



laetus in praesens

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos

18 December 2001 | Draft

911+ Questions in Seeking UnCommon Ground and protecting the Middle Way from Binary Thinking

-- / --

Beyond sympathy for the immediate victims and bereaved, this note presents over 1417 challenging questions, notably from a variety of electronic and other media sources. The intention is to facilitate collective learning on the occasion of the abhorrent and horrendous attacks on 11th September 2001 -- and their aftermath. As new questions are added new categories may be used. No attempt has yet been made to rate the questions for insightfulness or relative merit. Because of its size, the document has now been split into a number of parts.

Contents

- 1: **Nature of the challenge of terrorism**
 - Challenges to civilization
 - Challenge to collective intelligence
 - Dissent, democracy and civilization
- 2: **Belief systems and terrorism**
 - Belief-centered exclusivity
 - "Evil"
 - Spirituality
- 3: **Ways of thinking, perception and analysis**
 - Binary thinking
 - Symbolism, and other metaphors
 - Projection and denial
 - Quality of discourse vs propaganda
 - Comprehension of alternative perspectives
- 4: **Nature of terror and terrorism**
 - Ubiquity of "terrorism" and definitional game-playing
 - Contradictions
 - Evoking and amplifying terror
- 5: **Strategy against terrorism**
 - Appropriate strategy
 - Strategic cowardice
 - Intelligence failure and strategic handicaps
 - "War" metaphors
- 6: **Conspiracy and terrorism**
 - Dangerous factoids and conspiracy theories
 - Coincidences
 - Strange symmetries
 - Exploitation of crisis and commitment
- 7: **Justice and terrorism**
 - Justice and double standards
 - Admissible evidence and deniable responsibility
 - Appropriate retribution
- 8: **More questions for the future**
 - Consequences for civilization
 - Fruitful initiatives
 - Unhelpful insights
 - Humour

- [For the future](#)
- **God's daily problem**

The attack and its response are being presented by both 'sides' in terms of an 'us and them' logic requiring everybody to take sides or run the risk of being defined unambiguously as supporting the opposite side -- and threatened with the consequences. This simplistic binary logic is not worthy of 21st century civilization. There is at least a case for recognizing twelve 'sides':

Activists:

- (a) 'terrorists',
- (b) 'fix-it avengers',

Sympathizers:

- (c) 'non-violent sympathizers with the terrorist cause',
- (d) 'non-militant sympathizers with the fix-it cause of the avengers',

Opportunists:

- (e) 'exploiters of business opportunities created by the crisis',
- (f) 'exploiters of political, ideological, religious and racist opportunities created by the crisis',

Peace-mongers:

- (g) 'peace activists' engaged in opposition to any conflict,
- (h) 'peace passivists' dissociating themselves from any confrontation,

Framers, interpreters and apologists:

- (i) 'intelligence analysts', 'presenters', 'commentators', 'news managers', 'spin doctors' of official positions,
- (j) 'commentators', 'conspiracy theorists' and 'strategists' of alternative positions,

Uninvolved:

- (k) 'informed but indifferent',
- (l) 'innocent and unaware'.

In defining their mission, the 'fix-it avengers' endeavour to cluster all other groups with (a) -- if they are unwilling to be associated directly with (b). The 'terrorists' and the 'fix-it avengers' have their own military dynamic with each other -- although each is split, as always, into those at personal risk and those instigating from the rear. Neither (c) nor (d) have any desire to be drawn into this dynamic, which they see as unhelpful to any resolution of the larger problem -- but the dialogue between them is also highly problematic and unfruitful. The 'terrorist' cause benefits from this confusion and inhibits the emergence of any more fruitful dialogue or approaches to the problems that all face in different ways. Missing from this twelve-fold breakdown are other more fruitful systemic perspectives to sustain more meaningful dialogue between the twelve, towards more complex and sustainable solutions. These contextual, non-linear perspectives of higher dimensionality -- (m), (n), (o), etc, perhaps interrelated on a polyhedron -- would of course appear totally lacking in credibility from the perspectives of any of the twelve and are readily, if not deliberately, confused with those of any opposition. Attempts to articulate what forms action could take from any such broader perspective are totally inhibited by exaggerated polarization. That is the tragic essence of the crisis.

The questions in the [various parts](#) of this document (see above) are an effort to identify the '[uncommon ground](#)' -- the unexplored 'sacred' space for dialogue towards (m), (n), etc., however these modes may reflect the best of world civilization. The questions may be considered a contribution to the *United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations* (2001).

See also:

- [Documents relating to Dialogue and Transformative Conferencing](#)
- [Documents on the conceptual challenge](#)
- [And When the Bombing Stops? Territorial conflict as a challenge to mathematicians](#), 2000
- [Enabling Creative Response to Extraordinary Crises](#), 2001
- [Needing Evil Elsewhere](#), 2001
- [War against Terra](#), 2002
- [Web resources: Critical thinking vs. Specious arguments](#), 2001



Any more questions?

What questions are not being asked?



God's Daily Problem [\[top\]](#)

Should we not all pray for God, who has a daily epistemological problem of immense proportions ?

After all s/he receives daily prayers from:

- the suffering of the world in need of many vital necessities (plus a few exaggerated or opportunistic extras)
- those engaging in some form of *Jihad* or *Crusade* in defence of s/his sacred interests or

- to remedy initiatives that defile s/his sacred soil
- those thanking s/him for the land that s/he has given to them for their exclusive use, and attacking others who sacrilegiously fail to appreciate their unique claims to this gift
 - the peacemakers who ask God to reconcile the above (but without recognizing the multi-dimensional epistemological problem which God must solve in a manner comprehensible to those who insist on binary thinking at all times)

This four-fold problem is the cross God bears. It is symptomatized and compounded by the need of people to impose a gender on God when for s/her the mystery is in the slash. It is definitely God who needs our prayers!

This document may be freely reproduced in whole or in part. It is subject to [copyleft](#) principles rather than copyright restrictions. Thanks to Robert Pollard for advising on restructuring the document.



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

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