



# laetus in praesens

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## Ensuring Dynamics of Sustainability by Appreciative Recognition of Evil

### Engaging otherwise with the paradoxes of positive and negative

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#### Introduction

The future may well see as incredible the dependence of society on the perceived existence of evil and its assumed pervasiveness. Its existence featured in the authoritative acceptance speech of the Nobel Peace Prize by Barack Obama to the effect: *For make no mistake: evil does exist in the world (Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, 10 December 2009)*. Yet curiously this recognition seemingly did not give rise to institutional initiatives and global strategies in response to it during his presidency with the resources at his disposal.

Whilst the religions have long featured its existence in their theologies, the country claiming world leadership in science seemingly devoted no resources to the prevalence of evil and the remedial responses it might be assumed are required -- unless the many "virtual wars" are to be seen as proxy wars to that end (*Review of the Range of Virtual Wars, 2005*). As thereby implies, any such response is perhaps to be found in action against surrogates of evil -- without formally naming how evil engenders the surrogate. Are many institutions indeed to be understood as effectively engaged in proxy wars against evil -- including the Specialized Agencies of the UN?

More intriguing for the future is the dependence of entertainment on manifestations of evil and those embodying it -- as the focus of plots and narratives engaging attention worldwide. What proportion of media -- whether films, books, plays or works of art -- is then to be considered as dependent on evil and its embodiment? Does the greatest creativity depend on representation of some kind of "axis of evil" to whatever degree it is implied and disguised?

The question takes a different form in competitive sports which are a major focus of entertainment. The opponent is readily upheld as the embodiment of evil over which triumphant victory is sought. The term "evil" may well not be used in public commentary -- being more evident in the perceptions and exchanges of individual spectators.

Far more problematic is the transformation of sport into military engagement with an enemy -- paralleled by the activities of the security services. Like any enemy, the opponent is readily defined as an expression of the essence of evil -- and the embodiment of it. Evil is then to be recognized as a primary motivating force in society. That perception is carefully cultivated by supporting propaganda. For the security services responding to perceived sources of threat -- whether criminals or terrorists -- these are most readily framed as the embodiment of evil to elicit a focused collective response..

It is of course the case that both the military and the security services are then readily presented as the embodiment of the opposite of evil -- namely the heroic embodiment of the good. As such their engagement with their opponents constitutes a primary source of entertainment, whether as news of reality or in fictionalised form. Violence, whether in the media or otherwise, is held to be essential to a healthy information diet -- although the contrary may be vigorously claimed, however hypocritically. The vicarious experience of violence may well meet the perversity of a need known as *Schadenfreude* -- pleasure in the suffering of others, whether individuals or societies. A much higher order of skill is required to create appealing entertainment which avoids violence of any form -- hence its relative rarity.

Rather than "good" or "evil", current appreciation of the situation and its dynamics is reframed in public discourse through use of "positive" and "negative" -- avoiding the controversies evoked by "evil" in public discourse. Less evident is whether these abstractions engender the interest and emotions appreciated in much entertainment. Every effort may well be made in discourse to focus on the positive and to exclude the negative -- ensuring a disconnect with the engagement on which successful entertainment is typically dependent.

The situation is of course not as simple as the framing above, as is evident in creative efforts to render entertainment interesting. There is extensive exploration of dynamics in which the good come to be perceived as evil through the drama, or those framed as evil come to be perceived as good. This dynamic is typically explored in the relation between the security services and criminals. Uncertainty as to whether one or the other is the embodiment of the good or of evil is cultivated in order to increase the interestingness of the entertainment.

The difficulty for society is that those who might be assumed to embody the good -- authorities of every kind -- tend now to be suspected of a degree of evil intent, whatever the euphemisms used. The suspicion is confirmed by publicised instances (misappropriation of funds, etc) or personal experience (police violence, etc). The corresponding difficulty is that those successfully labelled as a threat to social cohesion -- criminals and terrorists -- may well be recognized as beneficent in some form, and a corrective to the abuses of authority. As revolutionaries, they may subsequently become authorities in their own country -- even presidents.

The future may see as ironic the inability to engender a form of public discourse to explore such matters -- other than to embody them in surrogate form, whether fictionalised entertainment, competitive sport or military engagement against an enemy. Religions may claim to have developed such a mode of discourse. Their lack of success in this respect is obvious from the conflicts they engender, most obviously between those claiming a common heritage -- the Abrahamic religions. As such they are themselves an embodiment of the problematic dynamic they purportedly deplore -- each recognizing a degree of evil in the other through their misguided dogma, presumably now to be labelled misinformation, if not disinformation.

Given the dependence on evil, even an addiction to it in some form -- whether acknowledged or not -- the question here is whether it invites appreciation of a new kind, appreciation of another kind. **How can evil be appropriately appreciated as a means of transforming what is readily apparent as a fruitless dynamic?** Are the proposed modes of discourse in that regard to be considered alienating and futile -- in contrast with those which may be engendered by the future?

Is there a case for an [appreciative inquiry](#) of evil (David L. Cooperrider, *Appreciative Inquiry in a Broken World*, 22 April 2020)? However, although the need to transcend the habitual focus of that method on the "positive" is argued, no effort is seemingly made to engage with "enmity" and "evil" as such (Gervase R. Bushe, *Appreciative Inquiry is not (just) about the Positive*, *OD Practitioner*, 39, 2007, 4).

## Authoritative acknowledgement of existence of evil

Whilst there have long been claims regarding the existence of evil, most obviously by the religions of the world, there is a case for recognizing the extent of such acknowledgement in secular public discourse. This was explored in discussion of the *Existence of evil as authoritatively claimed to be an overriding strategic concern* (2016) -- a section in a proposed wiki-style facility (*Encyclopedia of Evil Claims, Claimants, Counter-claims, and Sigils*, 2016).

- **George W. Bush:** Referring to three countries engaged in terrorism, indicated that: *States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger.* (2002 *State of the Union Address*). He further stated that: *We've come to know truths that we will never question: evil is real, and it must be opposed. and We are a people dedicated to the triumph of freedom and democracy over evil and tyranny* (*Patriot Day*, 2002)
- **Barack Obama:** Presumably with the full support of his science advisors, as noted above, Barack Obama specifically referred to evil in the course of his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize: *For make no mistake: evil does exist in the world.* (*Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize*, 10 December 2009).
- **Pope Francis:** *Satan seduces by disguising evil as good* (*Catholic New Agency*, 29 September 2014); *What is Pope Francis on about with all this talk of Satan and evil?* (*The Conversation*, 28 May 2014)
- **John Kerry** (US Secretary of State): Declared in relation to the Boston Marathon bombings: *We've been in direct confrontation with evil* (*BBC News*, 19 April 2013).
- **Kofi Annan** (UN Secretary-General): *Who can avoid using the word "evil", when confronted with genocide? Unquestionably, some very evil things happen in the world. And you are right, it has been my fate to come face to face with such things at certain points in my career* (*Naming Evil: Lecture at the 35th National Conference of Trinity Institute*, New York, 2 May 2004)

- **Tony Abbott** (Prime Minister of Australia): *This death cult is uniquely evil in that it does not simply do evil, it exults in evil* (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 September 2014)
- **Justin Welby** (Archbishop of Canterbury): *I believe Islamic State is deeply evil -- even to its own supporters* (*BBC News*, 19 April 2015)
- Donald Trump: *The existence of evil in our world is not a reason to disarm law-abiding citizens... The existence of evil is one of the very best reasons to arm law-abiding citizens* (*Keynote speech to National Rifle Association, France24*, 28 May 2022)

The challenge of such recognition was noted in a separate section of that encyclopedic proposal, namely the *Framing by others of claimants of evil as evil* -- noteworthy in the case of the religions, variously claiming each other to be evil.

Framing that proposal, three "unasked questions" had been previously asked (*Evil Rules: guidelines for engaging in Armageddon now*, 2015):

- *Which world leaders have (not) been labelled "evil"?*
- *Which countries were (not) engendered by "terrorists"?*
- *When did we last do what we abhor now in the actions of others?*

The matter has acquired new relevance in relation to the concurrent dynamics of the COVID pandemic and the Russian "military operation" in the Ukraine. Clearly every opportunity is taken to frame the Russians and Vladimir Putin as evil -- as is a normal feature of wartime propaganda to engender public motivation. Proposals are now made for the indictment of Russian leaders, especially Putin, as war criminals. Such trials are now also envisaged for Ukrainians (Andrew Roth, *Kremlin mulls Nuremberg-style trials based on second world war tribunals*, *The Guardian*, 28 May 2022). No consideration is given to the evil consequences of other forms of intervention, such as those of Iraq and Afghanistan. Those responsible remain un-indicted despite compilations of evidence in that regard.

Examples of such perceptions include:

- Joel S. Hirschhorn: *Exposing the Evil, People-Killing Pandemic Strategy* (*America First Report*, 1 June 2021)
- Jacob G. Hornberger: *The Evil and Malevolence of the Pentagon's Brilliant Strategy in Ukraine* (*The Future of Freedom Foundation*, 18 February 2022)
- Robin V. Sears: *Putin's Invasion of Ukraine: No Deal with the Devil* (*Policy Magazine*, 11 March 2022)
- Victoria Butenko: *Zelensky calls Russian actions "absolute evil, absolute stupidity," after strike decimates cultural center* (*CNN*, 20 May 2022)
- Randall Balmer: *Easter, Ukraine and the persistence of evil* (*Yahoo News*, 17 April 2022)

It is of course the case that the justification presented by Putin concerning the broken promise by the West (regarding NATO expansion through Ukraine) could be framed as essentially "evil" (David N. Gibbs, *Claims over Broken Promises about NATO simmer at the heart of the Ukraine Crisis*, *TruthOut*, 6 February 2022). Whether any breach of promise is to be considered a lesser evil is another matter. The ranking of evil as sin has long been a controversial preoccupation of religion.

The pandemic may well be framed as an evil in its own right:

- Casimiro Designer: *Why is the Pandemic an Evil that Came for Good?* (*Medium*, 12 October 2020)
- Antonio Kaldas: *Pandemic, Anthropocentrism, and the Problem of Evil* (Sydney College of Divinity)
- Verónica Ortiz-Ortega: *COVID-19: The Global Evil* (*Wilson Center*, 20 March 2020)
- Daniel Harrell: *Is the Coronavirus Evil? Or is this part of life in the world God made?* (*Christianity Today*, 17 March 2020)

However there is no lack of initiatives currently seeking to indict those held to be complicit in the institutional response. A Nuremberg-style trial is envisaged -- with the implication that those accused they are as evil as the Nazi leaders of that time (Mike Yeadon, *The Fake Pandemic Is Pure, Unalloyed Evil*, *HNewsWire*, 18 April 2022; Tim Duff, *Covid's Evil Origins*, *LA Progressive*, 27 October 2020).

## Questionable reframing of evil

None of the declarations cited above regarding evil -- effectively *ex cathedra* -- allows for any reservations or qualifications. As noted separately, the declarations are however questioned from a wider perspective in the light of the apparent contradictions implied (*Questionable reframing of evil*, 2015):

- **Kofi Annan**: *Naming Evil* (*Lecture at the 35th National Conference of Trinity Institute*, New York, 2 May 2004):

In fact, to be frank with you, I don't even think that the word "evil" is a regular part of my vocabulary. There is something about the word, when we apply it to another human being - and more especially to a group of human beings, that makes me uncomfortable. It is too absolute. It seems to cut off any possibility of redemption, of dialogue, or even coexistence. It is the moral equivalent of declaring war. When we think of other people as evil we are perilously close to depriving them of any rights, and releasing ourselves from any obligations towards them. We are poised at the top of a slippery slope that leads to violence, murder, even genocide.

- Sarfraz Khan and Shuja Ahmad: *Good Versus Evil: argument to begin global war on terrorism*. (*Central Asia Journal* No. 64)

This article argues that Good versus Evil (Us versus Them) has been a commonly forwarded argument, in times of War

on Terror. Good versus Evil is a complex argument, involving numerous fallacies: false cause, poisoning the well, appeal to force, appeal to pity, appeal to fear, begging the question, slippery slope, false dilemma, etc. It also argues that Good versus Evil argument has been instrumental in framing the case to begin War on Terror in Afghanistan as well as a Global War on Terror. We also argue that once President Bush set the Good versus Evil frame, committing other fallacies ensued. Many people did accept his subsequent arguments, though fallacious, without adequate evidential support.

- As'ad AbuKhalil: *War against terrorism not an issue of good vs. evil* (*The Progressive*, 16 October 2001):

President Bush insists to the world that there are only two choices: you are either with "us" or with "them". Yet many people from the Middle East and Muslim countries stand opposed to both Osama bin Laden and Bush. Both men speak of the conflict in striking Manichean terms: While Bush invokes the biblical language of "evil doers" versus the goodness that he ostensibly represents, bin Laden draws on the discourse of the 7th century wars between Muslims and pagans, whom he calls "infidels". Many Muslims see both bin Laden and the U.S. government's acts over the years as immoral.

- Wendell Bell: *New Futures and the Eternal Struggle between Good and Evil* (*Journal of Futures Studies*, 2000):

Think of evil as a continuum, ranging from those acts that are horribly grotesque and monstrous in the harm and suffering that they cause to those that are relatively minor. Think of evil, too, as a choice that people make, even though the choice is frequently situated within a context of group pressures and social conventions. This involves the infliction of harm, sometimes intentional, on people. But its causes have been obscured by the myth of pure evil... Rather, evil is often the result of understandable acts of well-meaning, decent people, such as you and me...the production of evil is for the most part the result of the behavior of ordinary people....Millennial views allow plain and decent people to feel justified in carrying out the most hideous crimes against others whom they see as evil, subhuman monsters....Ordinary people can learn that the idea of pure evil is a myth.

The reviewer of the study by Claudia Card (*Confronting Evils: Terrorism, Torture, Genocide*, 2010) usefully remarks:

In ordinary discourse the idea of "evil" is both powerfully emotive and very unclear. It is emotive because it is connected with wrongs that overstep some bound of normality and because it is connected both with assumed malevolence and with kinds of suffering that are intense or extensive or both. All of those features are manifestly porous in their meaning, which makes the term a dangerously versatile one in the hands of politicians. So it is a good thing that those features should also attract the critical attention of philosophers. But their attention could either illuminate or dissolve the term. Card's account, I believe, tends (unintentionally) in the direction of dissolving it, for she rejects the idea that the agent's malevolence is a necessary condition of an evil act and rejects the view that evil is extraordinary; so, it would seem, her account risks disposing her readers to question the value of having a term that depends not only on both of the elements that she rejects but also on an idea of their essential conjunction.

All religions teach the difference between good and evil. However it could be said that one of the evils of "evil" is that religions have different beliefs about evil and suffering, as noted above. Why could that be? Of course, many religions consider other religions to be inherently evil. Preoccupation with evil is curiously highlighted by distinctions made in the program of religious studies offered by the BBC. This notably asserts the distinction between only *two types of evil* (BBC Religious Studies):

Relevant distinction are not carefully made in official declarations in which the evil of natural disasters is seemingly equated with that of terrorism, for example. Natural disasters are not a preoccupation of security services. A degree of subtlety is evident in other writings:

- Kenneth Cloke: *Mediating Evil, War, and Terrorism: the politics of conflict* (*Beyond Intractability*, 2005)
- S. D. Reicher, S. A. Haslam and R. Rath: *Making a Virtue of Evil: a five-step social identity model of the development of collective hate* (*Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2008)
- S. A. Haslam and S. D. Reicher: *Beyond the banality of evil: three dynamics of an interactionist social psychology of tyranny* (*Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 2007)
- Fardi Abdel-Nour: *An International Ethics of Evil?* *International Relations*, 18, 2004, 4)
- Michael Ingatjeff: *The Lesser Evil: political ethics in the Age of Terror* (2004)
- Victor E. Kappeler and Aaron E. Kappeler: *Speaking of Evil and Terrorism: the political and ideological construction of a moral panic* (2004)

Is evil to be more appropriately recognized as a **hyperobject** -- an entity of such vast temporal and spatial dimensions that it defeats traditional ideas about what a thing is in the first place (Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: philosophy and art after the End of the World*, 2013)? Aspects of this possibility are considered separately (*Hyperobjective entanglement: sacredness, wickedness and the witch meme*, 2022). Hyperobjects have themselves been reframed, both by Morton in considering hyposubjects, and critically (Dominic Boyer and Timothy Morton, *Hyposubjects*, 21 January 2016; Mikkel Krause Frantzen, et al, *Ecology, Capitalism and Waste: from hyperobject to hyperabject*, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 37, 2020, 6).

Is there indeed a case for a subtler and more complex understanding of evil -- potentially taking account of enlightened theological reflection on the matter? It is profoundly curious, despite acknowledgement of the existence of evil by the highest authorities, that science would seem to be completely unable to study the phenomenon directly.

It is however somewhat ironic that the policy sciences and complexity sciences have framed a preoccupation with so-called "wicked

[problems](#)" These are problems that are difficult or impossible to solve because of incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements that are often difficult to recognize (Catrien J. A. M. Termeer, et al, *A Critical Assessment of the Wicked Problem Concept: relevance and usefulness for policy science and practice*, *Policy and Society*, 38, 2019, 2). However "wicked" denotes resistance to resolution, rather than evil -- offering the curious implication that the problems engendered by evil are not wicked (*Transcending the wicked problem engendered by projecting negativity elsewhere*, 2015).

## Needing problems as a catalyst for a psychosocial dynamic?

**Problems as inherently evil?** The question could be asked as to whether the "problems" on which so many strategies are focused are essentially evil or a manifestation of it in some manner, as might be claimed. Clearly natural disasters could be perceived in this light -- as with war and pandemics. It is clearly the case that some constitute a lesser evil to the point that associating them with evil is meaningless for many.

The purported existence of evil, as it might be the focus of a systematic approach (secular or otherwise), then necessarily calls for methodological considerations -- discussed in other sections of the encyclopedic proposal mentioned above:

- [Epistemological and definitional challenges to profiling evil](#)
- [Adapting a proven problem profiling methodology to profiling of evil](#)
- [Employing a problem profile as a template for an evil profile](#)

Such considerations followed from that of an online initiative to profile the multitude of problems perceived by international constituencies, namely the [Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential](#). The interlinked profiles therein also suggested the possibility of recognizing:

- [Evil loops and sigils as a pattern language](#)
- [Engaging fruitfully with deadly opposition and fear of transformation](#)
- [Insights from engaging with the terrors of the wild](#)

The strange insight with respect to problems is that none can be recognized -- other than in the light of a particular human value. Something must be valued in order for its absence to trigger recognition of a problem. This suggests that the encounter with problems may in some way be vital to reinforcing an appreciation of values -- even to the point of engendering their recognition.

**Problem negativity as an essential trigger for positive creativity?** Is it indeed the case that the problematic nature of problems engenders creativity: no problems, no creativity? How might negative creativity be understood -- perhaps exemplified by the development of weapons of mass destruction? This frames the question as to the underlying significance of problems -- even potentially to be perceived as the embodiment of evil in some manner. What dynamic would be evident in a society without problems? This could be understood as the challenge for any ideal society -- and for the dynamic of any imagined heaven. Stated in this way, the nature of any challenge becomes questionable?

Some clarification is offered by cybernetics as the science of systems control, notably in the light of its insights into viable systems. A viable system is one in which there is an appropriate balance between positive feedback and negative feedback. This could suggest that positive feedback is in some way related to creativity -- at least in a psychosocial system -- with negative feedback indicative of perceived problems, even of an evil nature.

Given the crisis of crises with which global society is faced, of interest is whether these are in process of engendering remedies, as separately explored (*Systemic Crises as Keys to Systemic Remedies*, 2008). This included discussion of:

[Dangerous neglect of underlying patterns](#)  
[Metaphorical descriptions of systems](#)

[Interplay of metaphors in strategic discourse](#)  
[Systemic challenge: opportunities \(hopes\) vs threats \(fears\)](#)

Kenneth Boulding offered the insight that he know of no crisis that had not engendered positive effects -- nor of any purportedly positive strategy which had not had problematic consequences. This points to the possibility of appreciating deadly problems otherwise (*Celebrating the Value of Deadly Problems Worldwide: planetary salvation in an era of inept global governance?* 2008; *Recontextualizing Social Problems through Metaphor*, 1990).

## Needing enemies implying the need for evil?

**Coherence engendered by enemy threat:** A peculiarity of a psychosocial system is its apparent need -- even a desperate one -- to perceive the existence of enemies (preferably elsewhere). This is seemingly vital to the cultivation of the coherence and identity of that system and those within it. The point is clarified in a presidential address by Vamik D. Volkan to the 7th Annual Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology:

This paper describes as an inescapable developmental phenomenon: man's need to identify some people as allies and others, as enemies. This need evolves from the individual's efforts to protect his sense of self, which is intertwined with his experience of ethnicity, nationality, and other identifying circumstances. When threatened by political or military conflict, man clings ever more stubbornly to these circumstances in an effort to maintain and regulate his sense of self. Members of any given group revert to childhood ways of reinforcing their bonding, developing shibboleths, and investing objects with mystical value. Anyone trying to deal with interethnic or international conflict must grasp the psychological cogency of man's need to have enemies as well as allies, and his stubborn adherence to identification with a group when undergoing hardship and danger. This need is the basis of political psychology, connecting the public arena of political action with individual psychological development. Political economic,

military and historical factors are customarily weighed in any attempt to solve turbulence, but it is necessary to consider also the profound effect on human psychology. (*The Need to Have Enemies and Allies: a developmental approach, Political Psychology*, 6, 1985, 2, *Special Issue: A Notebook on the Psychology of the U.S.-Soviet Relationship*)

Allen Faulton, indicating the "simple truth" that people need enemies, notes that in 1988, Georgy Arbatov, a Soviet Union expert on the United States, said to a US counterpart: *We are going to do a terrible thing to you. We are going to deprive you of an enemy.* And they did. And it was. (*The Need for Enemies, Modern Survival Guide*, #40, 14 August 2018).

One study explored the notion that certain politicians need enemies to maintain their political advantage and therefore act so as to keep the enemy alive (Leopoldo Fergusson, et al, *The Need for Enemies, The Economic Journal*, 126, 2012, 593). For M. Menuet and P. Villieu:

A reputation of competence in solving a particular problem is useful only if the problem remains in the future. Hence, there is an incentive to keep the "enemy" alive: An agent may do wrong in his or her job precisely because he or she is competent. The paper develops this mechanism in a general career concerns framework and shows that a tradeoff between reputation and the need for enemies emerges. As a result, agents are induced to produce only moderate effort, and only moderately skilled agents are likely to be appointed. (*Reputation and the "need for enemies, Economic Theory*, 72, 2021).

**Specific benefit of enemies:** Exploring 3 insights of Plutarch (*Plutarch, How to Profit by One's Enemies, Moralia*, 2, 1928), Jakub Grydiel indicates the benefits of enemies (*The Benefits of Having an Enemy...and the perils of believing that you have none, American Interest*, 11 October 2018):

- *The existence of enemies is an incentive for good governance.*
- *Enemies spur us to be more coordinated and efficient.*
- *The presence of enemies releases pressures.*

In his controversial response on the evil associated with US engagement with the Middle East, Gore Vidal cites a comment by Joseph Schumpeter in 1919 on ancient Rome in a manner that sounded eerily like the United States in 2001:

*There was no corner of the known world where some interest was not alleged to be in danger or under actual attack. If the interests were not Roman, they were those of Rome's allies; and if Rome had no allies, the allies would be invented... The fight was always invested with an aura of legality. Rome was always being attacked by evil-minded neighbours.* We have only outdone the Romans in turning metaphors such as the war on terrorism, or poverty, or Aids into actual wars on targets we appear, often, to pick at random in order to maintain turbulence in foreign lands. (*The Enemy Within, The Observer*, 27 October 2002)

Robert Talisse draws on empirical work concerning belief polarization to argue that we must uphold civil relations with our political enemies, not because we are required to regard them as reasonable, but because in the absence of those relations our political alliances crumble (*Why We Need Political Enemies*, University of Colorado, 22 October 2021). This recognition is explored in the case of Australia (Allan Behm, *No Enemies No Friends: restoring Australia's global relevance*, 2000).

**Enemies essential to global coherence:** It has long been alleged that the coherence of global society could be best ensured by having a common extraterrestrial enemy -- hence the dramatisation since 1897 of *The War of the Worlds* and its variants. Recognition of the role of a common enemy continues to be variously argued and contested:

- Adam Waytz: *Having Putin as a 'common enemy' won't unite Americans* (*The Washington Post*, 23 March 2022)
- Michael Beckley: *Enemies of My Enemy: how fear of China is forging a New World Order* (*Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2022)
- Gregory Rodriguez: *What this country needs is a good enemy* *Los Angeles Times*, 5 October 2009)
- Molly Jong-Fast: *Biden Needs an Enemy* (*The Atlantic*, November 2021): Can the president change the narrative and save democracy again?
- Dominic Tierney: *Does America Need an Enemy?* (*Foreign Policy Research Institute*, October 2016)
- Steve Rathje: *Do We Need a Common Enemy?* (*Psychology Today*, 17 December 2018): Enemies can fill important needs in our lives.
- *A common enemy could heal the US partisan divide* (*Financial Times*, 23 January 2019)
- *Wanted: Enemies of the Earth and Greenwar International* (1992)

The relevance of enemies extends to the integrity of corporate operations:

- Avi Savar: *Nothing Brings A Team Together Like A Common Enemy* (*Forbes*, 17 December 2019)
- Lynn Power: *Your Business Needs an Enemy: having a business nemesis can work wonders for your company's bottom line* (*Entrepreneur*, 31 August 2021)
- D. K. Denton: *Hitler's Secret, Einstein's Fear: using enemies to empower teams and organizations* (*Competitiveness Review*, 10, 2000, 2)

It has been argued that totalitarianism introduced a completely new and hitherto unseen enmification process and enemy category, namely the 'total enemy' whose enemy status was derived from being rather than action (Mikkel Thorup, *Total Enemies: understanding 'The Total Enemy' through Schmitt, Arendt, Foucault, and Agamben, Library of Social Science*).

Arguably the more evil the enemy can be claimed to be, the greater the reinforcement of that sense of identity (*Needing Evil Elsewhere*, 2001). The need for enemies has been otherwise explored, as noted in the Biblical references assembled by Stephen Penny (*Why You*

*Need Enemies*, 6 June 2019). The Christian preoccupation is echoed by V. D. Coleman: *We need a few enemies to keep us balanced....we need a few enemies to make sure that we maintain a prayer life* (*Needing Enemies...*, 27 December 2012).

**Problematic absence of enemies:** Whether heavenly or not, the implications for an ideal society then call for reflection -- especially if an enemy needs to be portrayed as evil, as is typical of propaganda framing the war between "good" and "evil" (Emily O. Goldman, *Thinking About Strategy Absent the Enemy*, *Security Studies*, 4, 1994, 1). If evil indeed exists, as formally declared by President Obama, can an enemy be other than a manifestation of evil? Could the collective identity of the American people be sustained in the absence of an *Axis of Evil*, as recognized by George W. Bush in 2002?

The question is especially relevant from a military perspective and the justification of the unprecedented investment in military bases worldwide (Danny Sjrursen *Creating the enemies they need: US militarism's strange bedfellows: the military-industrial-complex needs an enemy*, *Responsible Statescraft*, 23 April 2020).

Particular insight in this regard has been articulated from an influential strategic perspective by Zbigniew Brzezinski, ironically known as one of the potential role models of the classic 1964 satirical movie *Dr Strangelove*, together with Henry Kissinger (Alexander Light, *Zbigniew Brzezinski: Evil Spirit Of 5 US Presidents (and biggest threat to world peace)* *Humans Are Free*, 9 January 2017; *More Evil Than Kissinger? How About Brzezinski?* *Northwest Research and Covert Book Report*, 20 July 2014). Both tend to be perceived as unrepentant architects of international meddling, horror and human suffering,

For Brzezinski:

Babbling in general terms about terrorism as an abstract evil and then attacking Iraq is simply a mechanism for increasing the ranks of terrorists who define the United States as their principal enemy. America has no choice but to act as a stabilizer in the world. No one else can play that role. The problem is that we may not be doing so if we define our relationship with others by a phrase the president has been so fond of: "If you're not with us, you're against us." The implication is that our leadership is not consensual but is based on a Manichaean doctrine: If you're not doing what we want you to do, you define yourself as our enemy. (*Know Thine Enemies*, *American Prospect*, 16 July 2004; *How to Make New Enemies* *The New York Times*, 25 October 2004)

## Surrogates of evil engendering proxy wars

If evil is so elusive that no government can respond to it with any explicit strategy -- as clarified in public discourse -- the nature of that response could be usefully recognized through the response to surrogates of evil and the "proxy wars" which they engender. Any surrogates could then be effectively seen as euphemisms for evil -- as required by promotion of politically correct discourse. One difficulty is the disinformation with regard to "evil", presumably to be construed as evil in its own right (Ian Vásquez and Fred McMahan, *Governments worldwide use 'enemies' to justify repression*, *RealClearPolitics*, 4 February 2022).

Following from the above argument, such surrogates might then include:

- problems
- pests
- disasters
- enemies
- opposition
- disagreement
- resistance
- insecurity
- disease
- inequality
- elitism
- injustice

As noted above, any such surrogates would give rise to what could then be recognized as proxy wars. One form these could be recognized to take is as "virtual wars", as separately identified (*Review of the Range of Virtual Wars*, 2005). These can be understood as taking two forms of which the first is those declared by governments and international bodies, as noted below (with inclusion of the "war on terrorism", but excluding "trade wars"):

"Official Virtual Wars"	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• war on want [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on poverty [<a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on drugs [<a href="#">more</a>] [<a href="#">more</a>] [<a href="#">more</a>] [<a href="#">more</a>] [<a href="#">more</a>] [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on waste [<a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on hate [<a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on weapons of mass destruction [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on pornography [<a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on illiteracy [<a href="#">more</a>] [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on ignorance [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on traffic [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on noise [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on corruption [<a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on forced labour [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on slavery [<a href="#">more</a>]</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• war on crime [<a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on disease [<a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on malaria [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on hunger [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on landmines [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war against child labour [<a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war against locusts [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war against racism [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on homelessness [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on desertification [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on pollution [<a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on pests [<a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on evil [<a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>]</li><li>• war on HIV/AIDS [<a href="#">more</a>   <a href="#">more</a>]</li></ul>

That review also presented a more extensive table of a second form of "wars on...", namely *Unofficial virtual wars*, which have been identified, or "declared", by groups of varying degrees of global legitimacy. In each case it remains to be clarified the extent to which the focus of each tends to be framed as a manifestation of "evil" in public discourse. Also of interest is the extent to which each may be appreciated by various authorities -- and when. Slavery and forced labour are examples.

It is then appropriate to ask whether the strategic focus on such surrogates suggests that the strategies are "pseudo-strategies", especially when they are claimed to be engaging with a fundamental evil. The inaction on climate change has already given rise to suggestions that pretence and tokenism have become the strategic priority (Sonalı Kolhatkar, *Global Elites in Davos Pretend to Care About Inequality*, *CounterPunch*, 31 May 2022; *Climate Change -- Let's Just Pretend: why do we need to do anything?* 2016). The questionable nature of pseudo-strategies is evident when the intent is effectively limited to the eradication of symptoms rather than to addressing any root cause (*Eradication as the Strategic Final Solution of the 21st Century? Indicative checklist of possible domains of application*, 2014).

The argument with respect to engagement in proxy wars can be understood otherwise through the widespread enthusiastic engagement in video games -- most obviously those involving the violent eradication of an enemy. In this case the need for the enemy is obvious, recalling childhood enthusiasm for [cops-and-robbers](#) or [cowboys-and-indians](#).

## Needing opposition implying the need for evil?

The value of competition, potentially in the form of engagement with an opponent, is widely appreciated. This takes the obvious forms of competition in sport and business. The absence of a competitor -- a challenger of adequate merit -- severely detracts from the stimulus of the engagement. In principle an opposition is valued in government, recognized as necessary to being held to account. These situations are however all characterized by a tendency in practice to frame the opponent as "evil" -- if only as "evil-lite" -- justifying the motivation to triumph and to "crush" the other. Curiously, whether unconsciously or not, this would seem to echo the mythological triumph of light over darkness, and of good over evil (*Democratic rehearsal of the final battle between the Forces of Light and Darkness*, 2016).

Rather than the surrogates engendering the proxy wars of political rhetoric (as noted above), potentially more intriguing are those which lend themselves to analysis by different disciplines. These tend to avoid to a higher degree any implication of evil -- to whatever degree it could be interpreted to be present.

- **Disagreement and criticism:** This may be treated as a simple matter of opinion, and potentially valued as an alternative perspective, casting a distinctive light on any matter. However disagreement is especially problematic in a number of contexts:
  - *religion* is typically highly intolerant of disagreement with dogma, such disagreement being readily reframed as an expression of evil -- the voice of the devil. The result is evident in the tragic failure of interfaith dialogue, with adherents of each religion claiming others to be expressions of evil, despite claims to the contrary. The fundamentally righteous commitment of each to convert others by any means from their erroneous (evil) beliefs continues to be disastrous -- again, despite claims to the contrary. The world is witness to the violence which has ensued (an indication of evil in its own right).
  - *politics* tends, like religion, to be intolerant of arguments at variance with a party line. This intolerance engenders competing political parties, whose agendas may be readily framed as essentially evil by their opponents, as with those individuals promoting them. Increasingly evident is the influence of political agendas on the media as a means of crafting and sustaining the narrative associated with the party line. Alternative perspectives are then ignored, repressed as misinformation, or actively repressed through legislation.
  - *science* claims to value disagreement as a primary driving force in the advancement of knowledge through critical review by peers. However this interpretation only holds within approved paradigms and is far less credible in the face of emergent paradigms and other "schools of thought". Especially problematic is the degree to which science finds it essential to frame alternative perspectives as pseudoscientific -- or not even wrong. Despite the formal assertion of President Obama regarding the existence of evil, the scientific establishment of the world's superpower has proven completely unable to study the phenomenon -- which does not feature among its approved categories. It is unclear whether the extent of scientific fraud, plagiarism, and the like, could be recognized as manifestations of evil -- as with the degree of complicity in the development of weapons of mass destruction.
  - *economics* is especially evident in the formulation of competing economic policies which allow for no compromise. The dynamics are apparent in the articulation at [The Other Economic Summit](#) (TOES) first held in London in 1984 as an alternative to the policies sustained by the G7 Group -- and now organized by the [New Economics Foundation](#). The dynamics are otherwise apparent in the respective positions of the World Economic Forum and the World Social Forum (*All Blacks of Davos vs All Greens of Porto Alegre: reframing global strategic discord through polyphony?* 2007).
- **Resistance:** Consistent with arguments regarding enemies, there is some recognized need for opposition (David P. Barash, *Beloved Enemies: our need for opponents*, 1994). Opposition may well be recognized as resistance -- especially resistance to change, as noted by William E. Scheuerman (*What is Political Resistance? An exploration of the word and its political connotations*, 16 February 2017):
  - The term *resistance* has always been ambiguous. It has referred to both violent and nonviolent political action, acts aiming at a fundamental and perhaps revolutionary overhaul of existing society, and those seeking to preserve or reestablish the status quo... The term's present ambiguity, in short, is nothing new. That ambivalence constitutes both the source of its broad appeal -- and its Achilles' heel. It masks conflicting ideas about political strategy, and the contrasting political philosophies behind them. It also risks obscuring some tough moral and political questions.... Its wide appeal notwithstanding, the term *resistance* masks sizable political differences and potentially sows confusion. Like previous generations of political progressives, we will need a somewhat more refined and subtle political language if we are to ward off the terrible threat our democracy now faces.

- **Complaint and protest:** These phenomena are widely evoked by perceptions of inappropriateness, most obviously in the form of injustice and irrationality on the part of authorities. They are a common feature of political dynamics and perceptions of the problematic actions of "them" in response to "us". It could be assumed that there would be no cause for either in the ideal society variously proposed by religious, scientific and political authorities. Ironically much depends on how the inappropriateness is comprehended -- and whether this is in fact appropriate (*Comprehension of Appropriateness*, 1986).
- **Alterity and otherness:** As clarified by J.-F. Staszak (*Other/Otherness, International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, 2009):
  - Otherness is the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group ('Us', the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups ('Them', Other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined – presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination. To state it naively, difference belongs to the realm of fact and otherness belongs to the realm of discourse. Thus, biological sex is difference, whereas gender is otherness. The creation of otherness (also called 'othering') consists of applying a principle that allows individuals to be classified into two hierarchical groups: them and us. The out-group is only coherent as a group as a result of its opposition to the in-group and its lack of identity. This lack is based upon stereotypes that are largely stigmatizing and obviously simplistic.
  - The perception of otherness can have highly problematic consequences, as evident in with respect to discrimination. Being highly controversial, discussion of remedial strategies is equally so, as discussed separately (*Elaborating a Declaration on Combating Anti-otherness -- including anti-science, anti-spiritual, anti-women, anti-gay, anti-socialism, anti-animal, and anti-negativity*, 2018). This includes discussion of *Anti-otherness, anti-alterity, anti-diversity and anti-consensus?* and of *Disputatious otherness and negative capability?*

## Needing the positive thereby implicitly acknowledging evil?

However understandable, there is a curiously desperate need for the "positive" in public discourse. [Barbara Ehrenreich](#) has emphasized the challenge this implies in this period (*Bright-Sided: how the relentless promotion of positive thinking has undermined America*, 2009). With "yes" understood as indicative of a positive response, the preoccupation has long framed the primary objective of negotiation ([Roger Fisher](#) and [William Ury](#), *Getting to Yes*, 1981). This understanding has been challenged by [Chris Voss](#) (*In Negotiating, Why Getting a "No" Is More Important than Getting a "Yes"*. *Big Think*, 22 May 2016; [S. Fineman](#), *On Being Positive: concerns and counterpoints*, *Academy of Management Review*, 31, 2006) .

To the extent that a form of appreciative inquiry into enmity and evil is relevant in this period, the above-mentioned argument of [Gervase Bushe](#) is relevant (*Appreciative Inquiry Is Not (Just) About The Positive*, *OD Practitioner*, 39, 2007, 4). Arguably any sense of the need for transcendence (as implied by Maslow's need hierarchy discussed below), calls for the much-discussed transcendence of polarity ([P. Johnson](#), *Transcending the Polarity of Light and Shadow in Appreciative Inquiry: an appreciative exploration of practice*, In: [Zandee](#), et al, *Organizational Generativity: Advances in Appreciative Inquiry*, 2013).

The argument is developed separately (*Being Positive Avoiding Negativity: management challenge of positive vs negative*, 2005) in the following respects:

Interpersonal games	Systems management: value of both positive and negative feedback	Uncritical thinking
Denial of the negative	Dependence of system operation on contrasting modes	Embracing error
Unchallenged dangers of positive thinking	Dualistic games	Leadership and "negative capability"
Vulnerability to disaster	Dangerous associations	Relating to the unknown -- beyond denial
Testing the boundaries of "being positive"		Dangerous consequences of ignoring the cycle
Management challenge: positive vs negative		Symbolic relationship between positive and negative

In striking contrast with the seemingly desperate concentration on the positive is the subtle argument of the poet [John Keats](#) in appreciating the negative and calling for skills in that regard. Termed [negative capability](#), it indicates the capacity of the greatest writers (particularly Shakespeare) to pursue a vision of artistic beauty even when it leads them into intellectual confusion and uncertainty, as opposed to a preference for philosophical certainty over artistic beauty. Keats articulated it in the following terms:

I had not a dispute but a disquisition with Dilke, upon various subjects; several things dove-tailed in my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in Literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously -- I mean Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason -- Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetralium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half-knowledge. This pursued through volumes would perhaps take us no further than this, that with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration. (1817)

As discussed separately, the progressive conflation in mainstream discourse of radicalisation with [Islamisation](#), [extremism](#), [fundamentalism](#), [dissidence](#) and terrorism raises the questions as to whether it is possible to engage in thinking, framed as radical by some, without being branded a terrorist in consequence (*Risks of cultivating negative capability in a caliphate of normality*, 2015). The further concern is whether thinking upheld appreciatively as normal in mainstream discourse can be permitted to be critical, as in [critical thinking](#), without being similarly conflated with radicalism and terrorism. This in turn raises the

question as to whether creativity -- through questioning conventional modalities and "business-as-usual" -- is to be considered threatening to those conventions and therefore to be similarly branded.

## Systemic tolerance of evil through compromise

The need for enemies and evil is especially evident in the compromise between principles and practice. Most obvious is the manner in which failure to conform to the *Ten Commandments* is tolerated, if not actively cultivated, whether in relation to killing, adultery, blasphemy, theft, or disinformation. Especially noteworthy are attitudes to corruption and lying as characteristic of bureaucracies and their leadership. This extends to leaders of countries acclaimed as members of the G7, the G20 or the UN Security Council. The irony is all the more evident in the case of the indictment of those variously responsible for regulatory or remedial strategies. More questionable are the [controversial appointments](#) to the [UN Human Rights Council](#) of those allegedly implicated in abuses.

To the extent that lying is perceived as a manifestation of evil, it is now remarkable to note the extent to which politicians are deemed to lie, and especially leaders of major countries with every expectation of being reelected (David Leonhardt, et al, *Trump's Lies: the definitive list*, *The New York Times*, 23 June 2017; Jamie Grierson, *Lies, damned lies: the full list of accusations against Boris Johnson*, *The Guardian*, 11 December 2021; *Slovak opposition leader claims that Zelensky lies on a daily basis*, *Prensa Latina*, 10 May 2022). Whereas lying to parliamentary bodies has been deemed cause for resignation in the past, this is now tolerated as a feature of public discourse.

The commandment prohibiting killing has been skillfully reframed by [just war theory](#). Arguably the method in question has been extended to suffering (*Reframing virtual death and assisted dying by "just suffering theory"*, 2021; *Enabling Suffering through Doublespeak and Doublethink*, 2013). This is especially evident with respect to torture, euphemistically reframed as "enhanced interrogation" together with the controversies associated with capital punishment. To a lesser extent it is obvious in the use of physical punishment (flogging, etc) and incarceration. The physical abuse associated with imprisonment goes unchallenged, even in societies priding themselves on their civility (John Kiriakou, *New York's Prison Crisis*, *Consortium News*, 8 April 2022; Spencer Woodman, *Isolation still commonplace in US prisons and detention centers*, *International Consortium of Investigative Journalists*, 25 May 2022). Compromise is otherwise evident in the case of the slaughter and treatment of animals -- an abuse seen controversially as a human right.

Especially curious is the tolerance of corruption, notably given its incidence in bureaucracies, regulatory authorities and the leadership of many countries. This extends to complicity in the operations of organized crime -- with the long-recognized challenge of corruption in police forces (*Serious and Organised Crime in the EU: A corrupting influence*, Europol, 2021). It is remarkable to note the manner in which such crime has been transformed into themes in much appreciated entertainment -- with the implication that movies of that genre may be funded for public relations purposes in order to improve the image of those complicit.

Most blatant is the tolerance of inequality, whether with respect to wealth, health or justice. This is a common experience for many. The treatment of Julian Assange over an extended period, as an example of vindictive justice, calls into question every principle of human rights -- and the complicity of the judiciary in its abuse (Jacob G. Hornberger, *The Evil Persecution of Julian Assange*, *Future of Freedom Foundation*, 10 September 2020). Strangely this treatment has even been explicitly associated with the Axis of Evil (Howard Bloom, *Julian Assange and the Axis of Evil*, 28 October 2021).

Of particular recent interest is the insight offered by the case of the American Psychological Association. Its former president addressed the issue of why the efforts to prevent future terrorist acts must begin with understanding the root causes of the hatred against America (Philip G. Zimbardo, *Opposing terrorism by understanding the human capacity for evil*. *American Psychological Association*, 32, 2001, 10).

Unfortunately for such arguments, extensive media coverage has subsequently been given to complicity in torture by the APA and its members (*American Psychological Association Bolstered CIA Torture Program, Report Says*, *The New York Times*, 30 April 2015; *Psychologists met in secret with Bush officials to help justify torture -- report*, *The Guardian*, 30 April 2015). A degree of coverage had been given previously but was variously covered up or denied (*Psychologists' Involvement in Torture and the APA*, *Psychology Today*, 19 December 2014; *What the APA Knew: the complicity of psychologists in CIA torture*, *CounterPunch*, 11 December 2014). However, in the light of several of the "rules" above, such complicity could obviously not be considered "evil", nor the torture itself.

## Requisite engendering of crime in authoritarian contexts?

The current period is witness to a remarkable rise in [authoritarianism](#) in the form of authoritarian regimes and their relation to the public. *Wikipedia* offers an extensive [list of states currently or frequently characterized as authoritarian](#). (Melissa Morgan, *Understanding the Global Rise of Authoritarianism*, Stanford University, 8 November 2021; Sonia Hickey, et al, *Australia's Move Towards Authoritarianism Under the Guise of Public Health*, *Sydney Criminal Lawyers*, 26 August 2020).

From a systemic perspective, given the spectrum of reactions to authoritarianism, there is the curious possibility that criminal activity is engendered as a compensatory measure -- feedback in a cybernetic sense. With authoritarianism perceived as an institutional ill -- if not a form of evil in its own right -- crime could be understood as a necessary process by which people are able to ensure their survival, even though defined as evil. This is most evident in the case of the "illegal" response to rationing.

Historically the authoritarianism of a dominant religion or ideology has evoked activity readily labelled from that perspective as problematic -- even to the point of being termed "evil". This has given rise to religious schism, deemed evil in its own right through subverting the coherence of the dominant religion and its spiritual inspiration. Hence the righteous treatment of heretics by the Catholic Church, for example.

An analogous process is evident in the case of dominant academic disciplines -- engendering the emergence of problematic alternative perspectives. In the case of science, especially in the form of scientism, any such alternatives are condemned as pseudoscience. This may be as close as science is able to get to recognition of the existence of "evil" -- despite being faced with scientific fraud, plagiarism, and other methodological ills. Following the assertions of US Presidents regarding an Axis of Evil (as noted above), there is a particular irony to the distinction by cosmologists of a so-called [Axis of Evil](#) -- an apparent correlation between the plane of the Solar System and aspects of the cosmic microwave background, disruptive of the previous models of cosmology.

## Engagement with the shadow implying an evil within?

Necessarily variously understood, if recognized at all, the [shadow](#) is an unconscious dimension of the personality with which the person does not identify whether held to be positive or negative. According to Carl Jung, everyone carries a shadow, "and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is". It may be, in part, a person's link to more primitive animal instincts, which are superseded during early childhood by the conscious mind (Sue Mehrrens, [Jung on the Devil and the Reality of Evil](#), *Jungian Center for the Spiritual Sciences*; Robert A. Segal, [A Jungian View of Evil](#), *Zygon*, 20, 1985, 1).

The proponents of analytical psychology recognize a staged process of [encountering the shadow](#), [merging with the shadow](#) and [assimilation of the shadow](#).

As argued by Polly Young-Eisendrath, with respect to de-humanization, Jung's theory of "shadow" as the disavowed aspects of our own personalities combines with our primary emotion of disgust in motivating us to create "others" to blame for what goes wrong in our lives ([Why Humans Need Enemies](#)):

When we set our ideals too high or become too rigid about them, we can easily lose our humanity and then turn against our fellow humans because they do not meet the ideals we embrace; at this point, we may completely dehumanize those who fall short and truly want to kill, subdue, or separate ourselves from them.

The shadow is understood to take collective form ([Acknowledgement of the "shadow side" of any collective human enterprise](#), 2003). This intimately associated with evil ([Carl Jung, on the collective shadow and evil](#), *JungCurrents*):

None of us stands outside humanity's black collective shadow. Whether the crime lies many generations back or happens today, it remains the symptom of a disposition that is always and everywhere present -- and one would therefore do well to possess some "imagination in evil", for only the fool can permanently neglect the conditions of his own nature. In fact, this negligence is the best means of making him an instrument of evil. Harmlessness and naïveté are as little helpful as it would be for a cholera patient and those in his vicinity to remain unconscious of the contagiousness of the disease. On the contrary, they lead to projection of the unrecognized evil into the "other".

Much is made of the quest for the positive and the associated individuation process of enlightenment towards maturity. The necessary encounter with the shadow, as extensively explored from the perspective of analytical psychology instigated by Jung, implies the contrary -- a process of endarkenment ([Enlightening Endarkenment: selected web resources on the challenge to comprehension](#), 2005).

## Hypothetical challenge of ETs as intrinsically evil?

Continuing speculation regarding the possibility of extraterrestrial contact, and whether they have already made contact with authorities raises many questions. In the latter case, one explanation as to why their existence is not publicly announced is the possibility that their form and behaviour might trigger uncontrollable reactions. A global civilization by people believing themselves to be civilized -- with a track record of framing indigenous people as savages justifying any brutal treatment -- may respond similarly to ETs.

How is any "solidarity" with ETs to be imagined, as implied by Timothy Morton ([Humankind: solidarity with non-human people](#), 2017)? A degree of irony to such an exploration is evoked by the traditional tendency to frame some people as subhuman or "basket cases" ([In quest of extraterrestrials whilst ignoring terrestrial "extras"?](#) 2016).

Ironically however, it might be the case that ETs are especially sensitive to the guidance seemingly offered by the track record of human treatment of those they deem to be subhuman or savages ([Writing Guidelines for Future Occupation of Earth by Extraterrestrials](#), 2010). The ET attitude to Earth may however be consistent with the controversial attitude of President Trump to the most problem-ridden countries on Earth, as separately explored (Robin Wright, [The "Shithole Countries" -- and the rest of the world -- respond to President Trump](#), *The New York Times*, 12 January 2018; [Earth as a Shithole Planet -- from a Universal Perspective? Understanding why there are no extraterrestrial visitors](#), 22 January 2018)

There is little difficulty in imagining that the physical form of ETs might evoke legendary human images of demonic figures. Even minor differences from the human form would suffice -- if they had tails, for example, or spoke with a hiss. More challenging would be the behavioural differences -- perhaps exemplified by attitudes to [cannibalism](#), upheld as the epitomy of evil in the case of [human cannibalism](#). That cannibalism is a common ecological interaction in the animal kingdom on Earth, having been recorded in more than 1,500 species. Human cannibalism is well documented, both in ancient and in recent times. For ETs such a practice with respect to themselves may be held to be reasonable when extended to humans. Its value to population control has long been imagined ([Jonathan Swift, A Modest Proposal For preventing the Children of Poor People From being a Burthen to Their Parents or Country, and For making them Beneficial to the Publick](#), 1729).

Many would then find it convenient to frame them as the embodiment of "evil", beyond the threat they might be otherwise deemed to

constitute as "enemies" of humanity -- as widely rehearsed on TV. Such reactions, whether conscious or unconscious, would indeed be uncontrollable, whatever the use of propaganda to the contrary. Will it prove to be the case that ETs are deemed inherently evil by humans - with humans deemed inherently evil by ETs?

At best the response to ETs might engender the issues currently deprecated as discrimination. Such issues are only too evident in the encounter between human cultures, exacerbated by those associated with gender -- especially noteworthy in the righteous condemnation from Western cultures of practices in non-Western which have been all too recently superseded. With women framed historically with evil over centuries (as in Western cultures), attitudes of ETs to differences in gender (including their own) have ever reason to be deemed problematic. Discernment to compensate for discrimination may prove to be rare. There is some irony to the possibility that the current condition in the West may itself be pathological from an ET perspective (*America as Eve-ill Empire and the Evocation of Authenticity Elsewhere*, 2003).

Emphasis is typically placed on the technological superiority of ETs and its exploitation to the possible disadvantage of humanity. More problematic may well be the understanding of "evil" from an ET perspective -- especially if humans are deemed to embody it from an ET perspective, as has been a human tendency with respect to indigenous peoples.

It can readily be argued that ETs may have framed themselves problematically in relation to a subtler understanding of evil. Human preoccupation with "crimes against humanity" might well be reframed by ETs in terms of "crimes against life" according to other principles more universally held. This can be variously argued:

- *Anticipation of Judicial Inquisition of Humans by Extraterrestrials: potential consequence of failure to adhere to universal principles of intelligent life* (2020)
- *Radical speculation anticipating radical extraterrestrials?* (2015)
- *Communicating with Aliens: the psychological dimension of dialogue*, (2000)
- *Mirroring capacity of future response to extraterrestrials and otherness* (2009)
- *Self-reflective Embodiment of Transdisciplinary Integration (SETI): the universal criterion of species maturity?* (2008)

The questionable human justifications for just war theory -- and the sense of righteousness they sustain -- may be transformed by ETs in terms of their own principles.

## Cultural bias in the identification of thrival needs

Much continues to be made of the [hierarchy of needs](#), as first presented in 1943 by [Abraham Maslow](#). This excludes any reference to the need for enemies or evil, despite the recognition of their apparent value in practice as noted above. Criticism also focuses on its inherent cultural bias, as articulated by Geert H. Hofstede:

My interpretation is that this tells us more about Maslow than about the other countries' managers. Maslow categorized and ordered his human needs according to the U.S. middle-class culture pattern in which he was embedded himself – he could not have done otherwise. (*Culture's Consequences: comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations*, 2001, p. 18)

As argued by Theo Winter:

In general, there is partial to little or no evidence from the scientific community as to the validity of Maslow's hierarchy. One of the most frequently cited reviews comes from Wahba and Bridwell [*Maslow Reconsidered: a review of research on the need hierarchy theory*, *Organizational Behavior & Human Performance*, 15, 1976, 2], who reviewed studies based on Maslow's theory and stated: *The literature review shows that Maslow's Need Hierarchy Theory has received little clear or consistent support from the available research findings. Some of Maslow's propositions are totally rejected, while others receive mixed and questionable support at best.* (*Praise and Criticism: Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow)* *Human Performance Technology*, 27 January 2016)

Such considerations are countered by arguments such as those of Keith E. Rice (*More on Maslow*, *The Psychologist: British Psychological Society*, 31 September 2018):

Maslow's hierarchy and the concept of self-actualisation are often portrayed as culturally biased towards Western individualistic values and inappropriate to non-Western collectivist values. In fact, it is under-appreciated and barely reported on that Maslow's 1956 'redefinition' of self-actualisation was heavily influenced by his 1938 sojourn with the Blackfoot people and his experiences of their collectivist culture.

Debate on the matter has continued, as reflected in Johan Galtung and David Antal (*Human Needs; a contribution to the current debate*, 1980) which included a discussion of *Viable need patterns and their identification* (1980). These included no explicit references to enemies or evil. The more recent literature by Li Juan also makes no reference to such topics (*Literature Review of the Classifications of "Needs" in Needs Analysis Theory*, *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 2, 2014, 3).

Given the lack of consensus on any hierarchy of needs, **the following exercise makes use of that of Maslow as indicative of possibilities.**

# Reframing the hierarchy of needs (in principle) to encompass the need for evil (in practice)

The question raised by the above argument is the nature of appropriate recognition and engagement with evil. From a collective perspective its locus can be understood as a form of underworld -- which featured prominently in Imperial Rome, as separately discussed (*Engaging with the Future with Insights of the Past*, 2010).

**Cognitive underworld?** As considered here, the question is reframed as the relevance of a cognitive underworld to governance (*Cognitive embodiment of an "underworld" into governance*, 2010). The wider challenge is discussed separately (*Designing Global Self-governance for the Future: patterns of dynamic integration of the netherworld*, 2010). This notes recognition of a "dark side", which may be dangerously ignored, but is seemingly impossible to eliminate in practice:

- Tony Addison: *Human Trafficking: the dark side of globalization* (Ending World Poverty)
- Michel Beine, et al: *The Dark Side of Global Integration: increasing tail dependence* (Luxembourg School of Finance) [
- William Brittain-Catlin. *Offshore: the dark side of the global economy* (Picador, 2006)
- Andreas Buehn and Stefan Eichler: *Trade Misinvoicing: the Dark Side of World Trade* (2009)
- Richard Ellis: *The Dark Side of the Left: illiberal egalitarianism in America* (University of Kansas Press, 1998)
- Fjordman: *The Cult of Reason: The Dark Side of the Enlightenment* (*Global Politician*, February 2010)
- Global Policy Forum: *The Dark Side of Natural Resources*
- Raneee Hassarungsee: *The Dark Side of Global Markets* (*Social Watch*)
- S. Hein: *The Dark Side of Emotional Intelligence* (28 June 2003)
- James Hender: *The Dark Side of the Semantic Web*. (*IEEE Intelligent Systems*, 22, Jan./Feb. 2007, 1)
- Valerie M. Hudson, et al: *The Dark Side: Sex in Global Affairs* (*World Politics Review*, 10 October 2010)
- Pat Duffy Hutcheon: *Is There a Dark Side to Multiculturalism?* (*Humanist in Canada* Summer, 1994)
- IPS-Inter-Press Service: *Fighting the Dark Side of Globalised Society* (*IPS News*, 23 October 2010)
- George J. Irbe: *The Dark Side of Human Nature* (Philosophy Resource Center, 2000)
- Hinatsu Ken'Ichi: *The Dark Side of Network Society* (*Bulletin of the Japan Special Libraries Association*, 181, 2000)
- Ugo Mattei, et al: *Global Law and Plunder: the dark side of the rule of law*. (Bocconi School of Law, March 2009) [text]
- Stephen Myler: *The Dark Side: psychology of the insane*. (*ezine@articles*, January 2010)
- Gareth Peirce: *Dispatches from the Dark Side: on torture and the death of justice* (Verso, 2011)
- Chris Rumford: *Confronting 'Uncivil Society' and the 'Dark Side of Globalization'* (*Sociological Research Online*, 6, 2001) [text]
- Jill M. Strange: *The Dark Side of Organizational Behavior* (*Personnel Psychology*, July 2005)

**Reverse hierarchy to encompass evil?** Arguments have been made for the value of **reverse hierarchies** (Shaul Hochstein and Merav Ahissa, *View from the Top: Hierarchies and Reverse Hierarchies in the Visual System*, *Neuron*, 36, 2002, 5). Such an inversion has been proposed in relation to that of Maslow by Reza Ghiabi (*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, in Reverse* 26 October 2014):

Maslow's hierarchy of needs was helpful in 20th Century management in pointing out to managers why traditional management--hierarchical bureaucracy with managers acting as controllers of individuals, was unlikely to meet the psychological needs of employees. But it offered an unrealistic route to meeting those needs: ascension up the hierarchy of needs towards self-actualization. The truth is most of the people can't survive without effective collaboration with others. Also, most creative people prefer to minimize satisfying their basic "needs" in order to focus on their "wants". To get inspired and inspire others, sometimes we need to think of Maslow's hierarchy of needs in reverse.

It could then be asked whether the need for an enemy or evil should feature in such a reverse hierarchy -- then to be associated with the conventional presentation as an extension. This would then offer a more comprehensive indication of the range of needs. The possibility of such a continuum is developed in the argument of Kris Nelson (*What is Good or Evil? The Good and Evil Continuum, Spectrum, Scale or Degrees*, *Evolve Consciousness*, 24 January 2018).

Given insight into each of the following, they frame the possibility of being aspects of any understanding of the degrees of evil.

Contrasting gradations of degrees of evil?	
Degrees of evil?	Degrees of sinfulness?
Degrees of enmity?	Degrees of otherness and alienation?
Degrees of reification?	Degrees of violence?
Degrees of pain and suffering	Degrees of uncertainty?
Degrees of ignorance and stupidity?	Degrees of fear and terror
Degrees of stress and panic	

**Degrees of evil?** Potentially controversial is the distinction of degrees of evil, especially in a period when those promoting strategies perceived as problematic are specifically framed as being "evil" (as noted above). For Ron Rosenbaum:

It's such a highly charged term, "evil", and so are its recently revived elaborations "evil ones" and "evildoers" -- words that President Bush has applied to Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. That doesn't mean "evil" is a useless term. It can specify something important, but we should know what it is specifying, because tossing the term around indiscriminately can devalue it, rob it of its very specific gravitas. There is evil and there is evil -- the word has hierarchies and degrees -- distinctions to be drawn and commonalities to be sought, when making comparisons between Hitler and bin Laden, for instance. (*Degrees of Evil: some*

[thoughts on Hitler, bin Laden, and the hierarchy of wickedness](#) *The Atlantic*, February 2002).

As discussed separately ([Degrees of Evil](#), 2014), in examining the philosophical literature Rosenbaum discovered not a single, all-encompassing evil but hierarchies and degrees. These distinguish:

- natural evils ("acts of God" in the theological and insurance-company vocabularies)
- man-made evils (flu epidemics from anthrax attacks, for instance), distinguished by the mindset of the perpetrator:
  - doing evil under the illusion of doing *good*
  - knowing that a crime is being committed.
- evildoers can in turn be clustered into a more rarefied category in the literature, often called "wickedness", subdivided into
  - "ordinary wickedness"
  - "selfish wickedness"
  - "conscientious wickedness"
  - "heteronomous (just following orders) wickedness"
  - "malignant wickedness" (as the highest (or lowest) degree) -- doing evil for evil's sake.

Rosenbaum argues that:

Most people (not all) would agree that a difference in degree between six million and six can be discerned, if not precisely defined. But defining degrees of evil involves calculations of both mindset and magnitude, whereby a lower body count might in some cases represent a greater degree of evil or a higher body count a lesser....

**Degrees of sinfulness?** The sense of "degrees of evil" has long been a focus of discussion, most obviously in relation to the degrees of sin identified by religions:

- Mary Fairchild: [Degrees of Sin and Punishment in Hell](#) (*Learn Religions*, 29 October 2020)
- Erika Grey: [Are There Degrees of Evil? are there degrees of evil in the Bible?](#) (27 January 2014)

There is of course the controversial question of perception, framing the actions of the other as sinful ([Seven Deadly Sins of Fundamentalism: assessing memetic weapons capability of neoconservatism](#), 2004). This includes discussion of :

Conceptual sins as logical fallacies  
Cognitive distortions as "sins"

Strategic "sins"  
Knowledge-handling "sins"

That argument refers to the possibility of a distinctive organization of sins, with inclusion of references to sin ([Towards a Logico-mathematical Formalization of "Sin": fundamental memetic organization of faith-based governance strategies](#), 2004). This followed from the interpretation of classical propositional calculus developed by Vladimir A Lefebvre (*A Formal Approach to the Problem of Good and Evil*, General Systems, 22, 1977).

Understandings of sin, including those esteemed to be of less serious implication ("evil-lite"?), opening the good-evil continuum to inclusion of other phenomena -- like disagreement -- to their inclusion. This would bear comparison with the triangular graphic representing a "hierarchy of disagreement" (Paul Graham, [How to Disagree](#), March 2008; Chris Meyer, [Graham's Hierarchy of Disagreement: how to argue like an expert](#), *The Mind Collection*). The latter presents the hierarchy in a manner comparable to that of Maslow.

**Degrees of enmity?** A related approach follows from insight into degrees of enmity, as with the exploration by J. Peter Pham ([Degrees of Enmity and the "War on Terrorism"](#), *Telos*, 31 August 2007). Such degrees featured in the procedures of the Catholic Church for the interrogation of those suspected of heresy (*Malleus Maleficarum*, 1486). Potentially of greater current relevance is the argument of D. George Harrison:

Long before Charles Darwin and his *The Origin of Species*, there have been degrees of enmity and distrust between the "scientific" community and the religious community...This has resulted in the severe polarization between the two... ([Modern Science and Ancient Genesis: The Cancerous Conflict](#), 2021):

As a surrogate for enmity ("enmity-lite"?), an array of degrees is now proposed with respect to adversarial relationships ([Rate Your Adversarial Relationship](#), 28 August 2008). That focus might be fruitfully combined with the many references to degrees of animosity, variously interpreted (Kwon Jung, et al. [A typology of animosity and its cross-cultural validation](#), *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 33, 2002, 6). A hierarchical arrangement of the increasing degrees of animosity is offered by Mohammad Jafar Amir Mahallati ([Friendship in Islamic Ethics and World Politics](#), 2019).

Of some relevance is the recognition from a marketing perspective of such degrees, as noted by Annie Peng Cui, et al:

Few studies, however, have considered that individual consumers may harbor varying degrees of animosity toward different countries, thus, differentially affecting their willingness to buy products from these countries. ([Consumer animosity and product choice: might price make a difference?](#) *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 29, 2012, 7)

**Degrees of otherness and alienation?** Given the manner in which otherness and alienation evoke animosity and enmity, potentially

provoked by propaganda or religious dogma, this too merits inclusion in any comprehensive spectrum of any "need for evil":

- James Roy MacBean: *Degrees of Otherness: a close reading of First Contact* (*Visual Anthropology Review*, September 1994)
- J. A. Auerbach: *Degrees of Otherness: The Ottoman Empire and China at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (2008)
- Natalija Jovanović: *Degrees of Otherness: fetishisation of the 'West'* (*Blesok*, 67-68, 12 October 2009)
- Wilfried Lippitz: *Foreignness and Otherness in Pedagogical Contexts* (*Phenomenology and Practice*, 1, 2007, 1)
- Stephen Brighton: *Degrees of Alienation: the material evidence of the Irish and Irish American experience, 1850-1910* (*Historical Archaeology*, 2008)

Clearly the difficulty is that each is free to frame the other as constituting an evil threat in order to define the response as justified. The result is evident in the convolutions of **just war theory** (*jus bellum iustum*), namely the doctrine of military ethics studied by theologians, ethicists, policy makers and military leaders. This ensures that war is morally justifiable through respect for a set of criteria. It is the ease with which "evil" is attributed to the other -- with the aid of the media coverage characteristic of war propaganda -- which renders the argument questionable. As argued by **Jeff Sparrow**, humanitarian interventionists dangerously present each crisis as a morality tale: our enemies commit atrocities out of pure malice, whereas we always mean well (*We Don't Fight Men, We Fight Monsters: another war in the name of humanitarianism*, *Information Clearing House*, 5 September 2014).

**Degrees of reification:** Reification occurs when an abstraction (abstract belief or hypothetical construct) is treated as if it were a concrete real event or physical entity. Recognized in terms of the **fallacy of misplaced concreteness**, it is a fallacy of ambiguity, namely the error of treating something that is not concrete, such as an idea or evil, as a concrete thing.

For Robert J. Moore:

Reification is different from objectification, the process by which the mind lifts one aspect of reality out of the overall flow of experience and makes it a discrete object of consciousness (Berger and Pullberg 1965, p. 200). Reification, on the other hand, is the process of objectifying reality and then, apprehending the object as an alien thing that is independent of its producer. Furthermore, Berger and Pullberg (1965, p. 200) conceptualize reification in terms of "alienation": By alienation we mean the process by which the unity of the producing and the product is broken. The product now appears to the producer as an alien facticity and power standing in itself and over against him, no longer recognizable as product. In other words, alienation is the process by which man forgets that the world he lives in has been produced by himself.... Reification is objectification in an alienated mode. Thus, reification is the objectification of reality by an alienated consciousness. According to Berger and his colleagues, although objectification is "anthropologically necessary" for a society to exist, reification is not. (*Dereification in Zen Buddhism.*, *Sociological Quarterly* 36, 1995, 4)

The extent to which reification is evil is implied by the various references to degrees of reification, notably following Karl Marx and Georg Lukacs (Val Burris, *Reification: a Marxist perspective*, *California Sociologist*, 10, 1988, 1; Dominic Kenneth Mario Pizzolitto, *Lukácsian Reification in the Twenty-First Century*, University of Windsor, November 2019). There is however little clarity to the degrees distinguished, although it could be assumed that greater clarity is held to be evident in the practice of Zen (Ryan Gunderson, *Things Are the Way They Are: A Typology of Reification*, *Sociological Perspectives*, 27 May 2020).

**Degrees of fear and terror:** Some indication is offered separately (*Distinguishing degrees of fear and terror*, 2005). As noted there, there are a number of references to the varieties of fear or terror, without distinguishing the degree experienced. The focus on that experience is discussed separately (*Thinking in Terror: refocusing the interreligious challenge from "Thinking after Terror"*, 2005)

**Degrees of pain and suffering:** Clarification is most notably offered through the work of **Ralph Siu** in measuring such degrees in terms of dukkhas and megadukkhas (*Panetics Trilogy*, International Society for Panetics, 1993; Johan Galtung, *Panetics and the Practice of Peace and Development*, 1999). Siu distinguishes 9 level of pain from noticeable through to unbearable. There are a number of references to the varieties of pain or suffering, without distinguishing their degrees (Robert Daoust, *Collecting and Classifying in the Systematic Study of Suffering*, *About Suffering in the World*). Of exceptional interest in this respect are the scales for both identified by Andrés Gómez-Emilsson from a non-linear perspective (*Logarithmic Scales of Pleasure and Pain*, Qualia Research Institute, 10 August 2019).

**Degrees of ignorance and stupidity?** The question is usefully framed by Robert J. Wolfson and Thomas M. Carroll (*Ignorance, error, and information in the classic theory of decision*, *Behavioral Science*, March 1976):

Up to this time decision theory, applicable to any level of living system, most usually the organism, has looked at situations in which there were varying degrees of ignorance about the connections between actions selected by the decision maker and the occurrence of states of affairs which the decision maker values to varying degrees. Here are introduced two notions relating to the decision maker's knowledge of states of affairs which may develop. The first is ignorance. A decision maker is ignorant if there are states of affairs which may come about as a consequence of actions open to him, but about whose possibility he is ignorant. The second is error... The notion of irrationality, it is suggested, can be replaced by the behavioral notion of being in a state of error or ignorance.

Whilst there are a number of exercises endeavouring to clarify the varieties of ignorance, that of Darren Smith usefully presents the distinctions in terms of degrees (*Eight Degrees of Ignorance and Stupidity*, *Jonathan Turley*, 8 January 2022). The matter is considered in considerable detail, extended to the implication of indifference, by John D. Norton (*Ignorance and Indifference*, *Philosophy of Science*, 75, January 2008). Also of relevance are the insights from the perspective of moral theology offered by James Akin who differentiates among the degrees of vincible ignorance and the consequent culpability of the individual (*Ignorance: Invincible and*

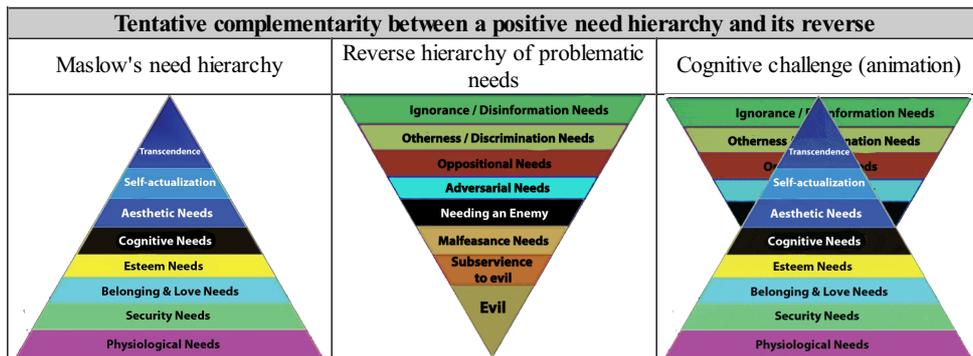
*Vincible, Catholic Culture*). A comprehensive overview is provided by Nicholas Rescher (*Ignorance: on the wider implications of deficient knowledge*, 2009).

## Requisite representation of complementary hierarchies?

In the light of the above, a tentative approach to a hierarchy complementary to that of Maslow (below left) can be presented as follows (below centre). The latter is necessarily inverted given unquestioned assumptions regarding vertical orientation: "up" equals "better", etc (*Unquestioned Bias in Governance from Direction of Reading? Political implications of reading from left-to-right, right-to-left, or top-down*, 2016).

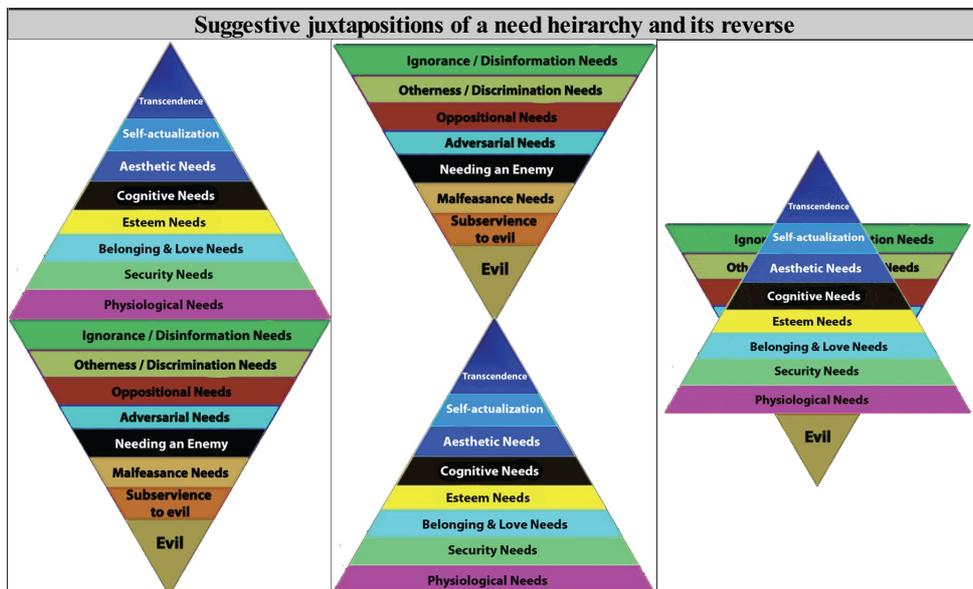
The distinctions made are necessarily simplistic and controversial, as between that of "enemy" and "adversary". For Michael Ignatieff, for example, an adversary is someone you want to defeat, whereas an enemy is someone you have to destroy (*Enemies vs. Adversaries*, *The New York Times*, 10 October 2013). The distinction between adversary and opposition also calls for clarification, as with the perception of otherness as a threat. The reframing of "enmity", as characteristic of the embodiment of "evil" (if not possession by it), also merits very careful consideration -- given the role of such reframing in propaganda to justify and motivate violent response.

The dynamics between the two forms of needs can be explored for purposes of discussion by the use of an animation (below right).



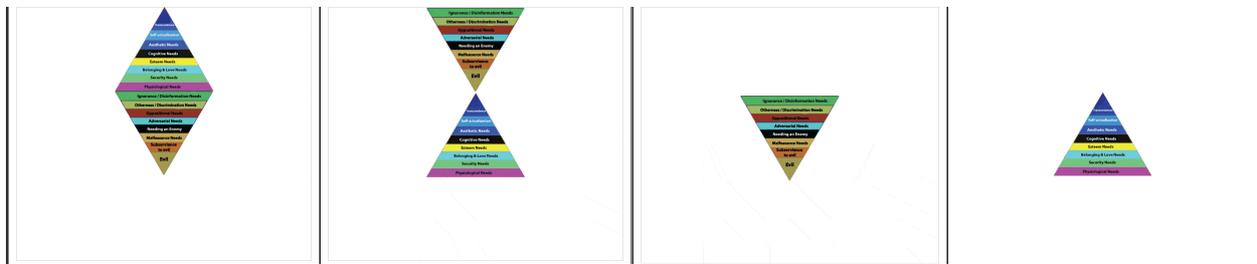
The category of "malfeasance needs" is of relevance, for example, in the light of the importance of the recourse to "enhanced interrogation" by governments, to "dirty tricks" by corporations, or the complicity of the secret services with organized crime. The transformation from malfeasance (through following orders) to any addiction to malfeasance is then indicative of the transition to "subservience to evil".

Also suggestive are other possibilities of relating the two hierarchies (left and centre below), inviting insights from another animation (below right).



As a device for evoking further discussion, more complex animations can be envisaged as shown below. The concern is whether there is imagery which can fruitfully reconcile the implications of the "polyamory" implied by a Maslow-style hierarchy with the "polyhostility" implied by its reversal (*Global Civilization through Interweaving Polyamory and Polyanimosity? Loving/Hating the world otherwise through contractual bonding with any significant other*, 2018).

Potentially suggestive animations of patterns of complementary hierarchies and their transcendence			
Simple forms		Complex forms	
Centred on negative	Centred on positive	Centred on negative	Centred on positive



Degrees of threat are of course associated with degrees of enmity from the strategic perspective of military preparedness, however they may be exaggerated to advance a particular agenda (Melvin Goodman, *The United States Specializes in Exaggerating the Threat*, *CounterPunch*, 26 May 2022). The distinctions of the inverted hierarchy then merit comparison with those of the five alert states distinguished by the defense readiness condition (DEFCON) as used by the armed forces of some countries, presumably in association with NATO. Five conditions of alertness are recognized.

It might be asked whether a corresponding array of conditions of alertness meets development with respect to Maslow's hierarchy. Their administration, and the transition from one level to another, could be most appropriately handled by the United Nations. As a reaction to human rights violations, the system might be termed HUMCON, for example.

## Incorporation of evil into models of requisite subtlety

**Organization of requisite complexity:** Use of a simple hierarchy to distinguish the values fundamental to psychosocial life -- whether positive or negative -- could be considered remarkably inappropriate. Relative to any such articulation, the models by which thinking is organized about fundamental dimensions in other domains is of a quite different order, whether it be electrical circuitry, the periodic table of chemical elements, the standard model of fundamental particles, or the phenomena distinguished by astrophysics. Is it to be assumed that simple hierarchies now encompass the subtleties of modern psychosocial life -- especially in contrast with the complex angelic and demonic hierarchies distinguished by traditional theology?

The transformation in discourse from any deprecation of evil to deprecation of the negative is indicative of the possibility of more complex articulations. Borrowing a term so fundamental to the natural sciences, suggests that greater attention could be given to the manner in which those sciences distinguish the dynamics between positive and negative from a neutral perspective. This has seemingly proved controversial (if not impossible) for the psychosocial sciences, where "negative" is readily recognized as dysfunctional or "bad".

Arguably missing is the insight from a systemic perspective offered by electrical systems, for example (*Electrical Systems as a Guiding Metaphor for Stages of Group Dialogue*, 2001). Clearly these benefit from extensive understanding of the relationship between positive and negative on which they are dependent -- in addition to an understanding of "earth". This is apparent in the careful manner in which they may be confronted in order to create light or power motors. There is widespread familiarity with the need for a positive and negative wire to achieve this -- if not a third "earth" wire in order to do so safely. It would be understood as ridiculous to strip out the negative wire in a spirit of political correctness.

**Possibilities with respect to evil:** It could then be asked whether analogous possibilities might be discovered with respect to any counterpart to evil. Especially suggestive in this respect are the applications developed by Nikola Tesla. As discussed separately these highlight the *Potential implications of alternation and rotation in psychosocial fields* and *Encycling positive and negative for future sustainability (Reimagining Tesla's Creativity through Technomimicry: psychosocial empowerment by imagining charged conditions otherwise, 2014)*.

Fundamental to any such exploration is the highly controversial confrontation between physics and religion. As clarified by [John Polkinghorne](#), a theoretical physicist turned priest:

Physics has been wonderfully successful in answering its own questions because it has carefully limited its ambition. Its concern is solely with questions of process (how things happen in the world) and it has bracketed out other questions, such as those of value, meaning and purpose (is there something going on in what is happening?). It is just these questions which lie at the heart of religious concern and they surely need to be addressed if we are to gain a full understanding of the nature of reality. (*Physics and Theology* January 2014)

Consideration is now given to the insights into such matters to be obtained from quantum physics ([Diarmuid O'Murchu](#), *Quantum Theology: Spiritual Implications of the New Physics*, Crossroad, 2004; [John Polkinghorne](#), *Quantum Physics and Theology: an unexpected kinship*, Yale University Press, 2008)

For Robert Russell, in discussing evil and the problem of suffering in nature:

One approach is to see sinfulness and the capacity to do evil as something which arose *sui generis* with the evolution of humanity as a distortion of those aspects which distinguish *homo sapiens* in the context of other early hominids... But is it appropriate and even sensible to use terms like morality and evil outside the context of human behavior?

While the debate continues among sociobiologists, anthropologists, and so on, some see even physics as having at least a limited bearing on the subject. Clearly the underlying physical characteristics of what we call sinful and evil acts involve dissipation, decay, violence, and so on, and thus entropy. It is then possible to ask whether the laws of thermodynamics are in some way a

precondition for the possibility of the slow evolution of those capacities which, at least in humanity, emerge as full-blown sinfulness. Entropy in particular seems to play an ambiguous, multivalent role here. (*Physics and Theology, CounterBalance*)

As asked by Stoyan Tanev and David Bradshaw:

Where do the understandings of energy in theology and physics meet? The author argues that the encounter between theology and physics happens at the level of quantum physics, where the subtle use of words and language acquires a distinctive apophatic dimension. His comparative approach focuses on the epistemological struggles of theologians and physicists. According to Tanev, this focus on the struggles of knowing offers a new way to look at the dialogue between science and theology. (*Energy In Orthodox Theology And Physics* Wipf and Stock, 2017)

**Periodic table of positive and negative?** Fundamental to the pattern highlighted by the periodic table of chemical elements is a distinction made between positive and negative valency. An element with a positive valency, namely having 1, 2, or 3 electrons in its outermost shell, tends to lose those electrons in any reaction in order to obtain an inert gas configuration. Correspondingly an element with a negative valency, namely having 5, 6 or 7 electrons in its outermost shell, will tend to gain 3, 2, 1 electrons to form such a configuration.

From this perspective a distinction can be made between the elements in the human body, especially with respect to their positive or negative valency (Reginald Davey, *What Chemical Elements are Found in the Human Body?* *News Medical Life Sciences*, 19 May 2021; Prinessa Chellan, et al, *The elements of life and medicines*, *Philosophical transactions. Series A, Mathematical, physical, and engineering sciences*, 373, 2037, 2015; Osamu Wada, *What are Trace Elements? Their deficiency and excess states*, *Journal of the Japan Medical Association*, 47, 2004, 8).

The pattern language offered by the periodic table of elements then suggests the value of exploring its implications for the ordering of human knowledge (*Periodic Pattern of Human Knowing: implication of the Periodic Table as metaphor of elementary order*, 2009; *Towards a Periodic Table of Ways of Knowing in the light of metaphors of mathematics*, 2009). Are the "lighter elements", then characteristic of most psychosocial interaction? Do the "heavier elements" -- the "heavy metals" -- then tend to be inimical to life, especially those which are radioactive? (Anne Marie Helmenstine, *The Most Toxic Elements on the Periodic Table*, *ThoughtCo*, 5 October 2019).

The argument could be extended to the array of fundamental particles as ordered by the **Standard Model** (*Beyond the Standard Model of Universal Awareness Being Not Even Wrong?* 2010). A section in the latter, on *Inexplicable unknowns: the challenge of "the dark"?*, includes discussion of: the inadequacy of conventional frameworks, inexplicability, necessary "darkness", evil, and insights from "the dark". The argument is then developed further (*Epistemological Panic in the face of Nonduality: does nothing matter?* 2010).

**Cognitive engendering of analogous patterns:** Such examples from the natural sciences suggest that it is appropriate to imagine that the human mind has an inherent tendency to engender organized "bubbles" of preoccupation, however they may be inspired (Jeremy Lent, 2017, *The Patterning Instinct: a cultural history of humanity's search for meaning*, 2017), In the case of the religions this results in the projection of an array of angels, demons and heavens, however these may be distinguished and ordered in relation to virtues and sins. In the case of the natural sciences, the preoccupation engenders arrays of elements, galaxies, particles or species -- again however these may be distinguished and progressively ordered. This understanding may be at least partially explained by the arguments of George Lakoff and Rafael E. Núñez, notably the distinction between various types of number: positive/negative, rational/irrational, prime/composite, imaginary and complex (*Where Mathematics Comes From: how the embodied mind brings mathematics into being*, 2000).

The process may prove to be consistent with the articulation of Christopher Alexander (*A Pattern Language*, 1977) -- itself an invitation to recognition of analogues from a general systems perspective (*5-fold Pattern Language*, 1984). With respect to any paradigm shift, this suggests the value of *Distinguishing Levels and Patterns of Strategic Obsolescence* (2006), articulated there in terms of:

Denial and positive thinking  
Polarization and demonization  
Pre-emptive / Defensive appeals

Filtering and gatekeeping -- beyond denial  
Project Logic  
Patterning capacity challenges

From a general systems perspective again, there would seem to be a case for confronting the highly disparate ordered articulations of the natural sciences, then to be understood as aspects of an underlying general pattern -- one that is inherently elusive to comprehension. It is in terms of this pattern that any organization of qualitative distinctions and polarities -- including "good" and "evil" -- could be further explored. Expressed otherwise, using the pattern languages of the periodic table or the Standard Model, how might the variety of human values be articulated, for example?

Curiously a tendency of that kind is evident in the traditional projection of a simple set of qualitative distinctions onto the visible features of the solar system (Joseph Campbell, *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: metaphor as myth and as religion*, 1986; *Interface challenge of inside-outside, insight-outsight, information-outformation*, 2017).

## Concept analysis towards a periodic table of human values

**Concept analysis:** The development of the above-mentioned *Encyclopedia of World Problems and Human Potential* from 1972 (now online) explicitly sought to address the paradoxical relationship between "problems" (as noted above) and various understandings of "human potential". The latter included the challenging semantics of the extensive array of "human values" simply presented in any need

hierarchy. The early focus on the latter, through the [Human Values Project](#) of that initiative, was encouraged by early involvement in the [Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis](#) (COCTA) which has since evolved into a research committee of the International Sociological Association, following activity within the International Political Science Association.

An early concern was how to move beyond the constraints of structured lists and hierarchical representation of concept arrays (*Anti-Developmental Biases in Thesaurus Design*, 1981; *Needs Communication: viable need patterns and their identification*, 1980; *Patterns of N-foldness: comparison of integrated multi-set concept schemes as forms of presentation*, 1980; *Relationship between elements of knowledge; use of computer systems to facilitate construction, comprehension and comparison of concept thesauri of different schools of thought*, Working Paper No. 3, COCTA, 1971).

**Tabular configuration of concepts:** This shift away from dependence on hierarchical representation had been strongly influenced by the tabular presentations of [Ingetraut Dahlberg](#) as developer of the universal [Information Coding Classification](#) (ICC) and as instigator of what later became the International Society for Knowledge Organization (*Grundlagen universaler Wissensordnung*, Verlag Dokumentation, 1974; *Ontical Structures and Universal Classification*. Bangalore, 1978). Dahlberg's ICC influenced the topic organization of the online version of the *Encyclopedia* (*Functional Classification in an Integrative Matrix of Human Preoccupations*, 1982).

**Value polarities from *Roget's Thesaurus*:** Of relevance to the above argument, the Human Values Project identified sets of 1992 "destructive value" terms (implied in problem perception and description) and 987 "constructive value" terms (implied in the articulation of any strategic response). To address the highly problematic [definitional challenges](#) and [semantic ambiguity](#) of these terms in practice, these were clustered into 233 "value polarities", namely "positive-negative" concept pairs. These polarities were in turn clustered into 45 "value types" within a 5x9 tabular framework otherwise presented as *Variety of value dynamics*, 2015). Other tabular arrays (3x5, 3x7, 5x12) were considered in exploring semantic similarities between clusters of polarities (*Classification: Human Values Project*).

The primary tool for that exercise was *Roget's Thesaurus*. Its organization enabled detection of synonym-antonym pairs for qualitative concepts deemed to be "value charged" to some degree, namely liable to figure in any naming of a problem or of the value implied by any strategic response or human aspiration. From the perspective of the argument above, each value polarity holds both a negative connotation (with its implication of a degree of "evil") and a positive connotation (with its implication of "transcendent" potential). As such the tabular array constitutes a richer framework through which "good" and "evil" are articulated.

**Formal concept analysis:** *Roget's Thesaurus* has since become a focus for computer-based studies of semantic similarities in the light of the methodology of [formal concept analysis](#) (FCA) and its relevance to [data mining](#), [text mining](#), [machine learning](#), [knowledge management](#), and the [semantic web](#). As described by L. John Old:

*Roget's Thesaurus* is a semantic dictionary that is organized by concepts rather than words. It has an elaborate implicit structure that has not, in the 150 years since its inception, been made explicit. Formal Concept Analysis (FCA) is a tool that can be used by researchers for the organization, analysis and visualization of complex hidden structures.... *Roget's Thesaurus* has been studied or used for the automatic classification of text, automatic indexing, natural language processing, word sense disambiguation, semantic classification, computer-based reasoning, content analysis, discourse analysis, automatic translation, and a range of other applications. (*Unlocking the Semantics of Roget's Thesaurus Using Formal Concept Analysis*, School of Computing, Napier University, 2004; published in *Concept Lattices*, ICFCA 2004, *Lecture Notes in Computer Science*, 2961)

Other FCA studies of *Roget's Thesaurus*, indicative of its potential relevance to the clarification of the array of values, include:

- Mario Jarmasz: *Roget's Thesaurus as a Lexical Resource for Natural Language Processing* (Ottawa-Carleton Institute for Computer Science. 2002)
- Mario Jarmasz and Stan Szpakowicz: *Roget's Thesaurus and Semantic Similarity* (arxiv.org/abs/1204.0245, 2012)
- Stan Szpakowicz Mario Jarmasz: *Roget's thesaurus and semantic similarity* (*Current Issues in Linguistic Theory*, 2004)
- Patrick J. Cassidy: *An Investigation of the Semantic Relations in the Roget's Thesaurus: Preliminary Results*
- *Roget2000* (hyperlinked thesaurus); *Visualization of Roget's Thesaurus*
- Jason L. Baumgartner and Timothy A. Waugh: *Roget2000: A 2D Hyperbolic Tree Visualization of Roget's Thesaurus* (Indiana University, 2002)
- Uta Priss and L. Old: *Lattice-based modelling of thesauri* (*Semantic Scholar*, 2008)
- Uta Priss and L. Old: *Concept neighbourhoods in knowledge organisation systems* (*Semantic Scholar*, 2010)
- Yen-Ling and Kuo, J. Hsu: *Bridging Common Sense Knowledge Bases with Analogy by Graph Similarity* (*Collaboratively-Built*, 2010)

Such computer-based studies have demonstrated the continuing appreciation of the organization of *Roget's Thesaurus*, justifying its use with respect to any study of values. However they make no use of the implication of the distinction of a qualitatively "positive" (constructive) value term as set against its antonym, then to be understood as a qualitatively "negative" (destructive) term -- potentially indicative of some degree of perceived "evil" (however dilute). It is appropriate to note its alleged use by *Wikipedia* for classification of its articles (*Outline of Roget's Thesaurus*)

**Tabular organization of value polarities:** With respect to the ordering of clusters of value polarities in tabular form, consistent to any degree with that of the periodic table of chemical elements, a possible question would then be how to transform the distribution of the clustered elements from a 5x9 pattern into one which corresponds to the basic 8-fold structure of the main [groups of chemical elements](#) -- the columns of that table. This would mean that some clustered polarities would be associated with the [period structure](#) -- the rows of that table.

The first of Roget's 6 main classes is on *Words Expressing Abstract Relations* with 8 sections as indicated in a comprehensive Wikitionary entry (*Roget's thesaurus classification*). The 5x9 pattern in fact made explicit use of 5 of those 8 sections as columns of the 5x9 value types table -- allocating 3 to a later row. Clearly use could potentially be made of FCA to refine the redistribution of the set of value polarities associated with the other 5 Roget classes.

**Classification of qualitative categories:** The challenge with respect to classifying values is comparable to that of *figures-of-speech* and of *tone-of-voice* (*Questionable Classification of Figures of Speech -- as fundamental to the need for powerful rhetoric in governance*, 2016; *Varieties of Tone of Voice and Engagement with Global Strategy*, 2020). There is every reason to expect recognition of some figures-of-speech as of an evil nature. Thus for Robert C. Delgado:

The historical track record of demonizing one's adversary goes far back. Demonization uses metaphor or figures of speech to create an image of the enemy as evil or in league with the Devil. In politics today, the cosmic battle between God and the Devil disguises itself in the rhetoric of good and evil. Thus, while the origins of demonization are religious, its role today is fundamentally political. (*Dealing with the (D)Evil Enemy: a historical perspective*, UC Davis Library, 28 November 2016)

This recognition would also apply to tone-of-voice: *An easy way to tell if someone is evil is that their voice is much deeper than a normal character, often artificially so* (*Evil Sounds Deep*, Tropedia; *Evil Voice Sound Effects*, Soundsnap).

The focus on *Roget's Thesaurus*, both in the Human Values exercise and by the FCA studies, avoids a fundamental issue as to how a category is perceived and used in other cultures and languages -- especially non-European. With respect to the values exercise, it was indeed noted that there was an *inherent English-only bias* in the use of a thesaurus composed only of English words.

References to equivalents to such a thesaurus in other languages are sparse. The Princeton *WordNet* is a lexical database of semantic relations between words in more than 200 languages. The lexical resources of the *EuroWordNet* project, based on *WordNet* (not on *Roget*) are not freely available (Piek Vossen, *Introduction to EuroWordNet, Computers and the Humanities*, 32, 1998; *WordNet, EuroWordNet and Global WordNet, Revue française de linguistique appliquée*, 7, 2002, 1). The *Global WordNet Association* (GWA) is a free, public and non-commercial organization that provides a platform for discussing, sharing and connecting *wordnets for all languages in the world*. GWA builds on the results of *WordNet* and *EuroWordNet*.

Despite the acclaimed importance attributed to values across the cultures of the world, there is seemingly little interest in seeking value correspondences between languages -- or their implications for insights into "evil". Of potential political relevance has been early concern that terms described with negative prefixes might prove especially problematic (*Conceptual Distortions from Negative Descriptors: the possibility that "non-governmental" may be comprehended as "anti-governmental" in some languages*, 1974).

Of further interest is the sense in which values call for subtler understanding, especially when their significance may be better carried by their use as verbs (*Freedom, Democracy, Justice: Isolated Nouns or Interwoven Verbs?* 2011). The latter argues that the assumption that value "categories" are nouns may have framed an illusory quest for qualities and principles dynamically disguised.

The generalization of the periodic table of elements into psychosocial domains by *Edward Haskell* also usefully frames the challenge, especially given the distinctions he makes between entropy and negentropy through the coaction cardioid (*Full Circle: the moral force of unified science*, 1972).

**"Tuning" tabular configurations:** It is perhaps useful to emphasize that the quest for a higher degree of order for human values -- especially with implications of periodicity governed by analogy down each column of a table -- is at a stage comparable in historical terms to the progressive insight into the periodicity of the properties of elements in the table of chemical elements. The organization of that table only gradually became evident from its early proposal by *Dmitri Mendeleev* in 1869 -- with his *predictions of elements yet to be discovered*. The shambolic nature of current discourse on human values, with its claims and counter-claims, suggests that collectively there may indeed be a degree of recognition of the values in the first periods of such a table -- a recognition diminishing rapidly at this time with respect to later periods.

The future refinement of the human value table had been previously framed in terms of "tuning" as discussed separately (*Tuning a Periodic Table of Religions, Epistemologies and Spirituality -- including the sciences and other belief systems*, 2007; *Positive vs Negative*, 2007).

The form of the table of chemical elements is the focus of many *proposals for alternatives* -- despite (or because of) the fundamental nature of the elements, and the challenge of representing the periodicity of that pattern meaningfully. Beyond checklists of human values, of which there are many, the 5x9 pattern seemingly remains the only such exercise, in contrast with the hierarchy of Maslow, with its own limitations. Suggestions have been presented for a polyhedral configuration of values:

- *In Quest of a Strategic Pattern Language: a new architecture of values* (2008)
- *Configuring sets of values and principles as polyhedra*, (2008)
- *Embodiment of values in interweaving cycles* (2011)
- *Topology of Valuing: dynamics of collective engagement with polyhedral value configurations* (2008)
- *Recognizing missing values and the challenge of configuring value dilemmas* (2018)
- *Implementing Principles by Balancing Configurations of Functions: a tensegrity organization approach* (1979)

In seeking clues from the table of chemical elements, a key question is whether the clusters of the 5x9 table can be meaningfully redistributed in terms of 8 columns following Roget -- at least as a first approximation. Alternatively is it the 233 value polarities within those 45 clusters which call for redistribution following more sophisticated analysis as suggested by the FCA methodology?

In either case the positive-negative combination could be understood in a manner analogous to the proton-electron combination

constituting a potentially stable element -- a stable meme. In this light, the good-and-evil dynamics can be understood in a richer context -- worthy of the challenges they constitute in psychosocial relations. Especially intriguing are then the configurations "inimical to life" -- whether as heavier elements or due to their instability, otherwise recognized as radioactivity (for which value analogues might be usefully recognized). Also intriguing is the possibility of stable positive-negative combinations of values, analogous to [superheavy chemical elements](#), but of far greater complexity -- termed "[islands of stability](#)".

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