Introduction

Context of clashing cultures

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Introduction

This is an exploration of the possibility that the operating pattern associated with DNA, so fundamental to microbiological life processes, may be of some relevance in reframing understanding of the large-scale processes associated with psychosocial interactions -- with which civilization has as yet proven to be fatally incompetent.

What follows is a development of aspects of the following earlier explorations:

- Theories of Correspondences -- and potential equivalences between them in correlative thinking (2007)
- Potential Misuse of the Conveyor Metaphor: recognition of the circular dynamic essential to its appropriate operation (2007)
- Walking Elven Pathways: enactivating the pattern that connects (2006)
- DNA Supercoiling as a Pattern for Understanding Psycho-social Twistedness (2004)

The central insight is that correspondences offer a form of understanding of relationships between what may well be both inconceivable and incompatible within conventional frameworks -- as between science and religion, between science and art, or between different belief systems. DNA integrates large quantities of information of qualitative and generative significance, notably through the nature of the bonding between its two intertwined, complementary strands. The most challenging bonds in psychosocial dynamics are partially embodied and understood, if at all, in poiesis of some form (poetry, dance, music, drama, etc.). ***

This exploration takes a quite different approach from that of Spiral Dynamics based on the work of Clare W. Graves (The Emergent,
Cyclical, Double-Helix Model of the Adult Human Biopsychosocial Systems, 1981). The emphasis is on the existential challenge of comprehending any relationship with "The Other" and how such a challenging bond may break down. It focuses closely on what may be learnt from the complexities associated with DNA, notably in contrast with the existential dynamics to which the I Ching alludes through metaphor.

The question in what follows is whether, as correspondences, such bonds between the incommensurable offer a form of ladder -- a cognitive spiral staircase, in the light of the DNA metaphor, on which it may be possible lightly to tread between the polarized, "clashing" forces. Might "theories of correspondences" be more fruitfully understood as "ladders of correspondences"?

More intriguing is whether processes of creativity and schism formation in groups are usefully patterned by the processes associated with DNA replication and its role in protein fabrication. In endeavouring to comprehend the integrity of the "pattern that connects" does this imply that this depends on the ability of that pattern to engage dynamically in seemingly disintegrative processes through which the new is engendered? How are such disintegrative processes to be distinguished from those destructive of that pattern and the quality which it sustains?

**Context of clashing cultures**

Many of the challenges to the integrity and viability of civilization are framed in the simplistic terms of binary logic as a "clash of civilizations":

- Judeo-Christianity vs. the others
- Israel vs. Palestine
- science vs. religion
- art vs. science
- industry vs. environment
- natural sciences vs. social sciences
- left wing vs. right wing
- men vs. women
- young vs. old
- old vs. new
- haves vs. have-nots

Such a framing may also be applied within groups, as argued by Wendell Bell (in: Richard Slaughter, Looking Towards the Futures Studies Renaissance: a conversation between Richard A Slaughter and Wendell Bell, Journal of Futures Studies, August 2007): Within almost every group or collectivity, there is a struggle between people:

- on one side who wish to deal with members of other groups with peaceful diplomacy, persuasion, and comprise; who seek justice tempered by forgiveness and restraint; who have empathy for "the other"; whose self-interest is moderated by concern for the well-being of others; who have respect for others; and who have some understanding of the unity of mankind;
- on the other side of the struggle (within the same group) are people who are prone to use violence against "the other"; who seek justice as retribution and revenge; who demonize their perceived opponents as evil-doers; who tend to be punishing, controlling, and domineering; who are intolerant of other cultures and show scorn for what is foreign to them; whose narrow self-interest dominates their judgments and actions, and who have little, if any, sense of themselves as members of a common worldwide humanity.

The polar terms may in each case be understood as "cultures" or "civilizations" which are in process of clashing in ways that are poorly contained by the best insights of the wise and their capacity to offer remedial strategies of any credibility. For the less than wise, and those without any doubts regarding their own wisdom, the response is systemically little different from Stone Age clubmanship, locked into self-righteous, conventional, "in-the-box" thinking -- "Me right / You wrong". Conclusion: "you are either with us or against us", "you need help", "you need to be eliminated".

Pakistan was recently threatened with being "bombed back to the Stone Age" if it failed to collaborate with a superpower locked into this Stone Age mentality. The limitations of this perspective have notably been explored by Edward de Bono (I Am Right, You Are Wrong: New Renaissance: From Rock Logic to Water Logic, 1990).

Worse still is what might be caricatured as a mutation of the "Stone Age" mentality into a structurally violent confidence trick (a "new con"): "I am right. Follow my advice and be part of the solution. Don't be negative" (cf Being Positive Avoiding Negativity: management challenge of positive vs negative, 2005).

The response of those appalled by this dynamic appears to be a desperate search for magical "common ground" -- enabling all to agree, free from toxic and potentially fatal differences. This worthy objective has however taken on the attributes of some Edenic utopia. Little thought is given to the probability that, as with Eden, it is likely (if achieved) to be resubjected to the unexamined processes of the tragedy of the commons. (see discussion in In Quest of Uncommon Ground: beyond impoverished metaphor and the impotence of words of power, 1997; John Ralston Saul, The Unconscious Civilization, 1995).

Although every respect is due to such initiatives, and every hope could be placed in them by the optimistic, history suggests that there is also a case for exploring in parallel the possibility of more complex forms of viable rapprochement that are as respectful of disagreement between opposing belief systems as they are of any agreement (see: Using Disagreements for Superordinate Frame Configuration, 1992, prepared in anticipation of the Parliament of the World's Religions). With respect to the need for such "new thinking", Edward de Bono has himself promoted the creation of a World Council for New Thinking.
Contrast with framework of Spiral Dynamics

It is appropriate to note that the theory of Spiral Dynamics (Don E. Beck and Chris C. Cowan, Spiral Dynamics: mastering values, leadership, and change, 1996) was based on the work of Clare W. Graves (Human Nature Prepares for a Momentous Leap. The Futurist, April 1974; The Emergent, Cyclical, Double-Helix Model of the Adult Human Biopsychosocial Systems, 1981), itself rooted in general systems theory and developmental psychology (cf Caleb Rosado, An Explanation of Spiral Dynamics; A Mini-Course in Spiral Dynamics). It has notably been promoted by Ken Wilber and his Integral Institute.

The spiral is said to incorporate a double helix through which "life conditions" at each level ("what the real world is like") may match with "capacities of the mind" (the neurobiological equipment and mindsets required to deal with such a reality). Explanations of Spiral Dynamics do not however appear to make the helical structure as prominent as is implied; it is not mentioned in the extensive commentary of the Wikipedia entry, for example. Nor is it mentioned in the critique by Michel Bauwens (A Critique of Wilber and Beck's SD-Integral, P/I: Pluralities/Integration, 2005). If the spiral is assumed to imply a direction of development, as an essentially one-way spiral, it would be subject to criticisms similar to those made with respect to Ken Wilber's one-way developmental conveyor (see Potential Misuse of the Conveyor Metaphor: recognition of the circular dynamic essential to its appropriate operation, 2007).

The emphases in the exploration of this paper are however on the existential challenges of comprehension and the degree of correspondence with DNA which not evident in Spiral Dynamics; it might be argued that the emphasis there is on matching of various clear-cut psychological and behavioural categories as is characteristic of various formulaic type coding systems. Don Beck has however stated:

The real content of Spiral Dynamics, however, is not about the eight or nine levels, but how human systems emerge from the interaction of people with their life conditions. Otherwise, one is trapped with a Calvinistic, pre-determined roll out, maybe like reincarnation. Different developmental theorists will, of course, see different wrappings, because of who they are, how they do research, who is in their studies, with what data-gathering technologies. The essence of Spiral Dynamics is this Double-Helix effect. (Lines of Development and Spiral Dynamics, 2007)

Following his dissociation from Beck in 1999, the original content of the work of Graves has been edited by Chris Cowan with Natasha Todorovic (The Never Ending Quest: Dr. Clare W. Graves Explores Human Nature: A Treatise on an emergent cyclical conception of adult behavioral systems and their development, 2005) through a Spiral Dynamics group distinct from that of Beck's Spiral Dynamics Integral. The point might be made that one inspiration for the current exploration is to enable a mode of understanding that responds to the differences associated with such typical relationship "breakdowns" and the contrasting interpretations to which they give rise.

Indeed, from the self-referential perspective of the current exploration, what is its relationship to such "Others"? A primary difference might be expressed as a concern with how meaning is experienced by those participants in the dynamics of strongly polarized relationships -- and how it is variously comprehended by them. Patterns of categories as explanations have proven to be inadequate to the challenge of such relationships from which many suffer.

The distinction might be caricatured by the agonized words of Jack Nicholson (As Good As It Gets, 1997) to a friend offering an explanation for a relational crisis: "I am drowning here and you are describing the water".

Possibility of an implicit pattern

The following exploration is of a radically different nature. Within the problematic context indicated above any possibility of reframing it merits a degree of consideration, however speculative -- as a precondition of creative brainstorming.

The argument here is that the complex processes associated with DNA are so fundamental to life that they merit consideration for their
implications for the organization of psychosocial dynamics on a larger scale. Arguments for this include:

- as a robust set of structures and processes, those of DNA may be said to have been thoroughly "tested" over millions of years to eliminate fundamental systemic weaknesses -- something that cannot be said for many "models" of reconciliation currently on offer
- in the light of general systems theory, as a viable system, the underlying pattern is likely to be applicable to some degree on a larger scale (cf James Grier Miller, Living Systems, 1978). After all why should evolution be expected to avoid benefitting from a model that has proven its efficacy?
- the processes associated with DNA demonstrably integrate a higher degree of complexity and variety -- presumably (or at least potentially) of an order commensurate with that requisite for the appropriate governance of psychosocial systems
- in the light of the technique proposed by Joël de Rosnay (The Macroscope, 1979) for detecting the patterns of larger systems (by analogy with the microscope), understanding at the micro-level may offer guidance to understanding of systems of a larger scale. This approach was a stimulus to the study of Luc de Brabantère (Le Latéroscope: systèmes et créativité, 1989; The Forgotten Half of Change: achieving greater creativity through changes in perception, 2005).

Given this context, from a systemic perspective, it is encouraging with respect to the challenge to human capacity of global governance that at the human cellular level:

- that the number of bases in the human genome (approx 6 billion), so recently "discovered", so closely approximates the population of the planet (approx 6 billion), so recently documented, and that the number of "base pairs" (approx 3 billion) might naturally be expected to correspond to the number of gender pairs;
- and, furthermore, that the number of molecular lesions in the human genome per year (approx 0.6%) is of the same order as that of the global mortality rate per year (approx 0.8%)

The comparison may be considered flawed in the light of the much lower levels of the human population in earlier periods -- when the human genome was essentially the same. However this fails to take into account the cognitive dimension that it is only recently that humanity acquired the capacity to assess both the level of its own global population and the global characteristics of its own genome.

Given that humanity has neither developed the capacity to control its population levels sustainably, nor to eliminate mortality associated with failure manifesting at the cellular level, it is clearly peculiarly dependent on catastrophic failure of relationships (generically understood from the macro to the micro level) for its own survival. There is therefore a case for assuming that systemically the correspondence between the above figures may be indicative of some significance beyond pure coincidence.

The following argument is not however dependent on this assumption although it is nevertheless curious that the governance capacity to respond to systemic problems arising from both overpopulation and disease (notably AIDS) is specifically inhibited by doctrines of the Abrahamic religions. These are all highly challenged both in their relationship to each other, and with regard to that between men and women -- as well as dependent on ensuring an early total catastrophic failure of relationships in order to engender a prophesied global resolution of these difficulties. Faith-based governance, cultivating demonisation and evoking terrorism, is promoted to that end (cf Spontaneous Initiation of Armageddon: a heartfelt response to systemic negligence, 2004).

The argument is not intended to question the good intentions of those whose understandings of psychosocial dynamics enable them to respond with some degree of viability (at least to their satisfaction) to the various manifestations of the "clash of civilizations" -- whether on the larger social scale or at the interpersonal level. Rather, given the high level of fatality that these dynamics continue to engender, the question is whether more radical framings may in the future offer yet more appropriate approaches to these clashes.

In particular this exploration acknowledges, as fundamental to the dynamics that call for elucidation, the self-reflexive challenge of any approach -- however self-righteously offered by the wiciest or most spiritual. Any such approach (perhaps necessarily) engenders an opposing approach by which it will in all probability be "demonised". This dimension is especially relevant in the light of the optimistic global efforts to promote global governance and consensus through particular (and largely self-selected) institutions (cf discussion in Emergence of a Global Misleadership Council: misleading as vital to governance of the future? 2007).

In the current context, new approaches are as likely as any to offer relevant insights, especially if they are grounded in million year old patterns.

The question here is whether DNA offers special insight into the "pattern that connects" the "clashing" elements of psychosocial dynamics to which the best and the brightest have little meaningful response in practice -- except possibly to bomb "back to the Stone Age" (if only metaphorically) those who disagree with their prescription. That there could well be such a relationship between DNA and the "pattern that connects" might be construed as implied by the contextual argument in which that phrase was famously first presented by Gregory Bateson (Mind and Nature: a necessary unity, 1979).

How then might DNA offer a dynamic "holding pattern" as it does in microbiological life processes? As a metaphor, does it offer a new way of framing polarized psychosocial dynamics? Is that better than what is currently on offer?

It is also appropriate to note that the following exploration is in harmony with insights of some indigenous cultures, as documented by Jeremy Narby (The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the origins of knowledge, 1999). This might itself be seen as consistent with the Biblical adage that "The first shall be last and the last shall be first". As Narby notes, the insight is echoed in the Biblical account of Jacob's Ladder -- common to the Abrahamic religions. The question is what are the "steps" on such a ladder and why might "the first" on it be so closely associated with "the last"?

It is indeed possible that the Edenic harmony is to be found in comprehension of the nature of the harmonies of correspondences between clashing forces, rather than in the elimination of the incommensurable qualities that distinguish them.
Correspondences and complementarities: "moonshine connectivity"

In an earlier exploration (Theories of Correspondences -- and potential equivalences between them in correlative thinking, 2007) attention was drawn to the co-existence of two distinct sets of theories of correspondences, those associated with traditional symbolist thinking and those associated with algebraic thinking. The point was made there that no studies have endeavoured to relate these two modes despite curious similarities and the possibility that the second endeavoured to supplant the first -- without being able to acknowledge its significance.

Both sets of correspondences do however bridge credibly across a cognitive chasm in ways that are not readily comprehensible or explicable to conventional thinking. That exploration in fact arose from a study of a major discovery in mathematics that was triggered by what was termed by mathematicians "moonshine" correspondences, in that they had qualities that were suspiciously inexplicable (cf discussion in Potential Psychosocial Significance of Monstrous Moonshine: an exceptional form of symmetry as a Rosetta stone for cognitive frameworks, 2007).

Rather than seek here to highlight the many aspects of correspondences that may be of relevance to this exploration, an initial example can be given in terms of aesthetics and poiesis. In its simplest terms cognitive significance is attached to associations established in poetry, music or song based on rhyme or rhythm, consonance and counterpoint. This may be such as to evoke "beating time to the music" or even dancing to it. Poiesis may be a necessary precursor of autopoiesis ***.

More complex correspondences may be expressed on a larger scale through drama and opera, notably highlighting the process of enantiodromia through which one mode is transformed into its opposite (Psychosocial Energy from Polarization -- within a Cyclic Pattern of Enantiodromia, 2007). Psychosocial processes on the largest scale may be understood as drama and may offer instances of such enantiodromia -- as with the development of the policies of the USA from the Cold War period in supposedly dramatic contrast to those of totalitarianism.

Correspondences may be recognized in the complementarity between contrasting individuals or groups, whether in the form of affinities that "work" (however inexplicable to others), through antipathies significant to both parties, or through some profound sense of "rappont". This phenomenon may be described using metaphors of mirroring -- where one is understood to be a (possibly transformed or distorted) image of the other. According to some psychotherapeutic frameworks, any such problematic mirroring may be described in terms of a "shadow" and the challenge of encountering "The Other" (cf Connie Zweig and Jeremiah Abrams (Eds). Meeting the Shadow: the hidden power of the dark side of human nature, 1991; "Human Intercourse": "Intercourse with Nature" and "Intercourse with the Other", 2007).

In purely aesthetic terms it is possible to incorporate a variety of correspondences into a design. This may be deliberately done in order to raise the spirit of the observer in some way. This approach was central to the Renaissance concerns of Marsilio Ficino and variously described as natural magic or sympathetic magic (Sutton Pub and D. P. Walker, Spiritual and Demonic Magic: from Ficino to Campanella, 2000). Chinese culture has notably continued to recognize related sensitivity through the discipline and practice of feng shui. Variants are characteristic of contemporary concerns with fashion, decor and creating ambiance. More challenging are the traditional uses of rhyming "spells" to induce effects by "magic" -- usefully construed to include advertising jingles (that also "work").

The argument here is that greater awareness of complementarities and correspondences allows them to be used as viable stepping stones through which to walk in domains outside -- or more specifically between -- the frameworks provided by various conventions and forms of conventional thinking. The credibility of this is readily recognized when an unusual gesture is made that, although seeming to break the rules of convention, is nevertheless understood (and especially "felt") to be appropriate.

The question is whether these steps may be understood to be configured in any way. A stepping stone may be an isolated stone in a river or accompanied by others. In creating ambiance an interplay is sought between a variety of complementarities. This is specifically the case within a piece of music or poetry. How are these to be understood as offering a means to uplift the spirit? Are they then better understood as steps on some form of staircase or ladder to a condition of higher potential --- or possibly even to one of lower potential? How many steps may be associated with such a raising out of the mundane condition?

Should the sequence of metaphors associated with the learning process of progressive initiation into more fundamental comprehension be understood as forming such a stairway of correspondences -- notably as cultivated in degrees of initiation? (cf Metaphors as Transdisciplinary Vehicles of the Future, 1991).

Curiously environments where a set of complementaries are in play are not normally distinguished by the degree of qualitative enhancement that they enable. Efforts to do so are constrained by limitations on the superlatives that can be used and the interpretations that can be given to them. The context may be appreciatively described as "magical" or even "sacred".

The question raised here is whether, understood in this way, correspondences offer a means of stepping lightly between the poles of binary thinking. Is it then somehow possible to walk between clashing opposites through recognition of the cognitive support that a complementarity offers? In particular, through recognition of a set of such correspondences, is it possible to use them as a form of staircase? In that case does DNA, for the reasons indicated above, offer insights into the structure of that staircase and the psychodynamics that may be associated with it?

A "hidden" stairway?

Clearly recognizing the possibility of such movement -- "slipping between the walls" -- is relatively easy for those with aesthetic sensibilities, if only to music. Such "hidden" possibilities may also evoke the kinds of worldwide excitement associated with rumours of secret codes (as with the Da Vinci Code and imitations thereof). For those locked into conventional thinking, the possibility may be as problematic as the threatening chaos that the autistic may experience -- challenged to understand the rules for such behaviour.
But whilst one may or may not have experience of how such an "unconventional" movement "works", it is interesting to note various forms of recognition of it in mythology and legend:

- the challenge of navigating Scylla and Charybdis is one classical example
- the Vedic insight regarding Neti Neti (not this, not that) is another
- the two pillars, Boaz and Jachin, of Solomon's Temple, the first Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 7:21; 2 Kings 11:14; 23:3) of significance to the ritual of freemasonry and other esoteric groups, and common features of their symbolic architecture.
- as noted elsewhere (The Isdom of the Wisdom Society: Embodying time as the heartland of humanity, 2003), mytho-poetic folk legends, and modern fictional explorations, serve to sustain and echo the archetypal insights in many cultures relating to elder "ancestral" races who "withdraw into the stones" -- or to those that may have been "trapped" therein, like Merlin and the proverbial geni in the bottle. Most curiously, one of the most popular and best known Christian hymns has as its opening lines: Rock of Ages, Left for me, let me hide myself in Thee [more | more].
- as an extension of the last point, a number of theological studies refer to the necessarily "broken symbols" through which people are reminded of the broken world in which they live and which appropriate insight may heal as a dwelling place "for eternity" (cf Barry L. Davis, Broken Symbols, 2006; Robert Cummings Neville, The Truth of Broken Symbols, 1996). Whenever reference is made to something through symbols, this is an indication that it is representative of something else - generally much greater than the symbol itself.
- in Theravada Buddhism, the Middle Way is understood as a description of a Nirvana-bound path of moderation -- between the extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification through the practice of wisdom, morality and mental cultivation. In Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, the Middle Way refers to transcendental ways of approaching seemingly antithetical claims about reality.
- the decorative art of China, including temples and traditional folk dances, focuses extensively on the theme of two dragons, typically depicted facing one another in the air in eager pursuit of a spinning pearl floating like an iridescent bubble between them. This theme was a mark of books issued under imperial auspices. For Taoists, the complex associations of that pearl include wisdom, yang energy, truth and life -- even the everlasting life of those who perceive the truth and attain enlightenment. Elsewhere (Psycho-social Significance of the Mandelbrot Set: a sustainable boundary between chaos and order, 2005), it was suggested that the two dragons can readily be associated with the two sides of the standard rendering of the Mandelbrot set -- in pursuit of the circular 2-period ball
- as with the Chinese dragons, complementary (magical) beasts, "counter-rampant" are a common feature of heraldic devices symbolic of the identity of dynasties and nations
- numerous political groups have endeavoured to articulate a "third way", to avoid the polarizing extremes of left and right-wing politics (Anthony Giddens, The Third Way: the renewal of social democracy, 1998 ; The Third Way And Its Critics, 2000)

To the extent that the intermediary passage is an open secret, it is seemingly only "hidden" by fixation on the attraction or repulsion of the twin guardians -- however symbolized -- of the way between them. Correspondences subtly introduce what is effectively a "space beam", holding the opposing forces apart in order to provide a viable cognitive pathway. Such a beam might be understood in terms of the best of counter-intuitive lateral thinking.

The degree of "openness" of the "secret" is perhaps best exemplified by what has been ambiguously translated as the Gateless Gate -- echoed in a very common symbolic portal in China and Japan -- whose paradoxical cognitive nature is indicated through a classic collection of 48 Zen koans (Mumonkan, Wumenguan) and their many commentaries. Its comprehension resists description in logical terms, as this quotation from the preface by the compiler Munson (or Wumen) indicates:

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The great path has no gates,
Yet thousands of roads enter it.
When one passes through this gateless gate,
He walks freely between heaven and hell.
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Spiral stairway -- threatening and/or broken?

Curiously freemasonry, as described by Albert G. Mackey (The Symbolism of Freemasonry, 1882), has also cultivated The Legend of the Winding Stairs associated with access to the so-called Middle Chamber:

Although the legend of the Winding Stairs forms an important tradition of Ancient Craft Masonry, the only allusion to it in Scripture is to be found in a single verse in the sixth chapter of the First Book of Kings, and is in these words: "The door for the middle chamber was in the right side of the house; and they went up with winding stairs into the middle chamber, and out of the middle into the third." Out of this slender material has been constructed an allegory, which, if properly considered in its symbolical relations, will be found to be of surpassing beauty. But it is only as a symbol that we can regard this whole tradition; for the historical facts and the architectural details alike forbid us for a moment to suppose that the legend, as it is rehearsed in the second degree of Masonry, is anything more than a magnificent philosophical myth.

A further study has been made by Homer L. Zurrrwalt (A Study of the Winding Staircase, 1989) since it is a key feature in the design of King Solomon's Temple that is central to the symbolism of freemasonry. He notes it has been made a central feature of the Second Degree which every Fellowcraft Mason must symbolically ascend in order to make his advancement in the degree. This is explained in more detail elsewhere (Charles A. Sankey, The Winding Stair to the Middle Chamber, 1968). The focus in masonic use is on the value-related symbolism of a succession of steps in the winding stairs (The Winding Stairs, Short Talk Bulletin, January 1932, 1):
There actually was a winding stair in Solomon's Temple, but of the three, five and seven steps the scriptures are silent. Only in this country have the Winding Stairs but fifteen steps. In older days the stairs had but five, sometimes seven steps. Preston had thirty-six steps in his Winding Stairs; in series of one, three, five, seven, nine and eleven. The English system later eliminated the number eleven from Preston's thirty-six, making but twenty-five in all. The Stairs as a whole are a representation of life; not the physical life of eating, drinking, sleeping and working, but the mental and spiritual life, of both the lodge and the world without; of learning, studying, enlarging mental horizons and increasing the spiritual outlook.

If the pattern, exemplified in DNA, holds more generally -- as suggested here -- then it is to be expected that it holds whether one believes in it or not, and to whatever degree. The cognitive dynamics of "believing in it" (or not) may well be fundamental to the operation of the pattern. It may well hold in some way at a range of scales, from the personal to the global (as discussed below). The question for the moment (and especially in the moment) is how such a stairway may be experienced -- if it is only partially experienced -- and what are the pathological forms of partial experience?

Suggestive clues may be obtained by comparing how stairways are experienced as unsafe with current understanding of how DNA may be damaged (and repaired) -- bearing in mind that the systems of the human body necessarily have a comprehensive understanding of the latter:

- **Potentially unsafe stairways** (and their associated dangers): This is a common experience for those personally familiar with ruins, but it has been widely explored in movie scenes. Possibilities include:
  - fragility of steps however solid they may appear (wood rot, etc) -- especially if they appear to be made of unusual materials
  - invisibility of steps (due to inadequate lighting or to optical illusions) calling for an act of faith in both their presence and solidity
  - special, and possibly unfamiliar, requirements for walking -- possibly to avoid inducing destructive vibrations (as with ropeways)
  - absence (or invisibility) of any supporting far wall and the consequent danger of falling off
  - any counter-intuitive need to avoid the prudence of clinging to the proximate side of the stairway
  - the presence of unforeseeable others, of unimaginable nature and motivation, on the strange stairway -- especially if it is not clear where it goes or the identity of those who may make use of it

- **Damage to DNA**: This occurs at a rate of 1,000 to 1,000,000 molecular lesions per cell per day due to environmental (exogenous) factors and normal metabolic (endogenous) processes inside the cell. It corrupts the integrity and accessibility of essential information, notably altering the spatial configuration of the helix.

The replication of damaged DNA before cell division can lead to the incorporation of wrong bases opposite damaged ones. Daughter cells that inherit these wrong bases carry mutations from which the original DNA sequence is typically unrecoverable. Accumulation of extensive DNA damage by a cell, or its inability to continue DNA repair to damage incurred, results in its entering one of three possible states:

- an irreversible state of dormancy, known as senescence
- cell suicide, also known as apoptosis or programmed cell death
- unregulated cell division, which can lead to the formation of a tumor that is cancerous

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<th>Table 1: Indicative patterns of DNA damage and repair</th>
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<td>to be interpreted as a comprehensive guide to the challenge of relating to a complementary &quot;Other&quot;</td>
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**DNA damage** by a range of mutagens can be subdivided into two main types:

- endogenous damage to DNA due to endogenous cellular processes:
  - oxidation of bases from reactive oxygen species produce multiple forms of damage, including base modifications, as well as double-strand breaks
  - alkylation of bases (usually methylation), such as formation of 7-methylguanine
  - hydrolysis of bases, such as deamination, depurination and depyrimidination.
  - mismatch of bases, due to errors in DNA replication, in which the wrong DNA base is stitched into place in a newly forming DNA strand, or a DNA base is skipped over or mistakenly inserted.

- exogenous damage caused by external agents such as
  - ultraviolet radiation from the sun causing crosslinking between adjacent cytosine and thymine bases creating pyrimidine dimers in a DNA strand
  - ionizing radiation such as that created by radioactive decay or in cosmic rays causes breaks in DNA strands.
  - thermal disruption at elevated temperature increases the rate of depurination, and notably hydrolytic depurination
  - certain plant toxins
  - human-made mutagenic chemicals, especially aromatic compounds that act as DNA intercalating agents resulting in insertion into the space between two adjacent base pairs; intercalators are mostly aromatic and planar molecules distorting the DNA strands by unwinding of the double helix thereby inhibiting both transcription and DNA replication, causing toxicity and mutations.
  - cancer chemotherapy and radiotherapy

**DNA repair mechanisms**: Depending on the type of damage inflicted on the DNA's double helical structure, a variety of repair strategies have evolved to restore lost information. If possible, cells use the unmodified complementary
Understood in terms of a stairwell, it is vital to recognize the cognitive challenge of the unfamiliar, if one's primary association is with one pole of the binary -- whether or not it is understood to be purportedly bridged by a sense of correspondence and complementarity. The other side may be existentially terrifying whatever may be hypothesised about its complementarity.

The terror of such unfamiliarity may be readily associated with the demonic -- as is only too evident in the tendency to demonize those who hold unfamiliar views evoking disagreement. In this sense any such supposed step on the stairway beyond doctrinal convention may be quite appropriately framed as encountering "Satan on one's doorstep". It is understandable why some belief systems are totally opposed to forms of aesthetics that may suggest correspondences and complementarities that relate them to other belief systems with which they have no conventional (doctrinal) affinity.

Perhaps the most curious feature of the open secret is the manner in which it is guarded. Given the above selection of examples from different cultures and traditions, a fundamental question might be how "jealously" it is guarded and to what end? In the case of the twin dragons, the "secret" is widely and frequently publicized in dragon dance ceremonies -- notably in rural communities. Symbolic twin columns, with appropriately symbolic beasts as guardians, are admired as characteristic of many temple-like designs. As noted above, such columns are a characteristic feature of masonic temples and initiation ceremonies -- and of common heraldic devices.

It would seem that there are various possibilities:

- that the knowledge of meaningful access to any intermediary way is effectively lost
- that the architectural and symbolic representations are accepted as having ceased to perform any genuine role as psychoactive reminders or catalysts of insight and merely serve decorative ceremonial purposes -- echoing (nostalgically) what might have been and what (longingly) might come to be (cf Connie Zweig, *The Holy Longing: the hidden power of spiritual yearning*, 2003).
- that claims to the knowledge (whether real or illusory) are indeed jealously guarded as secret because of the power that so doing is held to offer, if only with respect to those seeking to acquire access
- that the nature of the secret, to the extent that it is understood, is mistakenly understood in some way
- that the very nature of the secret lies in the difficulty in communicating such subtly intimate knowledge, whatever the motivation to do so

One interesting, if tragic, example is that of the traditional "wisdom keepers" of indigenous cultures. In addition to their values having been well-disparaged by the currently dominant world culture, well-meaning efforts to position and promote their insights might themselves be seen to be counterproductive. Sadly it might be said of the Wisdom Keepers assembled on the occasion of the Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) that they were indeed the most effective of those gathered there in achieving their apparent objectives. Not a trace of their wisdom emerged. Or is it that the very nature of wisdom -- that its expression should leave no "traces"? Or is it that its nature lies in how it is comprehended by others -- if at all?

A quite different example is that of freemasonry, given the degree to which the eminent and powerful are in some way secretly implicated in its processes at the highest level of leadership (cf *Global Strategic Implications of the "Unsaid*), 2003). To the extent that freemasonry, as noted above, indeed holds and enables such profound insights amongst its members, it might be asked how (or why) such insights have failed to imbue global leadership with greater wisdom -- whether through intergovernmental institutions or the various world councils of the wise (see discussion in *Emergence of a Global Misleadership Council: misleading as vital to governance of the future?* 2007). Or is it the case that the problematic nature of the dysfunctional dynamics of the times are in some way integral to the sustainability of the holding pattern that the wise consider appropriate? What is it that they are allowing (not) to happen and why? (cf *The Deafening Silence of Those Who Know Nothing*, 1998).

As with the purported ideal of classic imperial China, is it the case that the secret of governance at the highest level is a form of inaction -- however mysterious? (cf *The Quest for the Socio-Economics of Non-Action*, 1993; *The Art of Non-Decision-Making and the manipulation of categories*, 1997). Is this how the wise view their relationship to what the Club of Rome has named as the problematique -- without being able to give significant content to the corresponding resolutique? (Council of the Club of Rome, *The First

Is it this secret:

- that is held to absolve those at the very highest level of being called to account for problematic initiatives for which they have been responsible, or with which they have been complicit -- including those triggering calls for their indictment?
- that is the basis for the "creative accounting" of which they are so often accused -- perhaps justified by a correspondingly dubious "creative ethic"?
- that offers those "in the know" the necessary "wiggle room" to navigate these problematic times with effective impunity -- however criminal their actions may appear to others?

How many "in the know" have indeed been complicit in the Iraq debacle, and are complicit (at the time of writing) in the build-up to a nuclear strike on Iran -- in preference to providing effective aid to those in dire straits (Darfur, etc.)?

On the other hand, it might presumably be imagined that those "in the know" consider the level of tragic fatalities and suffering in today's civilization to be necessary and appropriate (despite their skilfully publicized "sincere" regrets) to sustaining the psychodynamics of the system. They may even consider it appropriate occasionally to fine tune the level of fatalities with any of the instruments of the Four Horsemen -- as a means of "assisting God's work". The logic of such a perspective was explored in the notorious Report from Iron Mountain -- possibly to be considered a precursor to that of the UN's Global Compact and that of the European Economic Forum (cf "Globalization": the UN's "Safe Haven" for the World's Marginalized -- the Global Compact with Multinational Corporations as the UN's "Final Solution", 2001)

Spiral stairwells and screw conveyors

If the DNA pattern holds, however, why the spiral? How may the spiral and twist be of psychosocial significance in development of understanding -- in contrast with other intuitions, such as those regarding a simple, linear "Jacob's Ladder"?

A previous exploration (Potential Misuse of the Conveyor Metaphor: recognition of the circular dynamic essential to its appropriate operation, 2007) reviewed insights into the significance of the conveyor as a metaphor of development and notably of spiritual development, as specifically advocated by Ken Wilber (The Conveyor Belt. Ch. 9 of Integral Spirituality: a startling new role for religion in the modern and postmodern world, Shambhala, 2006). The section in that exploration on spiral staircases and screw conveyors (omitted from an abridged version of the paper published in the Journal of Futures Studies) is reproduced in this and the following section.

The process of "return" is seemingly absent from this form of conveyor. Interestingly the spiral staircase is one favoured adaptation of the mythical "ladder" of "spiritual development" to "heaven", notably as used by Karen Armstrong (The Spiral Staircase: my climb out of darkness, 2004) -- inspired by T S Eliot's poem Ash Wednesday (1930) and by Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy, especially the Purgatorio.

At the first turning of the second stair
I turned and saw below
The same shape twisted on the banister
Under the vapour in the fetid air
Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears
The deceitful face of hope and of despair.
(from T S Eliot, Ash Wednesday)

In both the spiral staircase and the screw conveyor it is the "material" that moves, either of its own accord (as on the staircase) or as an effect on "static" material of a rotating screw. In this sense the conveyor rotates on its axis; its ends do not meet in any "tail-biting". In effect the conveyor then acts as a form of "timeless" standing wave; it is only the material that has a temporal experience. Curiously the spiral staircase is often used as an example of an architectural design that cannot be adequately communicated with words -- making the use of images (even gestures) essential to comprehension.

However Armstrong explores the challenging experience of a spiral staircase in her development "out of darkness" over time:

I am trying to describe an experience that has nothing whatever to do with words or ideas and is not amenable to the logic of grammar and neat sentences that put things into an order that makes sense... It is as though a comforting veil of illusion has been ripped away and you see the world without form, without significance, purposeless, blind, trivial, spiteful and ugly to the core. T S Eliot describes something similar in the third poem of Ash Wednesday. He is climbing a spiral staircase, a mythical image of the 'ascent' of the mind and heart to spiritual enlightenment. But At the first turning of the second stair he sees a shape twisted into the bannister, surrounded by vaporous, foetid air, and he is forced to struggle with the devil of the stairs. He leaves these convoluted forms behind, and at the next turning finds only darkness: Damp, jagged, like an old man's mouth drizzling, beyond repair. Or the toothed gullet of an aged shark, the underbelly of consciousness that lurks in the basement of our minds. (p. 75)

The figure on any such spiral staircase (given the parallel to the screw conveyor) is of course appropriately named as Screwtape by C S Lewis (The Screwtape Letters, 1942). As Armstrong later notes with regard to Eliot's poem:

There was a complete and satisfying 'fit' between my inner and outer worlds. The poem, with its quiet, haunting accuracy, perfectly expressed my own state, and endorsed it, showing that I had... somehow stumbled upon a truth about the human
consciousness and the way men and women work. In the very first poem of the sequence... the verse constantly turns upon itself in repetition of word, image and sound. Repeatedly the poet tells us, I do not hope to turn again, and yet throughout the poem, he is doing just that, slowly ascending to one insight after another. And even though he insists that he has abandoned hope, I felt paradoxically encouraged. (p 164-5)

Paradoxical existential dynamics of the spiral stairway

Whilst this is an admirable experiential account, it somehow seeks to design out the significance of what Armstrong elsewhere describes as the "ghost" on that spiral staircase. Emphasis is placed on overcoming the illusion of despair through discovery of appropriate hope -- however paradoxical (and illusory in its own right?).

The challenge may however lie in an overly simplistic understanding of the essentially "static" staircase metaphor -- as partially indicated by the challenge of understanding the "dynamics" of the screw conveyor and how it "works". Understanding it simplistically may indeed evoke encounters with "traffic" in the opposite direction -- "going downstairs". Any "ascent" of the mind and heart to spiritual enlightenment is then necessarily matched by the "descent" of forms of attachment variously imagined.

Armstrong herself equates the segregation she chose to undergo through her novitiate in a convent as a type of isolation central to rituals of initiation practiced in many cultures:

> It is a process of death and resurrection: initiates die to their childhood and rise again to an entirely different life as mature human beings... The idea is that in these extreme circumstances, the young discover inner resources that will enable them to serve their people as fully functioning adults. The purpose... is thus to transform dependent children into responsible self-reliant adults... and if necessary to die in order to protect their people. (p 45)

Again the error may lie in focusing inappropriately on the nature of "enlightenment" when a more appropriate understanding is only achieved, paradoxically, "in the light" of "endarkenment" (Enlightening Endarkenment selected web resources on the challenge to comprehension, 2005). In relying on simplistic understanding of the spiral staircase metaphor to communicate the fundamental means of conveyance to greater insight, the nature of this "error" may best be highlighted by contrasting this pattern with that of the uncontestably fundamental pattern of DNA (DNA Superciling as a Pattern for Understanding Psycho-social Twistedness, 2004 -- annex to Engaging with Questions of Higher Order: cognitive vigilance required for higher degrees of twistedness, 2004).

The features missing from the metaphor of the spiral staircase, or of the screw conveyor, are then more likely to be found in the structure and dynamics of the supercoiling of DNA as the conveyor par excellence of information across generations. The existentially challenging illusions may then be understood in terms of a misplaced "impossible fusion" of the two right spiralling strands of the DNA double-helices or its conformations.

Consistent with the complex spiraling of DNA is the double spiral staircase which might offer more appropriate "staircase" metaphors for spiritual development. A second helical staircase can indeed be interwoven with the first (as with DNA) -- as explored by both Leonardo da Vinci and M C Escher. It is a notable feature in the Vatican Museum, and at Chambord, allowing one person to ascend and another to descend without encountering (or even seeing) each other. It also features in one old English country house -- to ensure that residents and guests did not need to encounter servants. Perhaps more significant is the fact that fire escapes, though built with landings and straight runs of stairs, are often functionally double helices, with two separate stairs intertwined.

The cognitively twisted nature of any illusions arising from inappropriate conflation would of course be even more appropriately represented by a combination of right- and left-spiraling "stairs" -- only possible in a space of more than three dimensions. It is perhaps such a pattern, fundamental to yoga and tantra, that characterizes the spiraling channels (ida and pingala) entwined around the spinal sushumna, with their particular points of intersection, or by the caduceus of western tradition -- an example of the double spiral symbol common to many cultures.

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre*

*The falcon cannot hear the falconer;*

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;*

*Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,*

*The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere*

*The ceremony of innocence is drowned;*

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst*

*Are full of passionate intensity*

*(from W B Yeats, The Second Coming)*

Fundamental knower-known relationship

If the pattern, as suggested here, is indeed of relevance to a way of reframing sterile and unfruitful polarized dynamics, it is to be suspected that it would be of relevance (recursively and self-reflexively) to the very relationship between knower and known. This is the "conventional" relationship between "the observer" and "reality" with which people are faced in their daily lives -- even moment by moment. The self-reflexive challenge has been extensively documented by Douglas Hofstadter (Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid: a metaphorical fugue on minds and machines in the spirit of Lewis Carroll, 1979; I Am a Strange Loop, 2007) and variously by others (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Philosophy in the Flesh: the embodied mind and its challenge to western thought, 1999; Henryk Skolimowski, Participatory Mind: a new theory of knowledge and of the universe, 1994).
There are many traces of the recognition that there is a degree of mirroring of "knower" and "known" (Mirroring and Mixing Metaphors, 2006; My Reflecting Mirror World: making my World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) worthwhile, 2002).

Contrasting understandings of enlightenment in Chinese Buddhism have been expressed through contrasting understandings of a mirror metaphor. Philosophically both perspectives are based on a belief in the intrinsic purity of mind, which, while pure in its self-nature, is soiled by adventitious passions (cf Paul Demiéville. The Mirror of the Mind. In: Peter N Gregory (Ed) Sudden and Gradual: approaches to enlightenment in Chinese Thought, 1991):

- the gradualist approach, insists that effort is necessary to rid the mind of these foreign impurities, expressed through the metaphor of wiping and polishing a mirror;
- the sudden approach to awakening considers only its essential purity, hence the refusal to recognize the existence of any impurity needing to be removed.

The corresponding, mutually challenging, verses are:

- The body is the tree of the awakening; The mind is like a clear mirror. Be unceasingly diligent in wiping it and polishing it, So that it will be without dust.
- Awakening entails no tree at all, Nor does the clear mirror entail any material frame. The Buddha-nature is eternally pure; Where could there be any dust?

Curiously no reference is made to the fact that these "opposing" views -- fundamental to two "opposing" belief systems -- might themselves be seen as mirror images of each other. As correspondences, it is between them that one is called to step.

The mirror metaphor, with its optical associations, also offers a way of reframing speculations about "speculative freemasonry" -- especially given its embodiment in the title Masonic Mirror and Keystone (an early periodical). In the year in which the first play (Love's Labour's Lost, 1598) bearing the name of W. Shakespeare was published, an anonymous translation of Guillaume de la Perrière's Le miroir politique was published by Adam Issip as the The Mirror of Policie -- in which a freemason with square and compasses is depicted (cf Ron Heisler, The Impact of Freemasonry on Elizabethan Literature, The Hermetic Journal, 1990). As noted by Peter Dawkins (Shakespeare and Freemasonry, Francis Bacon Research Trust, 1997), the masonic references in the Shakespeare plays are numerous, "some fairly obvious and others extremely subtle, but all woven into the text in such a way that they form a natural part of the magical garment".

Norman D. Livergood (The Perennial Tradition, 2003) notes the commentary on a text of Plotinus by Marsilio Ficino (De vita coelitus comparanda) with respect to mirroring of a fundamental kind:

I think . . . that those ancient sages, who sought to secure the presence of divine beings by the erection of shrines and statues, showed insight into the nature of the All; they perceived that, though this Soul (of the world) is everywhere tractable, its presence will be secured all the more readily when an appropriate receptacle is elaborated, a place especially capable of receiving some portion or phase of it, something reproducing it and serving like a mirror to catch an image of it.

Also of relevance to understandings of mirroring, Livergood comments with respect to the title of Ficino's opus, that it might be variously translated as: On Capturing The Life of the Stars, On Obtaining Life From the Heavens, or On Instituting One's Life Celestially but that -- in light of Ficino's fondness for puns -- his title probably means all three and more. Some of these implications have been recently explored by Thomas Moore (Planets Within: the astrological psychology of Marsilio Ficino, 1990). Contemporary variants of this traditional understanding were a theme of a conference of the Scientific and Medical Network at the Pari Center for New Learning (Towards a New Renaissance, 2007).

Disciplines of meditation frequently allude to the possibility of reframing the relationship between knower and known in ways that might be understood in terms of offering access to other, and wiser, modes of understanding. However typically this reframing is described in terms implying a degree of fusion of knower and known -- although the "levels" of insight into the nature of such fusion, as articulated in Buddhism for example, might be said to evoke those of the staircase metaphor, as with the "degrees" of initiation of various esoteric traditions, as noted above (cf Navigating Alternative Conceptual Realities: clues to the dynamics of enacting new paradigms through movement, 2002).

Given the preoccupation of this exploration, it is appropriate to note the number of web sites of schools of meditation specifically addressing the issue of meditation in relation to DNA, based on certain research (Grazyna Fosar and Franz Bludorf. Spiritual Science: DNA is influenced by words and frequencies. In: Vernetzte Intelligenz). These explorations have presumably been considerably encouraged by direct personal experience of fatal illnesses such as cancer and AIDs -- and irrespective of conventional judgements as to their meaninglessness, in comparison with death itself.

It is appropriate to stress that the sense of any correspondence, affinity or rapport, seemingly calls for ways of knowing beyond any intellectual description thereof. It implies a deeper form of (self-)understanding on the part of the knower as much as a degree of cognitive engagement with "the other" constituting an existential challenge (cf Creative Cognitive Engagement: beyond the limitations of descriptive patterning, 2006; "Human Intercourse": "Intercourse with Nature" and "Intercourse with the Other", 2007).

From such a perspective, especially intriguing at this point in time are the immense resources devoted by humanity to two fundamental explorations of the known that depend for their success on unconventional understandings of the relationship between knower and known:

- the Large Hadron Collider, constructed by the CERN particle physics laboratory outside Geneva, that will commence operations in 2007 with the purpose of detecting the Higgs boson, the most elusive speck of matter in the universe. Also termed the God
particle, it is supposed to be the key to explaining why matter has mass (Richard Martin, *The God Particle and the Grid*, Wired, April 2004). A second and larger variant, the International Linear Collider, has been announced (Frederic Garlin, *Dark matter and 'God particle' within reach*, Cosmos, 15 February 2007)

- an international tokamak (magnetic confinement fusion) research/engineering project, ITER (under construction in France), intended to investigate the application of insights into plasma physics into future electricity-producing fusion power plants

Both, but notably the latter, suggest the possibility that as complex cognitive templates (like DNA), they may offer special insight into the relationship between knower and known and the nature of processes associated with their "union" or "fusion" (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006).

**Human relationships and "The Other"**

The challenge of correspondences, complementarities and affinities has long been recognized as being well reflected in that between man and woman. Much is made of "family values" as fundamental to society. Fundamentalists of every persuasion deplore unconventional and broken relationships -- possibly even to the point of criminalizing them and making them punishable by death. And yet the patterns of complexities and subtleties of such relationships remain a prime focus of interpersonal preoccupation -- and of the media in consequence.

The conventional attitudes, regulated by doctrine and law, are quite distinct from the knowledge of such relationships as experienced by those challenged by affinities (notably by those with the opposite gender) -- experiences for which people have long been prepared to die. The nature of these relationships -- as the essence of "being human" has long been a focal challenge for those of aesthetic bent. They have evoked poetry and song in every culture. Archetypal variants were, for example, associated with the Medieval culture of courtly love through which efforts were made to ennoble that relationship.

Most curiously it has typically been men who have endeavoured to circumscribe, regulate and institutionalize such relationships. Even more curious, it has been men -- as in priesthoods specifically required to abstain from such relationships -- who have been empowered to define them for society. Typically they have endeavoured to divert the unconventional experiential ways of knowing associated with such relationships such as to reinforce the more conventional ways of knowing of which they have positioned themselves as gatekeepers and interpreters.

It might be argued, as they have always done, that there is every justification for doing so if it enables more fruitful relationships within society. However it is precisely the total inability of those empowered in this way to relate to others of their own kind, holding different doctrinal positions on the matter, that has resulted in the level of interreligious conflict that has been fatal to millions -- and continues to be so. Their various approaches to appropriating the understanding of subtle relationships and correspondences would seem to have been a historic disaster for which they notably consider themselves free from all responsibility.

The situation might be considered more curious in the case of the craft of freemasonry or of other secret societies -- as supposedly holding subtler insights of "higher degree". It is especially curious in the case of freemasonry because of the manner in which it has been traditionally instituted as a male-only group committed to restricting its insights to its membership -- expected to conform to a code of morality (which, like its code of ethics, is seemingly open to creative interpretation in practice). This would appear to preclude any shared understanding in practice of the nature of such subtle relationships with any "Other", most especially of opposite gender. This might even be considered to be a prime example of enantiodromia whereby, through instituting a system to cultivate subtler forms of knowing, it in fact resulted in a system which precluded such knowing in effective practice -- however it may be celebrated in theory, ritual and symbol.

It is within this context that other approaches to understanding subtle relationships, involving those of both genders, have been set. As an extreme example, it is understandable how threatening is perceived to be the challenge of "witchcraft" for the Christian and other religions. More intriguing is the perceived justification in traditional societies for the separate secret societies of men and women and whether, through this separation, subtler understandings of relationship are cultivated that are meaningful to sustaining their culture in practice (cf A. P. Elkin, *Aboriginal Men of High Degree: initiation and sorcery in the world's oldest tradition*, 1993; Darrell A. Posey, *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity*, 1999).

Not only do religions continue to exacerbate bloody conflict, through their inability to exhibit understanding of the practice of subtler relationships with those of other ways of knowing -- whether other religions, science or the arts. They have also effectively exposed society to an increasing pattern of unfruitful and broken relationships -- as reflected in divorce and HIV statistics. In effect each religion is in the invidious position of claiming to have a solution to unfruitful relationships -- within its own doctrinal framework -- whilst simultaneously exacerbating bloody conflict (especially destructive of human relationships) with those of a different framework. More curious still, as with freemasonry, are the curious dynamics regarding access to roles within priesthoods of the opposite gender.

It is appropriate to argue that the quality of understanding of relationships offered by religion is therefore totally inadequate to the challenge of the psychodynamics of 21st century society. By extension it might be argued that religion, as with many other current belief systems, continues to reinforce inadequate (if not primitive) understanding of the challenging relationship with any "Other" -- namely with those who are different or who disagree. This is currently exemplified by the simplistic, Stone Age, response to those selectively framed and labelled as "terrorists".

It is therefore interesting to explore whether richer insights into such subtle relationships are to be found in the structure and dynamics of DNA -- especially given the manner in which they are at the root of the reproductive capacity of the human race. Do the challenges of "DNA damage" and "DNA repair" (noted above) offer insights into those of damaged human relationships and the possibilities of repairing them? Note however, as stressed above, that any such insights relate to the subtle, hidden, experiential nature of such relationships -- to which the arts can but allude. The doctrinal account, especially as elaborated authoritatively by men, is but one mode of knowing that typically -- if not necessarily -- misrepresents or deforms understanding of another. As emphasized above, it is in the
complementarity between these modes of knowing that lies the stairwell of affinities offering access to subtler patterns of relationship.

It is ironic that in this period of crisis for humanity the knowledge and opportunity of genetic engineering and “biotech” have been recognized:

- Is it possible that the knowledge will offer relevant insight into a vital and more appropriate “science of human relationships”?
- Beyond the self-interested psyops of the superpowers and the advertising industry, is it possible that an analogue to genetic engineering will offer new approaches to repairing the kinds relationships that are otherwise recognized as likely to engender ever more bloody conflicts?
- That new understandings of the nature of possible “union” may be possible? (cf Dynamic Reframing of “Union”: implications for the coherence of knowledge, social organization and personal identity, 2007)

Such a “prefigurative” capacity has been well argued by Jacques Attali (Noise: the political economy of music, 1977/1985) in relation to music. He suggests that the patterns of psychosocial organization characteristic of the 20th century were prefigured and sustained by those of the music of the 19th century. This suggested that the patterns of organization characteristic of the music of the 20th century would be fundamental to the psychosocial organization of the 21st century (Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations, 2007). From this perspective there is a fatal irony to the use of Beethoven’s Ode to Joy as the anthem of an institutional Europe. This has been deliberately institutionalized (at the time of writing) without democratic consultation, in a period when the Eurovision Song Contest was won through a democratic process, by a demonically garbed heavy metal rock group (cf A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic? 2006).

Continuation in: Part B: Archetypal otherness: "DNA vs. I Ching"

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