting celebrating the desirability of peace. It might be asked what artefacts of that nature are now required for mnemonic purposes, whether as paintings or monuments (*Reimagining Guernica to Engage the Antitheses of a Cancel Culture*, 2022; *Towards Inclusive Multi-Massacre Memorials to Victims of Conflict*, 2022). How indeed is the erosion of collective memory to be countered?

Intriguingly it is the poet *Robert Graves* who explored the potential of poetry in relation to governance (*Seven Days in New Crete*, 1949). Given the esteem in which poetry may be held by some world leaders, it is curious that its value in framing the challenges of enabling decision-making has not been explored, as argued separately (*Poetry-making and Policy-making: Arranging a Marriage between Beauty and the Beast*, 1993). With respect to peace, such a case has been made with respect to Afghanistan (*Poetic Engagement with Afghanistan, Caucasus and Iran: an unexplored strategic opportunity?* 2009).

Ideology: Somewhat surprisingly, but perhaps to be expected as a consequence of high degrees of commitment, there is a tendency for particular ideologies to associate their degree of organization with heaven, or having heavenly characteristics. Capitalism is a particular focus for this framing:

- *Theological Economics: Capitalism and the Kingdom of Heaven* (The New York Times, 9 May 1982)
- *Capitalism and Heaven* (Christian Forums, 1 December 2016)
- *Heaven and Capitalism* (Religious Forums, 28 July 2021)
- Daniel Isaiah Joseph: *Should Heaven be Capitalized* (Christianity FAQ, 26 April 2022)

The implication has even evoked a satirical "eschatological ditty" by Elisabeth Rowe -- for "true believers" -- with one stanza as: *Divine Discontent: The 1 per cent in close communion / Enjoy a blissful fiscal union / But outside the pearly gates, hell-bent / Are camped the 99 per cent ("A Capitalist Heaven", Financial Times, 22 December 2011).*

In that light there is some speculation as to whether one ideology or another is especially associated with heavenly organization (*Is heaven capitalist or communist?* Quora; Evan Patterson, *Is Heaven Communist?*, The Libertarian Institute, 9 March 2023).

Controversial critical perspectives are offered by Slavoj Žižek (*Heaven in Disorder*, 2021), as noted above -- and by Ted Flynn (*The Great Reset: Satan's Plan or Heaven's Triumph? Signs and Wonders for Our Times*, 19 November 2020). With respect to Žižek's argument, there is some irony to the challenge to any traditional sense of a "divine mandate" (*The Mandate of Heaven and Revolution in*

Modern China, The Confucian Weekly, 28 May 2020). This extends to particular cultural claims to be a "chosen people".

Mathematics: Curiously a number of icons of mathematics are known for their profound religious beliefs and the inspiration that it offered in pursuit of their endeavours. Arguably mathematics is the discipline which has the most articulate insights into the conditions which could be held to characterize the confluence of aspirations exemplified by "heaven". This is evident in the extensive literature on infinity, limits and number theory. Especially curious is the association with theology in the discipline of mathematical theology, as separately discussed (*Mathematical Theology: Future Science of Confidence in Belief*, 2011; *Bibliography of Relevance to Mathematical Theology*, 2011). The latter explored the self-reflexive global reframing to enable faith-based governance

As an expression of mathematics, especially intriguing is the relevance of physics to comprehension of the condition implied by the confluence of the aspirations to peace, sustainability and heaven -- and its anticipation. This has been indicated as the **Omega Point** by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. It bears comparison with the insights into negentropy of thermodynamics and notions of absolute zero. Curiously it is consideration of quantum mechanics which is evoking speculation in this regard:

- Robert Temple: *A New Science of Heaven: how the new science of plasma physics is shedding light on spiritual experience* (Coronet, 2022)
- John Horgan: *What God, Quantum Mechanics and Consciousness Have in Common* (*Scientific American*, 14 August 2021)
- Brittany Noelle Roa: *Quantum Physics: The Bridge Between Science and Religion?* (*Medium*, 12 November 2019)
- Judy Franklin, et al: *The Physics of Heaven* (Destiny Image Publishers, 2015)
- Phil Mason: *Quantum Glory: The Science Of Heaven Invading Earth* (2010)
- Rupert Sheldrake and Matthew Fox: *The Physics of Angels: Exploring the Realm Where Science and Spirit Meet* (2014)

Somewhat ironically, despite considerable insight into limits, it is unclear how this translates into the experiential reflections of mathematicians and physicists regarding their own demise and the nature of any life hereafter.

Cyberspace: The internet and **cyberspace** have been framed as **cyberheaven** -- the new heaven -- to the degree that the question is raised of how to distinguish it from any traditional image (*Heaven vs Cyberheaven - What's the difference?* WikiDiff). Cyberspace is understood as a consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation. Various commentaries have been invoked by the exploration of Margaret Wertheim (*The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace*, 1999):

- Gavin McNett: *Is the Internet the new heaven?* (*Salon*, 15 July 1999)
- Darren Tofts: *Okay, how is cyberspace like Heaven* (*RealTime*, 1 June 1999)
- Steve Welzer: *Cyberspace is the New Heaven* (*Green Horizon Magazine*, Fall 2011)

This has been seen as a context of particular relevance to religion (Lorne L. Dawson, et al, *Religion Online: finding faith on the Internet*, Psychology Press, 2004; Erik Helligren, *Creating God -- Through The Internet?* *Medium*, 1 March 2022; *Finding God on the Internet, What Does It Mean to Serve God*, 2 May 2018)

Games and puzzling: It can be speculated that a primary activity in heaven may be a transcendental form of game-playing -- a reflection of the use of many games as a medium of social interaction. How this might be a transformation of ball games, word games, card games, video games, and the like, invites creative exploration. The dynamics between archetypal forces may be seen in this light -- speculatively to encompass gambling and risk taking. **Hermann Hesse** offered allusions to this modality through *The Glass Bead Game* (1943). Potentially an inspiration for Hesse, *The Philosophers' Game* (known as **rithmomachy**) is an early European mathematical board game somewhat like chess except that most methods of capture depend on the numbers inscribed on each piece -- hence its recognition as *The Battle of the Numbers*.

In the light of its origins and correspondences, the mathematics of heaven has been speculatively related to chess by Raymond Keene (*Chess and the mathematics of Heaven, The Article*, 19 June 2021). A religious perspective resulted in the elaboration by **James P. Carse** of the sense of an infinite game -- as it might be characterized by heaven (*Finite and Infinite Games: a vision of life as play and possibility*, 1987). The exploration evoked that of Niki Harré (*The Infinite Game: how to live well together*, 2018) and Simon Sinek (*The Infinite Game*, 2019), as compared by Bruce Rosenstein (*James P. Carse, Simon Sinek, Niki Harré: Finite and Infinite Games*, 22 March 2021).

Of some relevance with respect to games played in heaven is the speculative consideration of the design of games which transcend binary games by which humanity is currently enthralled and entrapped, as discussed separately (*Playing the Great Game with Intelligence*, 2013; *Insights for democratic global governance from 4-team ball-games: 2-way football?* 2016). How might the nature of games of "higher order" be comprehended?

Curiously, for it to be "eternally" viable, a sustainable environment may need to be essentially "puzzling" -- as suggested by the mythology of labyrinths and riddles. Any continuing acquisition of insight -- of growth -- may effectively be based on puzzles the nature of whose solution may itself be problematic.

Dialogue: An ideal environment populated by others suggests the need for a particular understanding of dialogue -- potentially quite distinct from that of any pub, cafe or salon. In that respect of relevance is few documented instances of the wise exchanging with each other -- gurus in particular tend to avoid each other, despite the wisdom with which they are each associated. Little is remarked on the dialogue between the disciples at the archetypal Last Supper or on the quality of dialogue in academic common rooms. Myths offer little insight into the nature of the dialogue between angels or divinities.

Some attention is however accorded to **apophatic discourse**, namely dialogue characterised by avoidance of the essential (Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 1994; *Being What You Want: problematic kataphatic identity vs. potential of apophatic identity?* 2008). Ironically amusing is speculative consideration of the use of humour in heaven, as separately discussed (*Humour and Play-Fullness: essential integrative processes in governance, religion and transdisciplinarity*, 2005; *Recognized need for humour in religion*

and spiritual development, 2005).

The investment of [David Bohm](#) in the potential of dialogue raises the question as to the degree to which his insights have informed dialogue in environments characterised by peace or sustainability -- "heavenly" environments -- and in particular any form of proprioceptive dialogue as clarified by Olen Gunnlaugson (*Bohmian Dialogue: a Critical Retrospective of Bohm's Approach to Dialogue as a Practice of Collective Communication*, *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, 2, 2015, 1):

Proprioception allows the physiological correlates of our thoughts to enter more clearly into felt awareness in the moment, in turn helping us understand more fully what is taking place by orienting differently by experiencing this deeper connect with the underlying ground of wholeness, which day to day reality is imbedded in.

Such dialogue itself offers an instance of paradox ([Steven M. Rosen](#), *Splitting the Atom: the paradox of proprioceptive dialogue*, *Journal of Mind and Behavior*, 43, 2022, 3).

Loneliness? Speculation regarding the dynamics of heaven have suggested continuing fruitful communication with loved ones -- for all eternity -- with heaven as the antidote to loneliness, especially for believers (*Loneliness: heaven, longing for*, *Sermons and Biblical Studies*; Joe Carter, *What Christians Should Know About Loneliness*, *The Gospel Coalition*, 21 November 2020). Such dialogue notably avoids consideration of the potential for boredom noted above.

The alternative possibility of loneliness has also been imagined (*Do people get sad and lonely in heaven?* *Quora*; *Heaven Loneliness Poems*, *PoetrySoup*). This is potentially consistent with the extensive literature on the loneliness of the ageing, the retired, and those misleadingly assumed to be living "happily ever after" in marriages. Curiously the bonds characteristic of warfare may well contrast with the loneliness of veterans on their return to countries "at peace".

Extending lifespan and "living for ever": For some [life extension](#) has become a major preoccupation, given the potential opportunity of [cryonics](#), [suspended animation](#), and [mind uploading](#). For John Gray:

Ancient Chinese and early modern European alchemists dreamt of an elixir that would give perpetual life... But it is only in recent times that the dream has captured masses of people, with millions following diets and exercise regimes in the hope that they can put off dying for as long as possible. There are a few who go further - groups of immortalists, who have their cadavers frozen until technology develops to a point where they can be resuscitated or who stuff themselves with hundreds of vitamins every day while looking forward to a time when they can upload their minds into cyberspace and escape death altogether. (*A Point of View: Would you want to live forever?* *BBC*, 27 July 2012)

The question of the daily occupation of such extended lives is seemingly not addressed -- despite anticipation of the role of artificial intelligence (*Forthcoming Major Revolution in Global Dialogue*, 2013). The future engagement of the retired with AI may be indicative of the challenges of peace, sustainability and heaven. Paradoxically it may evoke hopeful aspiration for a mode of engagement "otherwise" (*Post-Apocalyptic Renaissance of Global Civilization: Engaging with otherness otherwise?* 2018; *Symbolizing Collective Remembering Otherwise*, 2018).

Paradoxical need for enemies and challenging otherness

In the imagined conditions of peace, heaven or sustainability, there is a largely unexamined sense in which a desire for "otherness" or alterity is engendered. Paradoxically this can be understood as characteristic of boredom and the need for something to happen. In phenomenology, the terms the Other and the Constitutive Other identify the other human being, in their differences from the Self, as being a cumulative, constituting factor in the self-image of a person; as acknowledgement of being real. Hence, the Other is dissimilar to and the opposite of the Self, of Us, and of the Same. The term Othering describes the reductive action of labelling and defining a person as someone who belongs to the socially subordinate category of the Other. The practice of Othering excludes persons who do not fit the norm of the social group, which is a version of the Self.

Othering translates into a need for enemies in order to reinforce a tangible sense of collective identity (*Needing Evil Elsewhere*, 2001). Without problematic enemies, there is a collective at risk of losing any sustainable sense of identity and of the relative superiority of its values, especially when their nature is elusive? (*Values, Virtues and Sins of a Viable Democratic Civilization*, 2022).

There is extensive literature in social psychology on the need for enemies (Leopoldo Fergusson, et al, *The Need for Enemies*, *The Economic Journal*, 126, 2016, 593; F. G. Bailey, *The Need for Enemies: a bestiary of political forms*, 1998). As noted by Maxime Menuet, et al, (*Reputation and the "need for enemies"*, *Economic Theory*, 72, 2021, 3):

A reputation of competence in solving a particular problem is useful only if the problem remains in the future. Hence, there is an incentive to keep the "enemy" alive: An agent may do wrong in his or her job precisely because he or she is competent. The paper develops this mechanism in a general career concerns framework and shows that a tradeoff between reputation and the need for enemies emerges. As a result, agents are induced to produce only moderate effort, and only moderately skilled agents are likely to be appointed.

Faced with the possible erosion of a sense of identity and coherence, is the collective then obliged to engender enemies justifying a militaristic posture? This may be done deliberately through false flag operations or by other covert means -- eliciting threats to which a response can be justified. (*Provocation of "Unprovoked Aggression" by Encroachment*, 2022). In an information-dependent society,

enemies may be variously imagined or asserted to exist -- much as has been done in the past by assertion of the role of "evil spirits".

The engendering of enemies is curiously common to many cosmologies and myths as the "wars of the gods" in heaven, most evidently translated into the eternal battle between good and evil (*The Great Battle between Good and Evil, Revelation 12*). It is a feature of holy wars (exemplified by the Christian *crusades*) and the Islamic understanding of *jihad* . Provocatively it may then be understood as calling for a systemic appreciation of the role of "evil" and the "demonic" (*Ensuring Dynamics of Sustainability by Appreciative Recognition of Evil, 2022; Engaging with Hyperreality through Demonique and Angelique? 2016*).

Perpetual war, endless war, or a forever war, is a lasting state of war with no clear conditions that would lead to its conclusion. These wars are situations of ongoing tension that may escalate at any moment, similar to the Cold War. From the late 20th century, the concepts have been used to critique the United States Armed Forces interventions in foreign nations or wars with ambiguous enemies such as the war on terror or war on drugs (*List of wars involving the United States, Wikipedia; List of armed conflicts involving the United States, Wikipedia; Review of the Range of Virtual Wars, 2005*).

- Lawrence E. Joseph: *The Need for Enemies* (*HuffPost*, 18 March 2010)
- James Joyner: *How Perpetual War Became U.S. Ideology* (*The Atlantic*, 11 May 2011)
- Samuel Moyn: *How the US created a world of endless war* (*The Guardian*, 31 August 2021)
- Michael Streich: *Americans Need an Enemy: common enemies have united the nation since Independence* (*DecodedPast*, 18 July 2013).
- Phil Pasquini: *Massive White House Protest Against Endless Wars in World* (*CounterCurrents*, 20 March 2023)
- David Vine: *The United States of War a global history of America's endless conflicts, from Columbus to the Islamic State* (University of California Press, 2021)

Curiously, in claiming to be the primary defender of global peace, extensive controversial reference is made to the numbers affected by US foreign intervention (James A. Lucas: *The U.S. Has Killed More Than 20 Million People in 37 "Victim Nations" Since World War II, Global Research*, 1 April 2023; *US war-mongering under guise of 'democracy' inflicts untold damage on the world, Global Times*, 1 December 2021). For the latter:

In its more than 240-year-long history since declaring independence on July 4, 1776, there have only been 16 years in which the US was not at war. From the end of World War II (WWII) to 2001, the US has initiated 201 of the 248 armed conflicts in 153 locations, accounting for over 80 percent of total wars fought. Since 2001, wars and military operations by the US have claimed more than 800,000 lives and displaced tens of millions of people.

A paradoxical feature of the global institutionalization of the safeguarding of peace in the UN Security Council is its grouping of Permanent Members who tend to perceive each other as a primary threat to peace. Ironically those attracted to anti-war activism may themselves be profiled by such authorities as a threat to law and order -- to peace.

For J. C. Flugel: *The Moral Paradox of Peace and War: Conway Memorial Lecture* (*Nature*, 147, 1941):

... Flugel gives us an acute analysis which is as pertinent to our plans for reconstruction as to the building of a world order from which war has been eliminated. Starting with an analysis of the moral qualities which are responsible for the real challenge of war and which have already led to a certain recognition of the need for a moral equivalent of war, he indicates concisely the points at which this challenge must be met in a progressive society in which full expression is given to legitimate desires and aspirations. Notably he stresses the spirit of adventure, with all it connotes of excitement, uncertainty, danger and tenseness or strenuous endeavour. Of this, as well as the social solidarity, the heightened sense of the individual being needed, and the identification with a nobler cause for which he or she is prepared to make any sacrifice, any stable order must take account of, and must seek to satisfy by discovering, a common purpose comparable in intensity with that induced by war.

The great task that confronts democracy is to find a formula for integration in harmony with its own essential spirit, which will express our fundamental agreement as to the ultimate goal while preserving our present liberty of thought and discussion as to the best means of attaining this goal. As Prof. Flugel sees it -- and in this most scientific workers will concur -- we must learn to face the stark realities of man's place in Nature, and find in the challenge and opportunity they afford for the exercise of human genius, combativeness, courage and co-operation, the true moral equivalent of war.

In the current period of political correctness, in which the perception of problematic otherness is deprecated, this invites speculative consideration of *Elaborating a Declaration on Combating Anti-otherness* (2018). That argument used as examples anti-science, anti-spiritual, anti-women, anti-gay, anti-socialism, anti-animal, and anti-negativity.

The embodiment of strife, in the conditions imagined as desirable, invites the philosophical insight of [Nicholas Rescher](#):

For centuries, most philosophers who have reflected on the matter have been intimidated by the strife of systems. But the time has come to put this behind us -- not the strife, that is, which is ineliminable, but the felt need to somehow end it rather than simply accept it and take it in stride. To reemphasize the salient point: it would be bizarre to think that philosophy is not of value because philosophical positions are bound to reflect the particular values we hold. (*The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity*, 1985).

From that perspective, Rescher's interest in ignorance suggests that that condition may well be a characteristic vital to the viability of the

dynamics of peace and sustainability -- if not of heaven itself (*Ignorance: on the wider implications of deficient knowledge*, 2009). How intimately is ignorance related to bliss (Geoff Olson, *If Ignorance is Bliss, Awareness is Pain*, *OffGuardian*, 9 April 2023).

There is the paradox that if ignorance were to be eliminated through a viable [Theory of Everything](#), it is far from clear what would ensure the dynamics of everlasting peace and sustainability over the next 1,000 or 10,000 years (*Unrecognized strategic implications of paradox and logical fallacy*, 2008). The question is consistent with the preoccupations of the [Long Now Foundation](#).

Experimenting with ideal environments in practice

Intentional communities: It is appropriate to recognize the extent to which religions have evoked the creation of environments which are upheld as reflecting divine organization to some degree. This is most evident in the creation of many Christian monasteries and convents. The pattern is evident in other religions. These can all be seen as experimental aspirations to peace and sustainability with an emphasis on "heavenly" harmony. Secular analogues are evident in the creation of collectives by Communist regimes, and by the formation of government-sanctioned kibbutzim in Israel.

Partly inspired by such initiatives, many efforts have been made to establish intentional communities with a measure of utopian inspiration -- readily understood as an aspiration to qualities associated with the "heavenly", most obviously peace and sustainability. These are variously described (Mark Holloway, *Heavens on Earth: utopian communities in America, 1680-1880*, 1951; Charles Erasmus, *In Search of the Common Good: Utopian Experiments Past and Future*, 1985; Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *From Commitment to Community: communes and utopias in sociological perspective*, 1972; 2003, Diane Leaf Christian, *Creating a Life Together: practical tools to grow ecovillages and intentional communities*, 2003).

Failure of collective initiatives: Understood as experiments, collective initiatives of different kinds have evoked a literature as to why they fail, whether commercial enterprises or intentional communities seeking to embody an ideal:

- **business failures:**
 - Tom Eisenmann: *Why Start-ups Fail* (*Harvard Business Review*, May–June 2021)
 - Amy C. Edmondson: *Strategies for Learning from Failure* (*Harvard Business Review*, April 2011)
 - Bernard Marr: *The Top 10 Reasons Why Businesses Will Fail Over The Next 10 Years* (Forbes, 29 August 2022)
 - *The Scary Truth About Corporate Survival* (*Harvard Business Review*, December 2016)
- failure of **communist collectives:**
 - Valerie Soleil: *Why Did Communism Fail? 10 Possible Reasons* (*Learning Mind*)
 - John Clark et al: *Why Communism Collapses: The Moral and Material Failures of Command Economies are Intertwined* (*Journal of Public Policy*, 10, 1990, 4)
- failure of kibbutzim:
 - J. J. Goldberg: *What Actually Undermined the Kibbutz* (*Forward*, 7 April 2010)
 - Johan Norberg: *The rise -- and disastrous fall -- of the kibbutz* (*The Spectator*, 30 November 2019)
 - Uri Davis: *Martin Buber's Paths in Utopia -- the kibbutz: an experiment that didn't fail?* (*Peace News*, 1 March 2002)
 - *Whatever Happened To The Kibbutzim?* (*ABC*, 21 June 2020)
- failure of monasteries and convents, historically associated with the **dissolution of the monasteries:**
 - James Jeffrey: *Monastic decline and the loss that goes with it* (*The Catholic World Report*, 3 December 2022)
 - Felix Bohr: *The Last of the Monks: Germany's Vanishing Monasteries* (*Spiegel International*, 19 September 2019)
- failure of utopian communities:
 - Ewan Morrison: *Why Utopian Communities Fail* (*Areo*, 8 March 2018)
 - Alexa Clay: *Like Start-ups Most Intentional Communities Fail* (*Aeon*, 28 February 2017)
 - Naima Ritter Figueres: *Why do Communities Fail?* (*Conscious Coliving*, 27 February 2019)

From a secular developmental perspective, also of interest is the analysis of the failure of "community development" (W. David Robinson, *The Failure of Community Development*, *Africa Today*, 14, 1967, 2; Bonnie J. Mccay and Svein Jentoft, *Market or Community Failure? Critical Perspectives on Common Property Research*, *Human Organization*, 57, 1998, 1). Intriguingly the [Institute of Cultural Affairs International](#), with its commitment to community development, adapted its own organization in the light of the question as to how the enduring monastic orders of the past would have envisaged their own organization in the present time.

Extensively studied, the challenge has been made more evident through the failure of "**nation building**", most recently in the case of Afghanistan, following an historically unprecedented level of investment. From a more general perspective consideration can be given to the reasons for the rise and fall of civilizations (Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, 2005; Johan Galtung and Sohail Inayatullah, *Macrohistory and Macrohistorians: perspectives on individual, social, and civilizational change*, 1997).

Learning from failure? Consideration can also be given to the criteria by which failure is recognized, when this may be questionable and controversial (David B. Bills, *The Sociology of Failure and Rejection*, *Sociology of Education*, 86, 2013, 4). Of relevance is then the variety of forms of failure and how they are to be understood in terms of systemic vulnerability (*Variety of System Failures Engendered by Negligent Distinctions*, 2016).

It is curious that it is questionable the degree to which lessons of past failures are taken into account in the design of experimental communities. **To what extent are appropriate experiments undertaken by relevant disciplines in the light of their respective insights?** There is clearly a marked preference for observation of initiatives by others, however inspired and designed, and commentary on their eventual failure. By contrast, **the potentially relevant psycho-social disciplines have a curiously constrained track record in designing their own professional organizations and meetings** (including those now electronically enabled). It remains questionable whether the insights of such disciplines have been adapted to the psycho-social organization of extensive space exploration and life in the

associated habitats -- of which [Biosphere 2](#) was an early variant.

Mice populations as exemplars? Somewhat ironically appropriate to any focus on experimentation is the work of [John B. Calhoun](#), an American ethologist and behavioural researcher noted for his studies of population density and its effects on behaviour. Calhoun used rats initially, and then mice, in an extensive series of studies to experiment with the idea of what utopias would be like (usefully summarized by [Wikipedia](#)).

The mice were provided with everything they could possibly need: food, water, perfect nesting grounds, freedom from predators, comfortable surroundings, and plenty of play space to roam around in. They were housed in constructs called "Universes", the most famous of these being called "Universe 25" (*Death Squared: the explosive growth and demise of a mouse population*, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 66, 1973, 1 Pt 2). The results gripped a society consumed by fears of overpopulation:

- James Felton: *Universe 25: the mouse "Utopia" experiment that turned into an Apocalypse* (*IFLScience*, 22 July 2021)
- Annie Melchor: *Universe 25, 1968-1973* (*The Scientist*, 2 May 2022)
- Sam Kean: *Mouse Heaven or Mouse Hell?* (*Distillations: Science History Institute*, 17 May 2022)
- Maris Fessenden: *How 1960s Mouse Utopias Led to Grim Predictions for Future of Humanity* (*Smithsonian Magazine*, 26 February 2015)
- Andrei Tapalaga: *Universe 25: The Horrifying Study That Predicted Human Extinction* (*History of Yesterday*, 21 September 2022)
- Esther Inglis-Arkel: *How Mice Turned Their Private Paradise Into A Terrifying Dystopia* (*Gizmodo*, 24 February 2015)
- Sophie Calabretto: *Calhoun's prophet rodents and the creation of the "behavioural sink"*. (*Cosmos*, 22 October 2021)

Given the fundamental implications of Calhoun's research, of particular interest is whether the literature on sustainability makes reference to it. Curiously this does not appear to be the case. Given its implications for the pathological consequences of high population density, it is also surprising that no reference appears to have been made to it in considering social distancing and lockdown policies in response to pandemic.

Fortunately a degree of recognition of the relevance of those experiments is evident from a recent response of ChatGPT:

In terms of sustainability, the Universe 25 experiment highlights the importance of understanding the complex interactions between population growth, resource availability, and social behavior. It illustrates the consequences of ignoring these interactions, such as environmental degradation and the collapse of social systems. The lesson from Universe 25 is that sustainability requires a holistic approach that considers not only environmental concerns but also social and economic factors. It calls for an understanding of the interdependence between these factors and how they affect each other. To ensure a sustainable future, we need to balance population growth, resource management, and social cohesion in a way that promotes long-term stability and resilience.

Possibility of human group viability experiments: As indicated with respect to the Calhoun experiments, he found that the mouse population never exceeded 200 individuals, and stabilized at 150 -- curiously reminiscent of [Dunbar's number](#) for humans. Moreover, the mice were not randomly scattered throughout the pen area, but had organized themselves into twelve or thirteen local colonies of a dozen each. He noted that twelve individuals was the maximum number that could live harmoniously in a natural group, beyond which stress and psychological effects function as group break-up forces.

Such references to a pattern of 12 are in turn curiously reminiscent of human preferences for 12-fold strategic patterns of organization (*Checklist of 12-fold Principles, Plans, Symbols and Concepts*, 2011; *Clarifying the Unexplored Dynamics of 12-fold Round tables*, 2019).

It is in this light that a simple large-scale experiment could be envisaged as detailed separately (*Group Questing or Twelving*, 1976). In contrast with the computer technology available at the time the proposal was made, current internet and social media facilities would enable insights to be engendered relevant to the dynamics of peace and sustainability -- and to enrich imagination on the dynamics of heaven.

Interrelating fundamental aspirations coherently with their negation

Fundamental aspirations as hyperobjects? The fundamental subtlety of peace, sustainability, heaven or hope suggests that each might be appropriately recognized as a [hyperobject](#), as articulated from the perspective of [object-oriented ontology](#) (OOO) by [Timothy Morton](#) (*Hyperobjects: philosophy and ecology after the End of the World*, 2013; *Introducing the Idea of 'Hyperobjects': a new way of understanding climate change and other phenomena*, *High Country News*, 19 January 2015). For Morton, a hyperobject is held to be of such vast temporal and spatial dimensions in relation to human life that it defeats traditional ideas about what is indicated -- an association with references to [hyperreality](#). Given the "end times" theme noted above, the clarification by [Laura Hudson](#) is of some relevance (*At the End of the World, It's Hyperobjects All the Way Down*, *Wired*, 16 November 2021).

In the apparent absence of any references to the 4 aspirations as hyperobjects, a useful provocation at the time of writing is to take advantage of the artificial intelligence facility [ChatGPT](#) -- to which the following questions were addressed (noting the reservations with respect to the potential limitations of the answers):

Is peace a hyperobject? While peace is an abstract and complex concept that can be difficult to fully define and achieve, it is not a hyperobject because it does not have the same qualities of vastness and complexity that characterize hyperobjects. Peace is a state of harmony and absence of conflict, typically between individuals, groups, or nations, and while it can be difficult to achieve and maintain, it does not exist on a scale or in a way that makes it a hyperobject.

Is sustainability a hyperobject? Yes, sustainability is often considered a hyperobject.... Like other hyperobjects, sustainability exceeds our ability to fully comprehend it, and it has effects that are felt across vast distances and timescales. Sustainability is also a concept that is constantly evolving, and our understanding of what it means to be sustainable is constantly changing as we learn more about the complex systems that support life on our planet.

Is heaven a hyperobject? No, heaven is not a hyperobject.... While heaven may be difficult to fully comprehend or prove, it is not a hyperobject in the same way that climate change or nuclear waste are. Hyperobjects are complex phenomena that exist on a vast scale and have effects that are felt across vast distances and timescales, and they often exceed our ability to fully comprehend them. While beliefs about heaven may be abstract and difficult to prove or disprove, they do not have the same qualities of vastness and complexity that characterize hyperobjects.

Is hope a hyperobject? No, hope is not a hyperobject. Hope is an abstract concept that refers to a positive feeling or expectation about the future... While hope may be difficult to define or measure, it does not have the same qualities of vastness and complexity that characterize hyperobjects.

The implication of the argument above is that -- with each being an aspiration -- together they may well constitute a mutually entangled complex. This would seem to call for exploration as a hyperobject in its own right. Given the challenge of doing so, it is then useful to consider how the labels conventionally used for each are simplistic indications of a higher order of complexity which can be mapped onto various configurations as projections of that subtlety into 2D or 3D. It is appropriate to recall the continuing struggle to find usefully meaningful ways to project the globality of the Earth into 2D (see [List of Map Projections, Wikipedia](#)). The challenge in the case of cognitive globality is necessarily all the greater (*Engaging with Insight of a Higher Order*, 2014).

Tetrahedral configuration: As a challenge to comprehension of disparate perspectives, the 4-fold pattern can (for example) be variously mapped into a [tetrahedral configuration](#) as a mnemonic aid. The animation on the left below is one approach. There the 4 aspirations are associated as text labels to the four vertices. Images indicative of each preoccupation are associated with the corresponding face, as follows: peace (UN emblem), heaven (rose window typical of churches and temples), sustainability (pattern of UN Sustainable Development Goals), hope (reaching hands of Michael Angelo's Sistine Chapel). Clearly many other images could be used, or an alternation between variants.

The tetrahedral configuration invites use of the edges to indicate relationships between the 4 aspirations, as shown in the central animation. Possible wording includes sustainable peace, sustainable hope, and sustainable heaven, for example. Anticipation can be substituted for hope, etc.

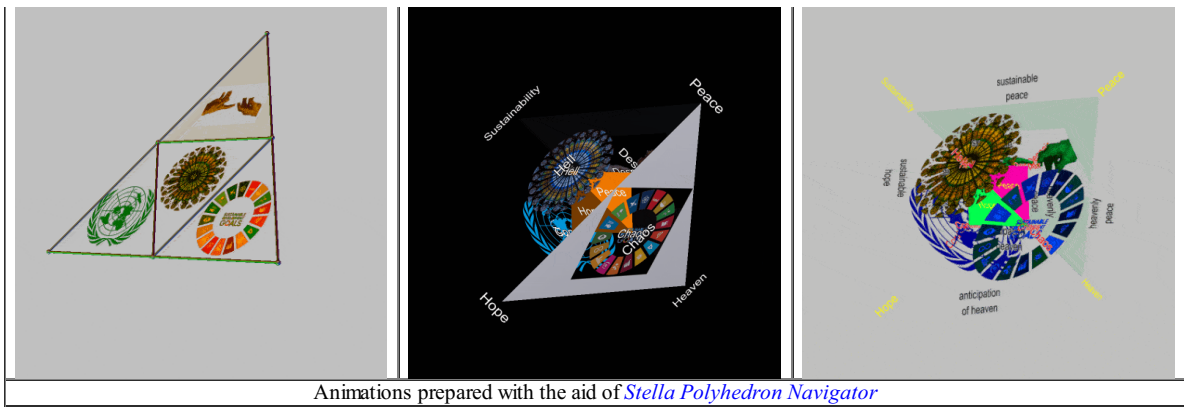
Again for mnemonic purposes, an alternative is to use the vertexes for what are held to be the constraining forces -- the "negation" of the corresponding aspirations. Thus conflict can be mapped in contrast to peace, despair in contrast to hope, chaos in contrast to sustainability, and hell in contrast to heaven, as shown in the animation on the right. Appropriate images can be used as an alternative to text indications (to the extent that they are free of copyright). The design choices in the animations (colour, transparency, etc) are merely indicative as offering a degree of coherence.

| Indicative animations of polyhedral configurations of fundamental aspirations and their negation | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| Tetrahedral configuration of aspirations | Relationships between aspirations | With negative forces constraining aspirations |
| | | |
| Animations prepared with the aid of Stella Polyhedron Navigator | | |

The emphasis in this argument is on the confusion associated with achieving any coherent comprehension of how the disparate aspirations might be understood as related and how they might be configured to suggest the nature of their confluence. One approach is therefore to allow the tetrahedron to fold from a 2D map (as indicative of the prior condition) into a 3D configuration (as indicative of that integration). This is illustrated by the animation below left.

The polyhedral geometry can be further exploited by considering the dual of the tetrahedron -- also a tetrahedron -- to hold the negating images separately. This is illustrated by the animations below using contrasting design metaphors (centre and right).

| Indicative animations of polyhedral configurations of fundamental aspirations and their negation | | |
|--|---|---|
| Folding a tetrahedral configuration of aspirations | Morphing between aspirations and their negation | Morphing between aspirations and their negation |
| | | |



Animations prepared with the aid of *Stella Polyhedron Navigator*

Stella octangula configuration: Of particular interest is the manner in which the tetrahedron and its dual can be combined geometrically to form the *stella octangula*, as discussed separately (*Framing Global Transformation through the Polyhedral Merkabah*, 2017). There the *stella octangula* is explored as corresponding to the Merkabah, of traditional symbolic significance (*Richer pattern of significance through complexification of the Star of David?*). Of further interest, as discussed there, are the *Controversies inherent in the cognitive significance of the Merkabah?* and the *Cognitive implication in Merkabah as configuration of cycles essential to systemic viability*. In the latter visualizations are presented as an indication of cognitive cycles interconnecting the various nodes in the complex.

The animation on the right above shows one tetrahedron morphing into its dual via the *stella octangula* configuration as an intermediary. The relationship is suggestive of the "negative" dynamics constraining and challenging the configuration of "positive" aspirations -- or of the eternal "battle" of their symbolic counterparts, as celebrated in mythology. As indicated, additional images and animations are presented in the earlier discussion.

Octahedral configuration: Further indications of the confluence and confusion of the aspirations and their negation are indicated below -- as a challenge to imaginative comprehension. The use of the *octahedron* in the central animations is constrained by the inability to show the dynamic between the exploded and imploded extremes.

| Indicative animations of polyhedral configurations of fundamental aspirations and their negation | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Morphing between aspirations and their negation | Rotation of exploded octahedron of aspirations and their negation | Rotation of imploded octahedron of aspirations and their negation | Morphing of aspirations (by tilting triangles) |
| | | | |

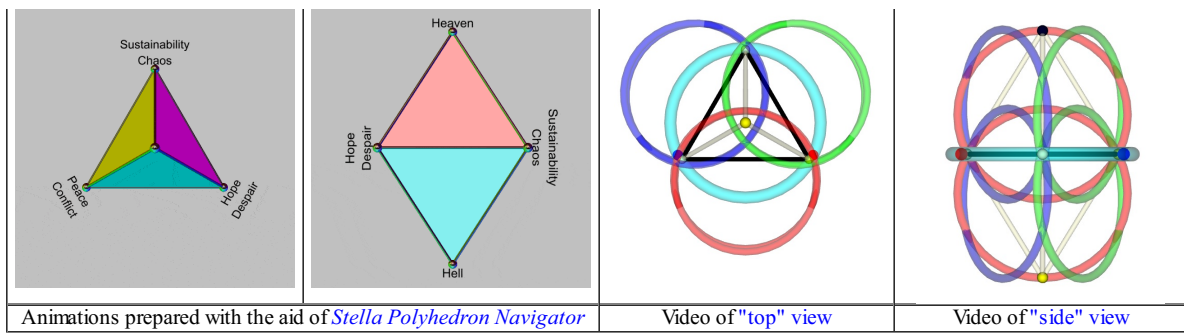
Animations prepared with the aid of *Stella Polyhedron Navigator*

Use of an octahedral configuration of "positive" and "negative" fundamental constructs is a potential relation framing of such as the *Eightfold Way* of Buddhism. More curious is the template it might offer for imagery of the *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* -- recently speculatively complemented by the *Four Horsewomen of the Renaissance* (*The Four Horsemen and Their Antidotes, Therapist Aid; Be where the Four Hoarsemen of the Apocalypse are not?* 2012).

Comprehension of the 8-fold pattern (with its two 4-fold aspects) might be usefully clarified by reference to the widely-cited 8-fold pattern presented by Gareth Morgan (*Images of Organization*, 1986), whose current relevance has been subsequently explored (Matthew J. Lambert III, *A review of Images of Organization, Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education*, 6, 2009, 2). Morgan specifically distinguishes images of organization as (1) machines, (2) organisms, (3) brains, (4) cultures, (5) political systems, (6) psychic prisons, (7) flux and transformation, and (8) instruments of domination.

Triangular dipyrmaid configuration: The *stella octangula* and the *triangular dipyrmaid* bear a degree of similarity when the tetrahedra (as triangular pyramids) are replaced and the two "triangular pyramids" are joined on one side. This offers the provocative possibility of fusing three "aspirations" with their respective "negations" -- indicative of the ambiguity with which each experience is associated (peace/conflict, hope/despair, and sustainability/chaos). Two animated perspectives of this are shown on the left below. A related approach is then to envisage the triangular dipyrmaid as engendered by cycles passing through its vertices as shown in corresponding animations below right.

| Indicative animations of fundamental aspirations and their negation using triangular dipyrmaid | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Rotation ("top") view (animation) | Rotation ("side") view (animation) | Cycle animation ("top") view (screenshot) | Cycle animation ("side") view (screenshot) |
| | | | |



The animations above right are reproduced from the earlier argument where related representations are discussed (*Framing Global Transformation through the Polyhedral Merkabah*, 2017).

Representation possibilities can be further explored by combining the triangular dipyramid with its dual in the animations shown below.

| Indicative animations of fundamental aspirations and their negation using triangular dipyramid | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Dipyramid dual (folding) | Dipyramid with dual (rotation of vertical view) | Dipyramid with dual (rotation of top view) | Dipyramid with dual (morphing rotation) |
| | | | |
| Animations prepared with the aid of <i>Stella Polyhedron Navigator</i> | | | |

As "ways of looking" and the "shadow"? The approach merits adaptation to the subtlety of the 4-fold aspirations with the 4-fold set of their negation. as conventional lenses through which the current condition is framed and perceived (*Interrelating Multiple Ways of Looking at a Crisis*, 2021; *Ways of looking at ways of looking -- in a period of invasive surveillance*, 2014; *Towards a Periodic Table of Ways of Knowing*, 2009).

One advantage to the integrative confrontation between the positive aspirations and their problematic counterparts is the suggestive use of such imagery to configure elements of the **collective unconscious**, as clarified from the psychoanalytical perspective by Carl Jung, most notably with respect to any understanding of the collective **shadow** of humanity (*Attacking the Shadow through Iraq: using the I-Rack to put Western Civilization to the question*, 2002; *Shadow of Humanity*, *World Problems Project*). Richard Slaughter refers to "humanity's shadow" as the repressed content of awareness (*Defending the Future: introductory overview of a special issue on responses to The Biggest Wakeup Call in History*, *On the Horizon*, 21, 2013, 3). For Slaughter:

The point was that, unless we took some of these subterranean impulses and their effects into account, our attempts at rational restorative actions in the wider world would be vitiated or undermined

With respect to the controversial pioneering focus of Paul Ehrlich and Anne Ehrlich on the consequences of overpopulation in 1968 -- as later reviewed (*The Population Bomb Revisited*, *The Electronic Journal of Sustainable Development*, 1, 2009, 3) -- a chapter was devoted to the "Shadow of Humanity" in a subsequent book (Anne H. Ehrlich and Paul R. Ehrlich, *Earth*, 1987). The controversy has continued with the repeated warning by the authors of civilizational collapse (Paul R. Ehrlich and Anne H. Ehrlich, *Can a collapse of global civilization be avoided?* *The Royal Society*, 7 March 2013; *Paul Ehrlich: 'Collapse of civilisation is a near certainty within decades'*, *The Guardian*, 22 March 2018).

With the aspirations above understood as cultural symbols -- with their negations -- the clarification of D. Steven Nouriani with respect to the "shadow of humanity" is appropriate:

Cultural symbols play a vital role in the development of the psyche, society, and consciousness. When cultural symbols decay or are misused, their libido energy can revert back into the unconscious and fuel the destructive shadow forces in the unconscious...The gradual decay and misappropriation of cultural symbols around the world diminish our capacity to contain our collective shadow, placing civilization at risk. The emerging global consciousness, rooted in the living symbol of the Earth and the feminine principle, challenges us to integrate our collective shadow at individual and cultural levels and carries the potential of healing the split between East and West. (*The Defensive Misappropriation and Corruption of Cultural Symbols*, *Jung Journal*, 5, 2013, 1)

Aesthetic comprehension of paradox as a knot

The variety of references to paradox cited above are useful as an indication of complex contradictions which are a challenge to

comprehension in conventional terms. However the term is only a reminder of a need to think otherwise about the matter, whether it be peace, heaven, sustainability or hope. The polyhedral representations of the complex are similarly indicative, but with other limitations -- especially given their linearity.

Visual metaphor: It is therefore of interest to consider how recognition of the curvature inherent in a "knot" can be helpful in giving a more appropriate visual feel for the complexity of a paradox -- if only aesthetically and as a mnemonic aid (David Ray Griffin, *Unsnarling the World-Knot: consciousness, freedom, and the mind-body problem*, *Process Studies*, 28, 1999, 1/2). A striking example is offered by Edmund A. Napieralski (*The Tragic Knot: paradox in the experience of tragedy*, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 31, 1973, 4). The reference to tragedy is especially valuable in that it integrates both a dynamic and a realistic sense that this may engender an indication that all may not be as ideally "positive" in any assumption of "happily ever after". For Napieralski:

Contradiction has characterized the history of the criticism of tragic drama from the time when Aristotle answered Plato to the present. Morris Weitz, in his perceptive study *Hamlet and the Philosophy of Literary Criticism*, uses this history of contradiction to argue persuasively that a logical or essential definition of tragedy is impossible, "that 'tragedy' is a term whose every criterion of use is always open to fundamental question, challenge, rejection, and replacement."... Yet paradox as an essential or central element in the best tragic drama has not received the eminence it deserves as the necessary and sufficient characteristic that infuses the three major components of tragedy: the nature of the tragic figure, the tragic situation or issue, and the effect of tragedy on its audience. Recognition of paradox as the essential element in tragedy may also serve to harmonize opposing views on the tragic figure, issue, and effect: in sum, paradox permits the translation of apparently irreconcilable views into a creative tension of contraries that defines the experience of tragedy.

Of greater strategic relevance is the argument of Thomas Duus Henriksen, et al (*A Paradox Rarely Comes Alone: a quantitative approach to investigating knotted leadership paradoxes in SMEs*, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 37, 2021, 1).

This article uses a paradox knotting perspective to study key leadership challenges among Danish manufacturing and crafting SMEs... Using exploratory factor analysis, three clusters of knotted paradoxes were identified concerning the management of 1) managing organisational flexibility, 2) balancing engagement and control, and 3) dealing with dispersion. Each identified knot consists of two paradoxes and shows how managers involved in one element of a knotted paradox are also likely to be involved in the tensions of the other. The article contributes to a better understanding of the complexity and interrelatedness of select management paradoxes by demonstrating that paradoxes appear knotted in practice.

For Camille Pradies, et al (*The Lived Experience of Paradox: how individuals navigate tensions during the pandemic crisis*, *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 30, 2021, 3):

Organizational life has always been filled with tensions, but the COVID-19 pandemic is amplifying this experience in fundamental ways...

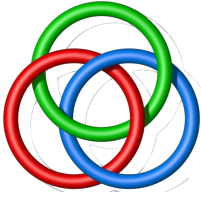
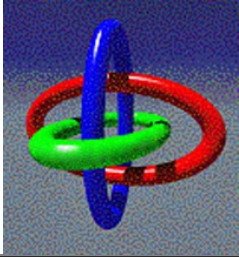
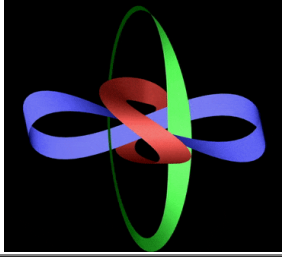
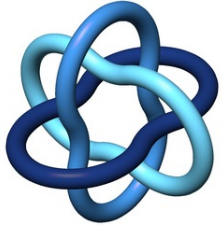
To address the multitude of tensions that employees are experiencing during the pandemic, we turn to paradox theory, which provides a metalevel approach to studying tensions across organizational contexts... The notion of paradox knots..., which are known to be born of constraint, may be helpful in taking these ideas further. It prompts us to consider how the work-family paradox was knotted with other tensions, for example, gender role tensions..., or tensions with paradoxical professional, economic, or societal poles (for instance, as an essential worker also being a parent). Such interconnection and mutual dependence within paradox knots become starker during crises when paradoxes are extremely salient.

Knots and psychiatry: However such reframing as a knot does not seemingly take full advantage of the many insights offered by [knot theory](#), as explicitly suggested in the works of psychiatrists [Jacques Lacan](#) and [R. D. Laing](#) (*Knots*, 1970). The latter evoked the review by Dan Lockton (*Exploring R. D. Laing's Knots in Systemic Design, Relating Systems Thinking and Design*, 2018). Lacan focused on the Borromean knot (Will Greenshields, *The Borromean Knot, Writing the Structures of the Subject*, 2017; Stijn Vanheule, et al, *Knotted Subjectivity: on Lacan's use of knot theory in building a non-universal theory of the subject*, *Re(con)figuring Psychoanalysis*, 2012).

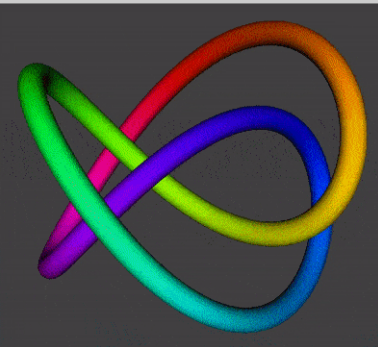
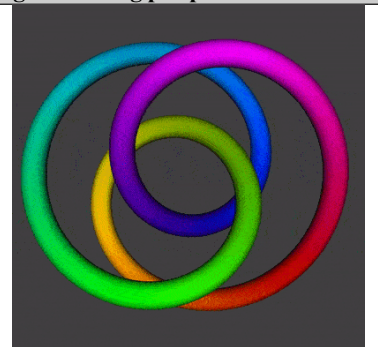
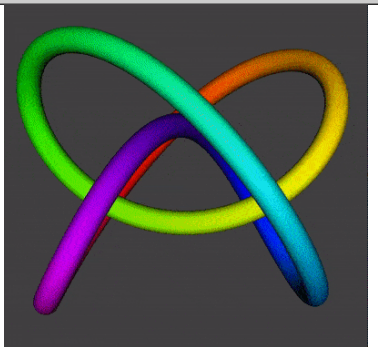
The strategic challenge of the times has been variously indicated in terms of the classical [Gordian Knot](#) (*Engaging globally with knots and riddles -- Gordian and otherwise*, 2018). That discussion highlighted the comprehensible complexity of the [Borromean ring configuration](#) as shown below -- significantly selected as the logo of the International Mathematical Union.

Does the paradoxical complexity of the entanglement of peace, heaven and sustainability merit recognition through such representations?

| Indication of 3-fold articulations of Borromean rings of relevance to entanglement of peace, heaven and sustainability? | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------|--|
| Common representation in 2D | Pask's Stable Concept Triple linked as a Borromean Ring | 3 Möbius strips (animation) | Logo of International Mathematical Union |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
|  |  |  |  |
| | Reproduced from Nick Green (<i>Axioms from Interactions of Actors Theory</i> , 2004) | Video (mp4); Virtual reality (x3d; wrl) | |

Experiential dynamic: Arguably different degrees of entanglement call for recognition, as suggested by the variety of knots (*Cyclic Representation of Coherence as Knots and Otherwise*, 2022). Missing from the static nature of such knot configurations is a fundamental experiential dynamic as implied by the aesthetics of tragedy in relation to the ideal (*Cognitive embodiment of knots: knotting and knitting processes*, 2021). Of particular relevance is the fundamental significance recently attached to the **Mereon Trefoil** (shown below) as described by **Louis Kauffman** (*Pattern, Sign and Space: Mereon Thoughts*. 2003). Otherwise known and visualized as the Mereon Matrix, its potential significance is elaborated in a far more extensive work (Louis H Kauffman, et al, *The Mereon Matrix: everything connected through (k)nothing*, 2018; [frontmatter](#)).


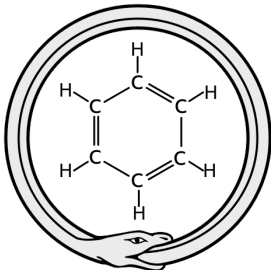

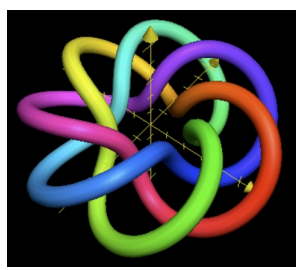
| Animations offering contrasting perspectives on the Mereon toroidal knot | | |
|---|--|--|
|  |  |  |
| Reproduced from (<i>Cyclic Representation of Coherence as Knots and Otherwise</i> , 2022) Animations adapted from X3D models kindly produced by Sergey Bederov of Cortona3D; Interactive 3D variant | | |

As suggestive representations of the 3-fold mutual entanglement of peace, heaven and sustainability, they evoke the provocative question as to the embodiment of the fourth. This is potentially suggested by perceptual engagement with the 3-fold -- and also by the movement along the pathway presented separately in the [interactive 3D version](#) (wireframe variant) highlighting the focal role of logos (*Eliciting Insight from Mandala-style Logos in 3D*, 2020).

It might be assumed that the dynamics of engagement can be framed by the circle alone, otherwise termed the **unknot** (below left). To the extent that this is minimally symbolic of peace, sustainability or heaven -- notably with any implication of a cycle and recycling -- a challenging question of "interestingness" is how long this can hold attention in practice, in contrast to becoming inherently "boring".

Holes as dynamic-engendering attractors: An obvious dynamic is the invitation offered by the hole as an attractor -- as a goal for ball games or intercourse. As a challenge in their own right for ontology and epistemology, bounding "nothingness" by a "hole", invites richer insight (Roberto Casati and Achille C. Varzi, *Holes and Other Superficialities*, 1994; M. Bertamini and C. J. Croucher, *The Shape of Holes*, *Cognition*, 2003), as discussed separately (*Imagined potential of circular forms as a pattern language*, 2022).

A visual contrast can be made as follows, with the unknot on the left, followed by the **Ouroboros**, an ancient symbol depicting a serpent or dragon eating its own tail -- and the inspiration for **August Kekulé's** insight into the structure of the benzene molecule. As a fundamental belief of most Indian religions, termed **Samsara**, the concept of rebirth and "cyclicity of all life, matter, existence" is notably indicated in mandala form as the **Bhavachakra**. A 3D configuration potentially inspired by the 2D representation of the latter is presented as a **torus knot** on the right and discussed separately (*Configuration of a toroidal helix*, 2016).

| Cognitive dynamics beyond the "boredom" of the unknot? | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Unknot of knot theory | Ouroboros with 6-fold benzene molecule | Cycle of samsara presented as the 6-fold Bhavachakra | Torus knot with continuous winding in 3D |
|  |  |  |  |
| Jim.belk , Public domain, via | Haltopub , CC BY-SA 3.0, via | Nagarjun Kandukuru from | Michiel Sikma , CC BY-SA 2.5, via |


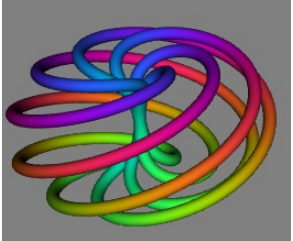


Experiential dynamic: The representational challenge remains that of embodying the experiential dynamic familiar in the variety of [carnival amusement rides](#) -- then to be recognized as indicative of possible cognitive equivalents. The Ouroboros invites experimental development of dynamic equivalents in 3D (*Experimental interactive animations of the Ouroboros-Yi Jing "integration"*, 2021). For peace, heaven and sustainability to offer enduring experience, the question is how complex does the experiential dynamic need to be?

Various dynamics can be recognized: movement through the central "hole"; circling around the "hole"; helical winding around the "hole"; combinations of all three movements; contrasting directional movement in each case. The image on the left below offers an indication of several such movements, as reproduced from (*Towards a 3D visualization of toroidal counter-coiling dynamics*, 2016). A more [complex interactive variant](#) is also accessible. The experiments were undertaken *In quest of optimum designs for a Concordian Mandala* (2016).

A sense of the cognitive dynamic into and through the "hole" is offered by the second image below, reproduced from an array of such images discussed separately (*Cyclic Representation of Coherence as Knots and Otherwise*, 2022). That array was presented as a means of highlighting the relative "interestingness" of curves of increasing complexity in relation to sustainability. The animations of the Mereon toroid above can be considered the archetypal variant of such configurations.

Attractor as "portal"? The argument can be taken further by considering the imagined role of a "portal" as the epitome of "interestingness", most notably as it features in folktales and mythology -- and more recently as the [stargates](#) of popular science fiction. A mandala can then be recognized as constituting a cognitive portal. Appropriately the representation of the portal as a magic mirror through which it is possible to pass is suggestive of recognition of a degree of self-reflexivity. This is potentially consistent with richer understanding of the knowledge cybernetics of peace, heaven and sustainability (*Stepping into, or through, the Mirror: embodying alternative scenario patterns*, 2008; *Radical Cognitive Mirroring of Globalization*, 2014).

Given the enduring challenge of sustainability in the face of climate change, this invites discussion of *Cognitive Embodiment of Patterns of Governance of Higher Order* (2022). As an experiment, the current pattern of Sustainable Development Goals could then be understood as framing a form of higher dimensional portal, as suggested by the animation on the right -- embodying the tragedy of "own goals" -- reproduced from *Polyhedral representation of Sustainable Development Goals including "Own Goals"?* (2022).

| Indications of portal design -- anticipating access to peace, heaven and sustainability | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Helical windings out of phase with circulating spheres moving in opposite directions | Indication of dynamic "through" the central hole | A "stargate" as imaginatively featured in the popular <i>Stargate</i> franchise | Polyhedral representation of UN's Sustainable Development Goals as a portal |
|  |  |  |  |
| Interactive X3D or VRML versions; X3DOM variant | Reproduced from <i>Representation of Coherence as Knots and Otherwise</i> , (2022) | Reproduced from <i>Gateworld: complete guide to Stargate</i> | Reproduced from <i>Polyhedral representation of SDGs</i> (2022). |

The representations above distract to a very significant degree from the cognitive implications of which mandalas offer one indication. Appropriate to that argument is reference to such an inherently paradoxical portal by a classical compilation of a collection of 48 *Zen koans* -- variously titled in translation as *The Gateless Gate*. These however invite experimental polyhedral configuration (*Configuring a Set of Zen Koan as a Wisdom Container*, 2012).

It can be usefully asked how the deprecated reference to "jumping through hoops" relates to an intuitive recognition of the constrained cognitive context contrasting with anticipation of a portal design appropriate to entering the realm of peace-sustainability-heaven. No portal, no peace? No portal, no heaven? No portal, no sustainability? An aspects of the paradox of any such portal is the sense offered by various traditions of "entering a way", potentially complemented by "being the way" -- as variously argued by [Francisco Varela](#), et al (*Laying Down a Path in Walking, The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, 2018)

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