



laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

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Framing the Global Future by Ignoring Alternatives unfreezing categories as a vital necessity

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Produced on the occasion of the [G20 Summit](#) (London, April 2009)

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Images as indicators

In preparation for the much-heralded, key meeting of the [G20 Group](#) in London (March 2009), two striking images were produced. The negatives are reproduced below:

- The *Financial Times* identified a set of 50 people "whose position, skills and contacts allow them to define the debate over what should happen" (*Fifty who will frame a way forward*, 11 March 2009)
- The meeting of the *G-20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors* (Horsham, 15 March 2009) gave rise to a [communiqué](#) that will be the key text for the discussions at the [G20 Summit](#) (London, 2 April 2009)

Fifty who will frame a way forward
Financial Times, 11 March 2009



G-20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors
Horsham, 15 March 2009



What is so striking about these images? Both have the traditional predominance of "white males". But to clarify further, of the 50 identified by the *Financial Times*, 5 are women (blurred out in white). Of the 46 present at the G20 Finance Meeting, 2 are women (blurred out in black). This treatment might have been rendered even more striking by blurring out the women using white, and the "non-whites" using black.

Despite the confusion and obfuscation over who actually had any responsibility for the financial crisis and the management of its evolution, there is a significant consensus that a failure of regulatory overview has been a key factor. It is therefore reasonable to ask:

- what proportion of those identified in either image were complicit in some way in this regulatory failure?

- with what capacities and new insights will those so involved be responding to the challenge of the crisis of the financial system -- and the credibility crunch with which it is now associated?
- what proportion of the global population are not "white males" -- but have had their livelihoods and future security rendered highly problematic by the those who have failed in their regulatory capacity?
- how is it that the insights of non-males -- presumably some 50% of the world population -- are represented by only 7% of those identified in the above images?

The focus of the argument here is not on the questionable representation of "non-whites" and "women" -- old issues as yet unresolved -- as with the proportion of women in national parliaments, of which the above situation is a reflection ([Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in National Parliaments*, 2009](#)).

Failure to consider a spectrum of alternatives

The concern here is rather to refer to these images as dramatic indicators of **a failure to bring new insights to bear upon a global challenge** which will affect "white", "non-white", "male" and "female" -- whilst ensuring the presence of many who were complicit in the emergence of the crisis.

Given the striking failure of many indicated in the images -- and the skewed participation in the above selections -- **with what confidence can it be assumed that an appropriate range of alternatives will be under consideration** for the G20 Summit or in any efforts to "frame a way forward"? What information is there on the alternatives that have been designed out of consideration?

Given that there is every expectation that social unrest will increase as the predicted effects of the crisis affect households and livelihoods worldwide, how prudent is it to exclude discussion of a comprehensive range of alternatives? Clearly any failure of remedies as currently envisaged will then be appropriately placed directly at the door of those who have had the arrogance to assume that they alone know best what to do -- having failed to exhibit that insight with respect to their responsibility for the emergence of the crisis.

How irresponsible is it to bring to bear on the challenge what some will consider to be the same mindset as ensured an inadequate response to the emerging challenge? **Is global governance locked into a highly dangerous pattern of tunnel vision and groupthink?**

Alternatives?

Indeed what are the alternatives that have been considered inappropriate? Why are they not articulated on the G20 website -- with clarification as to why they are indeed inappropriate? Would this not be of assistance to all concerned -- especially if those finally recommended prove to be inadequate?

How significant is the inadequate representation of insights from those marginalized by the process? Indeed is designing out the perspectives of women and "non-whites" symptomatic of **an underlying pattern of designing out insights distinct from those that led to the crisis of the financial system?** Why are alternatives considered to be so threatening as to be excluded from a discussion in which new thinking is in extremely short supply?

Part of the difficulty is again highlighted, if only as an example, by the role of women in relation to the financial system and world governance. This is explored in some detail in [Symptoms of denial: gender and the underside of meetings](#) (2009) as part of an exploration of [Engaging with Globality](#). **Is the absence of discussion of "alternatives" at summits as appropriately indicated as the effacement of the women from the above images?**

Is this treatment of the perspective of women to be considered as were the canaries in the coal mines -- as indicators of the threat of a dangerous explosion? Faced with disaster, **in the absence of insightful new thinking, should not every effort be made to draw on the full range of potential insights** -- rather than depending on the dangers of more of the same?

What level of crisis is required to make it evident that "global" governance -- adequate to the crisis -- calls for a form of "framing" enriched by alternatives, rather than impoverished by dangerously oversimplistic remedies?

Curiously a "frame", as with the frame that might be used for the above images, is typically a two-dimensional construct -- as are the "plans" vainly formulated to encompass the three-dimensionality of the "globe". This challenge of cognitive geometry is summarized ([Metaphorical Geometry in Quest of Globality: in response to global governance challenges](#), 2009). This is itself a summary of a more detailed commentary on the governance challenges and possibilities ([Engaging with Globality -- through cognitive lines, circlets, crowns or holes](#), 2009).

Is it possible that such "framing" has many of the regrettable characteristics of "in-the-box" thinking? Will the G20 gathering offer any indication of "out-of-the-box" thinking whatsoever? Will there be anything new on offer -- perhaps commensurate with the advanced technical innovation associated with the financial derivatives that triggered the subprime crisis? That such innovation is unlikely is indicated by a commentary in the *Financial Times* by Alan Beattie ([Panic buttons for future use](#), 12 March 2009) in response to the question "Why did no one see this coming?":

As policymakers from the Group of 20 leading developed and emerging economies struggle to combat the immediate effects of the crisis with fiscal stimulus packages and financial bail-outs, their forthcoming summit will also look at designing early warning systems to spot new disasters.

The problem, experts warn, is that, like much of the G20's agenda, it is a question of implementation rather than technical improvement. It is not just that any attempt to design such a system inevitably misses crises that do happen and falsely predicts

crises that do not, but that policymakers tend either to ignore such warnings or try to suppress them so they are not made public.

So no technical improvement -- more of the same? No insightful questions to detect the issues that are not being addressed? Just make sure that opinions contrary to the received wisdom -- that engendered the crisis -- are not effectively represented?

Unfreezing categories ?

If the emerging implications of the financial crisis -- and the highly constrained manner in which responses are being "framed" -- are to be taken seriously, then new questions should be asked. This is especially the case if the UK has now decided to indulge in "quantitative easing" as an emergency remedy. Aside from the constipatory connotations, such printing of money may be understood as the printing of promises -- at a time when the credibility of any promises is severely reduced. Is it possible that the financial "unfreezing" so desperately sought implies the need for a more generic unfreezing of categories? This challenge may indeed be exemplified by the manner in which women are "frozen out of meetings" regarding a global future -- as discussed separately in *Symptoms of denial: gender and the underside of meetings* (2009) as part of an exploration of *Engaging with Globality*.

What other questions might then be asked with respect to global governance, such as:

- what vital questions are not being asked?
- what inappropriate assumptions are still being made?
- why are more appropriate questions not being asked?
- who has a vested interest in not asking them, and why?

For example, with respect to the categories (and their associated crises):

- **Jobs (employment / work):** This is already recognized as becoming extremely problematic (*Alain de Botton, The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work*, 2009). Why is it that these categories are not explored to determine whether they have been inappropriately "frozen"? Any remedy to current and expected economic woes may call for unfreezing conventional understanding of what is a "job" and what is "work" -- and when someone is "employed". At present, as so clearly expressed by Alain de Botton:

We invest so much in our work emotionally that unemployment is a particular calamity, for to be out of a job means not only a financial loss, but also a loss of identity, meaning and esteem. To be out of work means, quite literally, to be a nobody: one is what one does.

An obvious example has been the treatment of the "work" associated with housework, notably as undertaken by women. The vast amount of "work" done "in the black", is not considered "work" -- and the people who engage in it are considered "unemployed", and may even collect "unemployment benefits". An associated irony is that any accident contributes directly to GDP through the "work" of the services involved. But any creativity or self-improvement initiative is not considered "work" unless it is remunerated -- possibly using "quantitatively eased" funds. The production of this text is not defined as "work".

Perhaps especially perverse is any gathering of out-work (formerly) high-flying executives and managers -- seeking advice on "how to get a job". There is no question that any such assembly has all the skills -- or does it -- to create an enterprise in which they and others could be engaged. In fact each would probably be happier to compete successfully with the others to "get" any job that was created by others.

Is there therefore a case for a more flexible approach to this central notion of economics -- given that the current approach would appear to be especially economical regarding the truth of the matter? More problematic still is that it has been widely remarked that "unemployment" is variously defined for political purposes in support of the policies of the government in power. Categories of "unemployed" are carefully included or excluded to improve the image of those policies within official statistics. Given this existing creative accounting flexibility, perhaps such freedom to reframe what is "unemployment" could be more creatively extended to defining what constitutes "work" -- if only to honour those who do "work", as with housework, without that work being minimally acknowledged. This would allow the "work" of subsistence farmers to be acknowledged -- and their productivity recognized. As it is official statistics regarding "labour" are as illusory as has been the financial system. (cf *Being Employed by the Future Reframing the Immediate Challenge of Sustainable Community*, 1996; *Sustainable Lifestyles and the Future of Work Learnings from "The Employment Dilemma and the Future of Work"*, 1996; *Sustainable Occupation beyond the "Economic" Rationale: reframing "employment", "non-profit-making" and "voluntary" in a context of increasing "unemployment" and failure of "social safety nets"*, 1998)

- **Resolutions:** The intention to act as it emerges within global governance typically takes the form of "resolutions". It is well-recognized that few such resolutions result in the intended action -- unless they are non-controversial and tokenistic. They therefore tend to be defined as "without teeth". Again, typically, regulatory authorities intended to implement such resolutions are then recognized to be "toothless". The situation is similar at the national level -- especially with respect to promises in election manifestos on the basis of which people are encouraged to vote. As with the process of "printing money" (as government "promises to pay"), it could be argued that the generation of resolutions at international gatherings has long anticipated government decisions to "print money" or "promissory notes". Resolutions are thus to be understood as "printed promises" -- with a similarly problematic prospect of actual delivery on promises whether as "interest" or "dividend"..

Is there a case for revisiting assumptions associated with the formulation of "resolutions" and electoral "promises" -- as vehicles

for "values" -- to determine whether they are designed in ways to reflect appropriately the hopes projected onto them? Is it possible that a more generic understanding of instruments of value (whether monetary or not) could be recognized? As it stands it can be argued the trillions of dollars of public debt in the system of financial values is effectively matched by trillions of words of carefully articulated promises reflecting non-financial values (extant in an equally "virtual" manner in the global system). It is tempting to detect parallels between junk bonds or "worthless shares" (as with the pre-revolutionary [defaulted Russian bonds](#)) and resolutions of intergovernmental conferences dating back over decades. What "value" is to be attached to [Agenda 21](#) (1992), to its [Kyoto Protocol](#) (1999), or even to the [Millennium Development Goals](#) (2001), or to the many "conventions" produced by intergovernmental agencies over decades. To what extent are they indeed "worthless paper" as bearers of value? Similar questions might be asked of the resolutions generated over decades by international NGO conferences. Do they have any more value than the promissory notes printed with the "guarantee" of governments? Is such "paper" inflated in value -- and divorced from the "real world" -- in a manner analogous to the illusory financial bubble? Even more intriguing is the extent to which they represent value commitments in currencies of limited issue (analogous to [LETS: Local Exchange Trading Systems](#)) -- to the members of those bodies (cf [Human Values "Stock Market": investing in "shares" in a "value market" of fundamental principles](#), 2006)

- **Drugs:** At the time of writing, the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs is meeting to [review the effectiveness of drug control](#) (Vienna, March 2009). It is widely acknowledged that its policies have been a failure and that vast amounts of money are illegally associated with the production and use of drugs -- without "work" or by the "employment" of anyone. As with the operation of the financial system, it is an "illusory" economy. Much is made of the classification of this or that drug and of their negative consequences -- many of which contribute directly to GDP through the services involved. Little attention is paid to other "substances" or "activities" which might also be considered to be "drugs" within a larger framework. Alcohol is the most obvious example; coffee might be considered another. Increasingly videogames and analogous activities might be seen as "drugs" -- again without any implication that those playing them for hours at a time are engaged in any form of "work". Defined as the "opium of the people", religion -- through the practice of prayer -- might also be seen as a "drug".

What would be the consequence and scope of reframing what constitutes a "drug" -- in order to recognize a spectrum, or continuum, of modes through which individuals distract themselves? Whether such distraction is to be considered socially dysfunction, as with alcohol or videogames, is another matter meriting a more healthy debate.

- **Health:** There is widespread despair at the failure to respond effectively to the health of the most impoverished -- even in the most developed countries. Promises continue to be made in this respect -- as with the WHO/UNICEF slogan "Health for All by the Year 2000" ([Global Strategy for Health for All by the Year 2000](#)). On the other hand, many questions are now asked regarding whether the privileged are actually as "healthy" as might otherwise be assumed. The issue of obesity is an example, as with the consequences of the polluted environment in which people live. To this may be added what is being recognized as an epidemic of depression and a problematic need for carers for an increasingly aging population. Health problems of course contribute directly to GDP through the services involved in responding to them -- often curiously anxious that remedial services should be provided by those whose activities are not defined as "work". In these senses, health too has an "illusory" quality that calls for new questions.

What would be the consequence of reframing what constitutes "health", "disease" and remedial measures -- especially where approved health delivery continues to be more than inadequate? More controversial, in the absence of adequate remedies to "ill-health" of any kind, how should "drugs" then be framed, especially when they relieve physical pain or existential pain?

- **Safety:** There is now an increasingly invasive preoccupation with "safety" seemingly designed on the assumption that individuals are decreasingly responsible for their own safety in many situations. This is exemplified by the fencing off of any areas involving a drop of more than a few metres -- whether cliff tops, bridges, or tops of buildings. Preoccupation with safety has been externalized. The individual increasingly has the right to sue relevant authorities for a paving stone out of alignment which then resulted in a fall. Many wilderness areas cannot be visited without signing a legal release note.

What would be the consequence of reframing "safety" as primarily a personal responsibility and only secondarily a collective responsibility?

- **Death:** As an extension of the attitude to health and safety, the situation in which people die is increasingly undignified in the extreme -- especially for the elderly lacking relatives, or the terminally ill, even in the most developed countries. Again however, it is in the last months prior to death that people contribute most to GDP -- through any services that are called into play, especially if the person is in a "vegetative state" for years. At the same time the means of causing the death of others have become ever more sophisticated through the development of weapons -- notably those for "mass" destruction. Ironically, even accompanying a terminally ill person to a location where euthanasia is legal may well be criminalized -- as with the ongoing debate relating to abortion. Despite the considerable sophistication of many disciplines, on the problematic reliance on interrogation techniques, it is assumed that it is impossible to determine whether an individual is acting responsibly with respect to death, whether in their own case or on behalf of others.

What would be the consequence of reframing "death" more flexibly to include not only present suffering but that in the future -- notably arising from failure to inhibit the birth of many when every available indicator confirms the inadequacy of resources to sustain them in a dignified manner? Is it a case of including in such a reframing a richer understanding of responsibility for death and associated suffering arising from the irresponsibility of those inhibiting such explorations? Just as engendering progeny is

considered a fundamental human right, at what point does the right to die at the moment of one's choosing become a fundamental human right -- especially for members of an ageing population? More controversially, at a time when some are pursuing ever longer lifespans, even immortality of some kind, how can death be reframed in a healthier manner as essential to the viability of environmental system increasingly stretched to sustain such numbers?

- **Population:** A wide range of problems reaching crisis proportions are clearly directly aggravated by the exponential increase in the world population: food, shelter, water, health, education, pollution, energy, etc. As with the current focus on "climate change" a seemingly deliberate effort is made to avoid reference to this systemic link -- if only to justify the relevance of excluding its consideration. This exemplifies the worst of scientific complicity in its relation to policy-making. (*Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge: incommunicability of fundamentally inconvenient truth*, 2008; *Climate Change and the Elephant in the Living Room*, 2008). The argument has been presented by those most complicit in sustaining the disastrous financial bubble -- now burst -- that population stabilization will result as a consequence of development. Is this too to be considered a dangerously illusory bubble of hope -- yet to burst? Perhaps more sinister is the dependence of economic development on what may yet prove to have been a vast Ponzi scheme -- namely the continuing exponential increase in the world population, precisely in order to ensure the manpower and markets for "growth", however unsustainable and however relatively impoverished those at the margins.

What would be the consequence of unfreezing the exploration of population issues to ensure the basis for a healthier system?

- **Energy:** There are increasing concerns about energy supplies for the future, especially in the light of their relationship to global warming. It is curious however how "energy" is defined in a very particular way -- whether derived from fossil fuels, nuclear power, or renewable resources (solar, hydro, wind, geothermal). As with the narrow framing of "work" by economists, "energy" does not include the kind of "people power" that is brought to bear in the event of any crisis when utility systems fail. The "non-work" of economists typically involves a considerable amount of energy. This is in fact implicit in the term "manpower", except that in the evaluation of "energy" resources no such "power" exists -- even when it is paid for. On the other hand, as under forced labour conditions, many major construction projects have only proven possible by use of such "fictitious" power. This would again suggest that some kind of illusion is being sustained by current framings of the energy challenge -- a bubble which may dramatically burst when "people power" responds destructively to inadequate global governance.

Again this suggests a need for unfreezing understandings of "energy" -- especially if it may prove necessary to depend on a wider spectrum of "energy" when conventional "energy" systems fail (cf *Reframing Sustainable Sources of Energy for the Future: the vital role of psychosocial variants*, 2006).

- **Extremism:** It is curious that the originally narrow focus on "terrorism" has been broadened to include a notion of "extremism". Neither term is adequately defined and authorities are increasingly free to act against activities framed as "extremism" using "anti-terrorist" legislation. Whilst the merits of the involuntary experience of "terror" caused by others are highly questionable, "terrorism" is defined in such a way as to exclude many forms of such "terror" -- if not the most common forms (*Varieties of Terrorism: extended to the experience of the terrorized*, 2004). Exposure to dangerous driving, street violence, or domestic violence is a relatively common experience -- far more common than the action of "terrorists". The deaths caused by the latter are statistically far lower than in the former case. In developed countries there are probably more deaths from school shootings than from "terrorists". Any yet those causing "terror" in this way, or in institutional intimidation in schools, workplace the army, or prisons are not deemed to be "terrorists". Similar arguments can be made with respect to "extremism" -- even more problematic in that many choose voluntarily to expose themselves to risk, most notably in extreme sports (*Norms in the Global Struggle against Extremism "rooting for" normalization vs. "rooting out" extremism?* 2005). More striking in relation to the cause of the financial crisis is the extreme risk-taking in which financial institutions (and individuals engaged) -- currently in process of being rewarded, rather than indicted for "extremism" and the loss of livelihood and homes of millions (*Extreme Financial Risk-taking as Extremism*, 2009)

Is there therefore a case for a healthy review of "extremism" to determine the level of risk at which people can choose to function or expose to others? To what extent are some policies currently promoted as options for global governance to be considered "extremism" -- or likely to be so considered by the future, if there is anything to be learnt from current evaluation of recent government complicity in enabling the financial crisis?

- **Property:** Aside from the continuing bloody conflicts over conflicting claims to physical territory, it is becoming increasingly apparent that knowledge which could be a key to the response to global crises may be effectively unavailable (due to security classification) or locked (by copyright or patent legislation). As with the initiative of a private individual in making use of a corporately owned bus to drive to safety refugees in the Hurricane Katrina disaster, such initiative may lead to legal action by the owners of the vehicle. The situation has become much more complex through the manner in which property has been reframed in an electronic environment, notably one in which property can be shared in many more fluid ways -- as with various **open source** initiatives, often by-passing conventional approaches to property rights (cf **Creative Commons** licensing initiative). There is also the curiosity of ownership of property in virtual worlds.

There is the possibility that a global knowledge society could be effectively held to ransom by holders of copyright on certain forms of intellectual property to which they claim (*Future Coping Strategies: beyond the constraints of proprietary metaphors*, 1992).

The situation would seem to suggest the need for a more generic approach to unfreezing the notion of property -- exemplified by the challenge faced by hikers regarding "right of public way" or "right of access". More problematic is the lack of responsibility typically attached to the ownership of any form of property, especially when it is leased to others. The owners of patents to weapons components are currently no more responsible for the deaths they may cause than the manufacturers of the weapons using such patented knowledge (cf *From Patent Rights to Patent Responsibilities: obligations incumbent on owners and licensors of intellectual property*, 2007).

- **Education:** As with the failure to deliver promised "health for all", it has not proven possible to deliver "education" to all who supposedly have a right to it. Unfortunately the "education" that has not been effectively delivered is defined in a very formalistic manner. As some have argued, it is the "education" most beneficial for the kind of "employment" associated with the "work" on which economists focus to ensure "productivity". There is little reference to the kind of "education" that might be more appropriate to those for whom "employment" will not be available. Increasingly it is this "education" which those who have become over-qualified for any available "jobs" find that they lack -- even in the most developed countries. Presumably the proportion of people able to benefit from conventional "education" is likely to decrease.

What are the conceptual skills vital to survival in a social system that is liable to be increasingly chaotic? Do they combine some of the skills associated with survival training, "streetwise", radical entrepreneurship, and the like? What is the basic "cognitive toolkit" necessary for the future if the 3 R's cannot be effectively delivered? How should such a toolkit be disseminated -- perhaps by analogy with first aid kits and emergency kits? It is here that the role of sets of folk tales and teaching stories merits attention -- notably as a means of communicating more powerful metaphors that point to new modes of action, as argued separately (*Poetic Engagement with Afghanistan, Caucasus and Iran: an unexplored strategic opportunity?*, 2009).

- **Qualification:** The conventional focus on education is framed as essential in leading to "qualification" and "accreditation" through "recognized" institutions -- even when these are unable to offer these facilities to the degree required. Qualification is then directly related, even by statute, to certain categories of employment. This focus takes no account of the extent to which the viability of the socio-economic system is currently highly dependent on those not qualified through such processes. Notable examples where no qualification is obligatory are: politics, computer programming, information systems management, entrepreneurship, creative arts, sport, farming, and vehicle mechanics. In each such case, if any qualification is required by an employer, it is "natural talent" or demonstrable experience of having learnt "on the job" that counts. This is especially the case with the "self-employed". Perhaps most striking is the total lack of any requirement for "qualification" in sexual reproduction and parenting -- whatever education may be offered.

The argument is advanced by the accrediting institutions and associated professional bodies that qualification is essential to avoid potentially dangerous consequences. It is noteworthy that the financial crisis of 2008-2009 was brought about by the exceptionally qualified **quantitative analysts** that developed dubious techniques for the management of risks. A further example is the case of conventional medical education in relation to **complementary medicine**, with the latter framed as dangerously irresponsible and unproven. This argument takes little account of **medical malpractice** by the qualified, especially given the death rate from medical mistakes. Of the 2.5 million deaths annually in the USA, 225,000 are considered to be due to **medial errors**, with 42% of the population believing they had suffered from such an error. Accrediting bodies are therefore ill-equipped to argue objectively for qualification given their vested interest in protecting their own authority and reputation. Introducing a more fluid approach to recognition of skills would bypass the argument that talent is only currently recognized by such bodies to the extent that it is detectable through the criteria of pre-established qualification and accreditation procedures that reinforce their authority. In a much challenged society, the capacity to recognize relevant skills and unforeseen talents may prove vital to its survival.

- **Growth:** Economic growth has been upheld as central to development and fundamental to the process of globalization. This narrow and unquestionable focus has obscured recognition of other forms of "growth" and the manner in which they are interrelated, sustaining or undermining development as it is idealised. Irrespective of the increases in temperature with which it is associated, or the growth in demand for non-renewable resources, economic growth engenders a level of production of waste which is proving increasingly difficult to recycle or absorb. As framed, economic growth is dependent on the growth in population in order to sustain demand for production, under conditions in which it is proving increasingly difficult to meet those demands -- as the economic crisis based on this understanding is now demonstrating.

There would appear to be a case for generalizing the understanding of growth in order to encompass its functional and dysfunctional forms in a more systemic manner. Of greater interest, now that the potential of dematerialization has been recognized in relation to economic products, is more fruitful insight into the processes and limitations of growth in knowledge. This is especially relevant in the light of the challenges of dissemination of knowledge under conditions of ever increasing information overload -- effectively ensuring the ever increasing growth in ignorance in a society of growing complexity that is dependent on the appropriate utilization of knowledge. How is a complex system to be comprehended and governed when its viability may depend on less growth, generically understood, rather than more?

- **Corruption and Crime:** The above examples of frozen understandings of categories evoke in practice a range of strategies for bypassing and breaking such constraints. At best this may be reframed as "innovation". At worst it may take some form of exploitation to the deliberate disadvantage of others. More problematic is when people are obliged to bend rules and detect loopholes in order to survive and develop. If categories are conventionally understood as closed containers for significance, such

initiatives effectively manipulate and transform their topology into the many complex shapes with which mathematicians are familiar -- most simply as knots but possibly as paradoxical structures exemplified by the [Klein bottle](#) offering other understandings of identity (*Intercourse with Globality through Enacting a Klein bottle*, 2009). The increasing proportion of the population incarcerated, even in the USA, is an indication of the challenge to handling rule-breaking. The tolerance of rule-breaking -- tax avoidance, breach of promise, cheating, etc -- highlights the central role that this process plays, even whilst the viability of frozen categories is proclaimed.

With the economic consequences of the global financial crisis yet fully to manifest, the estimate at the time of writing that some 50 million have been forced out of work suggests that people will be forced to find other modes of surviving -- as with those who have never had "jobs". Will their innovative responses then constitute "crime" or "corruption"? Most curious is the fact that few, if any, of those implicated and complicit in engendering the financial crisis are considered to have committed any "crime" or engaged in "corrupt" practices. They are even rewarded for legal execution of their contracts and conformity to the policies of their institutions. At what point would the "legality" of their contracts and behaviour be called into question: 100 million, 1 billion, 500 billion jobless? To what extent is the violence of their economic "crimes" against society to be framed as subject to the structures against "terrorism" (*Extreme Financial Risk-taking as Extremism -- subject to anti-terrorism legislation?* 2009)?

The general point to be made in each case is that categories are not written in stone and for all time. As with the constant massaging of the definition of "unemployment" for political convenience, categories can be considered more "plastic". Such a possibility is the focus of the international, transdisciplinary network [Plasticities Sciences Arts](#) (PSA), namely new fields of interaction between sciences, arts and humanities -- founded on both knowledge and human experience. Plasticity is considered to be the basic principle underlying the organization of any life form, art or idea -- as most recently articulated by Eric Combet (*From the concept of plasticity to the plasticity of the concept, Plastir*, 2009, 14). Of course, within this metaphor, it is appropriate to ask whether categories as conventional understood are presented in a suitably "plastified" manner to ensure their durability.

The financial crisis and its economic consequences suggests that the institutions of global governance run the danger of defining themselves as guardians and curators of "category museums". More is required by the nature of the crisis and the challenge of the future.

Opening possibilities for maneuver in seemingly blocked contexts

Responses to situations created by a number of the categories above arouse despair at the immense challenge involved -- as with "unemployment" and the search for "jobs". This might however be explored as a binary trap engendered by binary logic -- an inappropriately learnt response. Such an approach could be contrasted with that highlighted from Eastern cultures by Kinhide Mushakoji (*Global Issues and Interparadigmatic Dialogue; essays on multipolar politics*, 1988) in the form of a quadrilemma, rather than a dilemma.

- Having A ("got-a-job")
- Without A, namely Not-A ("no-job")
- Both having A and not-having A, namely A-and-Not-A ("both having-a-job and not-having-a-job")
- Neither having A nor not-having A, namely Neither-A-nor-Not-A ("neither having-a-job nor not-having-a-job")

It is the last two modes, and the set as a whole, that are suggestive of further insight. A binary response to such a possibility is readily framed as "irrelevant" rather than "relevant" -- without any room for maneuver. The possibilities may perhaps be illustrated experientially by the examples in the following table.

	Binary logic		Poorly explored alternatives	
	A ("good")	not-A ("bad")	A and not-A ("good" and "bad")	neither A nor not-A (neither "good" nor "bad")
weather	sun ("good weather")	rain ("bad weather")	sun and rain	neither sun nor rain
ethics	no-corruption	corruption	no-corruption and corruption	neither corruption nor no- corruption
competition	winning	losing	winning and losing	neither winning nor losing
self-esteem	aggrandisement	deprecation	aggrandisement and deprecation	neither aggrandisement nor deprecation
happiness	happiness	unhappiness	happiness and unhappiness	neither happiness nor unhappiness
love	in love	no love/unloved	loving and unloved	neither loved (loving) nor unloved
enlightenment	enlightened	unenlightened	enlightened and unenlightened	neither enlightened nor unenlightened

It is the last two columns, typically a matter of common experiential insight, which are suggestive of a richer approach to "unfreezing" the categories above. For example:

- **weather:** much that is appreciated in the experience of nature is associated with "dappled" conditions of light and shade, of the interplay between sun and rain in mist. The first two columns then represent extremes that obscure such subtler experiences
- **ethics:** in many societies where "corruption" is endemic, it is the experience associated with the last two columns which offers flexibility -- even a safety net otherwise unavailable where there is "no-corruption". Those experiences may be a valued characteristic of networking, connections, obligations, "collecting markers", "accumulating brownie points", and the like. As with

"commissions", they may be framed without cynicism as "gracing the occasion". Simplistic efforts to "eliminate" corruption do not then respond to the organic processes of those societies and "corruption-free" processes may be ill-equipped to sustain them.

- **competition:** in an effort to bypass the negative experience of "losing", an argument has been made for the exploration of "win-win" strategies (Hazel Henderson, *Building a Win-Win World: life beyond global economic warfare*, 1996). Joseph Stiglitz (*Stiglitz: Obama's Win-Win-Lose Plan Obama's Ersatz Capitalism*, *The Economist*, 2 April 2009) however comments that the remedy proposed by the USA is one of "the banks win, investors win -- and taxpayers lose". It is however intriguing that much is made of the last two columns, notably in relation to the Olympic Spirit or more generally to enjoying any game. A narrow pursuit of "win-win" would seem to be in defiance of ecological sustainability which necessitates that members of every species end up as "another species' lunch". Those columns highlight the conditions under which people "win" by "losing" or "lose" by "winning" - often only to recognize this after the event.
- **self-esteem:** this situation is usefully compared with the previous one. Indeed it is not well recognized how commitments by individuals, groups or countries to self-aggrandisement, maybe highly counterproductive. if only in the longer term. It is the subtleties of the "soft-power" attitudes associated with the last two columns that is then merits the learning that may emerge.
- **happiness:** this case has been separately explored (*Happiness and Unhappiness through Naysign and Nescience: comprehending the essence of sustainability?* 2008)
- **love:** much of the arts is an exploration of the experience and challenges of the last two columns -- with which many are very familiar (or statistically destined to become so).
- **enlightenment:** any life commitment to becoming enlightened, in reaction to the condition of unenlightenment, leads to recognition of the reality and significance of the experience of the last two columns -- notably in apophatic discourse and thinking (*Being What You Want: problematic kataphatic identity vs. potential of apophatic identity?* 2008). The associated ambiguities are explored elsewhere (*Enlightening Endarkenment: selected web resources on the challenge to comprehension*, 2005).

The obsession with a binary approach to strategic options would seem to inhibit recognition of the spectrum of alternatives associated with the further two columns, and possibly more (*Discovering Richer Patterns of Comprehension to Reframe Polarization*, 1998). Especially interesting is the manner in which strategies associated with the first two columns engage in a process of demonisation of each other:

- mainstream demonising "alternatives" and "alternatives" demonising "mainstream"
- "right-wing" demonising "left-wing" in politics, just as "left-wing" demonises "right-wing"

This process of demonisation lends itself to reframing through musical metaphor (*All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre reframing global strategic discord through polyphony?* 2007). The relation between the columns, especially the last two, is typically explored through various understandings of ambiguity (William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 1930). It might be argued that the relation between initiatives associated with either of the first two columns is concerned with "impact" on the other -- an unfortunate quasi-military metaphor (*Enhancing Sustainable Development Strategies through Avoidance of Military Metaphors*, 1998; *Conversion of Strategic Bullets into Global Accomplishment: clues to a crowning initiative based on effective partnerships*, 2009)

Whilst the limited numeracy of some indigenous tribes is deprecated ("one", "two", "many"), the future may be equally scathing in its regard for such an obsessive binary strategic focus at the present time. There tends to be an experiential progression from the first column (identification with *A*), to the encounter with another (*not-A*), to an understanding of the co-existence of both (*A and not-A*), to a recognition of significance beyond either (*neither A nor not-A*). This then, through a form of **imprinting**, is reframed as "*A*" -- at a higher level of abstraction -- as yet unchallenged by the potential emergence of a "*not-A*". Again this highlights the merits of the "unsaying" of **apophatic discourse**.

As discussed with respect to happiness (*Happiness and Unhappiness through Naysign and Nescience: comprehending the essence of sustainability?* 2008), it is possibly the cyclic configuration of the four columns that is significant to the dynamics of learning under complex conditions, especially over a more extended period of time. This would seem to involve a process of enantiodromia, namely cyclic transformation through the opposite (*Psychosocial Energy from Polarization within a Cyclic Pattern of Enantiodromia*, 2007; *Patterns of Alternation: toward an enantiomorphic policy*, 1995).



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