



laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

30th December 2003 | Draft

The Isdom of the Wisdom Society

Embodying time as the heartland of humanity

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Produced on the occasion of the UN [World Summit on the Information Society](#) (Geneva, 2003) in celebration of insights beyond those of the "information society" and of the "knowledge society" [See also website of [Union of the Whys](#) (2007)]

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Introduction

Many studies explore the importance of the distinctions in the sequence from "data", through "information", then on to "knowledge", and finally to "wisdom" [more]. At each stage there is a much-studied challenge of "management" (as in "information management" and "knowledge management"). Arguments are also made for the importance of a corresponding "information society" or of a "knowledge society" -- perhaps expressed as a "knowledge-based society". But clearly it is easiest to argue the case for an "information" focus, especially to hardware, software and information vendors -- hence the title of the UN [World Summit on the Information Society](#). It is more challenging to make a case for a "knowledge society", especially since "knowledge management" is in process of being disparaged as a fad term lacking any real content -- notably in those corporate environments that claim to practice it. And yet it is precisely the transfer of knowledge, in the form of "know-how" that has been a preoccupation of the United Nations over many development decades.

But, as Margaret Mead is reported to have declared on a memorable occasion: "We know all we need to know". The problem is that "we" do not know how to fit it together into a meaningfully communicable pattern which could catalyze appropriate action. As a philosopher, Mary Midgley (*Wisdom, Information and Wonder: what is knowledge for?* 1989) asks the question:

"In what sense is a thing known if five hundred people each know one constituent of it and nobody knows the whole? Or again; what if this truth has a thousand constituents and half of them are not known to anyone, but only stored in libraries? What if all of them only exist in libraries? Is it enough that somebody knows how to look them up if they should ever be needed? Indeed is it enough that this person should have access to a system which will look them up? Does the enquirer even have to understand the questions which these truths answer? (p. 6)

In fact there is no "we" with a shared awareness permitting coherent action. But as is noted on the cover of *The (Updated) Last Whole*

Earth Catalog (1974): "We can't put it together; it is together". It is wisdom that is called upon to respond to such dilemmas -- not knowledge.

The following is therefore a necessarily naive exercise in envisaging the nature of a "wisdom society" -- as distinct from the much-studied "knowledge society". It follows from an earlier paper (*Global Strategic Implications of the Unsaid: from myth-making towards a wisdom society*, 2003) which points to approaches (and web resources) of various groups envisaging a [wisdom society](#). The focus here is not on its desirability in principle or as an ideal, but rather on how it might already exist and function in reality -- for some at least. In this sense it is primarily speculative -- and perhaps essentially so. It is one thing to extol the archetype of an Arthurian Roundtable, for example, but it is another matter to consider the dynamics of such a group -- and what makes for its wisdom (with or without the presence of women).

Given the topic, the approach taken here is to emphasize, through hyperlinks, the existence of supportive or complementary arguments and resources.

Role of wisdom

"Wisdom" has an intriguing status in relation to "knowledge" and "information". This is especially so because of its traditional role in relation to governance. Whilst the highest levels of governance may be dependent on their information services, and the specialized knowledge of their experts, ultimately it is on the "wisdom" in making decisions when confronted with strategic dilemmas that the reputation (and survival) of a governor (or government) depends. Given his considerable experience in government, there is value to the distinctions made by Harlan Cleveland (Information As a Resource. *The Futurist* Dec. 1982: 34-39): Information is horizontal, knowledge is structured and hierarchical, and wisdom is organic and flexible.

As editor of a most valuable overview, R J Sternberg (*Wisdom: its nature, origins, and development*. 1990) indicates the relevance of wisdom in these terms:

It is hoped that research on wisdom will help to develop useful tools to assist world and national leaders in the increasingly complex problems facing humanity. Many crucial decisions, from nuclear waste to water use, face leaders and policy makers each day. Thus, wisdom is not simply for wise people or curious psychologists: it is for all people and the future of the world.

The role of wisdom has been well-positioned as a result of the dramatic intelligence failure associated with weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The quantity of **data** from electronic surveillance was enormous -- even larger quantities are now sought. This was selectively filtered into patterns of **information** that was subject to **knowledgable** interpretation -- about which many questions have been raised. But the final challenge for governance arose from the lack of **wisdom** with which this necessarily partial knowledge was used.

Nicholas Mawell (*From Knowledge to Wisdom: a revolution in the aims and methods of science*, 1984) argues that the radical, wasteful misdirection of academic effort is actually a central cause of the tragedy and dangers of the present era. For him:

Granted that enquiry has as its basic aim to help enhance the quality of human life, it is actually profoundly and damagingly irrational, unrigorous, for enquiry to give intellectual priority to the task of improving knowledge... [rather than to]... create and make available a rich store of vividly imagined and severely criticized possible actions, so that our capacity to act intelligently and humanely in reality is thereby enhanced. [p. 2]

For UNESCO, as the intergovernmental body mandated for information-related matters, it would appear that "wisdom" is subsumed under philosophy (that so lovingly studies it) -- or as the acknowledgement of the "wisdom" associated with indigenous knowledge, cultural expression, world religions, or "wise use" of resources. For the Director-General:

Philosophy, as the term signifies, is the love of wisdom. Regardless of its specific terminology in various cultures all over the world, *tetsugaku* in Japanese, indicating the discipline of wisdom, or in Arabic, *falsafa*, meaning science of wisdom, this act of thinking about thinking turns by definition around the fundamental concepts and ideas that lie at the heart of existence, both individual and collective. It is this act of philosophizing that is the lifeblood of philosophy. And it is precisely this act of reflection, of analysis, of questioning - whether of concepts that are taken for granted, ideas dulled by time, or long-established paradigms... (*Philosophy Day at UNESCO*, 21 November 2002)

But for the editors of participant interviews on the occasion of the UNESCO-sponsored 20th [World Congress of Philosophy](#) (Boston, 1998) (Michael Tobias, *et al. A Parliament of Minds: philosophy for a New Millennium*, 2000):

Why has philosophy failed its public? Like so much else in our society, it tried to become a speciality, a discourse only for experts. Yet it began life as the pursuit for the arch-generalist, the license to speculate in the most open an free manner. the dark narrowness of insistent explanation proved to be its downfall.

And yet the UNESCO 1998 *World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty First Century: Vision and Action* (Article 6d) indicates: "Ultimately, higher education should aim at the creation of a new society - non-violent and non-exploitative - consisting of highly cultivated, motivated and integrated individuals, inspired by love for humanity and guided by wisdom". As with other such secondary references to "wisdom", including those in the UN *Dialogue among Civilizations* (2000), it remains unclear what content is

implied or how any "guidance" is supposed to function in relation to governance.

And, with respect to "wisdom", the UNU's [Global Virtual University](#) (created in 2002) has only this to say:

Well-designed information facilitates the construction of knowledge. Knowledge in combination with experience may give sufficient wisdom to choose the right tools and resources to be able to "cross the bridge" from theory to practical implementation: a change in behaviour that entails a sustainable development. ([Global cooperation on e-learning: Background and pedagogical strategy](#))

It is not for nothing that appeal is occasionally made -- even in industrialized countries -- to "councils of the wise" (see [Development beyond Science to Wisdom: Facilitating the emergence of configurative understanding in Councils of the Wise](#), 1979). It is also a theme in speculative popular fiction as an imaginative attractor. The Club of Rome, and similar bodies, tend to perceive themselves as such. Various groups of "wisdom keepers" (possibly restricted to women) have been formed, notably in relation to the concerns and insights of indigenous peoples [[more](#) | [more](#)]. One such group met on the occasion of the 1992 Earth Summit. An International Council of Wise Women has been created and the creation of a World Council of Wise Women has been proposed.

The expression "Council of Wise Men" (or Group of Wise Men) continues to be used in contemporary society (notably in the UN, Commonwealth, OECD and EU systems) [[more](#) | [more](#)] -- despite its sexist bias, less obvious in some languages (eg *Conseil des Sages*) [[more](#)]. The Council of Europe uses the formula "Council of Wise Persons" (earlier "Council of Wise Men"). Other examples include:

- The transformation of the OAU into the African Union (2002-3) created a Peace and Security Council, modelled on the United Nations Security Council, and responsible for forming a Council of Wise Men (five person apolitical, but recognised for their moral authority), to direct the decisions. [[more](#)]
- It has been suggested with respect to the future evolution of African parliaments that: "Restoring the spirit of the council of wise men will lay the foundations for a genuine constitutional jurisdiction with popular support" (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 2000).
- Japan and Russia proposed in October 2003 to use the form to help resolve their differences [[more](#)]
- Where the UNIDROIT Principles address issues also covered by the UN Convention for Contracts on International Sale of Goods (CISG) and follow solutions found in that Convention, the supranational committee of experts constituted to devise those Principles "can be regarded as a council of 'wise men [and women]' " [[more](#)]
- An EU review of *Regulation of European Securities Markets* was undertaken by a the Group of Wise Men (Lamfalussy Group) and completed in February 2001 [[more](#)]
- In October 1999, European Commission President Romano Prodi ordered three of his most senior advisers - the so-called panel of wise men - to report on options for radical reforms to the EU's institutions as it prepares to almost double in size over the next decade [[more](#)].
- The [Institut für Friedens- und Bewusstseinsbildung](#) (Basel) argues that the world needs a council of wise men and women who are capable of representing the interests of all humankind as a unified entity and articulates its structure and operations in unusual detail (see Pierre and Catherine Brunner Dubey. *The World Council: A Council of Wise Men and Women*, 2002)
- Establishment in 2002-3 of the International Ethical, Political and Scientific Collegium as a "group of wise persons", a new institution bringing together (in the common search for the benefit of humanity) actors in the public sphere, researchers and creators ready to listen to civil society and "who accept the difficult merger of the quest for truth, beauty and justice with the exacting standards that all forms of responsibility embody" [[more](#)]
- On the occasion of the 3rd Summit of the Americas (Quebec City, 2001) on the social and economic integration in the Americas, the Hemispheric Social Alliance (HSA) organized a parallel 2nd Peoples' Summit which included a 300-person "Council of Wise Women" [[more](#)]
- On the occasion of an Africa Court of Women (Nairobi, 1999), a final session "heard the voices of the Council of Wise Women, the members of the jury" [[more](#)]
- Organized by the Gorbachev Foundation, the first annual State of the World Forum (San Francisco, 1995) had a selected "council of the wise" (or "global brain trust") indicated that "the wisdom distilled by all faiths" must determine the values needed to guide the world into the 21st Century, namely that familiar terms must be redefined to fit the new global perspective -- and the old beliefs and political systems must be abandoned.
- In Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, he has a council of wise men and women to guide his ideal state.
- Amongst the Aztecs, the Council of Wise Men was usually composed of the greatest warriors and wisest priests, themselves elected by their local "calpullis".
- In North America, the nations of native peoples maintained a council of wise men

Interestingly UNESCO, despite its mandate, appears no longer to use the form -- perhaps because of the male bias. In the UNESCO *Report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty first Century* chaired by Jacques Delors ([Learning: the treasure within](#), 1996) the notion of wisdom appears only in the final phrase of his introduction, despite this statement reporting on its first session in 1991:

The worldwide issues forming the background to the Commission's thinking prompted the fundamental question whether education could purport to be universal. Could it by itself, as a historical factor, create a universal language that would make it possible to overcome a number of contradictions, respond to a number of challenges and, despite their diversity, convey a message to all the inhabitants of the world? In this language which, ideally, would be accessible to everybody and in which the maxims and views of the West would no longer be preponderant, all the world's wisdom and the wealth of its civilizations and cultures would be expressed in an immediately comprehensible form. [[more](#)]

Echoing Margaret Mead, one member of the UNESCO Commission, Karan Singh makes the point:

It is not that we lack the intellectual or economic resources to tackle the problems. Scientific breakthroughs and technological ingenuity have given us the capacity to overcome all those challenges, but what is missing is the wisdom and compassion to apply them creatively. Knowledge is expanding but wisdom languishes. The yawning chasm will need to be bridged before the end of the century if we are ever to reverse the present trend towards disaster and it is here that education in the broadest sense of the term assumes such vital importance. [\[more\]](#)

No guidelines appear to exist regarding the functioning of such councils to elicit most effectively the collective wisdom of their wise participants. It is unclear how the emergence of "wisdom" is recognized in such groups -- or whether the pronouncements of participants are simply accepted as "wise" because of the selection process. There appear to be no indicators or criteria to assist in the recognition of wisdom although, for UNESCO, this is not the case with respect to "wise practices" in dealing with resources (see *Characteristics of Wise Practices* 1999-2002; *Wise practice criteria as an international instrument*, 1999) -- although the distinction from the more widely used "best practices" is unclear. Where are the responses to the challenge articulated by Julia Atkin: "What are the powerful ideas and processes captured in human wisdom that form the basis for, and enable lifelong learning?" (*Reconceptualising the Curriculum for the Knowledge Era*, 1999)

On the other hand there are many who offer "wisdom" -- notably in "schools of wisdom" -- or who are "keepers" of it. It is also a traditional role of wise people. The wise are unfortunately much challenged in practice when called upon to make available that wisdom - or to reconcile their views in response to any collective challenge faced by governance.

Unexplainable nature of wisdom

The distinctions between data, information and knowledge are increasingly problematic as is to be seen in efforts to give content to "knowledge management". It is perhaps helpful to see the sequence as a progression from more objective to more subjective -- namely an increasing dependence on judgement, cognitive ability, experience and the capacity for synthesis (see *Evaluating Synthesis Initiatives and their Sustaining Dialogues*, 2000). Whilst software can be provided to manage information, those packages designed in support of "knowledge management" are far more dependent on the knowledgability of the user. Similarly, whilst data and information can be readily explained, this becomes more of a challenge in the case of knowledge. This is exemplified in the case of appropriately ordered information on a food recipe. Although the recipe may be followed, it is only in the light of the knowledge acquired through past learning and experience that there is any guarantee that the result will be tasty.

Again, whilst data and information can be sold and inherited as property, this is not the case with respect to knowledge. The latter is the attribute of a knower who knows how to make use of information -- as is evident in the "art" of wine-making. As an art, it is only to a limited degree that it may be learnt from books or websites.

In this light, it might be said with respect to wisdom that, because of the degree of subjectivity involved, it does **not** lend itself to explanation. Nor can it be inherited. In fact the term "explanation" points to the challenge. Essentially wisdom is distinct from the geometrical perspectives suggested by possibilities of "ex-plan-ation" -- as a perspective over the "plane" of knowledge (perhaps understood as a gridwork of category pigeonholes). It might usefully be said that it is more intimately related to the properties of space-time -- notably because of its recognizably timeless quality. Wisdom tends not to be time-bound. A valuable summary of current thinking is provided by Helena Marchand (*Overview of the psychology of wisdom*).

There are of course many books of wisdom appreciated for the inspiration that they offer. As noted above, there may be wisdom schools and people of wisdom. It could be argued that what they can successfully communicate is information and knowledge -- pointing however to a mode of understanding to which they can only allude through parable and paradox. Wisdom has more to do with the quality of knowing and understanding -- and not the content. It is a higher order of knowing -- begging the question of what ordering might make for "higher" -- or whether that spatial metaphor is appropriate or misleading. It might be described as knowing how to know -- with the emphasis on a quality of discernment (as suggested by Peter Russell) largely absent from conventional knowing.

"Isdom" -- the locus of wisdom?

The suggestion above -- that wisdom is uniquely related to the properties of space-time -- frames a question as to the locus of wisdom and of the quality of knowing with which it is associated.

In what follows the suggestion is that this may be fruitfully explored in relation to the quality of understanding in the present moment -- the *Spirit of Now*, as articulated by Peter Russell (*The Global Brain*, 1983; *The White Hole in Time: Our Future Evolution and the Meaning of Now*, 1992). This theme has been explored in earlier papers (see *Presenting the Future*, 2001; *Present Moment Research: exploration of nowness*, 2001; *Composing and Engendering the Future*, 2001)

Paradoxically, as one might expect with respect to a "timeless" quality, its uniqueness derives from a way of "being in the present". This focus on the present is echoed in many sources of wisdom -- as the key to appropriate action in the more extended framework of space and time. Its proximity is for example stressed in various religions. Judaism and Islam recognize that the separation between Heaven and Hell is but a "hair's breadth" -- echoed by Zen in the acknowledgement that the separation between enlightenment and ignorance is again just one "hair's breadth".

It is for this reason that -- playfully -- it is suggested here that the domain of wisdom might usefully be recognized as "Isdom". This

might be seen as corresponding to terms such as "Kingdom", "Dukedom" or "Fiefdom" -- except that the focus is on the domain of "is-ness" in the present. The suffix "dom", deriving from domain and dominion, has connotations that include:

- the highest taxonomic category in biological classification ranking above that of "kingdom"
- a sphere of knowledge, influence, or activity
- the set of elements to which a mathematical or logical variable is limited; specifically: the set on which a function is defined (Note that an "integral domain" is a mathematical ring in which multiplication is commutative, which has a multiplicative identity element, and which contains no pair of nonzero elements whose product is zero)
- a realm or region in which something is dominant or holds a pre-eminent position

The domain, rather than emphasizing the **spatial** as is conventionally the case, here emphasizes the **temporal** -- as one in which the time dimension is pre-eminent -- a complex standing wave in time, for example. Additionally, however, given the intensity of the subjective focus, it might be considered to have echoes of the 6 "curled-up" dimensions of the 10-dimensional framework of string theory (see [Higher dimensionality as the prime characteristic of human consciousness?](#) 2003). In the spirit of [David Bohm](#) (*Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, 1980), it would then be associated in some special way with implicate order [[more](#) | [more](#)]. [Arthur Young](#) (*The Geometry of Meaning*, 1978) has explored a related view in terms of inverse time (1/T) rather than negative time (-T). Inverse time would then be very short -- eternity in an instant -- implying that:

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

As argued elsewhere ([Hyperspace Clues to the Psychology of the Pattern that Connects](#), 2003), the focus by cosmologists on Big-Bang type origins of the universe, to be eventually followed by a Big-Crunch collapse, suggests that:

From a psychological perspective this concept might be interpreted as an effort to project as far as possible from the present -- into the most inaccessibly distant past -- a "golden era" of integration. And as an effort to project into the inaccessibly distant future -- the possibility of re-integration. This may be consistent with the continuing depersonalized globalization of the world of material value according to a constrained logic -- as matched by the continuing collapse of individual spiritual life, forced to "curl up" into insignificance. It is perhaps no wonder that the importance of drugs and substance abuse is increasing explosively to offer individuals access to "knight's move thinking" ... with its more creative freedom of association.

But from a "psycho-spiritual" perspective, it is also interesting to speculate on the possibility that the "communication space" experienced by an individual is subject to an analogous explosive expansion at birth -- and to violent collapse at death. Or, even more intriguing, that such an analogous explosive expansion takes place in any significant moment of creativity in the life of an individual -- to be lost (or quashed) with any subsequent reversion to banality or loss of focus (or meditative concentration). This might accord with some existential and meditative experiences which -- as with many high-energy physical experiments -- would be difficult to demonstrate or replicate.

Any such significance in the moment derived from a Big-Crunch collapse could also be derived from the various doomsday scenarios currently foreseen for the current century for humanity and the planet -- including the temporal collapse explored by Peter Russell ([The White Hole in Time: Our Future Evolution and the Meaning of Now](#), 1992). Attention can be significantly focused if humanity is considered to be on Death Row (see also [Globalization of Death: a checklist](#), 2003). The imagination of death is a feature of religious studies, mythology and spiritual discipline.

Sustainable ecology of Isdom

Identified in this way, Isdom may appear spatially distant (or temporally unattainable) when the contrary is implied. Since, as argued, explanation is inappropriate, the challenge in what follows is to explore ways of providing a sense of the ecology of Isdom through which wisdom moves and has its being.

As the domain of the present moment -- the present instant -- Isdom is a place of being characterized by a quality of appreciating that moment, and sustaining that appreciation. It might be understood as the mode of expression and interaction in the instants before conventional exchanges occur. As such it resembles a kind of existential foreplay -- in part made of glances and understandings that are global in their quality -- an interplay of being. For example, one international event focused on *The Butterfly Effect* as the "coordinates of the moment before discovery" [[more](#)]. It is the sparkle on a pool -- or in a person's eyes (or those of any other animal).

The moment may be imbued with a sense of incipient knowing or of intuitive re-remembering -- of re-cognition. It may be understood through the anticipatory quality of "happening" -- a sense of *in potentia* -- as when encountering a significant other (perhaps for the first time). It is, for example, the instant before any process of falling in love -- "at first sight" -- namely before intentionality or action of any conventional kind.

As an encounter of being, such a momentary experience is necessarily evanescent to any "be-holder" -- and is not to be "be-held". It springs into being and disappears -- as with ancient memories and perfumes or a sense of *déjà vu*. The moment cannot be "caught" and "preserved". What may be captured is something else. As with the quality of being in the moment, it cannot be held onto -- although it may be danced with (see [Beyond Harassment of Reality and Grasping Future Possibilities: learnings from sexual harassment as a](#)

metaphor, 1996)

Perhaps the sustainability of the ecology of Isdom is best to be understood in terms of Gregory Bateson's "pattern that connects" (*Mind and Nature; a necessary unity*, 1979) (see also *Hyperspace Clues to the Psychology of the Pattern that Connects*, 2003; *Psychology of Sustainability: Embodying cyclic environmental processes*, 2002).

Isdom's quenching boundary

As a domain, Isdom is surrounded by what may be termed a "quenching" boundary. Its nature is "quenched" by any encounter with the cognitive "not-ness" of conventional understanding of space-time.

The metaphor of quenching derives from the research on nuclear fusion (in contrast with nuclear fission). This fusion process is dependent on plasma that can only exist under extreme conditions of temperature and pressure and is "quenched" when it comes into contact with the container in which the fusion reactions take place. Many decades of research have been devoted to the design of a container capable of containing plasma -- in order that nuclear fusion can take place as a prime source of energy for the future. The art has been to contain the plasma within a "magnetic bottle" such that magnetic field effects repel the plasma from any part of the encircling container wall. In the larger scheme of things, it is perhaps no coincidence that such research is now entering a new phase with the construction of ITER as a major international project to demonstrate the scientific and technological feasibility of fusion energy. This work on the "governance" of fusion processes essential to economic development may be as valuable as a metaphorical pointer to governance of psycho-social processes of sustainable development.

Understanding "plasma" as a quality of intensity, of attention, it might then be understood how the high energy "is-ness", characteristic of the state of being within Isdom, can readily be quenched by contact with any mundane cognition. Sustaining interaction within Isdom therefore calls for an analogous existential technology to maintain the detachment of being from that containing spatio-temporal world. This existential technology may be considered as having been identified in many spiritual disciplines (see *Navigating Alternative Conceptual Realities: clues to the dynamics of enacting new paradigms through movement*, 2002; *Psychology of Sustainability: Embodying cyclic environmental processes*, 2002)

It is useful to consider various efforts to capture and contain the essence of the moment of being:

- beauty may be admired, sought and acquired as a possession, only to discover that what is acquired is but a carrier for a quality that is not permanently attached to it
- culture / art, as a form of beauty, may be sought and acquired for its own sake -- perhaps with some expectation that the original qualities and creative insights that gave rise to it will rub off on the possessor
- theories, notably in the form of Theories of Everything, are sought as the ultimate instrument of conceptual control and of the creative moment from which they arise
- merit-worthy actions, are a prime objective, notably in some religions, as a means of improving subsequent chances of a "seat in heaven" or "release from the wheel of life" -- ignoring the release offered in the moment at which they were undertaken or the manner in which they may be negated through being sought as an objective
- honours / initiations, are sought and offered as a reward for achievement -- forgetting the dramatic contrast between the existential reality justifying a medal (such as heroism under fire) and the subsequent institutional efforts to appropriate this reality
- groups / hierarchies, may define themselves in such a way as to hold within their higher and inner reaches an essential quality that may be of purely symbolic significance, long dissociated from the existential reality that gave rise to such nested levels of realization
- performance / expression / mandalas
- parties / happenings may be treated as a context for celebrating being alive with all the confusion arising from the forms that happenings may take that may be but a pale reflection of that sense
- charisma / gurus may be sought as a means of directly experiencing an alternative reality in the moment -- without realizing that such external projection essentially undermines subsequent interior realization
- property, namely the possession of artefacts or qualities as in many of the above, establishes a relationship that negates the quality of being that is assumed to be held by that possession

Reification of the present

The previous argument may be considered in terms of the forms of reification of "is-ness". The recognition of physicists regarding the characteristic increase in entropy in the universe is paralleled by, and reflected in, what amounts to the increasing entropy of "is-ness" -- its reification into "is-not".

The sense of the present -- the Spirit of Now -- is ever-emergent, however. Hence the widespread appreciation of the fountain as a central symbol across cultures for the water of life -- and in the sense of a fountain of youth. It may be indicative of spiritual rejuvenation -- offering a sense of aliveness and invigoration. David DeMaris (*Dynamic Symbolism, Chaos, and Perception*, 1995) explores the nature of an invisible or virtual fountain.

What might then be the stages of reification as the quality of knowing in the moment "hardens" into objective reality -- passing through analogues to the states of matter (plasma -- gas -- liquid -- solid):

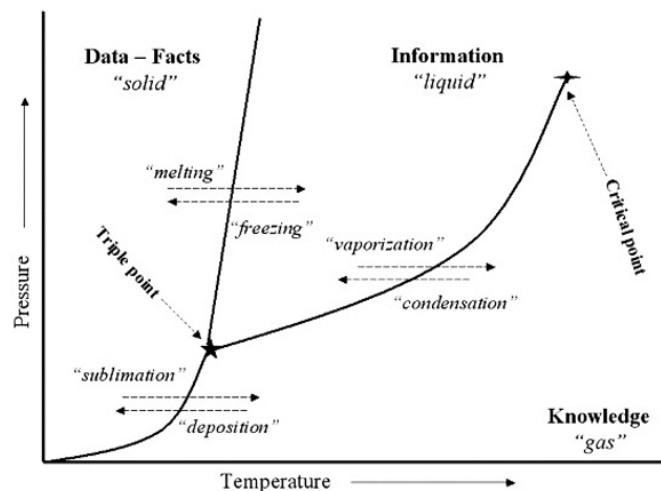
- *wisdom as a plasma stage?* This analogue is consistent with the often fiery quality of wisdom in the heat of creation through which structures are envisaged, formed and reformed
 - tingle within an individual / group
 - play like birdsong echoing -- resonant structures

- entrains in a dance -- birthing and rebirthing
- knowledge *as a gaseous stage*? This analogue is consistent with recognition of the "hot air" so often perceived to be characteristic of knowledgeable discussions ("up in the clouds")
 - categorization
 - relationships
 - associated pigeonholes -- pattern language
 - semantic web
 - patents
- information *as a liquid stage*? This analogue is consistent with the recognition of "information flows"
 - grid structure
 - data arrays
- data *as a solid stage*?
 - facts, data points

A possibly more fruitful metaphor than this linear sequence is that of a [phase diagram](#) such as that for water [\[more\]](#). This is a representation of the states of matter (solid, liquid, or gas) as a function of temperature and pressure. Lines separating the regions of space indicate the pressures and temperatures where phases can coexist and are in equilibrium with one another. Lines in the phase diagram may intersect at a point where solid, liquid, and gas all coexist -- a unique "triple point". Similarly a "critical point" may exist that is characterized by large fluctuations between the liquid and vapor states. Such diagrams are also used in describing the conditions of plasma -- understood as an ionized gas [\[more\]](#). Plasma is however characterized by much higher temperatures and pressures.

A highly simplified diagram of that type is adapted below to show the variety of relationships between the different forms of insight -- especially indicating that the transition from **data** to **knowledge** may not necessarily pass via **information**. It suggests possibilities for resolving definitional ambiguities associated with any assumed linear progression between them. As the extreme ionization of gas, plasma is not directly represented in the diagram (it would be far to the right). The diagram does however suggest possibilities of exploring the ionization metaphor in relation to knowledge -- and the corresponding implication of the bonds in the case of solids, liquids and non-ionized gases. The adaptation calls for a metaphoric equivalent to temperature and pressure -- which are both commonly used metaphorically in insight-related processes (eg "feeling the heat", "under pressure", etc).

Tentative adaptation of general phase diagram (for water) to suggest non-linear relationship between data -- information -- knowledge



Curves: Indicate the conditions of "temperature" and "pressure" under which equilibrium between different phases of insight can exist

Critical point: The "temperature" above which the gas cannot be liquefied no matter how much pressure is applied (the kinetic energy simply is too great for attractive forces to overcome, regardless of the applied "pressure")

Triple point: The particular condition of "temperature" and "pressure" where all three states are in equilibrium

NB: Phases may be subdivided into a complex pattern of sub-phases (exemplified by the variety of forms of ice as solid water) [\[more\]](#)

Of special interest are the implications for the transitions across the boundaries, such as sublimation (from data to knowledge) and deposition (from knowledge to data). The more tenuous bonds between elements of knowledge (corresponding metaphorically to atoms or molecules in a gaseous state) call for exploration in the light of implications of some equivalent to ionization. Aspects of this may be intuited in language used to describe the degree of "excitation" of a debate, whether academic or otherwise. Note that such excitation in an exciting meeting, for example, does not necessarily make for the conditions with which wisdom is associated. This may be more closely associated with the intensity of that excitation and how its focus and coherence can be sustained.

Another approach to this core experience of the moment is through what have long been termed "peak experiences". As one of the original authors to explore their significance through numerous books, [Colin Wilson](#) (starting with *The Outsider*, 1956) offers this description:

During these moments, the world seems renewed, revealing itself to be infinitely complex and beautiful in all its aspects. Sights which have been viewed a thousand times before suddenly seem rediscovered as if for the first time; the endless bounds of possibility open before oneself; everything is suddenly understood as being part of the song of the universe and one is filled with the desire to experience everything, building one's own bar of the music to a glorious crescendo. One greets the world with a child-like sense of wonderment. Routines and neuroses are banished and objects become categories no longer...a chair or a tree, for instance, but regain their existence in your eyes as real things with unique and complex characteristics. [more]

Wilson has been especially concerned by the decay of this experience into banality.

Emergence from Isdom

It is interesting to explore initiatives that might be considered emulations, recollections or commemorations in some way of the progressive emergence -- or reification -- of Isdom. This is most evident in the hierarchical structures cultivated by various groups.

Military (example)	Martial arts (example)	Masonic degrees (example)	Angelic hierarchies (example)	Initiations (example)
Generäle (Generalmajor, Generalleutnante, General, Generaloberst, General-feldmarschal)	10th dan	32. Master of the Royal Secret	Seraphim (<i>Seraphime</i> , Spirits of Love)	IX - The Refusal
	9th dan	31. Inspector Inquisitor		VIII - The Great Transition
	8th dan	30. Prince Kadosh Consistory	Cherubim (<i>Cherubime</i> , Spirits of Harmony)	VII - The Resurrection
Stabsoffiziere (Major, Oberst, Oberstleutnante)	7th dan	29. Scottish Knight of Saint Andrew	Thrones (<i>Thronos</i> , Spirits of Will)	VI - The Decision
Hauptmann (Captain)	6th dan	28. Knight of the Sun, or Prince Adept		V - The Revelation The Part which Energy Plays in
Leutnante (Lieutenant)	5th dan	27. Knight Commander	Dominions (<i>Kyriotetes</i> , Spirits of Wisdom)	Inducing Revelation The Place that the Will Plays in
	4th dan	26. Prince of Mercy		Inducing Revelation
Unteroffizier (Non Commissioned Officer)	3rd dan	25. Knight of the Brazen Serpent	Mights (<i>Dynamis</i> , (Spirits of Motion)	IV - The Great Renunciation or Crucifixion
Mannschaft (Soldat, Obersoldat, Gefreiter)	2nd dan	24. Prince of the Tabernacle	Powers (Authorities) (<i>Exusiai</i> (Elohim), Spirits of Form)	III - The Transfiguration
	1st dan	23. Chief of the Tabernacle		II - The Baptism in Jordan
		22. Knight of the Royal Ax, or Prince of Libanus	Principalities (Primal Beginnings) (<i>Archai</i> , Spirits of Personality)	I - The Birth at Bethlehem
		21. Noachite, or Prussian Knight	Archangels (<i>Archangeloi</i> , Spirits of Fire (Folk))	
		20. Master of the Symbolic Lodge	Angels (Messengers) (<i>Angeloi</i> , Sons of Life (or of Twilight))	
		19. Pontiff		
		18. Knight of the Rose Croix Council of Kadosh		
		17. Knight of the East and West		
		16. Prince of Jerusalem		
		15. Knight of the East		
		14. Perfect Elu Chapter of Rose Croix		
		13. Royal Arch of Solomon		
		12. Master Architect		
		11. Elu of the Twelve		
		10. Elu of the Fifteen		
		9. Elu of the Nine		
		8. Intendant of the Building		
		7. Provost and Judge		
		6. Intimate Secretary		
		5. Perfect Master		
		4. Secret Master		
		3. Master Mason		
		2. Fellowcraft		
		1. Entered Apprentice		

Much tends to be made about progress "up" such hierarchies and concerning the more profoundly integrative (if not holy) insights that that implies -- and the privileges that should necessarily follow from this emergence of insight. Mountain climbing is then a favoured metaphor (as in René Daumal. *Mount Analogue*, 1952). The assumption is one of progress from ignorance up to wisdom -- after many years of experience under the tutelage of the wise who have gone before. This ignores the implications of the Buddhist saying that "the seeker is that which is being sought". Furthermore, the implication that this is any form of progressive return to an initial insight that may have been accessible at any time in the reality of the moment -- possibly at any age -- is suppressed. This is the case despite calls to become "as a child" once more as the key to wisdom. The insight of T S Eliot's poem is transformed into an experience for the elderly alone, following appropriate tutelage:

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate*

When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning... (*Little Gidding V*)

For others, humanity awaits the *Externalization of the Hierarchy* through the *Reappearance of Christ* (possibly under other names that may pose problems for Christians) -- despite the centuries of highly problematic implementation of priestly wisdom as intermediaries for such spiritual hierarchies. Again the possibility that such externalization might be through recognition by each person of the wisdom inherent in the moment is set aside in favour of metaphors recalling the arrival of extraterrestrials on their spaceships in clouds of glory (offering up-beaming rapture technology) -- and led at its hierarchical peak by a positive archetypal counterpart to the ultimate malignant totalitarian dictator. This recalls, and encourages, a polarized mindset evident in imperial courts throughout the ages -- namely how to manoeuvre through the antechambers, past the various gatekeepers, to "get access" and "favours" from "on high". The pattern is currently evident in relation to any charismatic personality or guru. It is replicated in governmental bodies -- and in intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations and the European Commission.

Unfortunately alternative movements, despite their communication successes with networking, have not been able to elaborate and implement viable alternative models. As expressed by Naomi Klein with regard to the World Social Forum (*What Happened to the New Left? The Hijacking of the WSF*, January 2003):

How on earth did a gathering that was supposed to be a showcase for new grassroots movements become a celebration of men with a penchant for three-hour speeches about smashing the oligarchy?

Memories and projections of Isdom

If indeed Isdom is as "close" in space-time as is implied above, how are traces of its dynamics experienced?

It would seem that there is a tendency to articulate "memories" of the experience through cultural "memories" of an historical golden era. This may be delightfully refreshed for all ages by novels, and their movie representations, such as those of J R R Tolkien (*The Lord of the Rings*, *The Silmarillion*, etc) about "Middle Earth" and the timeless realms of the elves (see David Harvey. *The Song of Middle Earth: J R R Tolkien's themes, symbols and myths*. 1985). It might be useful to explore the ecology of such a mytho-poetic realm in comparison with the potential interactions represented in a phase diagram (see above).

Such novels, and the "memories" they evoke, may hold patterns of interaction reminiscent of Isdom -- especially including its problematic, shadowy dimensions (see *The "Dark Riders" of Social Change: a challenge for any Fellowship of the Ring*, 2002; also explored in the fiction of Stephen Donaldson: *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever*, 1993; *The Second Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever*, 1994). A page-1 newspaper headline (*Worldwide quest for the magic of Middle Earth*, *Guardian*, 20 December 2003) points to a recently launched an international study on why *The Lord of the Rings* is so popular -- which starts by asking participants: "Where, in your imagination, is Middle-earth?" [more].

These fictional explorations may serve to sustain and echo the archetypal insights of mytho-poetic folk legends in many cultures, notably those relating to elder "ancestral" races who "withdrew into the stones" -- or to those that may have been trapped therein, like Merlin and the proverbial geni in the bottle (see *Patterning Archetypal Templates of Emergent Order implications of diamond faceting for enlightening dialogue*, 2002).

A similar effect may be achieved by projection of the imagination into the future -- to a future golden era -- notably through science fiction. The pattern dynamics of Isdom may well be projected into special types of games -- as with Hermann Hesse's *Glass Bead Game* (and attempts at its concretization) or M A Foster's *Gameplayers of Zan* (1977). Such games have also been developed to guide and sustain life in alternative communities (as with Findhorn's *Transformation Game* and Damanhur's *Game of Life*). More generally it might be argued that some interactive games over the web are efforts to explore the dynamics of such psychic attractors. Through exercising the imagination they offer a reflection and resonance with the quality of being in the present offered by Isdom.

A more tragic possibility lies in the increasing recognition that some indigenous peoples have held to beliefs consonant with the existence of an inner realm of greater reality to them than the more secondary solid physical world that conventional thinking holds to be primary -- despite recent advances in physics. Indigenous groups holding to this primary inner reality have included the Muisca people (Colombia) ravaged by the Spanish in search of an Eldorado that may have been essentially mystical [more] (see also the many examples presented in Darrell Posey (Ed.): *Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity*, 2000)

Another catalyst for recollection of Isdom is the sense some have of there being a lost language which articulated interpersonal dynamics in highly integrative ways which we can now but vaguely intuit (see Umberto Eco. *The Search for the Perfect Language*, 1995. and *The Dream of a Perfect Language*, 1996). Tolkien, Hesse and Foster play on this through the languages they describe. There is also a whole movement to construct new languages with desirable attributes [more].

There is also the possibility that certain devices, like rosaries, have an ability to catalyze such integrative recollection (see *Designing Cultural Rosaries and Meaning Malas to Sustain Associations within the Pattern that Connects*, 2000). One flavour of this is suggested by the title of a book of poems by Antonio de Nicolas (*Remembering the God to Come*, 1988)

Perhaps the person who did most historically to render Isdom into an accessible reality is Marsilio Ficino (see *Composing the Present Moment: celebrating the insights of Marsilio Ficino*, 2001) through his concern with "natural magic" and ensuring that decor in all its senses served to reflect and resonate with such inner dynamics (see Thomas Moore. *Planets Within: The Astrological Psychology of Marsilio Ficino*, 1990). This accords well with the recent work of the Imagination Lab (above). It is echoed in William Blake's classic comment as a poet: "And at length they pronounced that the Gods had orderd such things. Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the

human breast." (*In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790)

But the concern here is the manner in which the essential quality of Isdom is quenched (see above) by projection of its experiential reality onto cognitive screens which are effectively a denial of its nature -- even though the pattern of that reality may be traced out on such screens. The argument here -- following the tale of Plato's Cave -- is that they readily run the risk of being but pale analogues. This may be particularly tragic for those who are unable to sustain themselves through "Project Logic" (see *Knowledge Gardening through Music: patterns of coherence for future African management as an alternative to Project Logic*, 2000)

Dynamics of Isdom

There is every reason to believe that "networking" as practiced does indeed hide important insights into the nature of the wisdom processes within Isdom. It is unfortunate that as a metaphor it has been downgraded to be synonymous in many cases with a phone call or (old boy) clubbing. It is sad that it is only the intelligence services that take "networks" seriously and proceed to use the mathematical techniques of social network analysis in order to discover their creative and controlling centres -- as a means of infiltrating them or "taking them out".

It is therefore useful to explore further the implications of the plasma metaphor of nuclear fusion as it can be used for insights into social change and transformation. The interesting parallel here with a plasma container is that of the alchemical vessel or flask whose symbolism was the subject of extensive exploration by C G Jung (*Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy* (The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Volume 14)) . Jung viewed it as a container for interior work (see, for example, Adam McLean. *The Alchemical Vessel as Symbol of the Soul*). As noted by John Fraim:

One of the key works Jung based *Mysterium* on was an alchemical text titled *Rosarium philosophorum*. This text consists of a series of symbolic pictures which are reproduced in the Edinger book [*The Mystery of the Coniunctio*]. The pictures represent the Rosarium Cycle or a sequence of psychological events that repeat themselves over and over. They are cycles. As Edinger remarks, they are meant to illustrate the events going on inside the alchemical flask or the containing vessel. Edinger notes that the alchemical vessel symbolizes three different psychological contexts: 1) a process within an individual 2) a process between two people and 3) a process within a group or community, a collective process. The "vessel" that contains them needs to be defined when looking at the Rosarium pictures. The sequential stages of the pictures are the following: The Mandala Fountain; Emergence of Opposites; Stripped for Action; Descent into the Bath; Union, Manifestation of the Mystery; In the Tomb; Separation of Soul and Body; Gideon's Dew Drops from the Cloud; Reunion of the Soul and Body; Resurrection of the United Eternal Body.

Whilst Jung and his followers have almost exclusively focused on the transformations of the individual, there is a valuable resonance between such "inner" transformations and those which they evoke, sustain and render recognizable in the "external" social context. The question is what reflections arising from the "inner" dynamics are suggestive of "external" dynamics that might sustain alternative processes vital to the viability of alternative social movements? The isolation of any cognitive vessel is highlighted by the statement of philosopher Marjorie Grene: "The philosopher's room is a chamber that's sealed. All the doors are shut firmly against reality? It's this self-contained game. and an awful lot of it has no connection with anything" (in Michael Tobias, *et al. A Parliament of Minds: philosophy for a New Millennium*, 2000, p. xvii).

The challenge of alchemical reflections by depth psychologists is that they have a strong tendency to emphasize the duration of such processes -- implying years of personal exploration and therapeutic assistance. Jungians have, as yet, little to offer groups (see *Thoughts on "Psyche at Work": Implications of Jungian analysis for social groups*, 1992). In this sense they deny the reality of the moment in which the essential processes of Isdom take place. As with nuclear fusion there is a vital temporal focus to be embodied in the understandings suggested. In a sense the projection over time *in extenso* is a counter-productive distraction where the challenge is effectively "*in intenso*" -- as with nuclear fusion.

It is for such reasons that the bridge established by physicist F David Peat (*Alchemical Transformation: Consciousness and matter, form and information*, 1997) between the vessels of alchemical processes and those of nuclear fusion is of potential interest.

The psychologist Carl Jung gave us the image of the alchemical vessel in which processes of sublimation and purification take place. Psychotherapy provides this same kind of containment whereby a person's tensions and paradoxes are contained within the therapeutic hour, charges with such energy that they may eventually give way to active transformation. Within the alchemical vessel there's no resolution of paradox and opposition, no compromise, no simple order that ties in between. Rather, a transcendental functions required which moves beyond the limits inherent in different positions by creating new domains. But for this to happen it is necessary to have a period, and a means, of active containment. Even nuclear fusion requires the hot plasma to be contained long enough for fusion reactions to take place....

Most dramatically, form appears in the guise of the wave function. It is the global form of the wave function (symmetric or antisymmetric) that is responsible for the existence of Fermi-Dirac or Bose-Einstein statistics. The fact that such forms are non-factorizable (into spatially independent components) is the deep reason for quantum non-locality (Bell's mysterious correlation between distant particles). The global form of the wave function is ultimately responsible for collective modes in physics-plasma, superfluid, superconductor and hypothetical Frochlich systems. The form of the wave function orchestrates each of an astronomical number of particles into a highly coordinated dance.

There is a surprising resemblance between the "wiring" patterns of the magnetic "bottles" required to contain plasma for nuclear fusion

and that of the transformation pathways between the 64 hexagrams of the *I Ching* (the *Book of Changes*) (see [diagram](#); also [Sacralization of Hyperlink Geometry](#), 1997). Such a diagram is highly suggestive of a container -- which in the taoist tradition would be understood as a container for *ch'i* (see the work of biochemist [Ralph G H Siu](#): *The Tao of Science: an essay on Western knowledge and Eastern wisdom*, 1957; *The Man of Many Qualities; a legacy of the I Ching*, 1968; *Ch'i: a neo-taoist approach to life*, 1974). The last of these is an effort to deal with the nature of time. It has been suggested that the significance of *ch'i* may be intuited as a perpetual "confluence of Time, Light and Life" -- supporting self-healing practices such as *T'ai Ch'i Chuan* that originated as an internal martial art.

There would appear to be some possibility that the many Chinese articulations of understanding of the conditions and movement of *ch'i* could offer much greater detailed understanding of the dynamics of Isdom -- especially since the classics that are the focus of such studies (*I Ching* and *Tao Te Ching*) are exemplars of books of wisdom. For example, the long-explored relationship to the [magic squares](#) of number theory suggests the possibilities of relating such insights to the insights of physicists into hyperspace and associated explorations of the physics of consciousness (see [Hyperspace Clues to the Psychology of the Pattern that Connects in the light of the 81 Tao Te Ching Insights](#), 2003). Susantha Goonatilake (*Toward a Global Science: mining civilizational knowledge*, 1999) has suggested that it is Asian cultural metaphors that will drive research in the coming century (see [Enhancing the Quality of Knowing through Integration of East-West metaphors](#), 2000).

Now-time of Isdom

Much is made speculatively of the first few seconds at the beginnings of the universe -- and of the millions of years of evolution since then. Much is made of the emptiness of space at the subatomic level -- and of the millions of kilometers of empty space between astronomical objects. Very little is made of the moments of time -- the fractions of a second -- in which awareness moves before any engagement in action or speech. And yet anecdotes abound on the capacity to review a whole life in such periods when faced with death. Or the astounding ability to recognize and respond to danger in that period -- as in the martial arts. Or the ability to fall in love. Just as subatomic space is "spacious", are such moments "time-full" in some way -- offering aeons of time for the dynamics of awareness?

Studies based on the work of C P Fulford and S Zhang (*Perceptions of interaction*, 1993) have shown that learners have the cognitive capacity to process speech at twice the rate at which a lecturer speaks [[more](#)]. It has been recently determined, with untrained volunteers, that it takes around 300 milliseconds to begin to understand a pictured object. A further 250 to 450 milliseconds is required to fully comprehend what it is. This suggests that the "total speed of thought" is between 550 and 750 milliseconds ([Hopkins Scientists Clock The Speed Of Comprehension](#), 28 May 1998) [[more](#)]. These figures ignore the kinds of speeds associated with some jugglers and players of musical instruments, such as the piano [[more](#) | [more](#) | [more](#) | [more](#)].

For a meditator the perspective may also be quite different as described by José Argüelles (*A Treatise on Time Viewed from Its Own Dimension*) watching the flow of thoughts with panoramic view, an awareness of time within non-conceptual space:

"With practice one can begin to see the current of thoughts and the ego attachments and recognize that no thought is more or less important than any other. One can come to distinguish that there is actually "space" between thoughts. This space between thoughts is the original unobstructed nature of mind. To experience this space is to taste the essence of now-ness. In the space of now there is no history, no ordinary time, no ego, no beginning and no end. Because one learns to see without concepts"

Other possibilities are indicated from a Chinese *qigong* perspective, according to Yan Xin ([Scientific Qigong Research](#), 1999):

Physics teaches us that the speed of light is the fastest velocity at which one may transmit material, energy, and information. Are there any material phenomena that can travel faster than the speed of light? From a *qigong* perspective, it seems very possible. But what kind of energy can make such a speed possible? This is difficult to assess. At the moment, modern scientific means still cannot discover or practically measure such an energy form. It is likely that the speed of thought is faster than the speed of light, but how can this be measured? How can this phenomenon be captured? Cultivating this space is called "cultivating clear seeing."

In 1996 the [Long Now Foundation](#) was established to develop clock and "library" projects as well as to become the seed of a very long term cultural institution. For them progress lately is too often measured on a "faster/cheaper" scale. The Foundation seeks to promote "slower/better" thinking and to foster creativity in the framework of the next 10,000 years. In contrast, with respect to Isdom, the suggestion here is that there is scope and merit in establishing a "Short Now Foundation" for thinking that will break through the "faster/cheaper" barrier -- but in the direction of instantaneousness.

There is indeed a "superficial" dimension to now-thinking (see Kato Hidetoshi. [Global Instantaneousness and Instant Globalism](#), 1992; [[more](#)]) perhaps first identified as a "blip culture" by Alvin Toffler -- and now a characteristic of instantaneousness in warfare and simultaneity in economics [[more](#) | [more](#)]. It was Martin Heidegger who not only described the "abolition of distance" as a constitutive feature of the contemporary condition -- now characteristic of globalization -- but who linked recent shifts in spatial experience to no less fundamental alterations in the temporality of human activity [[more](#)].

Dwain W. Higginbotham ([How the Universe Works](#)) makes the point that "90 percent or more of the 'stuff' of the universe, is dominated by quantum weirdness, has instantaneousness as a common thread, and has no dimensions, and is everywhere in the background of the material/spatial aspect".

Conventional thinking about instaneity obscures the kind of thinking notably explored by meditators or inventors ("a flash of insight"). For example: "Instantaneousness is a fundamental quality of psychic energy, but people have been accustomed to suppose that lengthy thought is the strongest. In such a way they lose sight of the fact that time is not needed for thought" [[more](#)]. What has been termed

cosmic consciousness is characterized by its instantaneousness: "The instantaneousness of the illumination is one of its most striking features. It can be compared to a dazzling flash of lightning in a dark night, bringing the landscape which had been hidden into clear view" [more]. It may also be characteristic of the religious conversion experience [more].

It is perhaps Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (*Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 1990; *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*; *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, 1996) who has helped most to give credibility to the dynamics of Isdom. He is renowned as the architect of the notion of flow in creativity -- people enter a flow state when they are fully absorbed in activity during which they lose their sense of time and have feelings of great satisfaction. He describes flow as "being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost." [more]

There is however relatively little information on "flow in groups" -- despite Csikszentmihalyi's work (*Flow in Sports: the keys to optimal experience and performance*, 1999). But this work, together with that of C Mainemelis (*When the muse takes it all: A model for the experience of timelessness in organizations*, 2001), have been suggestive in exploring "collective virtuosity" (see Mark Marotto, Johan Roos and Bart Victor. *Collective Virtuosity: The Aesthetic Experience in Groups Working Paper 2002-6*), namely the ethical and aesthetical aspects of social interaction in groups, extending such notions of timelessness, "flow" and job crafting beyond the individual level. As a focus of the work of the [Imagination Lab](#), "collective virtuosity" emphasizes the need to educate the imagination -- so critical to the ability of the alternative community at [Damanhur](#) to explore time travel (see *Renaissance Zones: experimenting with the intentional significance of the Damanhur community*, 2003).

The Imagination Lab study offers many further clues to the dynamics of Isdom, notably stressing the role of authenticity:

...ethics is about practicing who you are in the moment. The emphasis on the moment is related to the immediacy of authenticity....For a group to have collective virtuosity, the members must experience each other aesthetically....People that experience authenticity of others are challenged, and often inspired. this spark of transformation is the motor behind the recursive process and virtuous circle that is collective virtuosity. Authenticity leads to dynamic tensions between people. There is a rhythm of constant interaction, even conflicts that arise in the immediate moment of authentic exchange. Since it is not planned and controlled, there is a natural ebb and flow to the way people interact and co-create with each other. Such synchronization of activities is known as temporal patterning.

On authenticity, see also *Evoking Authenticity: through polyhedral global configuration of local paradoxes* 2003; *Authentic Grokking: Emergence of Homo conjugens*, 2003; Martin Buber. *I and Thou*, 1970.

Wisdom of Isdom

How then to envisage the wisdom of Isdom?

The Imagination Lab study does an excellent job of pointing to the practical learnings from the interactive dynamics associated with jazz improvisation in groups (a theme of studies by others, notably John Kao. *Jamming: The Art and Discipline of Business Creativity*. Ken Kamoche, Miguel Pina e Cunha *Minimal structures: From jazz improvisation to product innovation*. *Organization Studies*, Sept-Oct, 2001):

Jazz, as the exemplification of aesthetic awareness of the other combined with an ethic of authenticity, has been proposed as a model for a pluralistic and multicultural world (Welsh, 1999). The open musical conversations, intense exchange and respect for the other musicians inherent in jazz is a metaphor for how people of vastly different faiths and backgrounds can interrelate and create community together.

This strongly suggests that collective wisdom has much to do with how people "play" together -- a ludic quality (cf Johan Huizinga. *Homo Ludens*, 1950). For the individual it would then be a question of how indeed the individual "played" with insights and perceptions and of whether there were more fruitful ways of playing with them (see *Enhancing the Quality of Knowing through Integration of East-West metaphors*, 2000). There is a vast distinction between trivial play and that to which Hermann Hesse alludes (*Magister Ludi: the Glass Bead Game*, 1946). Johan Roos and Bart Victor even see strategy making as serious play (*Towards a Model of Strategy Making as Serious Play*, 1999) and have franchised a process for business strategy to bring the creativity, the exuberance, and the inspiration of play to the serious concerns of adults in the business world. (*The Science of LEGO SERIOUS PLAY*)

Whatever the leads from jazz however, much remains to be discovered about how (and under what conditions) this "play" engenders "wise" strategic action in the face of dilemmas typical of the world as it is framed today. It is perhaps here that the games noted earlier, whether real or imagined, are indicative of dynamic support structures of emergent insight. But much may depend on how the games are effectively internalized by the players -- rather than being purely external exercises in skill and virtuosity. Humour may also be vital to such play -- as implied by the Zen and Taoist concerns with crazy wisdom.

It is in this sense that wisdom is then to a high degree **in the process** of co-creation itself -- **not in the product** thereof. It is in the process of interweaving and interplay that builds, sustains and explores associations -- well-modelled in some respects by the improvisation of jazz. The contrast has also been stressed in the process of poetry-making of which any poem produced may offer only faint echoes (*Poetry-making and Policy-making: Arranging a Marriage between Beauty and the Beast*, 1993)

Aspects of these questions in relation to "practical wisdom" have been explored in a most valuable way by Matt Statler, Johan Roos and Bart Victor of the Imagination Lab (*Dear Prudence: an essay on practical wisdom in strategy making*). They take as their point of

departure the Aristotelian concept of prudence as practical wisdom:

According to Aristotle, practical wisdom involves the virtuous capacity to make decisions and take actions that promote the 'good life' for the 'polis'. We explore contemporary interpretations of this concept in literature streams adjacent to strategy and determine that practical wisdom can be developed by engaging in interpretative dialogue and aesthetically-rich experience. With these elements in view, we re-frame strategy processes as occasions to develop the human capacity for practical wisdom.... We then re-cast the importance of strategy processes as an occasion to develop the practical wisdom required to take appropriate action in situations when decision factors are clouded by ambiguity and uncertainty....

To recapitulate: practical wisdom is not science because it deals with unpredictable, dynamic aspects of human social life. On the other hand, it does not refer to the kind of clever intelligence that enables people to survive or achieve advantage through cunning. Instead, it refers to the capacity to make judgments and take actions that are good. Following the arguments outlined above, a process-oriented notion of the ethical 'good' appears necessarily to involve creative processes of dialogue and interpretation. With this definition of the 'good' in mind, our guiding question concerning ontology and intentionality leads us to inquire how practical wisdom might be developed among strategists. Interestingly, our answer to this question is one that has been offered throughout the Western tradition, but which has surfaced only recently and somewhat on the margins of the mainstream strategy literature. In this section of the essay, we explore aesthetically-rich experience as a category of activity through which strategists may become more practically wise.

Wisdom imbued with aesthetic qualities may then be associated with the "pattern that connects" and with bridging between cognitive incommensurables as an exemplification of the ecology of which they are expressions. It is thus the essence of that cognitive diversity that is capable of sustaining appreciation of cultural and biological diversity and ensuring strategies for its appropriate management. As such, metaphor plays a key role as a transdisciplinary vehicle vital to strategic thinking (*Metaphors as Transdisciplinary Vehicles of the Future*, 1991). As suggested elsewhere (*Metaphor as an Unexplored Catalytic Language for Global Governance*, 1993):

It is not that traditional policy models are ineffective or inadequate. The difficulty is rather in the incompatibility of models, however useful in different specialized domains, and the resulting weaknesses which emerge in any supposedly integrated strategy. Suspicion concerning integrative models has become a wise precaution.

Beyond any structural modifications, the key to the success of future strategies appears to lie in the imaginative manner in which valid, but seemingly incompatible, initiatives are woven together. The challenge is highlighted by the absence of models adequate to the reconciliation of "centralized" and "market" economic strategies in the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe. There are no available models because the challenge to the imagination transcends the world of model builders by which strategies have been so influenced. It could be concluded that new possibilities for global governance are to be found beyond the strategic incompatibilities in which visions of its future tend to become entangled.

It is metaphors which provide the imagination with "keystones" to balance the tensions between tendencies which, without such integrative elements, would appear incompatible. World governance in this sense is a question of "imagination building" rather than "institution building".

Governance at the highest level should therefore focus attention on the emergence and movement of policy-relevant metaphors -- that are capable of rendering comprehensible the way forward through complex windows of opportunity. The challenge lies in marrying new metaphors to models to ensure the embodiment of new levels of insight in appropriate organizational form.

The more concrete implications for governance are explored elsewhere (see *Coherent Policy-making Beyond the Information Barrier*, 1999).

Being otherwise in Isdom

The reference above to "crazy wisdom" suggests that -- in addition to humour -- the frame of reference within Isdom needs to be understood as fundamentally "otherwise" (*Being Other Wise: dynamics of a meaningfully sustainable lifestyle*, 1998). The role of humour in response to political and other adversity is well-recognized (cf Patrick Rorke. *The Wisdom of Adversity*, 1945; Victor S.M. de Guinzbourg. *Wit and Wisdom of the United Nations: Proverbs and Apothegms on Diplomacy*, 1961), notably through the Noble Prize of the Association for the Promotion of Humour in International Affairs.

The contrast with conventional thinking is perhaps most succinctly demonstrated by physicists' own need for "craziness". This is illustrated by the much-quoted statement by Niels Bohr in response to Wolfgang Pauli: "We are all agreed that your theory is crazy. The question which divides us is whether it is crazy enough to have a chance of being correct. My own feeling is that is not crazy enough." To that Freeman Dyson added:

"When a great innovation appears, it will almost certainly be in a muddled, incomplete and confusing form. To the discoverer, himself, it will be only half understood; to everyone else, it will be a mystery. For any speculation which does not at first glance look crazy, there is no hope!" (Innovation in Physics, *Scientific American*, 199, No. 3, September 1958)

The biologist **J B S Haldane** opined: "Now my own suspicion is that the Universe is not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we can suppose" (since referred to as "Haldane's Law") -- an explanation for the increasing counterintuitiveness of modern scientific

theories. But whilst "craziness" is now **acceptable** in physics -- and backed by high levels of funding -- yet such "craziness" is quite **unacceptable** in the search for more appropriate responses to the dramatic challenges of governance and personal identity -- and the planetary crises of the foreseeable future. Why indeed is it not assumed that really "crazy" solutions will be required -- and that those on the table are "not crazy enough"? Why should physicists have a monopoly on such "craziness"? And why should "crazy" strategic options only become acceptable, and justified, in the craziness of warfare and knee-jerk responses to crises?

The nature of appropriate "craziness" is usefully clarified by [George Monbiot](#) (*On the edge of lunacy*, *Guardian*, 6 January 2004) in commenting on the allocation of UK extensive foreign aid funds to the government-sponsored, right-wing [Adam Smith Institute](#) (London):

The institute's purpose is to devise new means for corporations to grab the resources that belong to the public realm. Its president, Madsen Pirie, claims to have invented the word privatisation. His was the organisation that persuaded the Conservative government to sell off the railways, deregulate the buses, introduce the poll tax, cut the top rates of income tax, outsource local government services and start to part-privatise the national health service and the education system. "We propose things," Pirie once boasted, "which people regard as being on the edge of lunacy. The next thing you know, they're on the edge of policy." In this spirit, his institute now calls for the privatisation of social security, the dismantling of the NHS and a shift from public to private education.

How to distinguish between this kind of disaster-prone "craziness" and that which those in search of "alternatives" and "new paradigms" appear to call for?

Perhaps to some degree, the key to Isdom lies in the ability to ask unusual questions of a certain type -- as suggested by the wordplay: Why's-dom. Perhaps it is these questions which "pluck" the strings of associations of the "pattern that connects". Perhaps it is in some way an ability to "play" on that pattern -- as on the strings of a guitar or a sitar.

In addition to the emphasis on the instant -- the present moment (see *Presenting the Future*, 2001) -- there is a need to shift **from the static** quality characteristic of conventional structures **to the dynamic** -- to their "momentum" in the present moment as argued elsewhere (see *From Statics to Dynamics in Sustainable Community*, 1998; *Discovering richer patterns of comprehension to reframe polarization*, 1998)

How then may the identity of the dwellers of Isdom be understood -- those whose psychic centre of gravity is therein? How might they be perceived? There are, for example, allusive pointers in mytho-poetic references to the world of faerie -- possibly also helpful to any reflection about how to conceive and communicate with extraterrestrials who may indeed be well-ensconced in Isdom (see *Communicating with Aliens: the Psychological Dimension of Dialogue*, 2000). Elsewhere (*Patterning Archetypal Templates of Emergent Order*, 2002) it was suggested that:

Another modality calling for reflection is the process reality contrasted with that of reified objects. The identities sustained by the dynamics within process reality are then effectively "aliens" -- unrecognizable from a static perspective to which they are not "linked". It might then usefully be asked whether people could be distinguished on a continuum depending on the degree to which their identity is associated with how they "move", as opposed to how they are -- their "status". At the process extreme, in folk traditions those of the "flow world" might then be readily recognized as spirits and the like -- hidden fairies contributing coherence to the forest. The religiously inclined might refer to them as angels or demons. In part, they would only live through the dynamics between the static identities. The "demons" would be of special concern as malevolent riders of those dynamics -- "dark riders". What identities live through processes of overpopulation, starvation, disease, injustice, pollution and violence -- or globalization itself? [more] In an era of "spin doctors" and multi-media morphing, are there more fruitful ways of understanding the conceptual implications of shapeshifting? [more]

Also helpful are some accounts of dream encounters with archetypes -- where the significance derives from the encounter rather than of any description that it is possible to give of it.

Also intriguing is the initiative of the [Batuz Foundation](#) (initially with [Inge Morath](#)) to give expression to a *Société Imaginaire*. For those with the ability to do so, why should the ability to create and inhabit castles of the collective imagination not be explored -- the castles *in potentia* of Isdom?

Another interesting lead is that articulated by the surrealists, notably by André Breton in the *First Surrealist Manifesto* (1924):

We are still living under the reign of logic, but the logical processes of our time apply only to the solution of problems of secondary interest. The absolute rationalism which remains in fashion allows for the consideration of only those facts narrowly relevant to our experience. Logical conclusions, on the other hand, escape us. Needless to say, boundaries have been assigned even to experience. It revolves in a cage from which release is becoming increasingly difficult. It too depends upon immediate utility and is guarded by common sense. In the guise of civilization, under the pretext of progress, we have succeeded in dismissing from our minds anything that, rightly or wrongly, could be regarded as superstition or myth; and we have proscribed every way of seeking the truth which does not conform to convention.

To what extent are such realities to be marginalized as mere "figments" of the imagination? Efforts such as those of the Imagination Lab suggest prudence with respect to premature cognitive closure. The central role of the imagination at Damanhur confirms its value in sustaining the life of a community (see *Imaginal education*, 2003). Perhaps the ultimate insight is provided by Kenneth Boulding, author

of *Image* (1956), who provocatively suggests:

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

Sustaining dialogue of Isdom

The argument above suggests that wisdom is somehow an emergent characteristic of an intensive dynamic within Isdom based on imaginative and playful dialogue having an aesthetic quality. Conventionally dialogue of this type tends to be described as "magical" and "transformative". It is the Holy Grail of dialogue, although little is known of how to evoke it. One lead for philosophers is the notion of the Platonic symposium (as explored, for example, by Owen Barfield. *Worlds Apart*, 1963). On a much larger scale, this might be seen as reflected in the dynamics of a body such as the World Congress of Philosophy. But the challenges in the latter case -- as articulated through 23 participant interviews (edited by Michael Tobias, *et al. A Parliament of Minds: philosophy for a New Millennium*, 2000) -- highlight the disappointing inability of the many schhols of philosophy to address the cognitive ecology of philosophical perspectives as a whole, despite moves towards various forms of "global dialogue", with or without a spiritual dimension.

It could also be argued that, for any integrative dialogue within Isdom to be sustainable, a further self-reflexive twist is required (see also *Evaluating Synthesis Initiatives and their Sustaining Dialogues*, 2000). Without such a twist these characteristics may only be understood minimalistically and conventionally -- without the degree of challenge that may be vital to sustainability (no risk, no sustainability; no doubt, no dialogue?). There are various clues to reflection on the nature of this twist, including:

- **Crossing boundaries:** Rather than operating within conceptual boundaries, there is a need for a boundary crossing dynamic in dialogue. One relevant exploration is that of Kinhide Mushakoji (*Global Issues and Interparadigmatic Dialogue: essays on multipolar politics*, 1988) summarized elsewhere (see *Epistemological challenges: interparadigmatic dialogue*).
- **Calculus of indications:** This was pioneered by G. Spencer-Brown (*Laws of Form*, 1969) and explores the notion of a distinction, and the consequences of what there would be if there could be a distinction. In his further exploration, Louis H. Kauffman (*Virtual Logic: the calculus of indication*, 1998) indicates: "Our intent is to explore a number of themes that are related to simplicity and vanishing. As things nearly vanish, we reach regions where apparently distinct domains touch, join and become one. As things come into being, apparently distinct domains appear from an undifferentiated ground. These new domains grow in great profusion and prolixity, sometimes obscuring the simple origins. We are interested in creative growth. It is by returning to the origin that the source of such newness is found. The calculus of indications is a gem retrieved by a descent into nothingness."
- **Varieties of variety:** What forms of variety might emerge in Isdom, as essential to the "pattern that connects"? For Ranulph Glanville (*A (Cybernetic) Musing: Varieties of Variety?*, 1998) there are several kinds of variety, or ways of considering variety (in a second order world, these are equivalents): "There is the difference that Ashby created in his two uses: variety as the number of states a system can attain (s-variety); and the "entropically inspired" variety as the relationship between the logically possible and the actual number of states a system could achieve (e-variety).... To this confusion I have to add the confusion I find resulting from the need to modify the Law of Requisite Variety that second-order understanding requires and the experience that not only does the variety in a system often increase, but it can (and must) be (re-)defined according to how the included observer chooses to see it. Thus... variety can be seen as needing to be both static and dynamic, both defined by the system and observer determined. Are there other qualities that I have not considered here? I suspect so. Then what are they?" (see also *Varieties of Dialogue Arenas and Styles*, 1992; *Varieties of Dialogue by Number: experimental overview by number of perspectives represented*, 1998)
- **Spacings:** For John Sallis (*Spacings of Reason and Imagination: in texts of Kant, Fichte, Hegel*, 1987), a spacing is a "movement" of the imagination "such as to open the very space in which it occurs", a relation of the space to itself. It "leaves difference open, dis(assembling) the plane of truth so as to set its parts at various angles to one another, reintroducing depth, a new kind of depth... The release of spacing opens reason beyond itself, disrupting that pure self-identity, self-recoverability, self-presence by which spacing would be, was to have been, superseded, suppressed....As such, it is (the movement of) imagination. Occlusion, the release of spacings, leads from reason to imagination". Sallis distinguishes four "outbreaks of spacings" that disrupt the tranquil space of conventionally reasoned dialogue (but bear an intriguing resemblance to language relating to the navigation of hyperspace or the control of plasma):
 - **Tunnelings:** "First an outbreak of what can only appear as metaphoricity, reason metaphorized as tunneling; a metaphoricity that serves to expose certain fissures within reason and to space reason out into historicity".
 - **Hoverings:** "Second, a certain decentering from reason to imagination; and though a certain recentring supervenes in the end, one can -- perhaps must -- withdraw from that end, withdraw to imagination as the power of hovering between opposities, hence as a different spacing of truth, a spacing also beyond being"
 - **Enrouting:** "Third, the spacing of critical reason as a certain eccentricity with regard to the route that reason could follow back to the common root, that is an eccentricity with regard to the enrouting of reason that, though categorically imperative, cannot but disrupt the very spacing of reason and broach a root of reason."
 - **Tremorings:** "Fourth, a certain movement that would withdraw nature in its sublimity from assimilation to the supersensible space of reason, the "true world", and that would thereby draw the trembling imagination out toward an abyss."
 - **Ending(s):** "Finally, the slightest eccentricity, traced in the very text in which imagination would be brought to its

end...within the most rigorous reduction of spacing in the entire history of metaphysics."

- **Co-existence of multiple interpretations:** As explored by [Michael Krausz](#) (*Limits of Rightness*, 2000): "Might there be more than one admissible interpretation, and under what conditions would they obtain? And under what conditions would it be inappropriate to speak of either one or more admissible interpretation?" [[more](#)]. That which is interpreted in dialogue need not always answer to one and only one fully congruent ideally admissible interpretation. There may be a one-many match between that which is interpreted and its interpretation, and the interpretations may be opposed but not exclusive.
- **Oversimplification:** In his work, [Paul Feyerabend](#) (*Against Method*, 1975) has explored the limitations of intellectual method in the face of a rich and complex world. Thus (in *Conquest of Abundance: a tale of abstraction versus the richness of being*, 1999): "The world we inhabit is abundant beyond our wildest imagination... Still many are bothered...and they react accordingly -- they try to "block off" what disturbs them. For them the world is too complicated and they want to simplify it further... The search for reality that accompanied the growth of Western civilization played an important role in the process of simplifying the world... What we find, with very few exceptions, are intellectual leaders repeating slogans which they cannot explain and which they often violate, anxious slaves following in their footsteps and institutions offering or withdrawing money in accordance with the fashions of the day..." (see also [Beyond Method: engaging opposition in psycho-social organization](#), 1981)
- **Openness vs Closure:** Hilary Lawson (*Closure: a story of everything*, 2001) argues that: "In the new relative, post-modern era, there is no unique history, no agreed morality, and no uncontested knowledge. In their place a mass of alternative and sometimes incompatible theories, from 'chaos' and 'string' theory to 'fuzzy logic' and 'consilience', proposing a theory of everything." For Lawson, "Instead of seeing the world as a thing, a universe whose truths we might uncover through for example the procedures of science...[he]...proposes that we regard the world as open and it is we who close it through our stories." However he acknowledges that *Closure* is itself just another story that is simply "a pointer to that which is not closure, a pointer in the direction of openness. As such it seeks to undermine the arrogance of theories that suppose they might have uncovered the true nature of reality....It is thus a reflexive theory. Like all other closures it both seeks to be complete, and under scrutiny fails. It is on the one hand the outcome of the desire for closure and on the other hand the outcome of the desire for openness."

It is preoccupations such as the above which are liable to inform the process of dialogue within Isdom. They are of course echoed in the concerns of certain schools of meditation. [See also [Navigating Alternative Conceptual Realities: clues to the dynamics of enacting new paradigms through movement](#), 2002; [Psychology of Sustainability: Embodying cyclic environmental processes](#), 2002; [Future Generation through Global Conversation: in quest of collective well-being through conversation in the present moment](#), 1997]

Normality -- across the quenching boundary

The theme of the above argument is that there may well be a way of reframing and refocusing our momentary understanding of space-time -- in the spirit of the openness of contemporary physicists to the necessary craziness of insight required to provide coherence to our understanding of these times and of our place in them. This craziness may indeed be of the kind suggested in Zen by the "sound of one hand clapping".

The core of the argument is that the true "heartland" of humanity -- usually projected into elsewhere and elsewhere -- may well be in the present moment understood in a different mode. Hence the reference in the subtitle of this paper to "embodying time as the heartland of humanity" -- rather than buying into seductive arguments that the essential truth lies elsewhere and elsewhere. It is from this heartland -- Isdom -- that humanity has been essentially divorced and estranged, forced to settle a cognitive landscape that is basically impoverished and ill-adapted to psychic needs of survival and thrival. There is also a continuing threat of encroachment on Isdom by banality -- despite its counter-intuitive protection.

The world that people are all educated to inhabit may well be a true (but very pale) reflection of the nature of Isdom -- a denatured reflection. In particular the problems of that world may be a reflection of issues whose roots within Isdom we do not choose to address (see [My Reflecting Mirror World: making Joburg worthwhile](#), 2002)

The art then may somehow involve consciously embodying or "incorporating" Isdom -- or rather recognizing that, as noted earlier on the cover of *The (Updated) Last Whole Earth Catalog* (1974): "We can't put it together; it is together". Isdom necessarily "is" within the Spirit of Now. In Sufi terms it is the perfection of what is.

The challenge of exploring the present moment could then somehow be associated with the cognitive process through which the sense of the ordinary is sustained in all its fragmented, and potentially alienating, bitterness and banality. It would seem that there is a real possibility of re-membering that to whose cognitive dis-memberment we contribute in every moment. There are aspects of our cognitive processes that constitute, and sustain, the quenching boundary -- such as to destabilize any effort to give coherence to Isdom in our understanding. It is perhaps [Francisco Varela](#) (*On Becoming Aware: a pragmatics of experiencing*, 1998; *Laying down a path in walking: a biologist's look at a new biology*, 1986) and his colleagues that have best focused academic thinking on the associated challenges -- through their work on [enactivism](#) (see also [En-minding the Extended Body: Enactive engagement in conceptual shapeshifting and deep ecology](#), 2003)

Such work points to the challenge of the widespread use of the spatial metaphor of "the way" as the preferred mode of achieving wisdom ([Pointing the Way](#); [The Way to Happiness](#); [Taoism, or the Way](#); [The Way of Perfection](#); [The Way of Qigong](#); [The Way: an ecological world view](#); [Way of Science](#); etc). This metaphor focuses thinking on envisioning somewhere else, going there and gaining "access" -- a journey that will necessarily "take time". The metaphor encourages **extension** and implicitly denies the significance and value -- and learnings -- of the current place in time. In many respects it is basically "green fields" thinking: somewhere else is better. In its metaphorical association with "vision" (seeing [The Way](#)), it elicits a disengaged, spectator role -- and raises the possibility of ignored

disorders of strategic vision: myopia, presbyopia, colour blindness etc (see *Developing a Metaphorical Language for the Future*, 1994). Humanity continues to invest very heavily in strategies implied by this metaphor -- "globalization" may even be one consequence as is "growth".

Embodying *kairos*

In contrast to "the way", using a time-based metaphor as a catalyst for activating wisdom might offer valuable support for alternative and more feasible cognitive styles -- in accord with the rhythms by which people live, as strongly argued by José Arguelles (*Time and the Technosphere: The Law of Time in Human Affairs*, 2002) and others (Stephan Rechtschaffen. *Time Shifting*, 1996; Diana Hunt and Pam Hait. *The Tao of Time*, 1990). A time-based metaphor might encourage **intention** with a focus on timing -- with all its associations to music, dance and rhythm in its many senses (see *Knowledge Gardening through Music: patterns of coherence for future African management as an alternative to Project Logic*, 2000).

As a basis for a new generation of "time management", Stephen Covey (*First Things First*, 1994) suggests an "alternative paradigm" based on the sensed "importance" of what people do, rather than the urgency of tasks characteristic of conventional time management. In contrast, Steve Randall (*Performance and Well-Being Depend on the Paradigm of Time*, 1997) argues that "inner time" is qualitatively different and that the flow of time is not objective and external. Given that scientists have not discovered any flow of time in nature, the perceived flow of time is a product of conditioning, and can be controlled. For Randall, the flow reflects the degree to which people have separated themselves from the task at hand.

A significant challenge of now-time is in the relationship to extended time. Paradoxically this is most evident in the desire for instant answers without effort (as with the slogan: "I want everything, and I want it now"). This attitude manifests in the assumption that the most complex issues can be communicated within a limited attention span, whether to the most eminent (as with the single-page, double-spaced briefing notes for presidents) or to those mandating them. The dilemma with respect to information and knowledge has been acknowledged in an aptly titled 1985 project of the United Nations University (Information Overload and Information Underuse). The pressure is now towards visualization of information and knowledge maps, and away from linear text (like this document). But such tools are still far from being adequate catalysts to gatherings -- with a variety of preferences for knowledge processing and a need for a degree of instantaneity and synchronicity to reflect and act coherently. And yet it is from these that wisdom is expected to emerge.

The contrast between linear and inner time, or between the extended time of exposition and that of the moment of mutual understanding, might be usefully related to the distinction in ancient Greek between *chronos* (from which chronological or sequential time is derived) and *kairos* (or *chairo*). Kairos time, in contrast with chronos, has no equivalent in English. It has been described as "in between time" -- an undetermined period of time in which "something" special happens. Kairos is intrinsically related to the quality of audience attention. Chronos might be understood as quantitative time while kairos is qualitative. Kairos may be understood as the right or critical moment of opportunity (*Carpe Diem*). For religions it may be understood as cyclic sacred time ("God's time") as explored by Mircea Eliade (*The Sacred and the Profane*, 1957) [see also Gary Eberle. *Sacred Time And The Search For Meaning*, 2003; *Restoring Sacred Time: how the liturgical year deepens Catholic faith*, 2002]. For Eliade, religious man needs to enter sacred time periodically because sacred time is what makes ordinary, historical time possible. Kairos is a period of disruption to the normal flow of things -- a time of paradigm shifting and the emergence of the new. In Greek the contrasting disciplines of kairos derive from metaphors of archery and weaving. [more]

In this light, rather than a journey elsewhere, entering Isdom across the quenching boundary may more fruitfully be understood as resembling stepping onto a moving circus round-a-bout -- a challenge in timing and coordination (in contrast to "*Stop the World: I Want to Get Off*"). It requires adjustment to a different rhythm, possibly entrainment by it. The poet Henry David Thoreau provides a classic quote that might be considered as distinguishing between the spatial metaphor ("pacing" out a journey) and the time-oriented metaphor ("stepping" to music, as in a dance):

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. (cf M. Scott Peck. *The Different Drummer: Community-making and Peace*, 1987).

The quenching boundary might therefore be understood as the interface between linear (objective, profane) time (*chronos*) and cyclic (subjective) time (*kairos*) that is characteristic of Isdom. But the challenge remains of how to embody such cyclic time and provide the carrier waves for the movement of memes that are the essential dynamic of Isdom -- cycles of liturgy may offer a possibility for some. It is this movement which makes the metaphor of "heartland" appropriate (see also *Psychology of Sustainability: Embodying cyclic environmental processes*, 2002). The two contrasting metaphors of *kairos* -- archery and the weaving -- are suggestive of the dynamic of the "pattern that connects".

Such considerations might also be related to speculations by physicists regarding the feasibility of time travel. The General Theory of Relativity postulates that matter "curves" the space in its vicinity. But under relativity, properties of space are fairly interchangeable with properties of time, depending on one's perspective. Theoretically this could allow timelines to curve around in a circle and reconnect with their own past through what are called "closed time-like curves", thus enabling time travel -- for which various spinning devices have been designed [more]. However the emphasis here in relation to activating and sustaining wisdom would challenge this perspective of encouraging "travel" in time -- which allows the journeying metaphor to creep in again without any apparent gain in significance.

Eternity isn't some later time. Eternity isn't a long time. Eternity has nothing to do with time. Eternity is that dimension of here and now which thinking and time cuts out. This is it. And if you don't get it here, you won't get it anywhere. And the experience of eternity right here and now is the function of life. There's a wonderful formula that the Buddhists have for the Bodhisattva, the one whose being

(*sattva*) is illumination (*bodhi*), who realizes his identity with eternity and at the same time his participation in time. And the attitude is not to withdraw from the world when you realize how horrible it is, but to realize that this horror is simply the foreground of a wonder and to come back and participate in it. [Joseph Campbell](#) (*The Power of Myth*, Episode 2, Chapter 13-14).

***Neti Neti* -- none of the above**

In many respects all of the above is more than presumptuous with regard to the eminent who hold alternative views -- and especially if they are held to be wise.

The work of [Alfred Korzybski](#) (*Science and Sanity An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics*, 1994) -- followed by [David Boulard](#) -- make the case for extreme precaution in using the verb "to be" to express dogmatic beliefs or assumptions. Perhaps, again, it is a special form of play with assumptions of "what is" -- "isplay" -- that is required to sustain the dynamics of Isdom. Without such play, declarations of "what is" are reified into belief systems and institutions such as to preclude any flexibility or openness to dialogue. Why might it be expected that any form of wisdom could be sustained amongst such reifications?

As many texts of the wise affirm, wisdom is necessarily "none of the above" -- the Sanskrit "*neti neti*" -- the not-ness of what is to be affirmed that has traditionally been explored by mystics through the *via negativa*. The affirmation of the first chapter of the *Tao Te Ching* -- concerning the unreality of "the way that can be named" -- recalls the remarks above concerning the "quenching" boundary of Isdom:

*The Tao that can be described is not the eternal Tao.
The name that can be spoken is not the eternal Name.
The nameless is the boundary of Heaven and Earth.
The named is the mother of creation.*

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