Aarnation of Nothingness and Emptiness through Happening and Mattering

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Annex C to Where There is No Time and Nothing Matters: Cognitive Challenges at the Edge of the World (2008) highlighting and giving focus to various themes in the light of metaphors arising from travels in Tasmania.

Summary

The purpose of this annex is to clarify a range of meanings and implications for the phrase "where there is no time and nothing matters" - as highlighted by the motto of Cradle Valley (Tasmania) noted in Annex A. The follows from a theme of the initial paper on the illusory nature of time (Amanda Gefter, Is time an illusion? New Scientist, 19 January 2008).

The embodiment of "nothing" in form ("mattering") and in process ("happening") is understood here as "importing" "nothingness" or "emptiness" through recognizing and enactivating patterns of associations. The terms in the title are intended to be ambiguously interpreted with respect to the transformation of "nothingness" into "somethingness", in the sense that each has both a tangible and an intangible sense, pertaining to matter (form) and to significance.

The central importance of "nothing" and "void" was a focus of the preceding paper (In Quest of Optimism Beyond the Edge -- through avoidance of the answering process). The intent here is to interrelate "nothingness" as it is central to extreme existential alienation (whether among the marginalized or as the consequence of personal development) with other philosophic and religious understandings. It
Experientially "emptiness" may be echoed:

- as an attractor by:
  - some physical extremes (mountaineering, deserts, etc) (Joe Simpson. Touching the Void **; Cradle Mountain values**)
  - associated psychospiritual disciplines (hermitage, etc), especially in meditative quests to "empty the mind" and achieve some form of cognitive "void" (sunyata)
- as the repulsor of existential alienation:
  - in severely deprived environments (slums, refugee camps, etc)
  - incarceration (penal, educational, asylums, etc)
  - as experienced in some others ("spiritual emptiness", etc) or through death (metaphorical or otherwise) of a significant relationship

**Varieties of nothingness and emptiness**

See Var

The set of variously interrelated approaches to these themes therefore includes:

**Death**: As discussed further below, any exposure to death or mortality may be intimately associated with reflection on nothingness and non-existence -- especially in the case of a loved one. (cf Rudolf Allers, On Darkness, Silence, and the Nought. *The Thomist*, 9, 4, 1946, pp. 515-572). In a meditation on mortality and death, Julian Barnes (*Nothing to be Frightened Of*, 2008) points out that:

> ... death is the one appalling fact which defines life; unless you are aware of it, you cannot begin to understand what life is about; unless you know and feel that the days of wines and roses are limited, that the wine will make your liver and the roses turn brown in their stinking water...there is no context to such pleasures.

In the light of the metaphorical use of "Van Diemen's Land" (discussed in Annex A and Annex B), such reflection is especially appropriate in the case of the unrememered deaths of thousands there -- deliberately enabled by British politics initially and supported by the Christian churches. Their support only shifted to protest, and even active opposition, with the recognition of an abomination (worse than death) to which such policies gave rise -- homosexual intercourse. The simultaneous extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines aroused far less protest and was held to have been mitigated by the effort to convert them to Christianity, even if it meant forcibly separating children from parents. This process was the subject of the recent apology of the Prime Minister of Australia -- which did not however exist at the time. Neither the British government nor the complicit Christian churches have apologized.

The breakdown of a relationship, as noted above, may be experienced as a form of death. Ironically, its importance has even been recognized as fundamental to marketing (Susan Dobsha, et al. *Preventing the Premature Death of Relationship Marketing*, Harvard Business Review, 1 January 1998; Daryl Choy, *The Death of Relationship*, Customer Think, 7 November 2007).

**Alienation**: There is an extensive literature on social alienation of the individual and the associated experience of personal emptiness and nothingness. For a powerful statement on that, see *Collective Memory Personified: an Analogy* (derived from the work of R D Laing, *The Divided Self; a study of sanity and madness*, 1960). In more traditional contexts, this may be framed as an "emptiness of spirit" or soullessness, as with superstition about *zombies*. Such was the alienation of some incarcerated in Van Diemen's Land that they were prepared to kill others in order to be hung.

Such considerations might be fruitfully related to alienation of property, whereby people are deprived of land with which their identity may have been associated over centuries. This is the experience of many indigenous peoples subject to colonial settlement, notably those in Australia.

**Emptiness in relationship**: James Park (*Loneliness of Spirit: Deeper than the Reach of Love*, 1999/2008) discusses existential loneliness in the following terms, distinguishing it from interpersonal loneliness:

> Loneliness is an aching void in the center of our beings, a deep longing to love and be loved, to be fully known and accepted by at least one other person. It is a hollow, haunting sound sweeping thru our depths, chilling our bones and causing us to shiver.

**Boredom**: Both rural and urban life may be experienced as fundamentally boring and empty -- characterized by "nothing happening" -- although each may consider the other to be the remedy to that condition. This drives some to migrate to the cities and others "back to nature". This is a fundamental challenge for indigenous peoples isolated in settlements onto which they may have been forced.

**Economics and finance**: Entrepreneurs in particular may be sensitive to an absence of economic activity in a region (occasionally termed an economic vacuum), possibly to be understood as an opportunity. In this sense business may be understood as deploring a vacuum -- where potential can be foreseen. As in Tasmania, economic logic may reinforce the erroneous perception that forests are "unemployed" - - unless they are being economically exploited.

Economics has attached considerable significance to "nothing" through recognition of the principle of the so-called "invisible hand" as demonstrated by Adam Smith who argued that, in a free market, an individual pursuing his own self-interest tends to also promote the good of his community as a whole.
However the most striking role of "nothing" is in monetary systems where money may continue to be issued that is "backed by nothing" other than government promises (as discussed below). In the UK, a recent crisis led to a relevant comment by James Robertson (Money from Thin Air, The Guardian, 20 March 2008). In the case of the USA, as of February 2008, the total federal public debt, was approximately $9.3 trillion (about $79,000 in average for each American taxpayer) of which 25% was owed to foreign governments. The latter are therefore significantly sustaining the capacity of the US to finance its foreign military interventions "out of nothing".

In the case of financial systems the process is notably enabled through monetary tokens that may be redeemed on demand with "real money" (originally gold). Unfortunately government promises of redemption have effectively been withdrawn or downwardly adjusted over the past century such that the tokens have very little (or no) intrinsic or use value. Fiat currencies remain generally acceptable in stable economies as a means of payment because people believe the currency can be used to discharge tax payments and contractual debts. This confidence regarding expectations about the future value of any given variety of fiat money is extremely fragile.

Politics: Emptiness is most notably recognized in politics as a power vacuum. It is also recognized through the political philosophy of nihilism. As discussed in Annex A, politics may enable and reinforce framing the legal status of land terra nullius when there exists a prior claim of some form.

Society: A sense of nothingness or emptiness is evident in judgmental phrases such as "there was nobody there", meaning nobody of significance -- as with summaries of dialogue in which "nothing was discussed" -- or summit conferences where (nothing happened). The tragedy of the British claim to Australia (as discussed in Annex A) was that the inhabitants were ignored as subhuman nonentities.

Community: Given the fundamental process whereby economic growth is achieved and sustained, "backed by nothing" (as discussed above and below), there is a case for exploring the extent to which an analogous phenomenon exists with respect to developing and sustaining community. In both cases the process might be framed as based on creating and maintaining "confidence" and "trust". Communities emerge from contexts in which some form of "token" can be exchanged, possibly quite independently of any monetary token (but possibly as to some degree associated with tokens in alternative and complementary currency systems). The tokens may notably simply take the form of exchanges of courtesies.

However understanding of the monetary analogue raises questions regarding the extent to which any sense of community is "backed by nothing", especially when the tokens cannot be effectively redeemed by any real value. The equivalence is illustrated by the efforts of leaders of local, national or international communities to "talk up" some form of sense of community -- in situations where this does not address the fragility of collective confidence in any such community (or its leadership's ability to redeem tokens by whatever is held to be of real value). The fragility of these processes may undermine, or preclude, the possibility of sustaining any system of monetary tokens (cf Mancur Olson, Logic of Collective Action: public goods and the theory of groups, 1965).

Insightful examples for further exploration include:

- the well-known tale, the Emperor's New Clothes (1837), by Hans Christensen Andersen, in which the operational consensus regarding the emperor was nothing but his clothes were of the finest cloth, too fine for the eye to see
- hoaxes, notably elaborated by Alain Sokal and Jean Bricmont (Fashionable Nonsense: postmodern intellectuals' abuse of science, 1998) following the so-called Sokal Affair. Whether scientific or otherwise, hoaxes raise the question of "deluded" consensual reality, based on "nothing", prior to emergence of more adequate explanations -- and the associated challenge of groupthink amongst the most authoritative experts, even of the "intelligence community" (cf Groupthink: the Search for Archaeoraptor as a Metaphoric Tale -- missing the link between "freedom fighters" and "terrorists", 2002)
- religious communities, raising questions as to how the community as a whole is sustained: Christians (Christendom as a polity, or Corpus Christianum), Muslims (Ummah), Sufi brotherhoods, etc. Given the role of "government promises" in monetary systems, the striking parallel in the religious case to redemption of tokens of meritorious behaviour for eternal life, enlightenment, "sitting on the right hand of God" in heaven, and/or access to 72 virgins, calls for careful consideration -- especially when these extremely influential beliefs are considered meaningless delusions by such as Richard Dawkins (The God Delusion, 2006).
- scientific communities, whether defined by tokens of mutual appreciation (honours, etc), mutual citation compacts, disputation (as proposed by Donald T Campbell), or other devices -- and whose resources are often assiduously sustained by promises to the taxpayer of future delivery of food for all, health for all, energy for all, knowledge for all, ultimate weaponry, etc. As with government promises, these are often subsequently judged to have been empty promises.

Philosophy (metaphysics): The University of Delaware has been criticized for offering a course titled: Nothing: A study of Nil, Void, Vacuum, Null, Zero, and Other Kinds of Nothingness (a course exploring the "varieties of nothingness from the vacuum and void of physics and astronomy to political nihilism, to the emptiness of the arts and the soul"). As a philosophical position, nihilism argues that Being, especially past and current human existence, is without objective meaning, purpose, comprehensible truth, or essential value. It may be used as a means of framing pejoratively or derogatively a position held by others.

As noted by the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the most powerful statement regarding "emptiness" (as shunya) was made by Nagarjuna (c. 150-250 CE) in response to the process of proliferation of conceptual and verbal hair-splitting, or prapanca. He articulated the concept of "emptiness" -- the view that neither subject nor object exist independently -- as a soteriological device, a deconstructive tool to rid the mind of delusional prapanca. Defined in varying ways by Western scholars, prapanca refers to the mind's natural tendency to both create elaborate networks of interrelated mental constructions and to cling to those constructs as real.

As explored by Allen W. Wood (Hegel's Ethical Thought, 1990), a central ethical doctrine of Hegel has been a recognition of the emptiness of the categorical imperative.

Questions relating to nothing were powerfully framed by Martin Heidegger (What is Metaphysics? 1929), as discussed by Fr. Jose Conrado A. Estafia (Heidegger on the Nothing - das Nichts). Heidegger asked the question 'Why are there essents, why is there anything
at all, rather than nothing? According to Heidegger 'Science wishes to know nothing of the nothing.' On this Richard Polt (Heidegger: An Introduction, 1999) comments:

Richard Polt (The Question of Nothing, 2001) traces the evolution of Heidegger's concept of the Nothing and argues that, for the later Heidegger, "the happening of Being in the bringing of happening of Nothing, the tracing of a fragile frontier beyond which things can belong no more to the realm of the accessible and acceptable."

What then is to be said of the apparent passing into nothingness of those who engendered the reflections on:

- To be or not to be, that is the question (William Shakespeare)
- Being and Nothingness (Jean-Paul Sartre)

Religion (cosmology): Understandings of nothingness and emptiness are fundamental to some religious thinking (cf John B., Jr. Cobb and Christopher Ives (Eds.), The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation, 2005). This may notably be associated with so-called "negative theology" (Via Negativa or Apophatic theology) that attempts to describe God by negation, to speak of God only in terms of what may not be said about God. There is a considerable body of religious literature on emptiness (sunyata in Sanskrit) and its varieties, of which Nagarjuna had distinguished 18. For example:

- Mipham distinguishes 20 varieties of emptiness (Karma Phuntsko / Karma-phun-tshogs. Mipham's Dialectics And The Debates On Emptiness: To Be, Not To Be Or Neither, 2005)
- Rudolf Steiner, Spiritual Emptiness and Social Life, 1919

Spirituality (meditation): Mahayana Buddhism advocates meditation on 16 varieties of emptiness, leading to a direct, non-conceptual realization. In Tantric Buddhism, a ritualistic instrument, the Vajra, represents emptiness by a central dot. This symbolizes a focal point, the seed of the spirit in which everything is in a potential but static state. It also characterizes the central axis and heart of the universe. To the extent that the essence of Being is complete peace and stillness without reflection or any kind of manifestation or projection, this may be understood as spiritual emptiness -- a level of mind and consciousness common to many traditions. Taoism advocates a practice of Refinement of Spirit Back to Emptiness.

Spiritual emptiness may take the form of a "crisis of meaningfulness" in a context of a spiritual vacuum, as discussed by John C. Thomas (How Juvenile Violence: Begins Spiritual Emptiness, Focus on the Family, 1999). This is a significant risk in impoverished indigenous communities.

Some religions may, on the other hand, associate understandings of emptiness and nothingness with the fundamental significance of poverty and voluntary simplicity as a practice (for example, Gerald N. Alfords, I Promise to be Truly Poor). There is a tradition of meditative walking, notably a path of emptiness (Kenneth Arnold, The Path of Emptiness: Philosopher's Path in Kyoto, Japan, Cross Currents, June 1999)

Qi (Ch'i): This is a fundamental concept of traditional Chinese culture which might be readily understood, notably by others (as it is by science), as "nothing" and "meaningless". Qi (or ki) is believed to be part of every living thing that exists, as a kind of "life force" or "spiritual energy". References to things analogous to the qi, taken to be the life-process or 'flow' of metaphysical energy that sustains living beings, are found in many belief systems, especially in Asia [more]. Life (as yet to be understood by science) might indeed be understood as the process of making something out of nothing -- with death as a reversion to nothingness. The dynamics associated with qi are discussed further below.

"Hearts and Minds": It might be considered extraordinary that the ongoing "war on terror" (which may prove to be the largest investment in military operations of all time) focuses increasingly on what the science of "defence research" and military logic consider to be meaningless, if not "nothing" -- namely on the "battle for hearts and minds" and the (comical) challenge of "target acquisition" to that end (note discussion in Enhancing Sustainable Development Strategies through Avoidance of Military Metaphors, 1998). And it is entirely probable that the efforts of the Coalition of the Willing will be defeated by what it considers to be "nothing", effectively from the "mattering of nothing" -- following an archetypal confrontation between -- in the scientific light of such as Richard Dawkins (The God Delusion, 2006) -- the nothingness of Christ and the nothingness of Allah.

Physics: Nuclear physics has clarified the extent to which material objects are made up primarily of empty space populated extremely sparsely by electrons around the nucleus. Modern cosmology continues a long tradition of speculation on the nature of the nothingness or emptiness from which the universe (as known to humanity) emerged. In terms of the concerns of this paper, the origin of the
Physicists distinguish between:

- the empty classical ("ordinary" or "pneumatic") vacuum, defined as the absence of matter
- the quantum vacuum, understood as replete with activity due to the continuous creation and annihilation of virtual particle-antiparticle pairs ("Seeing the Quantum Vacuum"). It is the quantum state with the lowest possible energy but contains fleeting electromagnetic waves and particles that pop into and out of existence. Vacuum energy is then the underlying background energy that exists in space even when devoid of matter -- the ground state of energy for the universe. It results in the existence of most (if not all) of the fundamental forces. In quantum field theory, zero-point energy is a synonym for the vacuum energy. As the lowest possible energy a system can have, this energy cannot be removed from the system.

Seemingly "empty" space is understood as filled with spacetime with curvature and structure, obeying the laws of quantum physics. It is thus filled with potential particles, pairs of virtual matter and anti-matter units, and potential properties at the quantum level. The quantum vacuum is therefore the source of all potentiality. The universe is not "filled by" the quantum vacuum, rather it emerges from it ("written out of it") as the substratum of all existence.

The properties that become the mass of the universe, its age, its physical constants, etc. appears to have their origin as the fluctuations of the quantum vacuum. These properties come from "nothing", where nothing is the quantum vacuum.

Several of the founding theorists of quantum physics were interested in the metaphorical similarities between the principles of quantum mechanics and the principles found in mysticism. However, they all strongly rejected the notion that mysticism and physics had anything more than a metaphorical relationship. Countervailing aspects of quantum physics, such as the uncertainty principle, continue to invite metaphysical speculation -- vigorously opposed by critics as quantum mysticism. The quantum mind hypothesis however suggests that quantum mechanical phenomena such as quantum entanglement and superposition may play an important part in the brain's function and could form the basis of an explanation of consciousness.

Wille Maartens (The Physics And Metaphysics Of The God Behind The Veils, 2007) reviews new theories for the origin of the universe (M-theory, the ekpyrotic scenario, and brane cosmology). He also provides some useful clarifications of the relationship between understandings of nothingness in physics and theology -- noting that in the Qabalah, three unfathomable qualities of "Nothingness" or veils (Ain, Ain Soph, and Ain Soph Aur) in the dawn of pre-creation somehow contracted to a singular point. Literature on the Qabalah notably stresses the distinct qualities of nothingness.

Curiously physics advances its theories with a degree of confidence in the weight of evidence that the history of knowledge necessarily tends to demonstrate to be flawed, insubstantial and empty of significance -- including, in all probability, the nature of the "nothingness" from which "matter" is currently assumed to originate. Physics is equally certain that any alternative views are based on "nothing". It is possible, however, that these understandings will prove to be complementary.

Health: Although the World Health Organization does indeed define health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity", it is nevertheless the case that it is primarily defined and understood in terms of such absence. Whilst many tangibles may enable and sustain the intangible condition of health, fundamentally its nature remains elusive.

Comprehension of the nature of health is not facilitated by emerging evidence that placebos may be as successful at enabling people suffering from some condition to feel better as are carefully designed prescription drugs or other therapies. They may be understood as tokens, based on "nothing", which are experienced as sustaining well-being. This raises the possibility that, like community (as discussed above), health may be engendered "from nothing".

Aesthetics: As discussed further below, nothingness, especially as implied by shadow and absence, is an important theme in aesthetics and drama. Emptiness may be a highly valued feature of Zen temples The World Heritage Site Zen garden of Ryoan-ji (Kyoto) is composed of 15 stones set in a small field of white gravel; the garden is called mutei (the garden of nothingness) or kutai (the garden of emptiness).


A wide-ranging web discussion of these themes focused on Nothingness As An Entity (thebigview.com discussion board, 2005-2006)

**Questionable understanding of emptiness and nothingness**

**See Ques**

Paradoxically the emptiness experienced by some may be the preferred habitat of others -- as exemplified by assumptions by British nuclear scientists that the Simpson Desert of Australia was unoccupied by Aborigines prior to exploding atomic bombs there, or that any occupants were necessarily lacking in significance.

With respect to what follows, of particular importance in some of the above explorations, especially Buddhism, is the understanding of nothingness and emptiness which precludes the possibility of statements of adequate form and subtlety about any condition prior to their emergence. In this sense nothingness is indeed about a form of unknowing -- prior to such a form or any sense of priority.

On this question, Joseph Stephen O'Leary (Emptiness and Dogma, Buddhist-Christian Studies, 22, 2002, pp. 163-179) indicates Christian theology has suffered from a delusive clinging to substance and identity, and that the Buddhist teachings of dependent co-arising, emptiness, and non-self may provide an antidote. Buddhism has been distinguished from the Hinduism of the Upanishads in that the former thoroughly denies all things, including emptiness itself, which otherwise is not real emptiness [more]. Elsewhere (Joseph
"Mattering" and "Happening"

See Matt

Typically "mattering" and "happening" are processes that engender "something" of significance. The sense that "nothing matters" or that "nothing is happening" are, in some situations, considered as key triggers to engender alternative behaviour to ensure that "something" does indeed happen. Where "nothing" is valued in contrast to "something", however, other considerations emerge.

Assuming, for the moment, that "nothing matters" and "nothing is happening" are equivalent, the following clarifications may be made, however they are to be fruitfully understood:

- focus on matter / form (implying some form of embodiment of the insubstantial, possibly a pattern or degree of order):
  - "nothing" becoming embodied in matter
  - "nothing" taking form (becoming embodied)
- significance / import (implying the acquisition of significance by that which, by definition, lacks any):
  - "nothing" becoming significant -- as recognized in the Buddhist understanding of dependent co-arising
  - "nothing" becoming a concern, of importance, or "mattering" (whether as a problem or a possibility)
  - "nothing" acquiring value and relevance
  - "nothing" becoming memorable
  - "nothing" becoming a matter of obligation or responsibility

In what follows a distinction is made between:

- "mattering" in the sense of acquiring significance, importance, value or becoming memorable
- "happening" in the sense of a dynamic, in contrast with some form of stasis


As noted by Sally Helgesen (Why Mattering Matters. Leader to Leader, 2005), the social sector has always understood that mattering matters, and this understanding has constituted one of its greatest strengths.

George Loewenstein and Karl Moene. On mattering maps

A mattering map is thus a 'projection' (in her novel and in real life, Goldstein is married to a mathematician) of how different things are valued in different social settings. It highlights the fact that different social groups value different things, and, because people are inherently social and naturally adopt the attitude toward themselves that others adopt toward them, what people value in themselves, and their feelings of personal worth, often undergo radical changes when they shift from one social context to another

Qi: This fundamental Chinese concept (mentioned above) offers an interesting example of the challenge of understanding what might be called the "mattering of nothing" -- especially given its rejection (as nothing) by science. Qi has been variously understood and explicated as:

- necessary to activity
- potentially controllable by a well-integrated will power
- capable of extending beyond the human body, when appropriately nurtured, to reach throughout the universe
- capable of being augmented by means of careful exercise of moral capacities, or of being degraded in an individual by adverse external forces
- also associated with the earth, notably through wind, and the topological configuration of places and spaces, as in the philosophy and practice of feng shui and geomancy, in ensuring the flow of qi, interactions between the five elements (in Chinese and Japanese philosophy), yin and yang and other factors.

Within this understanding human beings are born because of the accumulation of qi, namely when it accumulates there is life and when it dissipates there is death. It may thus be understood to connect and pervade everything in the world. Retention or dissipation of qi is then held to affect the health, wealth, energy level, luck and many other aspects of the occupants of space as understood by feng shui. This factors are notably of major significance to financial business environments in parts of the Far East. Qi is a central concept in many...
Alberta, 2005) who argues:

**Weapons of Mass Destruction (and Suicide):** It is curious that military research should have invested so heavily in what amounts to the "mattering of nothing", namely negating others. The US military budget is nearly 5% of GDP. The French term for such annihilation is also instructive (anéantissement). But perhaps of far greater interest is the extent to which, in this current period, such threat is met by the mindset of the suicide bomber -- the epitome of asymmetric warfare. In the latter case nothingness is destructively embodied -- sustained by a belief in what is indeed firmly asserted by science to be nothing. It is of course the same that developed the weapons of mass destruction.

**Happening:** Whereas 'nothing happening' may be experienced as highly problematic, the implications of the "happening of nothing" are intriguing as an unexplored key, as envisaged in an earlier exploration (Psychology of Sustainability: embodying cyclic environmental processes, 2002).

**Incarceration:** This process highlights a range of possibilities through which the happening of nothing is experienced. At one extreme it may be voluntarily chosen as by hermits or by contemplatives in intentional communities. At another, in penal institutions, there may emerge a recognition of how the experience becomes one of "no time" and of a different form of nothing happening -- specially for long-term prisoners. What long-term impact does this experience have on the developing culture of a country where a significant proportion of the population has endured it -- as in the Van Diemen's Land of the past, or the USA of the present? Paradoxically, does it enhance the quality of the culture in some way?

**Physics:** In physics another kind of "nothing" might be said to have been recognized. Whilst this has now been widely reframed as "something", which can be generated by various techniques, the somewhat mysterious nature of its "nothingness" continues to merit reflection. In fact that "nothingness" only acquires significance in a situation where invisible differences of potential become apparent -- through the dynamics of the "happening of nothing". That is when nothing "matters".

**Monetary systems:** National monetary systems may be recognized as "backed by nothing" (as noted above) -- and currently to an unprecedented degree, obscured by the process of globalization. Paper money may be issued, backed by nothing but government promises. The process has been named the Mandrake Mechanism after the 1940s comic strip character Mandrake the Magician (see also G. Edward Griffin, What is the Mandrake Mechanism? It's the most important financial lesson of your life!). Mandrake's specialty was making things out of nothing and making them disappear back into the same void. Hari Heath (Money? It's not what you think it is, Idaho Observer, June 2003), explains the principles by quoting the testimony of Federal Reserve Governor Marriner Eccles before the House Committee on Banking and Currency, 30 September 1941:

> In truth, money is not created until the instant it is borrowed, It is the act of borrowing which causes it to spring into existence. And, incidentally, it is the act of paying off the debt that causes it to vanish....In spite of the technical jargon and seemingly complicated procedures, the actual mechanism by which the Federal Reserve creates money is quite simple. They do it exactly the same way the goldsmiths of old did except, of course, the goldsmiths were limited by the need to hold some precious metal in reserve, whereas, the Fed has no such restriction.

> It is difficult for Americans to come to grips with the fact that their total money supply is backed by nothing but debt, and it is even more mind boggling to visualize that, if everyone paid back all that was borrowed, there would be no money left in existence.

**Drama:** Curiously William Shakespeare offers an exploration of the dynamics of "nothing" through one of his best known comedies. The play Much Ado About Nothing (1600) appears to be an exploration of trivia, but through a homophonic play on "nothing" (and "noting") is recognized to have other implications (Diana Major Spencer, Much Ado about Nothing: Much More than Nothing, Midsummer Magazine, 1995). This is perhaps the classic taoist "point" made by Chuang Tzu (The Pivot):

> What use is this struggle to set up "No" against "Yes," and "Yes" against "No"?... When the wise man grasps this pivot, he is in the center of the circle, and there he stands while "Yes" and "No" pursue each other around the circumference.

Whether "mattering" or "happening", the "ado" then engenders "nothing" of a higher order of significance.

Another approach to "not happening" has been drama as explored by Goesta Struve-Dencher (The Happening of Nothing: from Gao Xingjian's Dialogue and Rebuttal towards an Enactive Theatricism of Indeterminacy, Masters in Fine Arts (Drama), University of Alberta, 2005) who argues:

The possibilities are explored of a post-humanist drama that, rather than demanding the postmodern overthrow of all textual authority, is based on an open-ended, anti-rationalistic and analytically opaque playtext. Dramaturgical and performance strategies include psychophysical embodiment, ambivalent tensions, kinetic transformation and multiplexity of significations. In the final section, the author proposes a phenomenological framework for this indeterminate theatricism, by establishing parallels to a theory of enactive cognition (Varela, Thompson, Rosch) that integrates recent scientific research with Buddhist notions of perception, reality and ego-self. The theatre of indeterminacy is posited as part of an alternative cultural discourse that embraces teleological groundlessness. With performance as an emergent phenomenon, actor and spectator become cooriginating enactors of a shared, nondeterministic theatrical event.
The role of enactive cognition had been stressed in the initial paper (In Quest of Optimism Beyond the Edge -- through avoidance of the answering process, 2008). The use of aesthetic considerations in this way is consistent with the critique of Michael Schiltz (Form and Medium: a mathematical reconstruction, Image f&j Narrative, 6, 2003) regarding the need to challenge the adequacy of the form on which understanding is represented (as mentioned in Annex A).

The complexity of the reality that indigenous communities embody in their environment has been acknowledged (cf Darrell Addison Posey (Ed), Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity, 1999). The cultivation of that relationship through drama, dance, music and song is not recognized to the same degree although it is considered significant to Aboriginal peoples, for example. The role of pilgrimages and journeys (such that to the "Edge of the World" on which this commentary has been based) may also be considered in this light.

Creativity and innovation: To the extent that creativity and innovation are processes through which something is made "out of nothing", the "mattering of nothing" can be understood as notably characteristic of those described as the "cultural creatives". As with any form of creativity it may be disrupted through abandonment by the muse -- as in writer's block

Loss of faith: This phenomenon is widely recognized by those with a religious commitment. The resulting emptiness -- a dramatic "mattering of nothing" -- is experienced as a fundamental existential crisis. Analogues may be experienced with loss of other forms of existential commitment, notably in relation to a political ideology, with respect to allegiance to an organization, to a cognitive discipline, or to a personal relationship. In each case the foundation of the person's identity is called into question. The experience may be contrasted with experiential enlightenment but may also be subsequently understood as a necessary phase of detachment in a process towards more profound enlightenment following such a "dark night of the soul" (Enlightening Endarkenment: selected web resources on the challenge to comprehension, 2005).

Death: The "happening of nothing" offers a powerful means of exploring the relationship to the death of an individual or of a people (as in Tasmania). People in most cultures respond to the challenge of maintaining relations with the dead -- if only through commemoration and memorials (as discussed in Annex B). This is the theme of the exploration of Robert Pogue Harrison (The Dominion of the Dead, University of Chicago Press, 2003). He asks: How do the living maintain relations to the dead? Why do we bury people when they die? And what is at stake when we do? The author considers the supreme importance of these questions to Western civilization, exploring the many places where the dead cohabit the world of the living -- the graves, images, literature, architecture, and monuments that house the dead in their afterlife among us.

In the light of the work of such as Vico, Virgil, Dante, Pater, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Rilke, he argues that the buried dead form an essential foundation where future generations can retrieve their past, while burial grounds provide an important bedrock where past generations can preserve their legacy for the unborn. His exploration is a profound meditation on how the thought of death shapes the communion of the living -- which notably speaks to all who have suffered grief and loss.

It is in this context that he refers to Heidegger with regard to the "happening of nothing":

Regarding the connection I seek to establish between the underworld, the anachronic matrix of the institutional order, and what Heidegger calls das Nichts, I would draw attention to Richard Polt's essay, The Question of Nothing [1999] in which he traces the evolution of Heidegger's concept of the Nothing and argues that, for the later Heidegger, "the happening of Being brings in the happening of Nothing, the tracing of a fragile frontier beyond which things can belong no more to the realm of the accessible and acceptable." It is that other realm, or what Polt calls "the shadows and enigmas of the frontier (p. 82), that interests me here.

"Nothing" emerging through combinations of "mattering" and "happening"

See Noth

Whether in the long tradition of story-telling or through the skills of modern media, the highly valued art is to be able "to make something out of nothing". It is one definition of art (and consequently artefact). Through the zero, it has been framed as fundamental to mathematics (Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat, Making something out of nothing: Indian mathematics, UNESCO Courier, Nov, 1993). The art is especially valued with respect to social change and entrepreneurship (cf Charles Handy, New Alchemists: How Visionary People Make Something Out of Nothing, 1998; Phoebe Gilman, Something from Nothing, 1993; Joan Ranson Shortney, How to Make Something Out of Nothing, Mother Earth News, March/April 1976). The process is recognized as relevant in contexts such as architecture, drama/comedy, and art. It has many problematic associations to exaggeration, especially when used in relation to speculative financial initiatives and economic bubbles (eg South Sea Bubble) -- whose causes remain a challenge to economic theory. Apologists for "genocides" seek to demonstrate that history has been mistakenly fabricated out of "nothing" (as discussed in Annex A).

The following table endeavours to hold the various above nuances associated with "nothing mattering" and "nothing happening" -- as further clarified in the comments below it. "Happening" is understood in terms of dynamic and action -- as intuitively sought in response to boredom. "Mattering" is understood in terms of significance (whether or not anything is "happening").

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Simplified interplay of mattering and happening (elaborated in Table 2 by expanding intermediate shaded conditions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattering of &quot;nothing&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(emergent / implicit significance; longer-term memory; motivation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conditions within the table (as illustrated by the metaphors explored above and in the annexes) [NB: The following interpretations are very tentative and are the focus of further reflection; part of the challenge, beyond the terms and categories used, lies in their interpretation and the insights which they might imply]:

- **I: Neither "happening" nor "mattering":** This might be understood as the most challenging condition of cognitive entropy. It is the condition of inactivity and alienation most to be regretted in the existential despair of slum areas, but potentially also in those considering suicide.

  - **Cradle Valley (Waldheim):** typical experience of the casual visitor responding to tourist promotion of the reputation of the site and its facilities; associated with capturing images as a memory of the experience; arm's length engagement with the environment
  - **Tasmania / Van Diemen's Land:** celebration of comfortable conventional values of "Little England" repressing any memories of the cost of their emergence and dominance and the values associated with that process
  - **White Man's Dreaming / Black Man's Dreaming:*** nostalgic utopias ("linear" visions and future projections uninformed by complex challenges) / "Dreamtime nostalgia" (complex intuitions of spacetime uninformed by contemporary challenges of linear time or past historical experience)
  - **Edge / Centre:** seeming dissociation of creative, "leading" or "cutting" edge from conventional centre; edge and centre as mutually irrelevant and suspect
  - **Strategy:** preoccupation with surviving the moment (whether as peasant or politician)

  Experiential nothingness, emptiness, meaninglessness and existential alienation -- typical of many "pushed to the edge" and obliged to live in the moment.

- **II: "Mattering" without "happening":** This might be understood as the recognition of issues of importance (notably injustices, etc.) without any action in response to them. The worthy resolutions of many international institutions might be caricatured in such terms when only lip-service is paid to commitments to remedial follow-up (in full knowledge that promises can be broken).

  Although there may even be an appearance of vigorous activity thereafter, in this case such activity is subsequently seen to have been of a token nature -- "nothing happened" however much it "mattered". From a strategic perspective it might be understood as having requisite connectivity but lacking the operacy skills for which it calls.

  - **Cradle Valley (Waldheim):** conservative environmental concern and sensitization, without significant remedial measures; ecosophy; communing with nature; responsible overland trekking; valuing the wilderness; ecotourism
  - **Tasmania / Van Diemen's Land:** collective recognition of the inherited influences and memories of Van Diemen's Land (including extinction of the Aboriginal peoples); concern at the potential traumatic impact of repressed memories
  - **White Man's Dreaming / Black Man's Dreaming:** deep commitments to remedial initiatives in response to challenges but without the capacity to ground them ("armchair visionaries") / deep commitment to Dreamtime insights without the capacity to ground them in the present
  - **Edge / Centre:** the edge as attractor for the cultural creatives; dissociation of creative edge from alienation of those forced "to the edge", elicting recognition of the centre as attractor in an existential pursuit of integrative understanding -- edge and centre as complementary; "pilgrimages" from edge to centre and from centre to edge
  - **Strategy:** withholding assistance to those recognized to be in dire need

  Impotence in the face of a complex of concerns, whose intangibility and interdependence as a set constitutes a "no-thing" that "matters". Here the "mattering of nothing" gives a sense of weight to processes of reconciliation, commemoration and "Aboriginal legacy", their potential traumatic impact of repressed memories associated with that process

- **III: "Happening" without "mattering":** This might be understood in terms of the development of formal models detached from the content they are intended to order. This might be caricatured as the approach of those scholarly preoccupations indifferent to the relevance (the "mattering") of any insights in practice. Possibly to be experienced as a sense of pace and its pressures in the course of "looking for an edge" that promises "access to the centre". It might be associated with the social construction of reality notoriously associated with news management ("spin").

  - **Cradle Valley (Waldheim):** exploitation and irreversible destruction of natural resources; meaningless action insensitive to the long-term context; irresponsible overland trekking
  - **Tasmania / Van Diemen's Land:** formal commitment to processes of reconciliation, commemoration and "Aboriginal heritage"
  - **White Man's Dreaming / Black Man's Dreaming:** (frenetic) engagement in projects and processes essentially uninformed by any longer-term significance / commitment to ritual and celebration without the capacity to transmit their significance (to newer generations)


Here nothing is the emptiness of busyness of negligible long-term significance and wider relevance -- action in the moment for its own sake, disassociated from any longer-term temporal context.

- IV: "Mattering" with "happening": This might be understood as the condition of highest cognitive negentropy. This implies a condition of "cognitive pregnancy" and potential (in the sense of vigilance and preparedness) rather than concrete action -- it is the matrix for such action or its precursor whereby a pattern of connectivity is engendered. It is the condition explored by enactivism (as notably articulated by Francisco Varela)

- Cradle Valley (Waldeheim): identification and embodiment; sense of deep time; the Valley Spirit of Tao Te Ching ("The Valley Spirit never dies / It is named the Mysterious Female"), choosing the obscure and mysterious aspect of things, and controlling things without ruling them -- in complementing those of the Mountain (the adjoining Cradle Mountain); for what dynamic entity is the Cradle valley to be understood as a container?

- Tasmania / Van Diemen's Land: collective embodiment of the past such as to enhance the potential for engagement with the future

- White Man's Dreaming / Black Man's Dreaming: embodiment of insight, enactivating the pattern that connects, laying down a path through walking / invoking the future into the eternal present

- Edge / Centre: dynamic relationship between "edge" and "centre" through an unconventional (nonplanar) topology that recognizes each as effectively everywhere and intimately connected (as discussed in the Conclusion)

- Strategy: "getting one's act together"; "mindful" initiatives

The "mattering of nothing" might here be understood as the emergence or cognitive embodiment of a more powerfully integrative enabling paradigm -- implying a new level of connectivity, notably within a longer-term temporal context. Here the "happening of nothing" implies a sense of the birthing of a "pattern that connects" both statically and dynamically -- an empowerment through increased potential. (cf Entelechy: actuality vs future potential, 2001).

"Nothing" may here be a particular understanding of order, emergent or otherwise -- such that the "mattering of nothing" is the emergence of order and the "happening of nothing" is the dynamic that renders sustainable that new order as a complex system. The dynamic pattern of order may usefully be explored as a holon.

Of particular interest is the possibility that:

- healing may be essentially the happening of nothing through which a whole is made. Note also the controversy surrounding anti-despressants vs placebos, as discussed by Mark Lawson (Nothing for Something, The Guardian, 29 February 2008), "some will continue to need drugs, but it would be sensible to explore the range of ways in which doctors can give nothing, which can also be something.")

- "community" development is enabling nothing to happen, namely healing the community

In the above table, the relationship between res extensa and res cogitans, a focus of the initial paper (In Quest of Optimism Beyond the Edge -- through avoidance of the answering process), might best be understood as follows:

- Res extensa: Condition I, and dominant in Condition II *** jumble / uncoordinated / meaningless

- Res cogitans: Condition IV, and dominant in Condition III

Dynamic complexification: integration of "no time"

See Dyna

The above table might be usefully elaborated with respect to time in the light of the work of Arthur Young's Geometry of Meaning (1978) as applied to 12-phase learning / action cycles. This work was previously adapted in a table on Varieties of experience of past-present-future complexes (2001), itself part of a larger study (Presenting the Future: an alternative to dependence on human sacrifice through global pyramid selling schemes, 2001). The earlier table includes relevant commentary. In this adaptation the order of the rows has been reversed in order better to relate it to the table above.

Table 2: Complex interplay of mattering and happening
(simplified in Table 1 by collapsing intermediate conditions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Non-duration</th>
<th>Conscious adaptive response</th>
<th>Comparison with norms or memory of previous experience</th>
<th>Comparison with previous comparisons Patterns</th>
<th>Comparison with previous comparisons Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timeless awareness</td>
<td>Awareness Calendar time</td>
<td>Self-awareness Initiating time</td>
<td>Awareness of self-awareness Transcendental discontinuity Cyclic time Feedback</td>
<td>ML² / T² / T³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[A]</td>
<td>[B]</td>
<td>[C]</td>
<td>[D]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbol</td>
<td>T⁰</td>
<td>T¹</td>
<td>T²</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ML²</td>
<td>&quot;Identification&quot;</td>
<td>ML² / T²</td>
<td>Achieving a desired</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The correspondences to Table 1 are:

- "nothing happening" is usefully indicated here by Column A (T₀ as reciprocal)
- "happening of nothing" is usefully indicated here by Column D (T⁻³ as reciprocal)
- "nothing mattering" is usefully indicated here by Row 1 (ML), associating M with meaning (or the lack thereof)
- "mattering of nothing" is usefully indicated here by Row 3 (ML²)
- "mattering" with "happening" (Cell IV) is usefully indicated here by Cell 3D (ML²/T³), indicated as "power of acquired knowledge".

Columns [A], [B], [C], [D] distinguish 4 different kinds of **time**:

- Column [A] = sense of **timelessness**. Column A is primarily identifying and relating to experience (sensing it); an "intention" barrier must be passed to get into Column B.
- Column [B] = conventional **arrow of calendar time** fundamental to western culture. Column B is developing intentions with respect to experience; an "action" barrier must be passed to get into Column C.
- Column [C] = **time "bent"** effectively by a process of comparison. Column C is engaging in action; a "continuity" barrier must be passed to get into Column D where the action can be rendered sustainable.
- Column [D] = **time curved back on itself** through feedback loops into the cyclic time of processes. These columns effectively distinguish experientially different kinds of "future". Column D is ensuring that action is controlled and maintained knowledgeably; a "contextual" barrier, recognizing new feedback loops, must be passed to get into Column A (repeating the learning cycle within a larger framework).

An understanding of "time stopping" arises from the use of the original schema by Arthur Young, whereby inverse time (T⁻¹, T⁻², T⁻³) was very short -- eternity in an instant -- arguing that:

This compaction of time would give it the character of **omnipresence** -- not going "backward" in time, away from the present, but instead going more deeply into the present. This interpretation has the merit of conforming to references in countless religions and mythologies to the super-sensible, nonphysical celestial world... (p. 81).

It is tempting to consider, if only for mnemonic purposes, that Column [C] could be associated with a sense of **cyclic time**. Given the challenge of engaging with macrohistory (Engaging Macristory through the Present Moment, 2004), More intriguing is the case of Column [D] which might be understood in terms of **deep time**, with the emphasis on an unconventional sense of its "internalization" in the following (contrary to the intentions of the author):

By recognizing the vastness of Earth history compared to human history, we internalize what John McPhee has termed Deep Time and we gain an essential perspective from which to consider the results and consequences of our human impacts on Earth. (A. R. Palmer, The Context of Humanity: Understanding Deep Time)

Note the study of Tom Griffiths (Traveling in Deep Time: La longue Durée in Australian History. Australian Humanities Review, 1999). Some contemporary psychotherapeutic practices emphasize the function of **temenos**, as the sacred space within in which deep time is experienced in meditation [more | more].

**Rows** [1], [2], [3] bring in the knowable/known **locus** of experience in 3 different ways:

- **Row [1]** based on the "L" dimension, might be considered as space-like time, namely the "past" as a legacy pattern in an abstract speculative space. This row is essentially about knowing, framing, scope and clarification (processes of the "head"). Row 1 is primarily intellectual and detached from reality "on the ground" or "in the field", even if it is obliged to theorize about it; a
"concern" barrier must be passed to get into Row 2 experience.

- Row [2] introducing the "M" dimension (meaning) to accompany the "L" dimension, might be considered as the emergence of a **focus of significance**, an experiential centre of gravity in a recognized "present". This row is essentially about concern, involvement and participation (empathetic processes of the "heart"). Row 2 is concerned with, or involved with, grounded reality - but without "being there"; a "grounding" barrier must be passed to get into Row 3 experience.

- Row [3] here the "M" dimension is combined with "L", indicating an **engagement of the experiencer** -- a degree of identification with experience. This row is essentially about grounding, doing and praxis (processes of the "guts", "walking the talk", or "being there"). Row 3 is identified with grounded reality in some way; a "comprehension" barrier must be passed to get into Row 1 experience (repeating the learning cycle within a larger framework).

Whereas Arthur Young applies his insights to the conditions of learning/action, here the focus is on potential for action in terms of order. It highlights the emergence (or absence) of the action-enabling pattern of connectivity. Young's necessary focus on mass (M) is here considered generically in the sense of the connectivity that (in the material case through atomic bonds) constitutes a body of meaning.

The adaptation of the work of Arthur Young could also be considered in relation to the "progression of bindings" relating to human progress as identified by **Alfred Korzybski** (Science and Sanity: an introduction to non-Aristotelian systems and general semantics, 1994), notably his argument that through language and culture, sapient beings perform "time binding" by the transmission of knowledge and abstractions through time which are accreted in cultures. This has since been reframed in terms of a sequence of **metasystem transitions** through which new levels of control are achieved for: position (through motion), motion (through irritability), irritability (through reflex), reflex (through association), association (through thought), and thought (through culture). These six transitions might be fruitfully related to Table 2 by collapsing together the cells of Columns A and B, and those of Columns C and D.

Whereas a 7th metasystem level of control (or binding) is currently hypothesized as a technological singularity, this might be more fruitfully envisaged as a cognitive singularity (as discussed in the Conclusion: *Emergence of a cognitive singularity*).

**Emergence of "nothing": creating "cognitive shelters" and "cognitive vehicles"**

See [Cog

It is intriguing to explore any comprehensive cognitive system, or belief system, as a form of "cognitive shelter" -- or even as a "cognitive vehicle". The design and construction of such a shelter is such as to enclosure emptiness. The space so enclosed then serves as a habitat in which people "move and have their being". The nothingness of such space, necessarily initially absent, is effectively "imported" within a framework which thereby gives significance to that emptiness.

This is consistent with the challenging Buddhist insight (from the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra, the Heart Sutra): Form is emptiness / Emptiness is form / Emptiness is no other than form / Form is no other than emptiness. Perhaps to be understood in terms of form being implicit in emptiness, just as emptiness is implicit in form -- in the light of **David Bohm**'s understanding of the dynamics **holomovement** (Wholeness and the Implicate Order, 1983; Quantum Theory as an Indication of a New Order in Physics: implicate and explicate order in physical law, Physics, 3, 2, 1973, pp. 139-168).

It could then be said that the valued nothingness is "mattered" through the connectivity of the framework design and construction. The history of the construction of habitable spaces offers many examples of possibilities. Of potentially greatest interest are those combining minimal use of material resources with principles of sacred geometry to achieve a minimalist design of elegance and symmetry.

The challenge of creating attractive spaces -- places in which it is a pleasure to be -- has been remarkably addressed by Christopher Alexander. His work had been based on abstract principles (Notes on the Synthesis of Form, 1964) followed by insights into a set of practical patterns (A Pattern Language, 1977) -- then related to the widely recognized nature of the attractiveness of such spaces to which he refers as the "quality without a name" (The Timeless Way of Building, 1979). His many patterns were used experimentally as a template to identify their cognitive analogues (5-fold Pattern Language, 1984) and the implications of such patterns for governance (Governance through Patterning Language Creative Cognitive Engagement contrasted with Abdication of Responsibility, 2006).

Another approach to minimalist design, giving form and significance to nothing and emptiness, is that based on tensegrity principles, namely "tensional integrity" as elaborated by R. Buckminster Fuller (Synergetics: the geometry of thinking, 1978-9). For Fuller such structures were fundamental systems having different characteristics. The emergence and sustainability of such unexpected structure offer an appropriate metaphor for the embodiment of nothingness. They exemplify the patterns of connectivity that enable the emergence of such improbable space creating structures. Especially significant is their dependence on the continuing dynamic relationships between the parts -- perhaps to be usefully understood as an interplay between "mattering" and "happening" as explored here.

The function of such structures as "cognitive shelters" is highlighted by their use as templates to hold patterns of relationships between disparate conceptual entities. They raise the question as to the nature of order as "no-thing", however the patterns of connectivity are embodied. It is appropriate that Alexander's more recent work should be on The Nature of Order: An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe (2003-2004).

There is a curiously ironic possibility in the current civilization that the generic pattern of conceptual systems, in terms of which "points" are made in discourse, is echoed in the design of the ball (a container for emptiness) which is the focus of so much non-conceptual intercourse in sport. This has been explored elsewhere (Understanding Sustainable Dialogue: the secret within Bucky's Ball? 1996). As noted there:

Maybe the "ball" that gets kicked around between positions in any dialogue -- the topic -- needs to be understood as more complex. It is not just a "point". It is only this complexity that accounts for its resilience and ability to bounce back. Who would want a dialogue with a "ball" that did not bounce, but just stuck where it landed? Would a dialogue then be possible? What is the
A metaphor might be understood as a particular kind of cognitive shelter of which personification, as a vehicle for identity, may be an example (as noted by Kenneth Boulding below). Cognitive vehicles, as mobile shelters, could then be considered as devices for ensuring the mattering of nothing in different contexts (Metaphors as Transdisciplinary Vehicles of the Future, 1991).

**Emergence of "nothing": globalization as exemplar**

See Glob

The previous section points to the possibility of considering the much discussed phenomenon of "globalization" as the "mattering of nothing". From one perspective it recalls the phenomenon of the "economic bubble" and the process of "talking up" speculative ventures. From another it might be experienced as an exercise in emptiness, especially when it is recognized as contributing directly to destruction of livelihoods. In many respects it is essentially intangible, whatever the subtle erosion of acclaimed traditional values.

Note that economic ventures and national monetary systems may be recognized as "backed by nothing" -- and currently to an unprecedented degree, obscured by the process of globalization. Paper money may be issued, backed by nothing but government promises. The process has been named the Mandrake Mechanism (as discussed above).

The form which expresses the emergence of the intangible nothingness of globalization is that of the complex pattern of transactions -- the global connectivity on which many have remarked. The "happening of nothing" it represents includes business transactions primarily, as well as the patterns of communications characterized by the world wide web. This pattern raises the question of the nature of global conversation (Future Generation through Global Conversation: in quest of collective well-being through conversation in the present moment, 1997).

Of considerable interest is the possibility that the subtle global form sustained by "globalization" (as with a "bubble") is a form of "structural zero" marking a new stage as in the zero of the number system. Given the arguments of Jared Diamond, Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed, (2005) and Thomas Homer-Dixon (The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization, 2006), should civilizational collapse be compared with the collapse of such a bubble of credibility enveloping a core of emptiness?

**Emergence of "nothing": "import" of significance**

See Sign

As noted earlier, the title of this annex (Import of Nothingness and Emptiness through Happening and Mattering) implies a double significance to "import". As a cognitive process, it may be understood either as attaching importance (significance) to a pattern of associations or as importing that pattern into consciousness in some way -- possibly by "connecting the dots" and enactivating that pattern. In terms of res cogitans, it is the process of importing associations and embodying them in a previously non-existent pattern.

Given the concerns of this paper, it might be usefully seen as a creative exercise in "making something out of nothing" -- of "making nothing matter". This may be understood in terms of the "re-cognition" of aesthetic resonances through which the meaningful happening of nothing is enabled. It is the establishment of connectivity -- presumably echoed by synapses within the brain.

It is fruitfully to consider how this may be understood as creating cognitive wholes, gestalts or holons and how this process may be related to that which gave rise to recognition of the role of the zero in the number system. As noted by Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat (Making something out of nothing: Indian mathematics, UNESCO Courier, Nov, 1993) with regard to the religious context of the discovery of the zero:

There is no satisfactory documentary evidence as to how and in what exact period this system was discovered in India, and how it developed. The earliest reference to a place-value notation is a literary one. Vasumitra, a Buddhist writer and leading figure at a great religious council convened by King Kanishka (who reigned over the whole of north and northwest India at the end of the first or the beginning of the second century A.D.), maintained in a book on Buddhist doctrine that if a substance that exists in all three time dimensions (past, present and future) is regarded as something different every time it enters a new state, this change is due to the alterity of the state, not to its own alterity. He illustrated this idea by speaking of a marker which in the units position counts as a unit but in the hundreds position counts as a hundred. He did not specify the nature of the marker.

The question is whether the nothingness imported in this way, re-cognized as a unity, is to be considered as associated with a form of zero or positional marker in a larger scheme of understanding. Although vigilance is required with respect to attaching significance to any such play on metaphor ("importing" it), the remark of Kenneth Boulding, author of Image (1956), is relevant:

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

Given the proportion of matter to emptiness in the atoms of the human body, Boulding's statement might be fruitfully rephrased as:

Our consciousness of the pattern of connectivity, giving a degree of form to nothingness, associated with any sense of self in the
middle of a vast complexity of correspondingly empty images or material structures, is at least as suitable an image for the unity of group, organization, department, discipline or science -- primarily characterized by emptiness. If the personification of nothingness is a metaphor, let us not despise metaphors -- we might be one ourselves

Further exploration might consider:

- how the pattern of connectivity associated with the "happening of nothing" relates to the concern (mentioned earlier) of Richard Polt (The Question of Nothing, 2001) with respect to Heidegger's recognition that "the happening of Being brings in the happening of Nothing, the tracing of a fragile frontier beyond which things can belong no more to the realm of the accessible and acceptable". Is this "fragile frontier" the pattern of connectivity, and how does it relate to the dominion of the dead explored by Robert Pogue Harrison (The Dominion of the Dead, 2003)?

- the nature of the connectivity of the "fragile frontier" in relation to insights into the frontier between known and unknown, or order and chaos, as offered by the Mandelbrot set (Psycho-social Significance of the Mandelbrot Set a sustainable boundary between chaos and order, 2005)

- the possibility of analogues to the Mandrake Mechanism (given its current fundamental importance to the sustainability of modern civilization, as noted above), to enable the "happening of nothing" on a much smaller scale as a means of sustaining the integrity of communities and individuals; to what extent might religion be framed, notably by atheists, as operating in a manner analogous to the Mandrake Mechanism and its dependence on promises by a central authority?

- the possibility of smaller scale analogues to the phenomenon of globalization as discussed above, and given its association with the Mandrake Mechanism (Personal Globalization, 2001)

- the degree of connectivity of any pattern container for nothingness that is required to evoke credibility in its capacity to sustain integrity and identity (Theories of Correspondences -- and potential equivalences between them in correlative thinking, 2007); when can it be credibly asserted that something has indeed been made "out of nothing" -- like this exploration?

- the contrasting forms and degrees of "importance" implied in Table 2 in terms of the reciprocals of: \( T_0, T_1, T_2, T_3 \) and by \( M^0, M^1, M^2 \); in the latter case this might relate to any exploration of the sacralization of hyperlinks (Sacralization of Hyperlink Geometry, 1997)

As noted above, it is appropriate to highlight the questionable nature of nothingness and emptiness as a concept, objective or aspiration -- as something to which connection can be fruitfully avoided. On the other hand, Gregory Bateson's insight:

> The pattern which connects is a meta-pattern. It is a pattern of patterns. It is that meta-pattern which defines the vast generalization that, indeed, it is patterns which connect. (Mind and Nature: a necessary unity, 1979).

highlights the implications of the "export" of nothingness and meaninglessness -- through "breaking the pattern that connects" (as discussed in the Conclusion). Here "export" is recognized as a process complementary to that of "import" as used above.

### Polarization and the dynamics of nothingness

**See Pola**

The elaboration of distinctions in the tables above has depended on a form of polarization -- within rows, within columns, and between rows and columns. Some conditions have been isolated as more complex and interesting in comparison with others framed as more simplistic and less desirable. The latter might even be considered to have been "demonised" as regressive in an implicit process of emergence and development.

The argument has been developed elsewhere that the convenience of such matrix representations is fundamentally inadequate to an understanding of the complex dynamics interrelating those conditions (Comprehension of Requisite Variety for Sustainable Psychosocial Dynamics: transforming a matrix classification onto intertwined tori, 2006). The polarization is more fruitfully understood as a dynamic feature of a work cycle (Psychosocial Energy from Polarization within a Cyclic Pattern of Enantiodromia, 2007). There is also the question of whether individual and collective identity is not better to be comprehended in cyclic terms (Emergence of Cyclic Psychosocial Identity: sustainability as "psychically" defined, 2007).

This merits continuing reflection but the challenge might be appropriately summarized by using the heart and its dynamics as a metaphor -- perhaps comparing its four chambers to the four cells of Table 1. Aspects of this argument have been developed elsewhere (Cardioid Attractor Fundamental to Sustainability: 8 transactional games forming the heart of sustainable relationship, 2005)

Sustaining life may be compared to the challenge of sustaining the circulatory operations of the heart -- all four chambers. Sustaining the integrity of that recycling dynamic as a whole might be understood in terms of the different forms of happening and mattering of nothing -- all of which are essential to the mystery of life. Why indeed does the heart beat?

The heart is one of the most widely used metaphors across cultures. Especially significant is its use in relation to affection, in the understanding associated with an "empty" heart, and the implications of a "broken heart".

Given the arguments (above) challenging simplistic formulations, any implied polarization of the "Dreamings" of men (Black or White) is
appropriately and symbolically challenged by their complex interactions with both "Black Woman's Dreaming" and "White Woman's Dreaming" (cf Elise Boulding, *The Underside of History: a view of women through time*, 1976). This offers a powerful fourfold illustration of the "chambers of the heart".

In this light, of further relevance would be any understanding of the "cognitive heart" and its operations. Such explorations might be fruitfully associated with research on "cognitive fusion" as discussed elsewhere (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006). This implies the development of understanding informed by the templates of the subtlest thinking of fundamental physics. In that case the expectation is the generation of potential from nothingness through nuclear fusion under the peculiar conditions of the plasma state. The question is whether there is a psychosocial potential to be generated by analogous means -- or whether the sustaining potential of society and individual life is to be understood as being generated by such processes already (*Reframing Sustainable Sources of Energy for the Future: the vital role of psychosocial variants*, 2006).

Is the social collapse envisaged by Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, 2005 and Thomas Homer-Dixon (*The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization*, 2006), to be fruitfully compared to a civilizational "heart attack"? (cf *Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon: a heartfelt response to systemic negligence*, 2004) What do the insights into "energy flows" associated with Eastern medicine offer to enrich such exploration -- especially at the collective level? Is the quest for a way of understanding and enabling a healthier flow of qi along the songlines of the noosphere -- the "pattern that connects"?

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