



# laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

6 May 2019 | Draft

## Metaphorizing Dialogue to Enact a Flow Culture

### Transcending divisiveness by systematic embodiment of metaphor in discourse

-- / --

#### Introduction

Metaphorizing -- beyond one-off usage

Sustaining dialogue through metaphor?

Indicative precedents of metaphorizing skills

Discourse and debate reframed as cognitive combat through metaphor?

Integrity of metaphorizing framed by complementarity between alternatives

Imagining a relevant philosophers' game -- and beyond

Requisite metaphoric "circumlocution" avoiding disruptive disagreement

Sustainable discourse framed metaphorically as "orbiting"

Metaphorizing as artful indulgence in misplaced concreteness?

Re-imagining: metaphorizing, metamorphizing and cognitive shapeshifting

Sustainable discourse: longest conflict versus longest conversation?

References

## Introduction

There is no difficulty in recognizing the extent to which discourse has become problematic, whether in national assemblies, parliaments, or the media (social media or otherwise). The current scene has been described as poisonously divisive. Each faction is adamant that the facts and principles it presents are beyond question. Each is necessarily right, with any in disagreement being by definition wrong. Discourse between nations, between religions, between political parties, and between disciplines currently offers little hope for a more fruitful modality.

Curiously efforts towards transcending this situation -- if they are more than tokenistic -- seem to be readily entrapped by the same dynamic. Each is necessarily right or better, with others essentially misguided, misinformed or behind the times.

The following is an exploration of a distinctive mode which does not rely on facts and truth as commonly understood, or on the deprecation of fake news and pretence. The focus is not on being right or wrong or the attribution of blame. The question is whether discourse could shift from dispute with regard to facts and principles to a process in which their definitive and determinative nature is continually reframed through metaphor.

This is clearly in distinctive contrast to a range of assumptions regarding the rationality of discourse and its desirability, or the capacity to ensure it in practice. Essentially the transition is in favour of the primacy of aesthetics and shifting patterns of articulation -- lending themselves to appreciation in such terms. Rationality could indeed be one such, momentarily and for some. The presumed solidity of facts is for example challenged by reference to the [half-life of knowledge](#) (Samuel Arbesman, *The Half-life of Facts: why everything we know has an expiration date*, 2012).

The current condition is increasingly consistent with the surreal experience of the times (*Surreal nature of current global governance as experienced*, 2016). As argued in the journal *Foreign Affairs*:

From a strategic leadership standpoint, today's world can often be characterized as volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (aka, VUCA)... Leadership in the 21st century will greatly benefit from drawing upon our growing understanding of attachment theory, considering it is humans with emotions that are our greatest organizational asset. (Jonathan Silk and Evelyn Booth *Relation-Based Leadership for the 21st Century*, 15 April 2019)

Traces of the possibility of metaphorizing systematically can be variously recognized. A case for such a modality was made in anticipation of the problems of discourse at the Parliament of the World's Religions (*Guidelines towards Dialogue through Metaphor*, 1993). This noted the importance attached in religions to the use of parable, if not to insightful spiritual tales with a twist, as with the

famed set of koans known in English as *The Gateless Gate*, Some such recognition is evident with respect to diplomatic rhetoric, as in the compilation of Victor S. M. de Guinzbourg (*Wit and Wisdom of the United Nations*, 1961).

The emphasis here however is not on the use of a single metaphor to reframe a context, rather it is on the process of continual shifting between metaphors to engage otherwise with any framing -- effectively "dancing" with the assertions of any seemingly contrary perspective. Dispute, with its potentially violent consequences, is then understood as transformed into a form of poetic or metaphorical jousting of which traces are evident in musical duels. Rather than being identified with a particular position or perspective, the shift implies the ability to move -- a switch from the static to the dynamic. In this modality, metaphorizing is also used to reframe both the nature of discourse and the identity of the discussant. As teasingly expressed by the eminent economist [Kenneth Boulding](#):

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 (*Image: knowledge in life and society*, 1956)

Curiously the world is currently challenged in this respect by the leader of the world's primary superpower -- now recognized to be constantly shifting his ground and thereby placing others at a disadvantage in their efforts to maintain the predictable positions of the past (*New World Order of Walk-away Wheeling and Dealing*, 2018). A fruitfully appropriate response may well be to explore that dynamic to a much higher degree. Rather than seeking desperately and vainly for certainty and predictability, this implies the possibility of a new dynamic in a post-truth era -- one in which any sense of truth lies to a far greater degree in appreciation of the "moves" of the other and the possibility of "dancing" with them, possibly inspired by the martial arts..

The argument could be seen as consistent with the age-old quest for a [philosophical language](#), however this is appreciated or derided [Umberto Eco](#) (*The Search for the Perfect Language in the European Culture*, 1995; *Serendipities: Language and Lunacy*, 1998). However, in contrast to the many efforts to elaborate such a philosophical language in terms of its specific elements, alphabet, and grammatical structure, the approach here is focused on the the cultivation of integrity through the imaginatively artful use of metaphor -- potentially to be recognized in aesthetic terms.

## Metaphorizing -- beyond one-off usage

A contrast could be made between the following argument and the remarkable work of [Gordon Pask](#) on [conversation theory](#) from a cybernetic perspective. There is however little reference to metaphor in his work. Gary Boyd argues that: *Gordon Pask took conversational learning as more than a general metaphor for humanly significant learning* (*Reflections on the conversation theory of Gordon Pask, Kybernetes*, 30, 2001, 5/6). Metaphor is however implied to various degrees in his work, as suggested by the remark of Luciana Parisi:

For Pask, intelligent behavior is a craft and cannot be exhausted by computational programming.... Away from the on/off logic of computation, Pask conceives of interaction as a conversation that requires mutual actions, such as those performed in dance, where space is offered to the steps of other bodies. (*Contagious Architecture: Computation, Aesthetics and Space*, MIT, 2013)

The relation of the cybernetics of conversation theory to metaphor has perhaps been most fruitfully argued by [Kathleen Forsythe](#) (*Cathedrals in the Mind: the architecture of metaphor in understanding learning*, 1986). Elsewhere Forsythe notes:

Conversation theory asserts that learning takes place during the conversation. A conversation is an interactive dialogue among autonomous systems in order to reach agreement or disagreement on a concept or construct... to assert, construct or create an analogy which will necessarily assert a distinction as a similarity relation between them... Unlike the fictionalist schools... conversation theory is a science of process, encompassed by an ontology of many truth valuations which exist as distinct entities and which form their own necessarily dynamic phenomenology. (*Why distance is a state of mind, draft*, 1987?).

Curiously little reference is made to the process of employing multiple metaphors systematically in dialogue. The verb form is indeed recognized as being "to metamorphize", but this is acknowledged to be:

... an awful word. Ugly as sin, to employ a metaphor. Which, by the way, is the verb phrase used to choose a metaphor as an appropriate figure of speech in writing a passage. (*Why is there no verb form of "metaphor"?* *Quora*, August 2018)

As indicated by [Akilesh Ayyar](#):

Metaphorization is a catch-all term for the expression of *what it is like to be you experiencing something*. Any such expression which attempts to express that by *comparing* it to something that it is like or unlike (that's the idea of a metaphor), in any mode - in words, in drawing, in film, or otherwise -- however technically unskilled -- is metaphorization. (*On Metaphorization and the Validity of Every Experience. Sifting to the Truth*, 2 November 2017)

Despite the ugliness of the verb, there is an extensive literature on the process, notably in terms of "metaphorizing" (as noted in the references below). Examples include:

- Krzysztof Mudyń: *On the Two Ways of Metaphorizing the World: Pars Pro Toto or Intra Pro Extra?* (*Polish Sociological Review*, 2009, pp. 179-192)
- Adina Nerghes, Ina Hellsten, and Peter Groenewegen: *A Toxic Crisis: Metaphorizing the Financial Crisis* (*International Journal of Communication*, 2015)
- Noriko Iwamoto: *Constructing Reality through Metaphorizing Processes in Wartime Reporting* (*Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, 1996)

Metaphorizing is discussed as the "adjectivation of meaning" by Oscar F. Gonzalez, et al, (*Nurturing Nature: cognitive narrative strategies*, 2004). Many refer to the seminal study by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980).

The focus of such studies tends to be on the process of employing a single metaphor, or on the use of metaphor in a variety of domains. References to "metaphors of discourse" tend to refer to those in use in discourse and not to comprehension of discourse through a metaphorical frame. Most ironical in this respect is the extent to which global discourse has now been framed by a single metaphor, namely the *tweeting* of birds. The reference to birds is however only one of the eight offered by Marios Alexandrou (*Twitter is like... Metaphors for Newbies and Veterans Alike, Infolific*). There is also irony to the fact that the quest for a "perfect language" has been traditionally related to a so-called mythical "language of the birds" -- thereby evoking a further possibility (*Re-Emergence of the Language of the Birds through Twitter?* 2010).

**The concern here however is the nature of the skillful process in which there is a continuing shift from metaphor to metaphor in discourse, in response to those employed by others.** This could be compared, in metaphorical terms, to "swinging through the trees of a cognitive forest", without experiencing the need to come down to any conventional "ground" (Francisco J. Varela and Humberto R. Maturana, *The Tree of Knowledge: the biological roots of human understanding*, 1987). Bird flight could also be employed as a metaphor to frame the cognitive process of "flying" -- as might be applied to the best of discourse and dialogue where the challenge is to "get off the ground" (*Counteracting Extremes Enabling Normal Flying: insights for global governance from birds on the wing and the dodo*, 2015).

**The concern extends to how discourse itself may be reframed through metaphor during the process, as well as how discussants may reframe each other and themselves** -- namely how the identity of those involved is comprehended. Arguably it is grounded discourse which is currently proving so problematic in encouraging and enabling violence. Ironically this could be explored as a metaphor in that the ground defended by discussants is characteristic of "turf wars".

Metaphorizing offers greater degrees of freedom for all -- or potentially so. With respect to the deprecation of metaphor by various philosophers, the "pragmatic inconsistency" between the formal attitude to figurative language and the use of it is noted by Susan Haack (*"Dry Truth and Real Knowledge": epistemologies of metaphor and metaphors of epistemology*. 1994). The particular difficulty of rational discourse is that each party considers itself to be reasonable and right -- with little capacity to engage rationally with an alternative perspective. How might the process then be understood if returning to the conventions of rational discourse "on the ground" is skillfully avoided -- to the point of being a mark of incompetence in discourse? The point is perhaps well made by the metaphor of "keeping the ball in play".

Any "failure" could then be usefully compared with the understanding in quantum mechanics of *wave function collapse*. The relevance of such a metaphor would follow from the articulation by Alexander Wendt (*Quantum Mind and Social Science: unifying physical and social ontology*, 2015). Discussion of *quantum mind* is now variously considered (Arnold Mindell, *Quantum Mind: the edge between physics and psychology*, 2000). As noted separately, Wendt makes a case for understanding individuals as "walking wave functions" (*On being "walking wave functions" in terms of quantum consciousness?* 2017). This perspective offers a provocative contrast to the heavy investment of intelligence agencies in surveillance systems -- readily to be understood as a potentially dangerous dependence on a Newtonian worldview of only limited relevance in a period of chaotic global crisis.

Discourse then lends itself to reframing, as separately discussed (*Encountering Otherness as a Waveform -- in the light of a wave theory of being*, 2013; *Being a Waveform of Potential as an Experiential Choice: emergent dynamic qualities of identity and integrity*, 2013).

## Sustaining dialogue through metaphor?

There is no lack of resources on metaphors, including their categorization in databases (*Metamia: a free database of analogy and metaphor*; *The Mind as a Metaphor -- of the World of Objects*; *MetaNet: a multilingual metaphor repository*; *Hamburg Metaphor Database*; *Overview: Metaphor and Patterns Project*) .

In 2011 the US *Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity* announced *The Metaphor Program* with participation of the *US Army Research Laboratory*, as separately indicated (*Reframing the Dynamics of Engaging with Otherness*, 2011).

There are also specific references to use of metaphors in relation to discourse, including:

- Elena Semino: *Metaphor in Discourse* (2008)
- Jörg Zinken, Ina Hellsten and Brigitte Nerlich: *Discourse Metaphors* (*Body, Language and Mind*, 2008)
- Andreas Musolff. *Metaphor and Political Discourse: analogical reasoning in debates about Europe* (2004)
- L. Cameron: *Metaphor in Educational Discourse* (2003)
- Philip Eubanks: *A War of Words in the Discourse of Trade: the rhetorical constitution of metaphor* (2000)

These seem to focus on the use of particular metaphors in framing a pattern of discourse, or on the use of metaphor in comprehending the nature of discourse.

As noted above, seemingly missing are indications of how to switch skillfully from metaphor to metaphor in discourse -- namely

"keeping the ball in play" and "swinging through the cognitive trees" of a knowledge-based civilization. This skill merits distinction from what is otherwise deprecated in "mixing metaphors" (Mark G. Lee and John A. Barnden, *Mixing Metaphors*). This would presumably then include the process of creatively inventing a succession of metaphors "on the fly" to sustain a discourse and participation in it.

In this respect it has been argued that competence in the use of metaphor has not yet been sufficiently explored (Masoud Khalili Sabet and Marjaneh Tavakoli, *Metaphorical Competence: a neglected component of communicative competence*, *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 4, 2016, 1; Mahmood Hashemian and Mohammad Reza Talebi Nezha, *The Development of Conceptual Fluency and Metaphorical Competence in L2 Learners*. *Linguistik online*, 30, 2006).

These studies focus on competence in a foreign language, but the argument presumably applies to the "language" of a second discipline or domain (Larisa Ilinska, et al, *Metaphorical Competence in Professional Communication*, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 236, 2016). Any use of the term "fluency" is indeed suggestive of a skillful ability to shift nimbly between suitable metaphors, but this does not appear to be the focus of such research. What is valued in the experience of a discourse which "flows", whether or not this metaphor includes the insights and experience of [flow psychology](#)?

The question could then be asked as to where indications are to be found of sustained use of a pattern of metaphors in discourse -- without recourse to non-metaphorical framings. Is there evidence of how long a discourse could be sustained without reverting to a non-metaphorical? Is this a challenge to be recognized by the *Guinness Book of Records*?

The quest might be further refined through distinguishing metaphor from [figurative language](#) in general and from habitual use of analogies, as argued by Jörg Zinke (*Discourse Metaphors: the link between figurative language and habitual analogies*, *Cognitive Linguistics*, 18, 2006). Alternatively metaphors could be considered as simply one set of memes in a meme pool (*Questionable Classification of Figures of Speech -- as fundamental to the need for powerful rhetoric in governance*, 2016).

More provocatively it could then be asked whether gatherings of those professionally preoccupied by the use of metaphor offer examples of sustained use of metaphor to facilitate that discourse -- and whether that collective practice is cultivated self-reflexively. If not, why not? Similarly it might be asked whether engagement with the vast literature on metaphor lends itself to reframing in metaphorical terms, as might be suggested by the theme of Emma Wipperfurth (*Metaphors for Change: Re-Metaphorizing the Metaphors We Live By*. *Institutional Scholarship*, 2012).

## Indicative precedents of metaphorizing skills

**Poetry and song:** One early imaginative exploration of the possibility evoked here is the future-utopian poetry-based society envisaged by [Robert Graves](#) (*Seven Days in New Crete*, 1949). However the plot is only suggestive of use of that modality and is primarily focused on the institutional consequences. Another example is provided by the society of Castalia as imagined by [Hermann Hesse](#) (*The Glass Bead Game*, 1949). Here too the nature of poetic discourse is only artfully implied, and is associated (if not conflated) with other aesthetic modalities.

The credibility of such an approach is indicated by the arguments of various authors with respect to poetics::

- [Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr.](#): *The Poetics of Mind: figurative thought, language, and understanding* (1994)
- [Michael J. Sinding](#): *Body of Vision: Northrop Frye and the Poetics of Mind* (2013)
- [Gaston Bachelard](#): *The Poetics of Space* (1958)

Given the many gatherings of poets, it could then be asked whether these are indicative of poetic discourse between those assembled. Clearly the pattern tends to be otherwise, namely as the successive presentation of poems -- each to be variously and uniquely appreciated. The pattern is unfortunately only too similar to conventional discourse in other gatherings. This is also the case with a succession of singers in many much appreciated gatherings.

The question here is whether another modality is to be recognized in which poets or singers respond to each other in poetry or song -- thereby sustaining a mode of discourse through that pattern of exchange. Especially indicative of this possibility is the interaction between [bertsolaritza](#) in an improvised exchange of song -- typically on a theme presented to them at the last minute (Alicia Ault, *What Is Bertsolaritza and Who Are the Basque Poets Who Know It?* *Smithsonian.com*, 29 June 2016). This folk modality is the art of singing [extemporaneously composed songs](#).

This art form is central to Basque culture, and the preservation of that language. As separately discussed, questions are however raised regarding the constraints imposed by its conventions in terms of the need for some similar modality in other contexts (*Improvisation in Multivocal Poetic Discourse: Basque lauburu and bertsolaritza as catalysts of global significance*, 2016; *Evoking Castalia as Envisaged, Entoned and Embodied: the great game informed by the bertsolaritza cultural process?* 2016). The Basque people have successfully explored the approach together with other cultures, using other languages, but having similar folk traditions.

The relevance of such skill to current challenges of governance has been separately explored (*Poetic Engagement with Afghanistan, Caucasus and Iran: an unexplored strategic opportunity?* 2009; *Strategic Jousting through Poetic Wrestling: aesthetic reframing of the clash of civilizations*, 2008). There are of course a number of courageous efforts to engender mutual understanding across cultures through music and song. The question here is the nature of the "disconnect" between aesthetic appreciation of such collective endeavours and the challenges a society may face.

How indeed to enable viable insightful discourse with respect to the divisive issues of governance at this time, as may be variously explored (*Poetry-making and Policy-making: arranging a marriage between Beauty and the Beast*, 1993; *Ensuring Strategic Resilience through Haiku Patterns: reframing the scope of the "martial arts" in response to strategic threats*, 2006).

At the time of writing, when the [Eurovision Song Contest](#) is scheduled to be held in Israel -- with all the problematic political undertones

implied -- how might a more informed modality benefit governance, with discourse enhanced to a higher degree by metaphor? Some possibilities have been argued separately (*A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006; *Reframing the EU Reform Process -- through Song responding to the Irish challenge to the Lisbon Treaty*, 2008). Does poetic justice have a greater role in a world in which the rule of law is increasingly perceived as vindictive and enabling institutionalized inequality and impunity? There is a case for exploring the rule of lore (*Law and Order vs. Lore and Orders? Imagining otherwise the forceful engagement of singularity with plurality*, 2015).

Fundamental to the challenge would seem to be the manner in which discourse between radically opposed perspectives could be articulated through metaphor such as to benefit from the aesthetic integration offered by poetry and song. In this respect, what are the limitations of improvisation in various forms of poetry slam, including the rap modality?

Rather than chanted slogans between opposing factions, what form of discourse might be envisaged when enhanced aesthetically by metaphor? Is there a case for some analogue to the Eurovision Song Contest in which possibilities could be presented for widespread collective appreciation?

As an eminent economist, Kenneth Boulding presided over international gatherings and was wont to summarize their conclusions in poetic form -- to complement the conventional conclusions. How should this be reconciled with the insights for which he was otherwise appreciated (*Ecodynamics: a new theory of societal evolution*, 1978)? Why has use of haiku been so notably appreciated by some world leaders (Dag Hammarskjöld, Herman Van Rompuy)?

"Collaborative aesthetic duelling"? The Basque bertolaritza could be considered one example of duelling as a form of discourse. Other examples include duelling between practitioners of particular instruments, notably banjo duels, violin duels, etc. This frames the question as to how or whether any "duet" should be distinguished from a duel -- with obvious implications for any verbal duel. Clearly any such duel could be empowered and reframed by metaphor, and explored in terms of shifting metaphors.

Potentially more suggestive is the interplay between various instruments characteristic of improvisation within a jazz group. As indicated by Vinko Globokar (*Reacting: role of a performer*, 1970). Consider the clues implicit in the following description of an experiment in avant-garde music:

Correspondences are based on the principle of mutual psychological reactions and attempt to "join" the four participants with each other and to make them increasingly dependent on each other. There are four levels :

- The music material is entirely fixed, but the choice of instruments is left open.
- Each musician possesses only incomplete instructions, in order to be able to play, each musician must search for missing material in the performance of the neighbour (pitches from the first, length from the second, etc.) and react to it in different ways: imitate, adapt himself to it (if need be further develop), do the opposite, become disinterested or something else (something "unheard of").
- The composed material is completely substituted by the description of the possibility arising from the reactions of the performers to their neighbours.
- On the last level, it is left up to the performers whether to cease playing or to continue

(Vinko Globokar, *Drama and Correspondences*. Harmonia Mundi 20 21803-A. Comment on recording)

An adaptation of some relevance to this argument has been made by John Kao (*Jamming: The Art and Discipline of Business Creativity*, 1997).

**Verbal duelling in debate:** The process, understood in metaphorical terms, is well recognized:

- Daria Dayter: *Orality and Literacy in Verbal Duelling: playing the dozens in the Twenty-First Century in contested communities*, (2017)
- Donald Weinstein: *Fighting or flying? Verbal duelling in mid-sixteenth-century Italy* (1994)
- Helga Kotthof: *Verbal Duelling in Caucasian Georgia: ethnolinguistic studies of three oral poetic attack genres* (In: Aspects of Oral Communication, 2011)
- Carmen-Ioana Radu: *Verbal Impoliteness Strategies and Typology* (2017)
- Harry G. Lefever: *"Playing the Dozens": A Mechanism for Social Control* (*Phylon*, 42, 1981, 1)
- Amulf Deppermann and Axel Schmidt: *Disrespecting: a conversational practice for the negotiation of status in juvenile peer-groups* (2000)
- Donald R. Brennels, *Fighting Words* (*New Scientist*, 4 May 1978).

As noted above, aspects of the argument here have been developed separately (*Strategic Jousting through Poetic Wrestling: aesthetic reframing of the clash of civilizations*, 2008). Themes explored include:

Range of participants	Web-enhanced communication
Self-organization and self-regulation	Substantive and aesthetic integration
Aesthetic criteria	Enabling emergent aesthetic coherence

Clearly any dialogue or debate may be characterized by extensive use of illustrative figurative language, and use of metaphor to reframe the opponent, the advocated position or the process of debate a whole. It may well be framed as a dance, for example.

Aspects of the process, and the "fluency" may be cultivated and appreciated in repartee. Humour may be skillfully used to disrupt the articulation of the other and reorient the pattern of exchange. Competitive joke-telling is significant in this respect.

**Narrative:** As a potential feature of discourse, the use of stories, legendary tales and myths merits exploration as being enriched by metaphor, especially to the extent that these flow into each other in some way. The role of fables and teaching stories in many cultures clearly draws on metaphor.

Clearly a distinction can be made between use of traditional tales and those improvised by story-tellers with the skill to do so.

Examples of <b>fabulists</b> , and sets of relevant fables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Buddhism: <i>Jataka Tales</i></li><li>• China: <i>The Dragon's Tale: and Other Animal Fables of the Chinese Zodiac</i></li><li>• France: <i>Fifty Fables of La Fontaine</i> by Jean De La Fontaine</li><li>• Greece: <i>Aesop's Fables</i> [index] -- plus morals [ 1   2   3   4   selected ]</li><li>• Hindu: <i>Panchatantra</i> by Bidpai, illustrating principles of political science [more   more]</li><li>• India: <i>Narayan's Hitopadesha of Friendly Counsel</i></li><li>• Islam: <i>Kalilah wa-Dimnah</i>, a book of political instruction</li><li>• Islam: Luqman Bin 'Ad [more more]</li><li>• Italy: <i>Discorsi degli animali</i> by Agnolo Firenzuola</li><li>• Japan: <i>Kodansha Nihongo Folktales</i></li><li>• Judaism: <i>Fables of a Jewish Aesop: From the Fox Fables of Berechiah ha-Nakdan</i></li><li>• Poland: <i>Fables and Parables</i> of Ignacy Krasicki</li><li>• Russia: <i>Ivan Krylov</i></li></ul>
Reproduced from <i>Proportionate Response in the Eye of the Beholder: Educational fables for faith-based global governance</i> (2006)

The many such tales frame the question as to whether fluency in the use of metaphor in discourse is associated with its imaginative creation or its creative selection from a pool of metaphors -- essentially from a [meme pool](#).

Appreciation of traditional tales and fables suggests the way in which it is more fruitful to engage with "fake news" -- more imaginatively recognized as "bluff", with all its strategic implications. Should the artful wing display of a butterfly be deprecated as "fake news" rather than as vital [deception](#) to ensure its survival? .

**Game-playing:** As suggested by reference to *The Glass Bead Game* of Hermann Hesse, engagement with others can be modulated by games. These can be interpreted as framed by metaphor or embodying metaphor -- and suggest an understanding of shifting between modalities. Of less relevance is the sense in which duelling and games have an objective which is primarily competitive -- exemplified by the Eurovision Song Contest.

The objective in such contexts is how to "win" -- even to "crush" the opposition -- however much the "spirit of the game" is emphasized for certain purposes (and possibly with the aid of metaphor). This is at the core of the competitive approach to global politics and "being great again" -- relative to others.

How is a distinction to be made in discourse between playing a manipulative or exploitative game with others, and playing the kinds of games more readily appreciated in flirting (in those cultures which cultivate that process with appreciation)?

There is little sense of how non-competitive game-playing might be framed -- with or without the aid of metaphor. Peace games and intellectual games are considered of marginal significance -- if not as essentially boring for most (*Philosophy Games*). A remarkable exception is the imaginative advocacy of infinite games by James P. Carse (*Finite and Infinite Games: a vision of life as play and possibility*, 1987). Carse subsequently articulated the relevance of that perspective to religion (*Religious War In Light of the Infinite Game*, 2011)

## Discourse and debate reframed as cognitive combat through metaphor?

The examples above are helpful in indicating a degree of widespread familiarity with use of metaphor in discourse. With respect to this argument, such usage is clearly inadequate to the challenge of divisive discourse at this time -- readily described as "poisonous" or "toxic" in metaphorical terms. In an information-based society, such use of metaphor can be developed further in an analysis of the collective ills of the times (*Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society: speculations towards the development of cures and preventive measures*, 2008).

How might the combat between opposing parties be transformed through metaphor into a conceptual form rather than -- for lack of any imaginative alternative -- encouraging its collapse into physical and other forms of violence? Curiously the difficulty is evident in the problematic challenges of harassment currently highlighted by feminists -- many of whom would contest the role of flirting as a fruitful displacement of the archetypal relation between men and women. The controversy has been evident in the response to the framing offered by French women with respect to flirting (*Catherine Deneuve Joins nearly 100 French Actresses and More to Condemn 'Witch Hunt' against Men over Sexual Harassment*, *IndieWire*, 9 January 2018).

Use of "combat" in the title of this section is indicative of the trap -- whether between the sexes or otherwise. This is a particular metaphor of some value but needs to be called into question as being potentially unfruitful (*Enhancing Sustainable Development Strategies through Avoidance of Military Metaphors*, 1998; J. D. Casnig, *War Metaphors*). There is however a long tradition of consideration of [war as metaphor](#). Rather than consideration of "metaphors in discourse" (as noted above), the possibilities of "metaphors of discourse" is variously suggested (Roslyn. M. Frank, *Shifting Identities: Metaphors of Discourse Evolution*, 2009).

However, as the reference above to duelling indicates, the combative framing of discourse has been a focus of attention, as suggested by the following:

- Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr: *Metaphor Wars: conceptual metaphors in human life* (2017)
- Sarah A. Mattice: *Metaphor and Metaphilosophy: philosophy as combat, play, and aesthetic experience* (2014)
- Mark A. Reinholz: *Philosophical Combat* (2013)
- Giuseppina D'Oro: *Reasons and Causes: the philosophical battle and the meta-philosophical war* (*Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 90, 2011, 2)
- Eric Zuesse: *The Philosophical War between Democrats and Republicans* (*The Huffington Post*, 21 April 2013)
- David Ellwood: *A Very Philosophical War: the Global New Deal and its critics* (2012)
- *Philosophical Battles: Empiricism versus Rationalism* (*Dummies*)

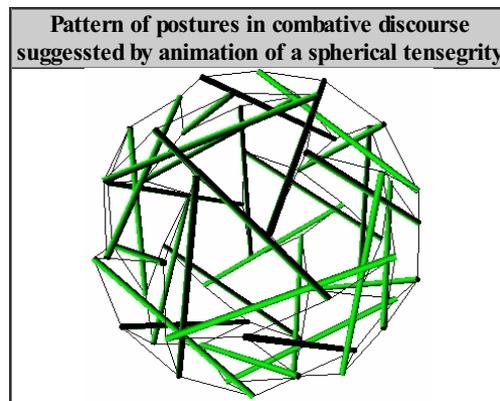
Of particular relevance to the use of that metaphor is the developing recognition of **memetic warfare** (*Missiles, Missives, Missions and Memetic Warfare: navigation of strategic interfaces in multidimensional knowledge space*, 2001; *Cognitive Ballistics vs. Derivative Correlation in Memetic Warfare*, 2009).

Potentially to be understood as virtual wars, how are the "rules of engagement" then to be understood? The current period sees reference to strategies reminiscent of the Stone Age (Nick Cullather, *Bomb them Back to the Stone Age: an etymology*, *History News Network*, 2006). By contrast, what "martial arts" are considered relevant to memetic combat -- as discussed separately from a poetic perspective (*Ensuring Strategic Resilience through Haiku Patterns: reframing the scope of the "martial arts" in response to strategic threats*, 2006)?

If conventional discourse can be caricatured metaphorically in terms of bludgeoning each other with sticks, this could indeed be explored further in metaphorical terms (*Configuring Conceptual Polarities in Questing: metaphoric pointers to self-reflexive coherence*, 2004). In the skillful practice of quarterstaff, kendo or fencing, the "stick" is constantly repositioned to ward off attack -- or as an instrument of attack, a theme of **Camillo Agrippa** (*Treatise on the Science of Arms with Philosophical Dialogue*, 1553), as commented by Ken Mondschein (*The Number of Motion: Camillo Agrippa's geometrical fencing and the enumeration of the body*, *Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, 6, 2014).

Operationally this dynamic is somewhat analogous to the function of a magnetic bottle in that the "stick" is then effectively redefined by the positions and angles at which it is successively placed, and how it is held, to constitute a protective shield or container for the wielder. Here the multiplicity of poles in the previous metaphors is replaced by the dynamic redefinition of the function of the quarterstaff as a kind of archetypal polarity. This holds the understanding that polarization, in the abstract, may manifest perceptibly in a variety of settings in response to circumstances.

Dynamically the resulting pattern can be understood as forming a containing structure -- a polyhedral tensegrity. The many differently angled poles could be seen as a static representation of the many defensive positions of a quarterstaff or **fencing parries**. As a metaphor it holds, at a high level of articulation, a configured dynamic relationship between polarities -- effectively a three-dimensional map.



## Integrity of metaphorizing framed by complementarity between alternatives

**Sets of metaphors:** More intriguing is the possibility of complementarity between any set of metaphors (*Complementary Metaphors of Discourse: towards transformative conferencing and dialogue*, 1984). Predating as it does the seminal study of 8 such metaphors by **Gareth Morgan** (*Images of Organization*, 1986), the earlier study with regard to discourse suggested (without specifically including war):

networking / teleconferencing	revolution	trade / development
sexual intercourse	environmental ecosystems	drama / opera
sharing in spirit	building	games / teamwork
celebration	rule of law	conspiracy of elites

However, rather than any static implications of a metaphor (especially as an "image"), there is a case for considering a dynamic equivalent (consistent with "imagining"). Similarly, rather than "organizations", the emphasis could be placed on "organizing" -- with the latter understood as implying a "metaphorizing" process. **Metaphorizing is then best understood as an imagining process woven into discourse such as to render it sustainable.** The dynamic interpretation would then be:

Reframing Morgan's <i>Images of Organization</i>			
original "static" rendering	"dynamically" imagined	original "static" rendering	"dynamically" imagined
machine	mechanizing	organism	enlivening?

brain political system flux / transformation	encephalizing? systematizing politically transforming / enfluzing?	culture psychic prison instrument of domination	enculturating imprisoning dominating / instrumentalizing
--	--	---	--

It is appropriate to emphasize that it is not the particular images which may be selected and highlighted in any such set -- nor the number distinguished in this way. Rather it is the complementarity between the modalities selected, however many there are. In this respect it is appropriate to note that suggestions have been made for the expansion of Morgan's set to include two other "images" (Anders Örténblad, Linda L Putnam, and Kiran Trehan, *Beyond Morgan's eight metaphors: adding to and developing organization theory*, *Human Relations*, 69, 2016, 4).

Of similar relevance are the sets variously distinguished by Edward de Bono (*Six Thinking Hats*, 1985; *Six Action Shoes*, 1991), and considered more generally (*Six Frames For Thinking About Information*, 2008). In practice he argues that in any group discourse, participants (or the group as a whole) would periodically don or doff a framework -- whether a "hat" or "shoe". This comes closer to clarifying the nature of sustainable metaphorizing in discourse.

Rather than Morgan's "organization", this further emphasizes the sense in which "organizing" cognitively is evoked through the dynamics of metaphorizing. This recalls the powerful contrasting metaphors of:

- an [organ \(as a musical instrument\)](#) -- offering the sense in which it is designed and played as an instrument,
- an [organ \(as a biological feature\)](#) -- offering the sense of groups of tissues of distinctive form and function
- an [organ of state](#), or other group -- offering the sense of distinctive psychosocial functions

It is then useful to recognize the extent to which arrays of deities and other mythical orders are especially significant as indicative of recognition of distinctive functions and modes of knowing and acting -- "organs" conflating the three senses indicated above. The traditional tales regarding the relationships between such subtle entities are then valuable mnemonic devices indicative of how the "organ" is played.

**Periodic table:** The argument can be developed further by reference to the [periodic table of chemical elements](#) of which 2019 is the 150th anniversary -- declared by the United Nations to be the [International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements](#) and the theme of a special issue of *Nature* (*The Periodic Table*, 30 January 2019). Given the famed use of that table as a metaphorical framework by Primo Levi (*The Periodic Table* (1975), the issue includes a review thereof (Tim Radford, *In his element: looking back on Primo Levi's The Periodic Table*, *Nature*, 30 January 2019). Of relevance to discourse is that argument of Rachel Falconer (*Facing the Other through Metaphor: Primo Levi's The Periodic Table*, *Journal of Literature and Science*, 8, 2015, 2, 53-71).

The organization of that table as an image has provoked many imaginative alternatives of varying degrees of relevance to this argument:

- [Periodic Table of the Figures of Speech](#)
- [Periodic Table of Metaphors](#)
- [Poetic Table of the Elements](#)
- [A Periodic Table of Visualization Methods](#)
- [The Periodic Table of Spiritual Elements](#)
- [The Periodic Table of 56 Business Planning Strategies](#)
- [The Periodic Table of Content Marketing](#)

Curiously the ambition of many of these seems primarily to be one of "pigeon-holing" categories. Seemingly present only by implication is the dynamic interplay between the chemical elements implied by the original table. It is in this sense, especially if the table is understood as distinguishing different modalities of metaphorizing, that the table can be understood through the metaphor of a musical instrument as an "organ" which could be "played". The emphasis is then on how its modalities as an organ -- the contrasting metaphors and their patterns of consonance and dissonance -- can be artfully played to engender levels of meaning for which musical harmony is itself a powerful metaphor.

The art of metaphorizing then lends itself to understanding as "harmonizing". What cognitive melodies then merit imaginative evocation in relation to the challenges of global governance at this time?

Aspects of that understanding are developed in the following:

- [Tuning a Periodic Table of Religions, Epistemologies and Spirituality -- including the sciences and other belief systems](#) (2007)
- [Periodic Pattern of Human Knowing: implication of the Periodic Table as metaphor of elementary order](#) (2009)
- [Periodic table of elements as problematic sociopolitical metaphor](#) (2012)

Of further relevance to this argument is the sense in which the tabular organization of the chemical elements has evoked many [alternatives to the more conventional forms](#), many of them non-tabular. Ironically these have even been experimentally organized (Daniel Donahoo, *The Periodic Table of Periodic Tables*, *Wired*, 29 March 2010; *The Periodic Table of Periodic Tables*, *keaggy.com*).

With respect to the relevance of such organization to discourse, also of interest is the extent to which the nature of the "elements", and interrelationships between, them is a matter of continuing exploration by mathematicians (D. H. Rouvray and R. B. King (Eds), *Mathematics of the Periodic Table*, Nova Science, 2006). Such exploration is especially valuable in offering ways of thinking about the elements distinguished, most notably to what any name or label refers.

In the case of the chemical elements, these are notably distinguished by the complexity of [atomic orbitals](#). In atomic theory and quantum mechanics, this is a mathematical function that describes the wave-like behavior of either one electron or a pair of electrons in an atom -- or in the more complex case of a [molecular orbital](#). Related distinctions of similar subtlety are evident in the distinction between musical notes and chords -- more readily understood in terms of their wave-like and vibratory function. Assumptions that meaning is adequately carried by "superficial" definitions and names -- as with Morgan's "images" -- obscures the cognitive subtlety of such distinctions and the

dynamics of such modalities.

## Imagining a relevant philosophers' game -- and beyond

**A philosophers' game:** The suggestion above that this argument with respect to discourse bore significant resemblance to the traditional quest for a so-called "perfect language" -- a mythical philosophers' language -- is reinforced through comparison of the periodic table with the medieval board game of [rithmomachy](#). The alternative name of rhythmomachy offers an allusion to potential musical implications. Ironically this has also been termed the Philosophers' Game (Ann E. Moyer, *The Philosophers' Game: rithmomachia in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, 2001; André Platzer, *Rhythmomachia: the Philosopher's Game*, 2017; Cassidy Cash, *How to Play The Philosopher's Game*, YouTube, 6 April 2019).

The game was undoubtedly an inspiration to the magnum opus of Nobel Laureate [Hermann Hesse](#), as noted by Todd R. Harris (*The Interplay of Opposites, the Language of Experience, and the Geometry of Ascent: a comparison of Hermann Hesse's "Das Glasperlenspiel" and Nicholas of Cusa's "De Ludo Globi"*, 2001).

It can be readily assumed that the game was interpreted in metaphorical terms by some -- as has been the case with chess and go. There are many initiatives to design such a game in the web environment.

However, whilst the game has evoked extensive commentary, this tends to be misleading with regard to the metaphoric connotations of the above argument. These are emphasized to a greater degree in other commentary regarding the forms of discourse implied and sustained by other modes of game playing (James Paul Gee, *Unified Discourse Analysis: language, reality, virtual worlds and video games*, 2016; Nicola Whitton and Maggie Maclure, *Video game discourses and implications for game-based education*, *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 38, 2017; C. Thi Nguyen, *Philosophy of Games*, Wiley, 2017).

Interpretation of emergent forms of gaming as modes of sustainable discourse (notably including *Dungeons and Dragons*), invites consideration of the following news item at the time of writing:

For those familiar with [Minecraft](#), Mr Watson's character was attacked by a zombie baby wearing enchanted armour. He ran away from it and was shot in the back by a hidden skeleton, which knocked him into the spider. He could have survived all of this if he had eaten a health-giving golden apple sooner, he said. (Zoe Kleinman, *Minecraft player loses five-year-long game*, BBC News, 29 April 2019)

Artificial intelligence has now been developed to the point of defeating human champions in games like chess and go -- as with [AlphaGo](#). The intriguing prospect for the future is the development of AI capacity to design ever more complex games -- potentially incorporating the subtleties which can be imagined in the case of a "philosophers game" or Hesse's *Glass Bead Game*. These might include the kinds of discourse-related games identified by [transactional analysis](#) -- extended to more than two people ([Eric Berne](#), *Games People Play*, 1964).

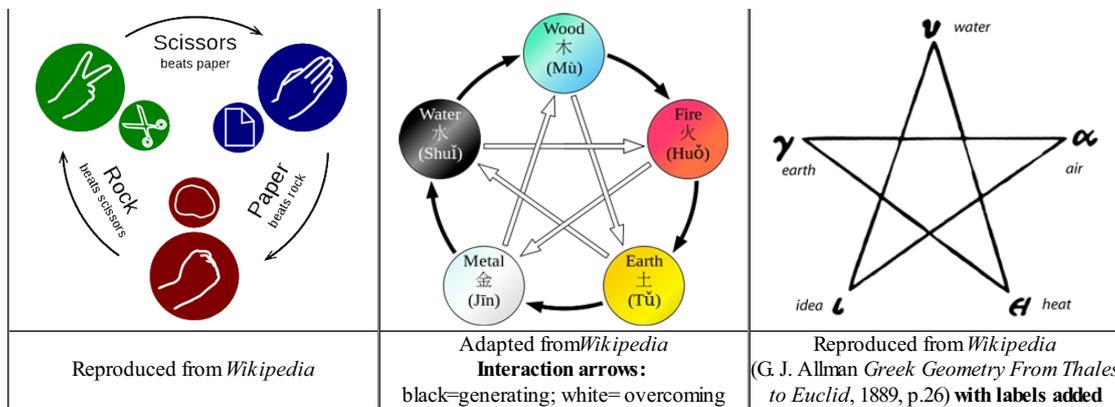
**Combining a perfect language with a philosophers' game:** In his supplementary exploration of the quest for a perfect language (as indicated above), [Umberto Eco](#) notes the seminal recognition by [Gottfried Leibniz](#) in the 17th century of the [binary encoding of the hexagrams in the Chinese I Ching](#). This anticipated development of the binary logic basic to the operation of computers. Eco includes the depiction of the classic circular configuration of hexagrams (*Serendipities: Language and Lunacy*, 1998, pp. 94-95). As an exercise in philosophical mathematics this merits exploration as both a perfect language and a form of philosophers' game.

Of particular relevance to the above argument, each of the 64 hexagrams in the [circular configuration](#) is traditionally framed by a metaphor subject to transformation into 6 other hexagrams (or more) -- themselves characterized by other metaphors, as with the process of transformation (to some degree). The binary structure also suggests an understanding of the circular configuration as a form of non-tabular periodic table, as variously explored by a number of authors. The game dimension is evident in the manner in which each hexagram is indicative of a strategic decision-making nexus for which the metaphor provides a mnemonic aid.

As with an organ, appropriately understood, the implication is that the configuration can be "played", however the "player" is implied in that process. This recalls the concerns with dialogue of [David Bohm](#) as a quantum physicist (*Implicate and explicate order*, *Bohm dialogue*), notably his understanding of [holomovement](#). Experientially this might be understood as related to virtuosity in dialogue (W. Barnett Pearce and Kimberly A. Pearce, *Combining Passions and Abilities: toward dialogic virtuosity*, *Southern Communication Journal*, 65, 2000, 2-3)

Engagement in that game frames the interplay between attention, misdirection and illusion, usefully explored as *Playing the Great Game with Intelligence* (2013). Missing in that context, and with respect to other metaphorically-empowered modes of discourse, is the nature of the relationship between "competing" metaphors in what is not a typical [zero-sum game](#). There is a degree of irony to the manner in which aspects of their relationship in the pattern as a whole are suggested by the simple game of [rock-paper-scissors](#) (itself of Chinese origin, and cultivated in Japan). That dynamic of "moves" can be recognized in more complex form in the Chinese *Wu Xing* pattern and is potentially implied in the [Hygeia \(Hugieia\)](#) pentagram of Pythagoreans, associated with health (*Cycles of enstoring forming mnemonic pentagrams: Hygiea and Wu Xing*, 2012; *Interplay of cognitive patterns in discourse on systemic change*, 2015). The latter stresses the relevance to discourse on metaphor, clearly meriting extension to the environment as a whole.

Suggestive insights into metaphorical games		
Rock-Paper-Scissors game	Chinese 5-phase <i>Wu Xing</i> cycle	Hygeia of Pythagoreans



**Implication of a central "hole" in the pattern:** Anticipating the following discussion of "circumlocution", the 3-fold and 5-fold images above could be explored as instances of such circumlocution -- as with the 8-fold and 64-fold configurations articulated in Chinese philosophy with respect to the *I Ching*.

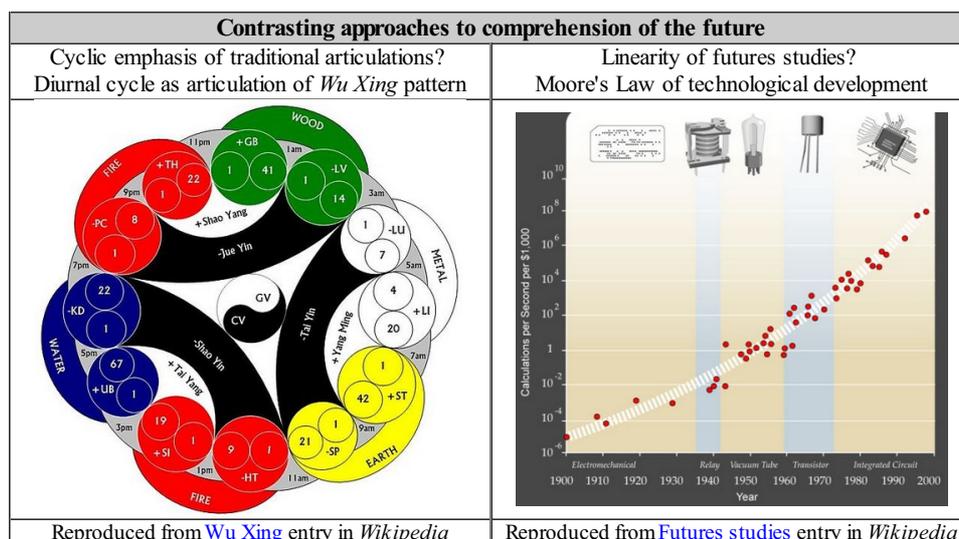
The configurations beg the question as to what, in cognitive terms, is implied by the empty centre. The question can be explored further in the light of mysterious artefacts engendered by the Roman Empire and Chinese culture, as discussed separately (*Time for Provocative Mnemonic Aids to Systemic Connectivity? Possibilities of reconciling the "headless hearts" to the "heartless heads"*, 2018; Amelia Carolina Sparavigna, *Chinese and European Ivory Puzzle Balls*, Zenodo, 23 June 2018).

In the case of the Roman Empire, it is the so-called **Roman dodecahedron** with 12 holes configured around an empty centre. In the Chinese case, it is so-called **puzzle balls**. These are concentrically nested ivory spheres with holes through which the surface of each sphere is intricately carved. There may be up to 20 such layers (Claire Voon, *The Mind-Boggling Artistry of China's Ivory Puzzle Balls*, *Atlas Obscura*, 3 May 2019).

Both artefacts offer resemblances to features of a periodic table -- especially to the nested orbitals of an atom in the case of the puzzle balls. There is little commentary on their cognitive significance; both are typically treated only as elegant curiosities.

**Comprehensible articulation of coherent dynamics?** Curiously approaches to global governance at this time, as inspired by Western culture, favour explicit recognition of a central principle -- as articulated in many "sterile" classification systems and exemplified by the strategy of **full-spectrum dominance**. That the consequences are currently experienced as chaotically divisive usefully encourages the imagination of other possibilities. It could be considered prudent to explore other patterns with an emphasis on popular comprehensibility, following the arguments of **Jeremy Lent** (*The Patterning Instinct: a cultural history of humanity's search for meaning*, 2017).

It is in this sense that Chinese articulations distinct from the *I Ching* also merit consideration in terms of the challenge of associating metaphors (as mnemonic aids, typically absent from sterile systems diagrams) with articulations of greater complexity -- especially when these together frame a comprehensible dynamic. One such example is the further articulation of the 5-fold *Wu Xing* pattern as follows:



In this period of crisis, the future tends to be formally framed in terms of linear predictions by the "serious" sciences -- if any framing beyond the short-term news cycle is considered meaningful. It is therefore appropriate to ask whether longer-term cyclic framings merit greater consideration, especially to the extent that they have widespread popular credibility -- potentially greater than the sciences. It is in this sense that the apparent failure of "**futures studies**" with respect to present-day official decision-making merits comparison with the deprecated modes of "**divination**" so valued in civilizations which may prove to have been far more sustainable than the current global civilization.

Of potential interest with respect to the articulation of the *Wu Xing* image (above left) is the rich pattern of distinctions with which metaphors are associated. Given that these all relate to features of the natural environment, it suggests a new way of exploring the complex of environment-climate change-resource issues -- and of presenting their interdependencies comprehensibly. Such an approach

has been argued separately (*Weather Metaphors as Whether Metaphors*, 2015; *Cognitive implication in a Chinese system articulated through weather-related metaphors*, 2015).

**Conference thought experiment:** With respect to this argument the artefacts suggest the possibility of a thought experiment -- even one to be explored in practice.

Rather than a conference being configured to discuss urgently a set of named themes -- agenda points -- how might the discussion flow if no specific reference was permissible to each such theme? What would be the dynamics of the event if participants were obliged to "talk around" the configuration of themes (as though they were not "politically correct") -- an exercise in avoidance in which a degree of coherence was ensured by metaphorical narratives?

In the case of [12 Roman deities](#) (with which the dodecahedron could well have been associated) -- exemplifying the highest values of that civilization -- withholding discussion of them could be deemed appropriate. Could avoidance of a set of of contemporary "hot topics" or primary values enable insights of relevance to governance? Rather than a conventional exhibition of known positions and oppositions, what skills would be engendered to enable sustainable discourse for the period of the event? The emphasis in the experiment is effectively on the collective management of the ignorance implied by current crises of governance.

The experiment can be further justified by the arguments of [Nicholas Rescher](#) (*Ignorance: on the wider implications of deficient knowledge*, 2009; *The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity*, 1985), or others ([Stuart Firestein](#), *Ignorance: How It Drives Science*, 2012; [Joseph Acquisto](#), *Poetry's Knowing Ignorance*, 2019). Some relevance is evident from more speculative explorations (*University of Ignorance: engaging with nothing, the unknown, the incomprehensible, and the unsaid*, 2013). One experiment of some relevance brought together professionals in group dynamics with contrasting skills -- on the understanding that the application of the skills of any one of them would be prohibited by the others (*The International School of Ignorance ? An ongoing experiment in dialogue meeting design*, 1996).

## Requisite metaphoric "circumlocution" avoiding disruptive disagreement

**Artful use of avoidance:** The possibility of metaphoricizing discourse calls for consideration of another requirement -- if that modality is to be sustainable. The argument implied above is the need to avoid the forms of confrontation characteristic of "turf wars", "being put on the spot" or "called into question" in a way which causes the dialogue to "collapse" (as a "wave-function").

Obvious examples whereby such confrontation is avoided are the limits implied in use of [circumlocution](#), euphemism, allusion (even double entendre), and political correctness, especially in formal settings ([Daniel Worden](#), *Developing Fluency in Circumlocution*, 2016). Clearly these include artful rhetoric typical of diplomatic discourse -- possibly constrained by *Robert's Rules of Order* or other such articulations. Such conventions are now obviously inadequate to the challenge of the times. Some other modality merits exploration.

Can circumlocution of an ever higher order be imagined, as is potentially implied by the [Triple Helix model of innovation](#) (*Psychosocial Learnings from the Spiral Form of Hurricanes: implications of the triple helix and the 3-fold triskelion as "cognitive cyclones"?* 2017).

**Unsayings:** With the primary constraint understood as avoidance of rendering explicit what is most "confrontational", the question is whether such modalities can be enhanced in some way without rendering them even more ineffectual. A valuable clue in this respect is the art of unsaying (or not-saying) as has been developed in certain forms of theological discourse where a primary requirement is to avoid inappropriate reference to what is most fundamental -- in that case deity ([Michael A. Sells](#), *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, 1994; [Robert K. Clark](#), *Unknowing and Unsayings: negation in the mystic quest*, 2006; [François Hugonnier](#), *Unsayings: Mystical Aspiration and Negativity in Paul Auster's Poetry*, *Caliban: French Journal of English Studies*, 2014).

Termed [apophasis](#), that modality raises the question as to whether it can be adapted to other contexts, as separately explored (*Being What You Want: problematic kataphatic identity vs. potential of apophatic identity?* 2008). Clearly there is a sense in which the most fundamental values and preoccupations of a discourse participant can be understood as a secular form of deity -- a challenge to articulation, even if that is considered inappropriate or offensive. The opposite may be the case where the preoccupations of any other in that discourse may be too offensive to be articulated in that context.

With reference to the literature on unsaying in relation to mysticism, [Sean Joseph Fitzpatrick](#) notes:

The use of "mysticism" and "mystic" as analytical terms in the social sciences is found to be problematic. Through an overview of current attempts to define the terms and a discussion of the use of the terms by representative theorists (Max Weber in sociology; Jacques Lacan in psychology) in examinations of representative "mystics" (Teresa of Avila and Meister Eckhart), the difficulties inherent in speaking psychologically and sociologically about mysticism are made clear. The identification of individuals as mystics is always tied to a political, economic, religious, and linguistic context. Any attempt to isolate elements common to an uses of the label "mystical" must take into account the motivations and cultural contexts of those who apply the labels as well as the differences in social contexts between mystical texts. Abandonment of use of the term would be premature; a better descriptive understanding may appear through an apophatic process of describing what mysticism is not. (*Saying and Unsayings Mysticism: the problem of defining mysticism in the social sciences*, 2000)

Whilst not conventionally understood as "mysticism", aspects of the unsaying modality are evident in flirtation, courtship, and advocacy. These may well be deprecated as "mystical" by the most rational. In the case of marketing, unsaying is evident in the widely known adage: *sell the sizzle and not the steak*. More challenging is discourse with a party with completely opposing values and agendas -- even held to reprehensible and repulsive. The art of dialogue is indeed then usefully described as circumlocution -- with a minimal degree of allusion to what is divisive, namely discourse by implication. Such indirection can be explored through dramatic comedy and [double](#)

*entendre*. It lends itself to potentially satirical exploration (*The Art of Non-Decision-Making -- and the manipulation of categories*, 1997).

**Revaluing the missing:** Irrespective of the theological preoccupation with avoiding explicit reference to deity, arguably any fruitfully meaningful philosophical language needs to encompass "something missing", as suggested by the arguments Terrence Deacon (*What's Missing from Theories of Information?* 2010). As discussed separately (*Necessary incompleteness*, 2014; *Cognitive mystery of holes, lacunae and incompleteness*, 2014), for Deacon:

The problem is this: *Such concepts as information, function, purpose, meaning, intention, significance, consciousness, and value are intrinsically defined by their fundamental incompleteness.* They exist only in relation to something they are not.... The "something" that each of these is not is precisely what matters most. But notice the paradox in this English turn of phrase. To "matter" is to be substantial, to resist modification, to be beyond creation or destruction -- and yet what matters about an idea or purpose is dependent on something that is not substantial in any obvious sense. So what is shared in common between all these phenomena? In a word, nothing -- or rather, something not present. (*Incomplete Nature: how mind emerged from matter*, 2011p. 23, *emphasis in original*)

A case for the relevance in this period of discourse of another kind is suggested by a traditional Daoist tale from *Zhuangzi*, as quoted by Ellen M. Chen (*In Praise of Nothing: an exploration of Daoist fundamental ontology*. 2010, p. 114). The reference is to the bliss associated with possession of a Dark Pearl as a symbol of chaos.

<b>Beyond wrangling debate from a Daoist perspective</b> (alternative translations of <i>Zhuangzi</i> , ch. 12, emphasis added)	
Huang-Di, enjoying himself on the north of the Red-water, ascended to the height of the Kun-lun (mountain), and having looked towards the south, was returning home, when he lost his dark-coloured pearl.	The Yellow Emperor went wandering north of the Red Water, ascended the slopes of Kunlun, and gazed south. When he got home, he discovered he had lost his Dark Pearl.
He employed <b>Wisdom</b> to search for it, but he could not find it. He employed (the <b>clear-sighted</b> ) Li Zhu to search for it, but he could not find it. He employed (the <b>vehement debater</b> ) Chi Gou to search for it, but he could not find it. He then employed <b>Purposeless</b> , who found it; on which Huang-Di said, 'How strange that it was <b>Purposeless</b> who was able to find it!'	He sent <b>Knowledge</b> to look for it, but Knowledge couldn't find it. He sent the <b>keen-eyed</b> Li Zhu to look for it, but Li Zhu couldn't find it. He sent <b>Wrangling Debate</b> to look for it, but Wrrangling Debate couldn't find it. At last he tried employing <b>Shapeless</b> , and <b>Shapeless</b> found it.
James Legge ( <i>Zhuangzi</i> , Chinese Text Project)	Burton Watson ( <i>The Complete Works of Chung Tzu</i> )

Curiously echoes of the "shapeless" and the "purposeless" are an explicit feature of the approach of Scott Simpkins (*Literary Semiotics: A Critical Approach*, 2001), focusing notably on the work of Umberto Eco as a leading semiotician. Simpkin sees the idea of semiotics as a "conversation" about sign theory and practice, explaining that:

This book is a bumpy, sometimes turbulent, tour through the discussion of semiotics. It also is a-thematic. By that, I mean that it doesn't exactly develop a thesis, or "go somewhere". (The conclusion is, appropriately, entitled: "No Conclusion") In part, this is intentional because, for me at least, such a discourse produces die kinds of yields you don't get out of more conventional, linear works. In this sense it's somewhat spatial in design or lack thereof. (p. 2).

## Sustainable discourse framed metaphorically as "orbiting"

Given that such forms already exist, is there a window of opportunity for a mode offering more fruitful implications of relevance to the times? Are there clues to how to engage fruitfully in discourse about matters which would otherwise be fundamentally divisive? **How indeed to refer to that of which one may not speak** -- as is the case in cultures where these feature as taboos (notably including specific reference to the dead)?

Ironically the question is as relevant with respect to personal "body odour" as it is with respect to global concerns such as overpopulation (*Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge: incommunicability of fundamentally inconvenient truth*, 2008; *United Nations Overpopulation Denial Conference: exploring the underside of climate change*, 2009).

Are there metaphors indicative of how to dialogue meaningfully about something sensitive -- without directly referring to it -- namely "discussing the unspeakable"? Are there more powerful ways of discussing a topic without discussing it -- as with the use of euphemism? Discourse by implication? The challenge of such "omission" can be framed otherwise in systemic terms (*Lipoproblems: Developing a Strategy Omitting a Key Problem -- the systemic challenge of climate change and resource issues*, 2009). The possibility could be usefully explored in terms of the mysterious nature of the distantly unreal in contrast with the real (*Local Reality of Overcrowding -- Global Unreality of Overpopulation: comprehensible reframing of engagement with global issues via metaphors of proximity*, 2019).

Curiously a valuable clue is to be found in the constraints and possibilities of aerospace navigation which -- in metaphorical terms -- offer a way of thinking about travelling between different "worlds", some (dangerously) "attractive" and some (dangerously) "repulsive". In both cases the art of navigation is to ensure a sustainable orbit and to avoid being drawn into the particular domain -- and to ensure the possibility of escaping from that orbit in order to travel to other "worlds". Use is of course commonly made of "orbit" in a metaphorical

sense in order to refer to a degree of attachment to a particular worldview or agenda. The capacity to "escape" from such an orbit is also recognized as a metaphor, most notably with respect to cults, schools of thought, and their "gurus".

The comparison is explored separately (*Orbiting Round Nothingness across Communication Space*, 2012). This argues that:

The question is whether the sense in which "orbit" is commonly used to describe the manner in which adherents "orbit" around a charismatic leader, for example, can benefit from insight into the variety of orbital patterns and possibilities identified in the case of space travel. The concern is whether such insights might be of relevance to the challenge of navigating a psychosocial space readily experienced as characterized by pointlessness and nothingness, as separately discussed (*Configuring the Varieties of Experiential Nothingness*, 2012). Given the appeal to the imagination of space travel in a period in which the need for "change" is widely stressed -- if only in response to a widely-felt sense of despair -- also of interest is whether the recognized technicalities of achieving orbit and travelling to distant planets offers insights into new ways of framing psychosocial change (*Implication of Personal Despair in Planetary Despair*, 2010).

The discussion is articulated in terms of the following:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orbital mechanics as a source of psychosocial insight</li> <li>Recognizing the variety of psychosocial orbits</li> <li>Distant planet as metaphor of archetypal other</li> <li>Clothoid as a psychosocial transition curve: from linear to circular</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reframing communication relationships</li> <li>From an "Interplanetary Transport Network" to an "Inter-other Transition Network"?</li> <li>Inter-other communication with minimum effort?</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

**Variety of psychosocial orbits in discourse:** As discussed there, the question is whether the detailed articulation of "orbits" by orbital mechanics can be related to understandings of "orbits" of a psychosocial nature -- or used imaginatively to elicit such recognition. A summary of the range of orbits is presented by *Wikipedia (List of Orbits)* under the following headings:

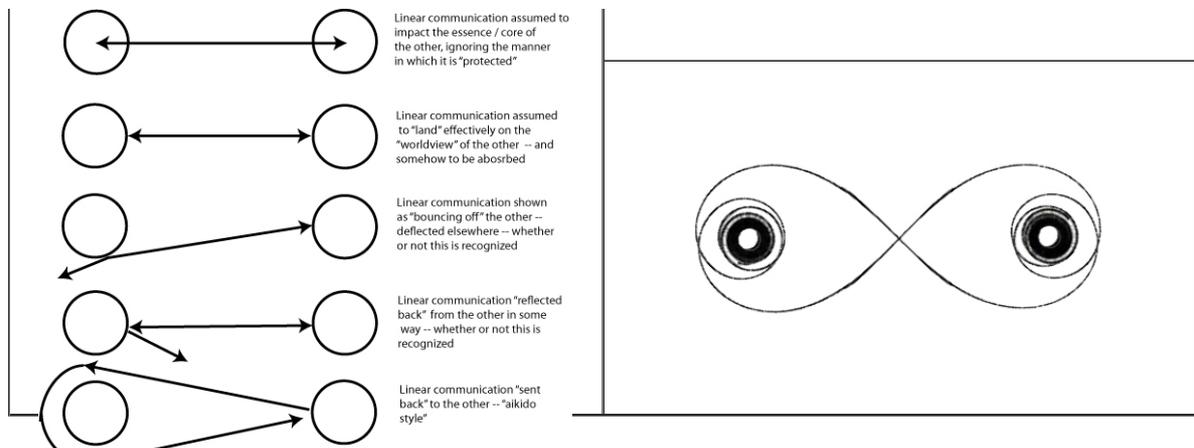
- [Centric classifications](#) ([galactocentric orbit](#), [heliocentric orbit](#), [geocentric orbit](#), [areocentric orbit](#), [lunar orbit](#))
- [Altitude classifications for geocentric orbits](#)
- [Inclination classifications](#) ([inclined orbit](#), [polar orbit](#), [Sun-synchronous orbit](#), [non-inclined orbit -- ecliptical orbit](#), [equatorial orbit](#), [near equatorial orbit](#))
- [Eccentricity classifications](#)
  - [circular orbit](#)
  - [elliptic orbit](#) ([geostationary or Geosynchronous transfer orbit](#), [Hohmann transfer orbit](#))
  - [parabolic orbit](#) ([escape orbit](#), [capture orbit](#))
  - [hyperbolic orbit](#)
  - [radial orbit](#) ([radial elliptic orbit](#), [radial parabolic orbit](#), [radial hyperbolic orbit](#))
- [Synchronous classifications](#)
- [Orbits in galaxies or galaxy models](#)
- [Special classifications](#)
- [Pseudo-orbit classifications](#) ([horseshoe orbit](#), [exo-orbit](#), [lunar transfer orbit](#), [prograde orbit](#), [retrograde orbit](#), [halo orbits](#), [Lissajous orbits](#))

**"Swinging by" as a key to non-divisive discourse:** As metaphors, potentially of particular relevance to the psychosocial dynamics of sustainable discourse are the articulations of:

- [Transfer orbits](#) (including [Hohmann transfer orbit](#) and [Bi-elliptic transfer](#)), typically elliptical orbits that allow space vehicles to move from one (usually substantially circular) orbit to another.
- [Gravity assist](#), in which a space vehicle swings by a planet and leaves in a different direction, at a different speed.
- [Interplanetary Transport Network](#) (as discussed below)

Rather than presenting discourse communication in linear terms (as typically portrayed in network diagrams), the argument there is that greater insight is obtained from non-linear relations, schematically distinguished as follows in terms of the [clothoid curve](#) or Euler spiral (*Clothoid as a psychosocial transition curve: from linear to circular*, 2012)..

<b>Discourse framed using orbital metaphors</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Relatively unfruitful modes of communication</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">More fruitful mode of communicative encounter through "orbiting" (as patterned by clothoid curves)</p>
	



There is a degree of "mnemonic charm" to this focus on "orbit", given that *Urbi et Orbi* is the name given to formal papal address and apostolic blessing -- especially its claimed implications for non-divisive global discourse.

**Discourse as an "Inter-other Transition Network"?** Specific reference is made to consideration of the little-known [Interplanetary Transport Network](#) (ITN). This offers powerful insights for communication and organization throughout psychosocial space, whether at the macro-level of global society or the micro-level of the individual. NASA enabled an early description of it following the work of [Martin Lo](#) which led to a simplification of the conceptualization and design of space missions (*Interplanetary Superhighway Makes Space Travel Simpler*, Jet Propulsion Laboratory, 17 July 2002) offering the following artist's impression ([NASA image](#) reproduced from *Wikipedia*).



As noted in that discussion, the "network" is a modality whereby nonlinearities in the gravity of the planets and moons of the solar system enable a trajectory to be determined of a highly perturbative, even chaotic, nature -- but possibly without any propulsion requirement, other than for course correction (Shane D. Ross, *The Interplanetary Transport Network*, *American Scientist*, 94, May-June, 2006; Ian Stewart, *Ride the celestial subway*, *New Scientist*, 27 March 2006).

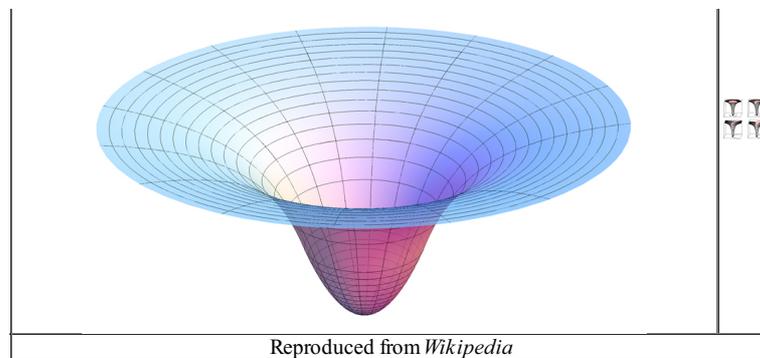
The "network" is a collection of gravitationally determined pathways through the solar system that require very little energy for a vehicle to follow. The ITN is based around a series of orbital paths predicted by [chaos theory](#) and the [restricted three-body problem](#) leading to and from the unstable orbits around the [Lagrangian points](#) -- points in space where the gravity between various bodies balances with the centrifugal force of an object there.

**Gravity of issues in discourse:** With respect to discourse, part of the charm of this metaphorical framing of non-divisive discourse is how divisive issues are effectively framed by the metaphor. Such weighty issues are typically presented as matters of gravity. They are indeed powerful attractors of attention into which others in any discussion may be drawn.

For the discussion to be sustainable -- between participants voicing other matters of gravity -- there is clearly a need for an ability to orbit gracefully between such points of focus. Recognizing the gravitational force of each, and their separation, is then clearly of concern to comprehension of the debate as a whole.

Under what conditions is it appropriate to "land" on an issue, given the gravity of it as recognized and proclaimed by some participants in the discourse? How does the pattern of discourse as a whole get drawn inexorably into a "gravity well"? What energy is required to escape into orbit from one -- to detach from any particular issue? There is of course a wide range of imagery relating to space travel which could offer suggestive responses in metaphorical terms.

Images of a gravity well -- towards comprehending the gravity of an issue in discourse?	



**Existential challenge of "pointlessness"?** If it is readily assumed that there is typically a "point" to discourse in a global civilization in crisis, any framing of an "Inter-other Transition Network" usefully highlights the challenge of pointlessness -- the trigger for the earlier discussion. What indeed is the "point" of discourse framed to enable skillful avoidance of any particular point -- because of the divisive challenge it engenders?

Should such a pattern of systematic avoidance in discourse be framed in terms of a form of "[disaster tourism](#)", shifting from point to point as a curious spectator avoiding any engagement? After all, what indeed is the point?

Skillful avoidance could also be explored in terms of the boredom engendered by discourse of such a style. What renders discourse more meaningfully interesting? Does sustainable discourse necessarily imply the capacity to engender and sustain interest? Intriguingly the attraction by which one is drawn into a "gravity well" in discourse could be compared to the manner in which attention is engendered, captured, sustained and given focus in contrast to boredom -- exploiting financial metaphors (*Investing Attention Essential to Viable Growth: radical self-reflexive reappropriation of financial skills and insights*, 2014).

**Framing the question: what is the point?** This argument makes a case for more skillfully avoiding any point which engenders disruptive conflict. Is the resulting discourse then inherently boring and unsustainable? What indeed is the point of such discourse?

That question frames the intriguing relationship -- potentially paradoxical -- between an interesting point and a question. What questions are interesting, when and for whom? Are interesting questions then similarly disruptive, calling for a metaphorical framing in order to be appropriately contained? More speculatively provocative is the question of what questions could be engendered in a context in which a "perfect language" is viable -- a hypothetical Paradise or Garden of Eden?

It is appropriate to note the variety of references to the "language of paradise" -- predictably claimed to be related to a [sacred language](#). If the perfect language is to be understood as related to the [Divine Language](#), traditionally understood as spoken there, this highlights the issue of whether interesting questions could be articulated in that language.

Arguably interest derives from exposure to catastrophe of some kind, and the advantages of adaptation to it -- as the daily news makes only too evident. Can "the point" of discourse be framed and contained more fruitfully through more challenging questions? Catastrophe theory and topological transformations, enabled by a metaphorizing process, would appear to offer possibilities in this respect (*Interrelating Cognitive Catastrophes in a Grail-chalice Proto-model: implications of WH-questions for self-reflexivity and dialogue*, 2005; *Metaphorical Geometry in Quest of Globality -- in response to global governance challenges*, 2009).

In sustaining interest, and in the hypothetical absence of catastrophe, what form might challenging questions take in the perfect language in paradise -- if any? Elements of the above argument have been presented in terms of "paracycling" (*World Introversion through Paracycling: global potential for living sustainably "outside-inside"*, 2013). Given the probable role of self-reflexivity and paradox in Paradise, it is somewhat unfortunate that etymologically the language of Paradise could not be recognized as "paradit".

## Metaphorizing as artful indulgence in misplaced concreteness?

In the quest for comprehensibility, metaphors are necessarily of greater simplicity than the subtlety they endeavour to communicate (especially hypothetical alternative frameworks). Hence the quest for mnemonic aids (*In Quest of Mnemonic Catalysts -- for comprehension of complex psychosocial dynamics*, 2007). Being relatively concrete in order to facilitate such comprehension, they merit exploration in terms of the fallacy of reification and [misplaced concreteness](#). Also termed "[mistaking the map for the territory](#)", as noted in the *RationalWiki*, and somewhat ironically in relation to metaphor:

The name is a metaphorical representation of mistaking words and symbols for things that they *could* mean, rather than what they *do* mean or those things themselves. It is sometimes referred to as the [Sanskrit](#) word "maya", but [Alfred Korzybski](#) referred to it as "*the illusion of mistaking the map for the territory*" and declared the maxim "*the map is **not** the territory*"

Given a degree of insight into wave/particle duality, it is appropriate to recognize the convenience of indulging in a "particular" view of the world -- at least momentarily -- if it is possible to shift between such perspectives via an implication in waves (*Being Neither a-Waving Nor a-Parting: cognitive implications of wave-particle duality in the light of science and spirituality*, 2013).

In that sense there is a case for recognizing the conditions under which it is appropriate to reverse the assertion of Korzybski, as discussed separately (*The Territory Construed as the Map: in search of radical design innovations in the representation of human activities and their relationships*, 1979).

Some credibility is given to the quantum dimension in this respect, as indicated by Gary Libben *The quantum metaphor and the organization of words in the mind*, *Journal of Cultural Cognitive Science* 1, 2017, 1, pp 49-55):

I suggest that metaphors from quantum physics, in particular the notions of wave/particle duality and superposition, are extremely valuable to an understanding of the contents of the mental lexicon and to the framing of research methodologies. Taken together, these perspectives lead us away from the assumption that the mind/brain contains representations for words. What they lead us toward is the view that the observation of words in the world may not require the postulation of words in the mind/brain.

Somewhat misleading is the phrasing "from quantum physics" in that both wave and particle are indeed metaphors highlighted by that world view, but particle could also be understood as a feature primarily characteristic of the classical mechanical worldview.

Provocatively it could however be said that it is the "particular concreteness" of particles which attracts interest as being so evidently "real" -- whether as a physical form, its collapse or its emergence. The sense of a "wave" as framed by quantum mechanics is an abstraction beyond any conventional cognitive grasp. However, ironically and paradoxically, it is the wave motion of particles -- notably recognized in the movement of the human body -- which constitutes an attractor, to a greater degree than any static condition of the body. Particularity is "sexy" and its "sexiness" is closely related to wave-like motions in which it may engage.

The experiential ambiguity is evident in the process of "falling in love" and all that is associated with that process. As an indulgence in concreteness and attachment it bears comparison with the operation of a "gravity well" (as described above). The process of conversion to a particular belief system could be seen as similar. There is then a sense of "capture" by a metaphorical gravity well -- meriting recognition as a fundamental biological process. The form and role of a flower as an attractor can be seen in that light -- given its function in biological reproduction.

Cognitively the question is then the identity of the attractee, potentially to be understood as metamorphizing through the process of attraction -- as with the attractor. The experiential ambiguity for both attractor and attractee is such that a transition from a cognitively internalized orbiting wave to an externalized particular concreteness can be seen as accompanied by partially externalizing the wave motion into physical dynamics (courtship rituals, etc). Whether the concreteness is held to be misplaced cognitively then depends on the ability to manage such placement appropriately.

Whilst such terms are readily perceived as ridiculous, the experiential and cognitive nature of the process is fundamental to the preoccupations of theology and psychoanalysis. Its framing through metaphorizing of some kind is clearly vital. The challenge to those favouring a purely rational articulation is whether this encompasses their fruitful attraction to any other. The challenge is well framed by Boulding (as cited above): *If personification is a metaphor, let us not despise metaphors -- we might be one ourselves* (Image: knowledge in life and society, 1956).

**Cognitive Internet of Things:** In a context partially dependent both on artful indulgence in concreteness (however misplaced), how might the rules of engagement be fruitfully reframed through metaphor?

Given the emerging recognition of an [internet of things](#), how might engagement with a "cognitive internet of things" -- as a metaphor -- enable a wave-like flexibility necessary to the transcendence of divisiveness? The following could be explored as a source of relevant metaphor:

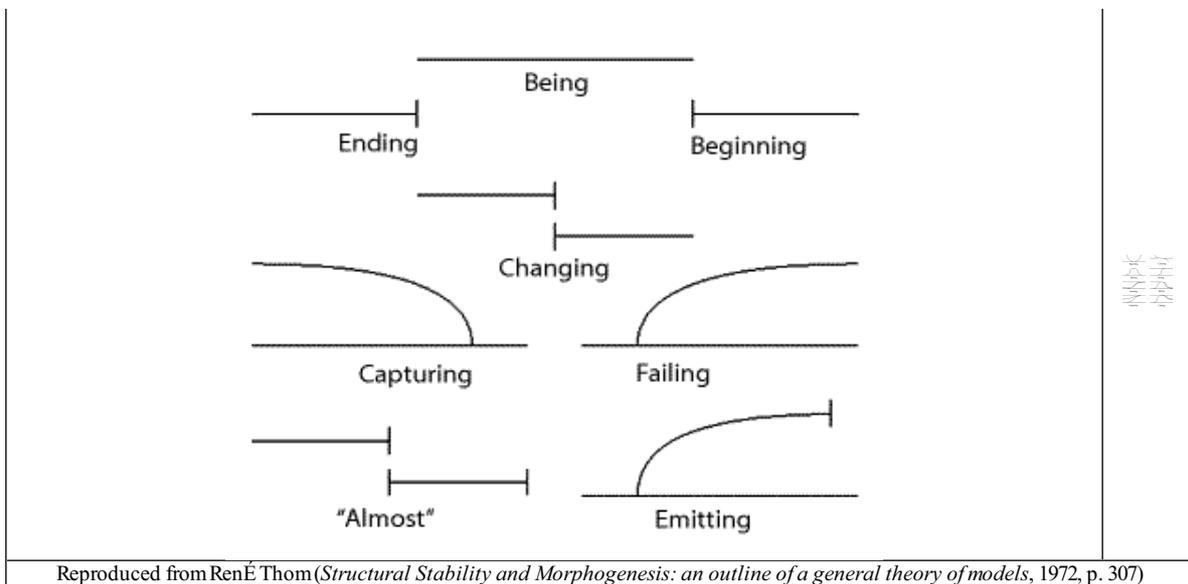
- Qihui Wu, et al: *Cognitive Internet of Things: a new paradigm beyond connection* (*IEEE Internet of Things Journal*, 1, 2014, 2;
- HendrikF. Hamann et al.: *Cognitive Internet of Things* (IBM, T.J. Watson Research Center, 2016)
- Huimin Lu (Ed.): *Cognitive Internet of Things: frameworks, tools and applications* (Springer, 2020).
- Arvind Sathi: *Cognitive (Internet of) Things: collaboration to optimize action* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)
- Chris O'Connor: *Reimagining the future with the cognitive Internet of Things* (*IBM Big Data and Analytics Hub*, 22 December 2015)

On the assumption that humour has a role to play in this argument, there is a strangely appropriate irony to the absence of reference to metaphor in the Cognitive Internet of Things -- known by the abbreviation of CIoT. Depending on the typography, this may be indistinguishable from ClOT. Given the obvious relevance of the CIoT to what is otherwise known as the [global brain](#), the dangers of an unforeseen future [clot on the brain](#) are already a concern.

## Re-imagining: metaphorizing, metamorphizing and cognitive shapeshifting

There is a curious relationship between metaphorizing and metamorphizing in discourse, given that they variously imply forms of "cognitive shapeshifting" through reframing -- more conventionally termed "re-imagining". The latter is consistent with use of discourse to imagine the future, if not present (*Engendering 2052 through Re-imagining the Present*, 2012; Elise Boulding, *The Future: Images and Processes*, 1994).

As with metaphorizing, metamorphizing is rarely used -- and equally ugly, despite being indicative of a fundamental process. Valuable clues to the process of metamorphizing, as it might relate to struggling metaphorically with another in discourse, are offered by René Thom (*Structural Stability and Morphogenesis: an outline of a general theory of models*, 1972), best known in terms of its articulation of catastrophe theory. This raises the question as to whether discourse can be usefully explored in terms of the variety of catastrophes -- as discussed separately (*Potential emergence of coherent transformational connectivity*, 2012).



Of interest is how these "archetypes" relate to the distinctions in the martial arts and other strategic studies with respect to engagement with an other -- potentially including those of the art of rhetoric. Of relevance, as cited above, are:

- the rules of [rithmomachy](#), as the Philosophers' Game
- the modes of interplay in musical improvisation, as articulated by Vinko Globokar
- the distinctive postures in fencing, as articulated by Camillo Agrippa

**Cognitive morphogenesis:** The arguments of Thom regarding morphogenesis continue to be developed in relation to recognition of patterns (Paul Bourguin and Annick Lesne, Eds., *Morphogenesis: Origins of Patterns and Shapes*, 2010; Jeremy Lent, *The Patterning Instinct: a cultural history of humanity's search for meaning*, 2017). They help to focus understanding of how metaphorizing may be fundamental to cognitive morphogenesis. Thus for V. V. Ilin:

In the widely known works of F. Varela, and U. Maturana automorphism is associated mainly with the study of the adaptation of biological organisms. It appears, however, that the possibilities of this approach are more significant. The author believes that the driving force of thinking activity is the constructive combination. Cognitive morphogenesis processes as a free combination of symbolic forms, managed by rules of mental experimentation over one's own resources, resulting in the development of the spiritual world of a person. (*Symbolic Construction of Reality: scenography of the world, Liberal Arts in Russia*, 2, 2013, 6)

The argument is echoed by G. Khairullin, et al. (*Social Life of Knowledge: Epistemological Analysis. Journal of History Culture and Art Research*. 6. 2017, 229).

**Cognitive shapeshifting?** Given the fear with which [shapeshifting](#) is associated in mythology and folklore, it is intriguing to consider that the potential of "cognitive shapeshifting" may merit more attentive exploration, as argued separately (*Secret sharing, Shapeshifting and Embodiment: reintegration of a remaindered world*, 2011).

The case for doing so is all the greater given the manner in which the leader of the world's superpower has been framed in the deprecated sense (David Moye, *Donald Trump Is A Shape-Shifting Lizard*, *The Huffington Post*, 31 May 2016; Kevin Mattson, *Donald Trump, Shapeshifter*, *Democracy*, 4 November 2016; James Fallows, *After the 'Nice' Debate: Trump's Shape-Shifting Power*, *The Atlantic*, 11 March 2016). Use of that metaphor can be usefully contrasted with other framings from mythology in which it is [Loki](#) as a [trickster](#) deity who exemplifies shapeshifting (*Identity in question via Trump: Narcissus vs Loki?*, 2017).

Rather than as deprecated, the more intriguing alternative is suggested by the widely promoted slogan *Be the Change* -- the abbreviation of a quote from Gandhi: *You must be the change you wish to see in the world*. How indeed to "be the change" without some form of shapeshifting? In a surreal context, to what extent does being the change require "trickster capacity"?

## Sustainable discourse: longest conflict versus longest conversation?

Although a seemingly trivial question, it is intriguing to explore whether it has been possible to identify the "longest" conversation in comparison with the "longest" conflict on the assumption that this is an indication of sustainability -- whether desirable or not. This begs the question as to whether and how interruptions of any kind are to be considered. "War as conversation", as well as "war as dialogue", may be variously recognized as "conversation by other means".

With respect to conflict and war, there are various indications:

- Longest wars ever fought (*The Top 5 Longest Wars Ever; 10 of the Longest Wars Ever Fought*)
  - [Arauco War](#): Colonial Spaniards and The Mapuche People (345 years, 1536-1881)
  - [Three Hundred and Thirty Five Years War](#): Netherlands and Isles of Scilly (335 years, 1651-1986)
  - [Achinese War](#): Netherlands vs. Aceh (31 years, 1873-1904).
  - [Hundred Years War](#): England and France (116 years, 1337-1453)

- [Thirty Years War](#): most of Europe (1618-1648).
- [Seven Years War](#): European countries (1756 and 1763)
- [Eighty Years War](#): Netherlands (1568-1648)
- [Greco-Persian Wars](#) (52 years, 500 BC to 448 BC)
- [Wars of the Roses](#) (30 years, 1455 to 1485)
- [Peloponnesian War](#): Sparta vs. Athens, (37 years. 431-404 BCE)
- [Punic Wars](#): Rome vs. Carthage (118 years, 264-146 BCE).
- [Wars of the Diadochi](#): Alexander's Generals (48 years, 323-275 BCE).
- [Crusades](#): in the Holy Land (196 years, 1095-1291)
- [List of civil wars](#) (*Wikipedia*)
- With respect to the USA:
  - Peter L. Bergen: [The Longest War: the enduring conflict between America and Al-Qaeda](#) (2011)
  - [Lengths of United States participation in wars](#) (*Wikipedia*)

In the case of discourse, a useful distinction could be made between monologues, dialogues, trialogues and N-logues.

- Monologue: With a variety of references, this is potentially the least relevant to the current argument, except to the extent that the speaker has a passive audience. It includes monologues in plays and movies, as well as parliamentary [filibusters](#). Potentially of greater interest are notions of a life-long exchange with oneself.
- Dialogue This is potentially interesting, especially where it includes exchanges between two people, possibly over years. Jung and Freud are said to have discussed for 12 hours when they first met. References tend to focus on dialogues in movies.
- Trialogues: Reference is made to the longest trialogue in Brussels regarding the EU Strategic Investment Fund (12.5 hours)
- N-logues: These are best recognized as "longest conversation" or "longest discussion"

There is no lack of web references to the "longest conversation" (or equivalents), and notably a site for [Conversation World Records](#) (although most of the indications are trivial). Potentially the most relevant are:

- Internet forum threads: As "discussion chains", these are a feature of various studies (Nasrullah Memon and Reda Alhaji, *From Sociology to Computing in Social Networks*, 2010):
  - [The longest discussion in the world?](#) (*OpenDemocracy*, 8 March 2005), is said to have been evoked by the BBC's [The Power of Nightmares](#) TV series. It gave rise to 1000 posts on an internet discussion thread
  - [Longest Discussion Thread on an Internet Forum?](#) which notes that the *The Question None of Us Wants to Think About*, gave rise to over 14,000 replies from 2010 until 2012.
- As "longest debate":
  - Charles Whalen and Barbara Whalen: [The Longest Debate: a legislative history of the 1964 Civil Rights Act](#) (Seven Locks Press, 1989)
  - UK Parliament: The longest debate lasted nine years and six months, from 26 November 1935 to 15 June 1945.
  - Australian Parliament: [Bills debated for longer than 20 hours 1990-2017](#)
- Hypothetical communication with extraterrestrials, is especially valuable as a metaphor in a civilization in which many perceive others to be distant "aliens" (beyond any conventional possibility of contact):
  - [The longest conversation](#) (*Blog of the Long Now Foundation*, 28 February 02008), regarding a potential 21,000 year delay between sending and receiving a message

References to the "longest dialogue" could usefully include those to exemplary "life-long exchanges" (on which there are many comments):

- Plato's "longest dialogue", namely [The Laws](#)
- Life-long exchange:
  - The imaginary exchange of romantic letters between [Tristan and Iseult](#)
  - [Siblingship as life-long exchange](#)
  - Kingsley Amis / Phillip Larkin
- Extensive references to the dialogue of humanity with nature could be understood as exemplary, given its articulation through metaphor, and the degree to which it is inherently conflictual (["Human Intercourse": "Intercourse with Nature" and "Intercourse with the Other"](#), 2007),

References to the "longest conference" notably include:

- [United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea](#) (UNCLOS III) which took place between 1973 and 1982 in 16 sessions

In the light of understandings of game-playing as a mode of sustainable discourse, the many references to the "longest game" (notably in chess, poker, and baseball) are also of some relevance:

- [The 10 video games that take the longest time to finish revealed: can you guess which one takes 693 hours to beat?](#)

The inquiry could be taken further by recognizing that:

- an organization, especially an international organization, could be understood as a sustainable conversation
- as with tribal feuds, the long-term co-existence of competing world views could constitute a form of "sustainable conversation", as in the case of the main religions or ideologies (irrespective of efforts at their reconciliation in conferences). The stand-off over

centuries between the Abrahamic religions could be seen as a form of conversation -- a "standing wave".

In each case the question is then how and why does discourse become unsustainable? Is the explicit assertion of strategic principles and fundamental values essentially a "conversation-stopper"? (Stuart Rosenbaum, *Must Religion be a Conversation-Stopper?* *The Harvard Theological Review*, 102, 2009; Richard Rorty, *Religion as Conversation-stopper*, *Common Knowledge*, 3, 1994; Michael Casey, *The Ultimate Conversation Stopper: does life have meaning?* *MercatorNet*, 10 April 2008).

---

## References

Joseph Acquisto. *Poetry's Knowing Ignorance*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2019

Mats Alvesson. *Metaphorizing the Research Process*. In: *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research Methods: Methods and Challenges*, 2018 [[abstract](#)]

Mihailo Antovic. *Metaphor in Music or Metaphor About Music: a contribution to the cooperation of cognitive linguistics and cognitive musicology*. *Metaphors We Study: Contemporar*, 2015 [[abstract](#)]

Samuel Arbesman. *The Half-life of Facts: why everything we know has an expiration date*. Current, 2012

Nicholas Asher and Alex Lascarides. *Metaphor in Discourse*. *AAAI Technical Report*, SS-95-01, 1995 [[text](#)]

Akilesh Ayyar. *On Metaphorization and the Validity of Every Experience*. *Sifting to the Truth*, 2 November 2017 [[text](#)]

Elise Boulding. *The Future: Images and Processes*. Sage, 1994

Kenneth Boulding:

- *Ecodynamics: a new theory of societal evolution*. Sage, 1978
- *Image: knowledge in life and society*. University of Michigan Press. 1956

Tom Brass. *The Unsayings of Marxism: capitalist accumulation and unfreedom in labour markets, identities, controversies*. *Studies in Critical Social Sciences*, 102, 2017 [[abstract](#)]

Y. Brazhuk. *The sources of metaphorization and peculiarities of the metaphorization process in medical terminology*. *Science and Education a New Dimension*. *Philology*, 31, 2017, 118 [[text](#)]

L. Cameron. *Metaphor in Educational Discourse*. Continuum, 2003

Guilherme Lima Cardozo. *Circular Metaphorization: the metaphor unveiling itself in the universe of the Torah*. 5, 2015, 14 [[abstract](#)]

James P. Carse. *Finite and Infinite Games: a vision of life as play and possibility*. Ballantine Books, 1987

Ellen M. Chen. *In Praise of Nothing: an exploration of Daoist fundamental ontology*. Xlibris Corporation, 2010

Paul Chilton. *Security Metaphors: Cold War Discourse from Containment to Common House*. Peter Lang, 1996

Paul Chilton and Mikhail Ilyin. *Metaphor in Political Discourse: the case of the 'Common European House'*. *Discourse and Society*, 4, 1993, 1, pp. 7-31

Edward de Bono:

- *I Am Right, You Are Wrong: From This to the New Renaissance: From Rock Logic to Water Logic*. Viking, 1991
- *Six Thinking Hats*. Penguin, 1987
- *Six Action Shoes*. Fontana, 1991
- *Six Frames For Thinking About Information*. Vermilion, 2008

Victor S. M. de Guinzbourg:

- *Wit and Wisdom of the United Nations: proverbs and apothegms of diplomacy*. United Nations, 1961
- *Wit and Wisdom of the United Nations: or the Modern Machiavelli*. 1965

Terrence W. Deacon:

- *Incomplete Nature: how mind emerged from matter*. W. W. Norton, 2011
- *What's Missing from Theories of Information?* In: Paul Davies and Niels Henrik Gregersen (Eds.), *Information and the Nature of Reality: From Physics to Metaphysics*. Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 146-169 [[text](#)]

Daniela Díaz-Rojas and Jorge Soto-Andrade. *Enactive metaphors in mathematica problem solving*. *CERME*, 10, 2017 [[text](#)]

Ehtibar N. Dzhamfarov. *Mathematical Theorizing versus Mathematical Metaphorizing: A Commentary on Rudolph*. *Culture and Psychology*, 12, 2006, 2 [[abstract](#)]

Umberto Eco:

- *The Search for the Perfect Language in the European Culture*. John Wiley, 1995 [[summary](#)]
- *Serendipities: Language and Lunacy*. Phoenix, 1998 [[summary](#)]
- *On the Possibility of Generating Aesthetic Messages in an Edenic Language*. In: *The Role of the Reader: explorations in the semiotics of texts*, Indiana University Press, 1979, pp. 90-100

- Philip Eubanks. *A War of Words in the Discourse of Trade: the rhetorical constitution of metaphor*. SIU Press, 2000
- Sean Joseph Fitzpatrick. *Saying and Unsayng Mysticism: the problem of defining mysticism in the social sciences*. Master's Thesis, Rice University, 2000 [[abstract](#)]
- Gemma Corradi Fiumara. *The Metaphoric Process: connections between language and life*. Routledge, 2005
- Kathleen Forsythe. *Cathedrals in the Mind: the architecture of metaphor in understanding learning*. In: Trapp R. (eds) *Cybernetics and Systems '86*. Springer, 1986 [[abstract](#)]
- Howard Gardner and Ellen Winner. *The Development of Metaphoric Competence: implications for humanistic disciplines*. *Critical Inquiry*, 5, 1978, 1, pp. 123-141 [[abstract](#)]
- Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr:
- *Metaphor Wars: Conceptual Metaphors in Human Life*. Cambridge University Press, 2017
  - *The Poetics of Mind: figurative thought, language, and understanding*. Cambridge University Press, 1994
- David. R. Gibson. *Talk at the Brink: deliberation and decision during the Cuban Missile Crisis*. Princeton University Press, 2012
- Oscar F. Goncalvez, Margarida R. Henriques and Paulo P. P. Machado. *Nurturing Nature: cognitive narrative strategies*. In: Lynne E. Angus, John McLeod *The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy: Practice, Theory and Research*. Sage, 2004 [[abstract](#)]
- Robert Graves. *Seven Days in New Crete*. Cassell, 1949 [[summary](#)]
- Susan Haack. "Dry Truth and Real Knowledge": epistemologies of metaphor and metaphors of epistemology. In: Jaakko Hintikka (Ed), *Aspects of Metaphor*, Springer, 1994, pp. 1-22
- Kathleen Robin Hart and John H. Long Jr. *Animal Metaphors and Metaphorizing Animals: an integrated literary, cognitive, and evolutionary analysis of making and partaking of stories*. *Evo Edu Outreach*, 2011, 4, pp. 52-63 [[abstract](#)]
- Mahmood Hashemian and Mohammad Reza Talebi Nezha. *The Development of Conceptual Fluency and Metaphorical Competence in L2 Learners*. *Linguistik online*, 30, 2006, 1 [[abstract](#)]
- Larisa Ilinska, Marina Platonova and Tatjana Smirnova. *Metaphorical Competence in Professional Communication*. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 236, 2016, December, pp. 254-259 [[abstract](#)]
- Noriko Iwamoto. *Constructing Reality through Metaphorizing Processes in Wartime Reporting*. *Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, n7 p56-71 1996 [[abstract](#)]
- Aydogan Kars. *Unsayng God: negative theology in Medieval Islam*. Oxford University Press, . 2019
- O. Kitayama. *Metaphorization--making Terms*. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. 68, 1987, 4, pp. 499-509 [[abstract](#)]
- George Lakoff:
- *Why environmental understanding, or "framing" matters: an evaluation of the EcoAmerica Summary Report*. *Huffington Post*, 19 May 2009 [[text](#)].
  - *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things. What Categories Reveal about the Mind*. Chicago University Press
- George Lakoff and Mark Johnson:
- *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press, 1980
  - *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*. Basic Books, 1999
- Jeremy Lent. *The Patterning Instinct: a cultural history of humanity's search for meaning*. Prometheus Books, 2017
- Bogdanka Pavelin Lesic. *The Metaphorization of Space in Speech and Gesture*. [[abstract](#)]
- Alan Libert. *A Priori Artificial Languages*. Lincom Europa, 2000
- J. Littlemore. *Metaphoric competence: a language learning strength of students with a holistic cognitive style*. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35, 2001, 3, pp. 459-491.
- J. Littlemore and G. Low. *Metaphoric competence and communicative language ability*. *Applied Linguistics*, 27, 2006, 2, pp. 268-294.
- Rodrigo José Loyola Martin. *Metamorphization in Contemporary Songs*. Universidad Nacional de La Pampa, 2013 [[text](#)]
- Sarah A. Mattice. *Metaphor and Metaphilosophy: philosophy as combat, play, and aesthetic experience*. Lexington Books, 2014 [[review](#)]
- Terrence Merrigan. *'Saying and Unsayng, to a Positive Result': Newman on the Practice of Theology in a Liberal Age*. 2010
- Arnold Mindell. *Quantum Mind: the edge between physics and psychology*. Lao Tse Press, 2000
- Gareth Morgan. *Images of Organization*. Sage, 1986
- Paul Bourguine and Annick Lesne (Eds.), *Morphogenesis: Origins of Patterns and Shapes*, Springer, 2010
- Ann E. Moyer. *The Philosophers' Game: rithmomachia in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*. University of Michigan Press, 2001
- Krzysztof Mudyn. *On the Two Ways of Metaphorizing the World: Pars Pro Toto or Intra Pro Extra?* *Polish Sociological Review*, 166, 2009, pp. 179-192 [[abstract](#)].

Cornelia Müller. Metaphorizing as Embodied Interactivity: what gesturing and film viewing can tell us about an ecological view on metaphor. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 34, 2019, 1, pp. 61-79 [[abstract](#)]

Andreas Musolff. Metaphor and Political Discourse: analogical reasoning in debates about Europe. Palgrave Macmillan, 2004

Adina Nergheș, Ina Hellsten, Peter Groenewegen. A Toxic Crisis: Metaphorizing the Financial Crisis. *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 2015 [[abstract](#)]

Maurice Olenker. The Languages of Paradise: race, religion, and philology in the nineteenth century. Harvard University Press, 1992

Luciana Parisi. Contagious Architecture: Computation, Aesthetics and Space. MIT, 2013

David Parry. Umberto Eco and the Echoes of Adamic Language. *Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich*, 58, 2 [[text](#)]

Gordon Pask. Conversation Theory: applications in education and epistemology. Elsevier, 1976

Helena Pavletic. Metaphorization of Nautical Terms. 2017 [[abstract](#)]

J. Petersen. Playing at the World: a history of simulating wars, people, and fantastic adventures from chess to role-playing games, Unreason Press, 2012.

Richard Pratte. Thinking as Modeling, Analogizing and Metaphorizing. *The Review of Education*, 3, 1977, 6, pp. 397-406 [[abstract](#)]

Bridget Pupillo. Apophasis as Apocalypse: the language of unsaying in the *Commedia* and the *Kitab al-Mi'raj*. [[text](#)]

Nicholas Rescher:

- Ignorance: on the wider implications of deficient knowledge. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009
- The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and implications of philosophical diversity. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985

Masoud Khalili Sabet and Marjaneh Tavakoli. Metaphorical Competence: a neglected component of communicative competence. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 4, 2016, 1 [[abstract](#)]

Aysel Safarova. Objective Laws of Phenomenon of Metaphorization in Discourse. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8, 2018, 3 [[abstract](#)]

Michael A. Sells. Mystical Languages of Unsayings. University of Chicago Press, 1994 [[contents](#)]

Elena Semino. Metaphor in Discourse. Cambridge University Press, 2008 [[abstract](#)]

Scott Simpkins:

- Literary Semiotics: A Critical Approach. Lexington Books, 2001
- The Semiotics of Post-Semiotics. *Semiotic Review of Books*, 7, 1991, 1 [[text](#)]

M. J. Sinding. Body of Vision: Northrop Frye and the Poetics of Mind. University of Toronto Press, 2013

Gerard Steen. Three Kinds of Metaphor in Discourse: a linguistic taxonomy. In: Musolff A., Zinken J. (eds), *Metaphor and Discourse*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 [[abstract](#)]

Aleksander Szwedek. The Nature of Domains and the Relationships between them in Metaphorization. *Review of Cognitive Linguistics*, 12, 2014, 2 [[abstract](#)]

René Thom. Structural Stability and Morphogenesis: an outline of a general theory of models. W. A. Benjamin, 1972

Ludger van Dijk. Laying down a path in talking. *Philosophical Psychology*, 29, 2016, 7 [[abstract](#)]

Francisco J. Varela. Laying down a path in walking. In W. I. Thompson (Ed.). *Gaia: A Way of Knowing*, Lindisfarne Press, 1987, pp. 48-64

Francisco J. Varela and Humberto R. Maturana. *The Tree of Knowledge: the biological roots of human understanding*. Shambhala, 1987

Francisco J. Varela, W. Thompson, and E. Rosch.. *The embodied mind: cognitive science and human experience*. The MIT Press, 1991

O. S. Vasylchenko. The Metaphorization of Political Terms in Media. *Linguistics: Lingviculturology*, 12, 2018, 1 [[abstract](#)]

Mark J. Webber. Metaphorizing the Holocaust: The Ethics of Comparison. *Images*, 8, 2011, 15-16 [[text](#)]

Alexander Wendt:

- Quantum Mind and Social Science: unifying physical and social ontology. Cambridge University Press, 2015
- Social Theory of International Politics. Cambridge University Press, 1999

Emma Wippermann. Metaphors for Change: Re-Metaphorizing the Metaphors We Live By. *Institutional Scholarship*, 2012 [[abstract](#)]

J. P. Wolf. *Building Imaginary Worlds: the theory and history of subcreation*. Routledge, 2012

Claire E. Wolfeich. Practices of 'Unsayings': Michel de Certeau, Spirituality Studies, and Practical Theology. *Spiritus*, 12, 2012, pp. 161-171 [[text](#)]

Jörg Zinke. Discourse Metaphors: the link between figurative language and habitual analogies. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 18, 2006, 3, pp.

445-466 [[abstract](#)]

Jörg Zinken, Ina Hellsten and Brigitte Nerlich. Discourse Metaphors. *Body, Language and Mind*, 2, 2008, pp. 363-386 [[text](#)].

---



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#).

For further updates on this site, [subscribe here](#)