



laetus in praesens

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Global Incomprehension of Increasing Violence

Matching incapacity to question the reason why

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Introduction

Writing from the recently acclaimed [epicentre of terrorism in Europe](#), it is remarkable to note the astonishment widely expressed as to the reason behind the attacks in Brussels on 22 March 2016 -- as was the case with regard to the attacks in Paris in 2015, or indeed in the earlier case of 9/11.

The question in the minds of many is "why" such irrational attacks are so unreasonably made against innocents. The title of this note is usefully ambiguous, however, for it also holds the more crucial question as to **why so little effort is made to address the question of "why"**. This is to be compared with efforts to detect and constrain perpetrators by any feasible means -- "[closing the stable door after the horse has bolted](#)". The resources allocated to the detection of threat, and the associated investment in security resources, are many orders greater than those devoted to understanding violence and the many forms it may take.

To the extent that there is a sense of being trapped by the degree of violence in society, and the fear it engenders, a valuable insight is offered by policy scientist [Geoffrey Vickers](#): *A trap is a function of the nature of the trapped* (*Freedom in a Rocking Boat: changing values in an unstable society*, 1972).

The question here is whether it is in the nature of people not to want to know "why"? Is this because of the fear of change potentially implied? Unknowingly, have we seen the enemy and "[them is us](#)" -- as might be concluded from the argument of John Ralston Saul (*The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995)? Are there unknowns so terrifying that humanity has no desire to know of them -- because of the transformation for which it calls?

Are people unduly content with more superficial responses -- those that require little new thinking -- as argued by [Susan Buck-Morss](#) (*Thinking Past Terror*, 2006)? Are we then content with the obvious reactions to which they give rise -- however unfruitful they may prove to be in the longer term? Is "shooting first" the better strategy when "we are at war" -- postponing any more radical questions until later? Or should the ongoing quest for answers by authorities be systematically challenged by the oft-quoted remarks of Albert Einstein:

- To repeat the same thing over and over again, and yet to expect a different result, this is a form of insanity.
- The significant problems we face can not be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.

What factors reinforce this incapacity to explore "why" in any depth and why is so little effort made to do so? **What might it mean to understand why there is so little effort to comprehend the global indulgence in violence?** Would real understanding imply a transformation in thinking so terrifying that such comprehension is systematically avoided, as separately argued ([Thinking in Terror](#), 2005)?

Ironically, given the terror engendering the rising number of refugees arriving in Europe as a consequence of the policies of Brussels-based institutions, "epicentre of terrorism" might indeed be an appropriate expression -- perceived otherwise, if unreasonably so.

Constraints on questioning why?

The factors inhibiting new thinking with regard to the violence of the times might include the following. Whether some should be

combined, or others included, merits attention in its own right in any systemic analysis:

- **Confirmation bias:** Otherwise termed "myside bias", this is the tendency to search for, interpret, favour, and recall information in a way that confirms one's pre-existing beliefs or hypotheses, while giving disproportionately less consideration to alternative possibilities
- **Selective attention:** Namely the capacity of an individual or a collective to choose to what attention is devoted and what is ignored or neglected, as separately discussed (*Investing Attention Essential to Viable Growth: radical self-reflexive reappropriation of financial skills and insights*, 2014).
- **Premature closure of inquiry:** As "jumping to conclusions", this is of notable concern with respect to medical diagnosis when evaluating complex acutely ill patients (*Cognitive Bias and Premature Closure, The Poison Review*, 26 April 2010; *Medical Errors and Role of Premature Closure*, 17 July 2005). The possibility of premature closure in the case of security threats is clearly highlighted by the failures of intelligence and imagination documented with respect to 9/11 and assertions regarding the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq (*Destructive Weapons of Mass Distraction vs Distractive Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 2003; Cherine Abdalla, *Reducing the Risk of Intelligence Failure through the Use of Structured Analytic Techniques to Mitigate Cognitive Bias*). A clear indication of premature closure of inquiry is noted by Frank P. Harvey (*Addicted to Security: Globalized Terrorism and the Inevitability of American Unilateralism, International Journal*, 50, 2004, 1).
- **Dumbing down:** This is the deliberate oversimplification of intellectual content within education, literature, cinema, news, video games and culture in order to relate to those unable to assimilate more sophisticated information
- **Self-satisfaction:** With a positive connotation, this refers to a satisfied sense of attachment toward one's own or another's choices and actions, or toward a whole group of people, and is a product of praise, independent self-reflection, and a fulfilled feeling of belonging. As **self-esteem** it reflects the overall subjective emotional evaluation of an individual or group regarding their own worth. It is both a form of self-evaluation as well as a self-reflective attitude.
- **Righteousness:** Otherwise termed "rectitude", this is a theological understanding shared by the **Abrahamic religions** (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam). This is an attribute that implies that a person's actions are justified, and can have the connotation that the person has been "judged" or "reckoned" as leading a life that is pleasing to God. As such it has implications for collectives, notably as articulated in terms of **just war theory**. Righteousness provides a justification for a self-perception of innocence and the blameworthiness of others as a corollary (*Collective Mea Culpa? You Must be Joking ! Them is to blame, Not us !* 2015). A secular understanding of this has been articulated by Edward de Bono (*I am Right; You are Wrong*, 1991). Presumably righteousness obviates any need to explore "why". Those acting otherwise as simply wrong, if not evil, with the issues that this conclusion then implies (*Existence of Evil as Authoritatively Claimed to be an Overriding Strategic Concern*, 2016).
- **Vindictive justice:** Commonly confused with "retributive justice" whereby punishment is the best response to crime. According to that principle, when an offender breaks the law, justice requires that they forfeit something in return. In contrast to the revenge associated with vindictive justice, this type of retribution is only directed at wrongs, has inherent limits, is not personal, involves no pleasure at the suffering of others, and employs procedural standards. It is appropriate to ask to what extent vindictive justice is now implicit in what is claimed to be retributive justice, given the religious understanding of righteousness (N. Emmons, *The Vindictive Justice of God, Bible Hub*; Jennifer Wells, *Vindictive Justice: America's pursuit of punishment*, 2010).
- **Preference for violent recreation:** Namely the correlation between themes of violence as entertainment in preferred media sources and real-world aggression and violence over time. This is especially evident in **violent video games**, television and films, and in **violent sports** (whether implicit or otherwise).
- **Psychic numbing:** Namely the tendency for individuals or societies to withdraw attention from past experiences that were traumatic, or from future threats that are perceived to have massive consequences but low probability. (*Indifference to the Suffering of Others: occupying the moral and ethical high ground through doublespeak*, 2013)
- **Managed consent:** Commonly confused with processes of consent management. The latter is understood as supporting the dynamic creation, management and enforcement of consumer, organizational and jurisdictional privacy policies. The confusion has been variously highlighted (Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: the political economy of the mass media*, 1988)
- **Cultivation of doubt and uncertainty:** Associated with the previous factor this has been variously studied (Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: how a handful of scientists obscured the truth on issues from tobacco smoke to global warming*, 2010). Related processes are evident with regard to a manufactured controversy, sometimes shortened into the portmanteau **manufactroversy**, is a contrived controversy, typically motivated by profit or ideology, designed to create public confusion concerning an issue about which there is no substantial academic dispute **manufactured controversy** and **manufactured uncertainty** (David Michaels, *Doubt is Their Product: how industry's assault on science threatens your health*, 2008). The implications with regard to manufacturing consent in the case of the threat of terrorism are evident in the literature on the **culture of fear** and **fear mongering** (Frank Furedi, *Politics of Fear: beyond left and right*, 2005)
- **Denial of complicity:** An individual or collective is held to be complicit in a crime if aware of its occurrence and having the ability

to report it -- but failing to do so. As such, those who are complicit effectively allow criminal activity to take place despite potentially being able to stop it from happening, either directly or by contacting relevant authorities. Those complicit are *de facto* accessories to the crime, rather than the innocent bystanders they tend to claim to be. The most obvious current example is the much debated complicity of the Catholic Church in the systemic **abuse of children by clergy**, as alleged by a United Nations tribunal (Laurie Goldstein, et al, *U.N. Panel Criticizes the Vatican Over Sexual Abuse*, *The New York Times*, 5 February 2014; Andrew Frye, *UN Panel Says Vatican Enables Sex Predators to Repeat Crimes*, *BloombergBusiness*, 5 February 2014). As is typical, the accusations had been denied (*Vatican rebuffs United Nations sex abuse inquiries*, *BBC News*, 3 December 2013).

- **Provenance indifference**: Whereas considerable attention is devoted to health and safety, most notably with respect to the food chain, little attention is given to the source of weaponry causing fatality. An apple on the table can be readily traced to source if it is a risk to health, but a fatal bullet in the body cannot and there is little request for such information (*Identification of Bullets: human right and human responsibility?* 2009). The question is why there is concern in the first case as to the original responsibility, but indifference in the second. Any quest for "provenance" could be associated with the as yet unfruitful use of **root cause analysis** in comprehending jihadist radicalisation (*Identifying the Root Cause Focus of Radical Identity: reframing the complex space of radicalisation dynamics*, 2015)
- **Habitual responses to threat**: Individuals and collectives have necessarily developed a pattern of responses to threat which are called into question with difficulty (*Us and Them: Relating to Challenging Others -- patterns in the shadow dance between "good" and "evil"*, 2009). This is despite a degree of recognition of the failure of such responses, most notably evident in the case of recent conflicts, as discussed separately (*Transforming the Unsustainable Cost of General Education: strategic insights from Afghanistan*, 2009; *Review of the Range of Virtual Wars: strategic comparison with the global war against terrorism*, 2005). As with the premature closure of inquiry, it can be related to the phenomenon of **groupthink**, as separately discussed (*Groupthink: the Search for Archaeoraptor as a Metaphoric Tale -- missing the link between "freedom fighters" and "terrorists"*, 2002)
- **Deprecation and criminalisation of questioning**: The questioning of explanations promulgated by authorities and mainstream disciplines is itself susceptible to threats (if not criminalisation), as indicated in the repeated arguments by the French Prime Minister, **Manuel Valls**, that any attempt to explain jihadism is already a step towards justifying it. Clearly a "bad career move" for any researcher dependent on government funding. He goes further in calling into question any cultural or sociological commentary with regard to the attacks in France. This attempt to equate understanding with excuse has subsequently been criticized (Sonya Faure, Cécile Daumas et Anastasia Vécrin, *"Culture de l'excuse"? les sociologues répondent à Valls*, *Libération*, 12 janvier 2016). This notes that: *Cette dynamique est une régression intellectuelle qui va de pair avec une politique basée sur la construction d'ennemis.*
- **Fear of learning**: As a particular phobia, termed **sophophobia**, this encompasses: knowledge fear, wisdom fear, learning phobia, knowledge phobia, wisdom phobia, fear of knowledge, fear of wisdom, epistemophobia, gnosiphobia. It has been variously described (*Fear of Learning; We Have Nothing to Fear but Fear of Learning*). To the extent that learning may well imply change, then it is change itself which is the source of fear as variously recognized (*Exposing Fear Of Change, Change Management; Fear of Change*, *The Huffington Post*, 5 March 2015; Joseph Burgoin, *The Fear of Change, After Psychotherapy*, 5 November 2011). Such fear has been termed **metathesiophobia**.
- **Avoidance of the disruptive -- tolerating "the unsaid"**: Is it the case that political correctness and the avoidance of whatever might be experienced as negative ensures that challenging questions are simply avoided, as can be variously argued (**Barbara Ehrenreich**, *Smile Or Die: How Positive Thinking Fooled America and the World*, 2009; William Davies, *The Happiness Industry: how the government and big business sold us well-being*, 2016; *Global Strategic Implications of the "Unsaid"*, 2003). Are there indeed matters of which it is better neither to speak nor to think?

Violence as primary means of getting attention in democratically deficient societies?

Limited collective attention capacity: In the light of the above, society as a collective has limited capacity of attention to the marginalised -- whatever token account is taken of their condition, as may be highlighted by various forms of media coverage, as queried in a particular case (*Starvation Imagery as Humanitarian Trump Card? Counterproductive emotional blackmail engendering worldwide indifference*, 2016). More generally, the avoidance of new thinking on "why" calls for new forms of learning in its own right (*Vital Collective Learning from Biased Media Coverage: acquiring vigilance to deceptive strategies used in mugging the world*, 2014).

Much is currently made of **democratic deficit**, **freedom deficit**, **political alienation** and **political apathy**, now complemented by commentary on the shift to radical **populism** in the USA and Europe. Further commentary has associated this with a rise in fascism (John W. Whitehead, *Fascism, American Style*, *The Huffington Post*, 22 March 2016; Thom Hartmann, *"Fascism is rising in America": the Koch brothers and democracy's dispiriting demise*, *Salon*, 8 February 2015).

For those experiencing themselves as marginalised and disempowered, the issue might be partially understood in terms of **how to obtain attention to any condition from the collective** -- in a society characterized by inequality and intensively preoccupied otherwise. This problem is of course a primary preoccupation of commercial marketing, which may well inhibit or prevent the communication of the existential concerns of the marginalised -- necessarily lacking the requisite resources.

It is of course the case that extensive **bombardment** and **targeted killing** are framed by democratic global governance as an appropriate

means of "getting the attention" of rogue states and of bringing them to order (Nils Melzer, *Targeted Killing in International Law*, 2008).

Media coverage of the human cost of the violence currently deployed with the complicity of Brussels-based institutions is however now severely curtailed. As noted by Patrick Cockburn:

The reporting of the events in Brussels is in keeping with that after the January (Charlie Hebdo) and November Paris attacks and the Tunisian beach killings by last year. For several days there is blanket coverage by the media as it allocates time and space far beyond what is needed to relate developments. But then the focus shifts abruptly elsewhere and becomes yesterday's story, treated as if the movement has ceased to exist or at least lost its capacity to affect our lives... A strange aspect of these conflicts is that Western leaders have never had to pay any political price for their role in initiating them or pursuing policies that effectively stoke the violence. (*Media is Failing to Bring Western Leaders to Account for their Role in Growing ISIS*, *Russia Insider*, 21 March 2016)

Related commentary from Joshua Grimes notes -- predictably, of necessity:

Once again, the wall-to-wall media coverage is allowing Western governments to escape responsibility for a far worse security failure, which is their own disastrous policies. (*Brussels Attacks: Will European Leaders Again Profit From Terror They Helped Unleash?* *Russia Insider*, 22 March 2016)

Is it any surprise that widespread media coverage of the human cost is elicited by attacks affecting those institutions?

Combative strategies: In the case of academia and the policy sciences, the lack of non-tokenistic attention to the matter can be variously explored with respect to the priorities currently most favoured ("*Tank-thoughts*" from "*Think-tanks*": *metaphors constraining development of global governance*, 2003; *Enhancing Sustainable Development Strategies through Avoidance of Military Metaphors*, 1998). As implied there, the metaphors framing new thinking are strongly reinforced by combative military thinking, avoiding the difficulties of rising popular discontent, if not seeking actively to escape them (*Challenges More Difficult for Science than Going to Mars -- or exploring the origins of the Universe or of Life on Earth*, 2014).

Irrespective of the violence framed as terrorism, democracy would now seem to require "unreasonable" forms of activism evident in [demonstrations](#) and frequent [strike action](#) -- whether or not these are associated with regrettable violence. In such cases it is increasingly clear that normal democratic processes do not ensure attention to conditions experienced as frustrating by some, if not a direct threat to their livelihood. To an increasing degree, government is evidently incapable of creatively organizing matters otherwise, or even of exploring that possibility (*Framing the Global Future by Ignoring Alternatives*, 2009). There is even a question as to whether democracy is ungovernable (*Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy?* 2011). The Chinese perspective emphasizes the point (Tom Phillips, *Democracy is a joke, says China -- just look at Donald Trump*, *The Guardian*, 17 March 2016).

Criminalising the radical: Within this context it is natural that government should take the relatively easy path of marginalising the discontented -- as an easy target, acceptable to an electorate demanding "action". Hence the ease with which tendencies to "radicalisation" have been deprecated and even criminalised. This could be considered especially ironic in that **this may well inhibit any "radical" new strategic thinking for which the situation would seemingly be calling** (*Radicalisation versus Demonisation? Enabling radical initiatives under conditions of strategic stalemate*, 2015; *Radicalisation of Existence and Identity: recognizing the global emergence and influence of daimonic dynamics*, 2015; *Coming Out as a Radical -- or Coming In? Risks of cultivating negative capability in a caliphate of normality*, 2015).

Equally ironic is that government may consider it necessary to take "radical" repressive measures to manage discontent (as intimated by Donald Trump). Similarly the most marginalised may perceive themselves to have no other option than to adopt "radical" strategies of the most problematic nature.

The strategic mindsets of authorities and of terrorists would seem to be strangely complementary and dysfunctional at a time when new and more appropriate strategic thinking is required. The "excuses" of both are questionable. Potentially more questionable, however, is the failure to allocate resources and support to those who might have the expertise to explore new possibilities.

In quest of extraterrestrials whilst ignoring terrestrial "extras"

"Extraterrestrials"? The existence and nature of extraterrestrial life has become a theme taken ever more seriously by various sciences. The challenge of the [search for extraterrestrial intelligence](#) (SETI) in order to establish "contact" remains a preoccupation. Little is said about the content of any communication once "contact" is established, as separately discussed (*Communicating with Aliens: the psychological dimension of dialogue*, 2000).

There is a curious naivety to the prevalent assumption that such extraterrestrials would somehow be "people like us", or conforming to the rationality and reasonableness claimed by science, and respectful of humanity's "universal" norms. The challenge is remarkably, and ironically, highlighted by that of communicating with those variously considered "alien" in society -- terrorists in general (ISIS, the Taliban, etc), refugees, those of other religious or ideological persuasion, youth, the elderly, and the "feral".

The point has often been made that the focus on life elsewhere is a form of escapism -- a failure to address challenging issues at home (*Challenges More Difficult for Science than Going to Mars -- or exploring the origins of the Universe or of Life on Earth*, 2014). This is exemplified by the expedition to Mars -- launched a week before the attacks at the "epicentre of terrorism in Europe" (*Massive European spacecraft launched toward Mars*, *Astronomy Now*, 14 March 2016; *NASA Eyeing Landing Site for 2016 Mars Mission*,

Space.com, 11 March 2016). Might such initiatives usefully call for the sign at the fatal entrance to highways: *Wrong Way -- Go Back?*

Extraterrestrials as a metaphor: Given the resources and intellectual capacity allocated to SETI, these serve as a remarkable generative metaphor for the neglected challenge of communication with the marginalised and those hostile to the **doublepeak** they currently associate with global governance (Frank J. Barrett and David L. Cooperrider, *Generative Metaphor Intervention: a new approach for working with systems divided by conflict and caught in defensive perception*, *Appreciative Inquiry Commons*, 2001).

Some of those identified as alien, or deprecated as "sub-human" might well be understood as "terrestrial extras" (according to drama parlance), or as "nobodies" with the prospect of "nothing". This may be held to justify their systemic neglect as "non-human", following a dubious historical pattern of human cultures by which proactive "extraterrestrials" might well be inspired (cf. *Writing Guidelines for Future Occupation of Earth by Extraterrestrials: Be done by as you did?* 2010). Could "terrorists" be fruitfully recognized as "extraterrestrials" -- in disguise, or under "cognitive cover"?

Hypothetical extraterrestrials raise a more complex possibility of greater relevance. Does the escapist impulse signal a crucial form of **cognitive displacement** -- perhaps to be understood as avoiding the systemic need to communicate with "intra-terrestrials". More subtly, does the creativity of astrophysics with regard to the complexities of the universe effectively disregard the potential complexities of an "intra-verse" -- or perhaps a **metaverse**?

Ever more complex topologies in response to the abstruse question of the **shape of the universe** are developed by astrophysicists advocating the simplistic strategy of colonization (*Stephen Hawking: Humanity Must Colonize Space to Survive*, *Space.com*, 13 April 2013). However there is seemingly no complementary effort to apply the subtle capacities of that discipline to a knowledge-based society now threatened by new patterns of terrorism, as can be variously explored (*Sensing Epiterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) Embedding of "extraterrestrials" in epistemic dynamics?* 2013; *Self-reflective Embodiment of Transdisciplinary Integration (SETI) the universal criterion of species maturity?* 2008; *World Introversion through Paracycling: global potential for living sustainably "outside-inside"*, 2013). Does the latter suggest a more challenging interpretation of "inhumanity"?

There is a further irony to be anticipated, as repeatedly explored in science fiction. The extraterrestrials contacted may inhabit a resource-challenged planet. Like the refugees which are currently a challenge to Europe, they may well seek refuge on Earth -- appealing to "universal" norms, however alien their appearance and culture. The theme has been explored in the science fiction film *District 9* (2009), highlighting issues of **xenophobia** and **social segregation** with the arrival over South Africa of extraterrestrials (nicknamed prawns).

"Why do we hate them"? In the search for "why", current populist reactions to the massive influx of refugees to Europe suggest the merit of recasting the old question with respect to Muslim jihadists: *Why do they hate us?* This was notably asked immediately after 9/11 (Fareed Zakaria, *The Politics Of Rage: Why Do They Hate Us?* *Newsweek*, 15 October 2001) and then subsequently (Mohsin Hamid, *'Why Do They Hate Us?'*, *The Washington Post*, 22 July 2007; Mona Eltahawy, *Why Do They Hate Us?*, *Foreign Policy*, 23 April 2012). Consistent with the argument of this note, the question was refined by Qasim Rashid (*Why Muslims Hate America*, *The Huffington Post*, 6 December 2012):

As an American Muslim activist, I receive this question all too often: *America is about freedom, free speech, and democracy -- why do Muslims hate us?* The question is not at all why they hate us, but why don't we get it.

By recasting the question, the much neglected issue of the manner in which "we hate them" is highlighted (Gilad Atzmon, *Why Do We Hate Them?* *Information Clearing House*, 4 July 2007; Jason Miller, *Why Do We Hate Them? Fear and Loathing in the Occident*, *Information Clearing House*, 18 August 2006; Roger Friedland, *Why Do We Hate Them Now? Anti-Islamic Feelings Nine Years After 9/11*, *The Huffington Post*, 13 September 2010; David William Pear, *Islamophobia: Why Do We Hate Them?* *OpEdNews*, 10 April 2015).

The question of course applies to the attitude of some, to some degree, to any other -- most notably to those who can be readily designated as alien (if not extraterrestrial, as may well be the case in the future). **Is there a form of hate built into the policies of structural violence which have been so subtly deployed to cultures and peoples whose hate "we" now find puzzling?** Our hate has of course its historically formative roots in the crusades -- evoked as a metaphor in the strategic response to 9/11, for example.

Communicating with "others"? The metaphor is remarkably illustrated by the movie *Avatar* (2009). The human forces are portrayed there as endeavouring to replicate the pattern of colonial exploitation in the quest for the resources of the exoplanet. The concerns of the extraterrestrial inhabitants are totally neglected, except insofar as they enable or hinder that priority. The challenge of meaningful communication is framed in those terms. To what extent does this reflect the absence of any capacity to "talk with ISIS" or to "talk with the Taliban"?

Curiously this failure is evident in the limited capacity of the Abrahamic religions to communicate meaningfully with one another, despite many exercises in interfaith dialogue. Each is remarkably capable of framing the other as intrinsically evil, anticipating the prophesied **end times** scenarios (*Evil Rules Guidelines for Engaging in Armageddon Now*, 2015).

Much debated, the challenge is also strangely evident in seemingly much milder form, namely in communication between competing leaders of schools of thought and between men and women (*Epistemological Challenge of Cognitive Body Odour: exploring the underside of dialogue*, 2006; *Women and the Underside of Meetings: symptoms of denial in considering strategic options*, 2009). The perspective of the other may then be readily framed as "alien", and potentially a threat, as explored by John Gray (*Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, 1992).

The failure of any more fruitful meaningful communication between the disciplines offers clues to the question as to "why" the potential of transdisciplinarity has not been more systematically addressed and enabled -- with each pursuing its own methodology, however unreasonable or irrational it may be held to be by others (Nicholas Rescher, *The Strife of Systems: an essay on the grounds and*

implications of philosophical diversity, 1985)..

Missing, more generally, is the development of any capacity to communicate meaningfully with "others", rather than in a mode requiring agreement, subject being redefined as a threat -- *You're either with us, or against us* ("*Intercourse with the Other*", 2007). The suggestion of bombing a culture back to the Stone Age can be explored in this light (Nick Cullather, *Bomb them Back to the Stone Age: an etymology*, *History News Network*).

In quest of shadows? The recent renewal of effort to detect extraterrestrial life through the SETI process is readily deprecated as a quest for shadowy life forms, whose possible existence has been hypothesized in the light of dubious agendas. Curiously the resources allocated to the detection of threatening terrorists -- with soldiers and police patrolling strategic points in major cities -- could also be seen as a quest for shadowy entities. It is questionable whether either initiative is appropriate to the detection of the entities sought -- given their very particular nature. Seeking shadows, and endeavouring to fight them, suggests the need for a new mode of thinking. Failure to do so recalls the efforts of [Inspector Clouseau](#) in the *Pink Panther* series.

Who speaks for the other?

If the language, behaviour and culture of the other inhibits mutual comprehension, **what is the process of enabling someone to speak for the other?**

Questioning sympathy for the other? Sympathy may well be inadmissible, despite exceptions ([Richard Jackson](#), *Confessions of a Terrorist Sympathiser*, *Transcend Media Service*, 7 December 2015). The issue is actively debated (*The Epistemological Crisis of Counterterrorism*, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 2015). It is a theme of current political discourse (*David Cameron accuses Jeremy Corbyn of being 'terrorist sympathiser'*, *The Guardian*, 2 December 2015).

Most problematic is the default response whereby anyone who endeavours to speak for the other is readily framed as unduly sympathetic to the perspective of the other. This may take the form of discounting and deprecating any arguments presented, as with those framed as Communist [fellow travellers](#) during the [McCarthy Era](#). However it typically goes further through efforts to discredit such a spokesperson -- even to intimidate them or ensure their premature demise.

Questionable legal defence? Those expressing sympathy may be explicitly defined as traitors, as with lawyers such as [Emanuel Bloch](#), and [Jacques Vergès](#), renowned for their defence of those associated with left-wing and Communist causes. It is indeed appropriate to note the formal procedure for the defence of any other in a legal process -- whether or not the outcome is anticipated in [trial by media](#). Who might have been appointed to speak for such as Osama bin Laden, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussein, or Adolf Hitler? How is the status of those who speak in defence of those suspected of human rights abuses protected -- as at the International Court of Human Rights or in the Nuremberg Tribunals?

Catholic canon law makes provision for a [devil's advocate](#) to challenge those who speak for [canonization](#). There is however some irony to the substantive current investment in the lawyers who "speak for" the clergy indicted for sexual abuse, framed by some as alien, if not diabolical.

Given the fictional depiction of extraterrestrial "prawns" in *District 9*, there is some relevance to the animal rights initiative entitled provocatively the [United Animal Nations](#). One of its most important organ is the Geneva-based [International Court of Justice for Animal Rights](#). Its duties are to bring to the notice of the public, by means of morally symbolic prosecutions, cruel human actions against the animal kingdom, perpetrations that cannot be legally dealt with under normal human rights legislature. Necessarily there is a requirement for those who "speak for" the respective species, in defence of their interests.

Advocacy of the rights of the other: Of relevance are the domains in which the question is specifically identified:

- *Minorities:*
 - Negro: [Robert Penn Warren](#), *Who Speaks for the Negro?* (1965/2014); David Dennis, *Who speaks for 'black America' now?* *The Guardian*, 21 June 2013
 - Aboriginal/Indigenous: Dale Eisler: *Who speaks for aboriginals?* *National Post*, 25 November 2014; Doug Phillips, *Who speaks for the American Indian?* *WND*, 5 April 2007
 - Regional minorities: Koni Hoffmann, *Who Speaks for the North? Politics and Influence in Northern Nigeria*, *Chatham House*, 7 July 2014
 - Middle Class: Jack Beatty, *Who Speaks for the Middle Class?* *Atlantic Online*, May 1994
 - Hispanics: Deirdre Martinez, *Who Speaks for Hispanics?* (2009)
 - Roma: Aidan McGarry, *Who Speaks for Roma? Political Representation of a Transnational Minority Community* (2010)
- *Disadvantaged:*
 - Laila Hlass: *Who Speaks For Immigrant Children?* *BU Today*, 15 October 2014
 - Nora McKeon: *Who Speaks for the Poor, And Why Does it Matter?* *UN Chronicle*
 - William Doscher: *Who Speaks for Dying Patients?* *The New York Times*, 19 September 2014
 - J. A. Erlen: *Who speaks for the vulnerable?* *Orthopedic Nursing*, March-April 2006.
 - Keegan Macintosh: *Who speaks for the dead?* *Institute for Evidence-based Cryonics*, 6 January 2016
- *Religion:*
 - Islam: John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks For Islam?: what a billion Muslims really think* (2008); Elias D. Mallon, *Who Speaks for Islam? America: the National Catholic Review*, 16 March 2015; Dalia Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? The World Post*, 18 March 2010; *Who Speaks for Islam? The New Criterion*, January 2016; Khurram Dara, *Who Speaks for Islam in America? Patheos*, 21 January 2016
 - Hinduism: John Stratton Hawley, *Who Speaks for Hinduism: And Who against?* *Journal of the American Academy of*

Religion (2000); Sarah Caldwell and Brian K. Smith, *Who Speaks for Hinduism?* *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 2000

- Judaism: *Who Speaks for the Jews?* *The Forward*, 11 February 2015; Eric Alterman, *Think Again: 'Who Speaks for the Jews?'*, *Center for American Progress*, | 10 October 2013
- Disciplines:
 - Science: Rees Kassen, *Who Speaks for Science?* *Forum on Physics and Society*,
- Earth/Environment:
 - Interstellar:
 - Carl Sagan: *Who Speaks for Earth?*
 - Jeff Foust: *Who speaks for Earth, and does it really matter?* 9 March 2015
 - Paul Patton: *Who Speaks for Earth? The Controversy over Interstellar Messaging*, *Universe Today*, 19 February 2015
 - David Grinspoon, *Who Speaks for Earth? Seed*, 26 March 2016
 - Climate: Maxwell T. Boykoff: *Who Speaks for the Climate? Making Sense of Media Reporting on Climate Change* (2011); Jeff Nesbit, *Who Speaks for the Earth?* *US News*, 10 November 2014
 - Eva Lövbranda, et al., *Who speaks for the future of Earth? How critical social science can extend the conversation on the Anthropocene*, *Global Environmental Change*, May 2015
 - Species: Mari Margil, *Who Speaks for the Trees?* *Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature*, 2009
- Artificial Intelligence: Eric Eaton, et al., *Who speaks for AI?* *AI Matters*, December 2015
- Humanity: Walter D. Mignolo, *Who Speaks for the "Human" in Human Rights?* *Hispanic Issues Online*, 2009

Missing the point? The above checklist is especially interesting because of **those for whom the question is not asked**. Arguably many groups would claim that their organization exists in order to speak for some concerned constituency. Thus the thousands of international organizations profiled in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* could be held to be "speaking for".

More problematic is the question exemplified by *Who speaks for Christianity* -- given the claims which competing groups would make for unquestionable rights in that regard. Historically such competing claims have resulted in violent conflict, currently illustrated by that between Shia Islam and Sunni Islam with regard to *Who speaks for Islam*.

Missing is the more general understanding of *who speaks for the other*.

What is to be expected of those who believe that their concerns are not heard? How is communication to be enabled if each considers the other to be unreasonable or irrational? Extraterrestrials may well prove to be far more threatening than terrorists, if means of engaging with them meaningfully are not developed -- irrespective of the extraordinary beliefs by which they may be motivated, however deprecated these may be.

Given the science fiction explorations cited above, who might speak for extraterrestrials of unforeseen repugnancy -- the "prawns" of *District 9* -- irrespective of whether they were indicted for some crime against humanity? Who indeed is able to speak for ISIS or the Taliban -- without being condemned as a traitor to global norms and the values of humanity?

Who speaks for speaking for the other in a "universal" context? Who speaks for the discontented, given the remark of the historian **A. J. P. Taylor**:

Conformity may give you a quiet life; it may even bring you to a University Chair. But all change in history, all advance, comes from the nonconformists. If there had been no trouble-makers, no dissenters, we should still be living in caves.

Given the challenge of distinguishing "terrorists" from "freedom fighters" -- as has long been a theme within the United Nations -- how to reconcile current tragic events with the complementary frequently quoted observation of anthropologist **Margaret Mead**:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Thinking strategically otherwise?

Hyperterrorism? Intriguingly, terrorism is now being reframed by authorities as hyperterrorism -- terminology reminiscent of the preoccupation of astrophysics with hyperspace (*'Hyper-Terrorism' Here To Stay*, *French PM Warns*, *Sky News*, 13 February 2016; *Era of 'hyper-terrorism' will bring large-scale attacks*, *Threat Brief*, 15 February 2016; Pepe Escobar *The emergence of hyperterrorism Asia Times*, 17 March 2004; Michael Dartnell *Hyperterrorism: A New Form of Globalized Conflict*, *ctheory.net*, 2001).

Reinforcing the concerns of this paper, the preoccupation is fruitfully articulated by **Ali Minai**:

It is precisely at times like these that the volume of immediate response threatens to obscure deeper issues, and for a problem as deep as the threat of jihadi extremism, this is truly dangerous. While people are still reeling from the actual attacks and decision-makers are reaching for the most obvious - and frequently bad - choices, it is critical that policy-makers move towards a more realistic understanding of the conflict they face, and not make things worse than they are. Of course, history suggests that this likely to be a vain hope -- especially since the proper course is far from clear. This motivation behind this article is not to prescribe specific actions, but to provide a general perspective that may trigger further thinking. (*War on a New Planet: reimagining conflict and leadership in the time of ISIS*, *3QuarksDaily*, 23 November 2015)

Complexity: That argument frames Minai's subsequent case for recognizing a new form of warfare, moving beyond the more superficial manner of presenting the challenge through benefitting from insights from [complexity theory](#):

By now, most thoughtful people understand that the war against jihadi terrorism is not just a contest of physical force. We often hear that it is also a "battle of ideas". However, that is too superficial a reading of the situation. Indeed, the main battlefield in the war is mental, but the battle is at the much deeper level of instincts, emotions and beliefs, i.e., those things that shape our values long before they are turned into ideas and expressed in language. The terrorists are engaging with our lizard brains, and that is where they must be met....

Contrary to what most people think, ISIS whispers to all of us, stroking our ancient grievances, ancestral hatreds, the need for meaning in life, the promise of vengeance and redemption. Each of us hears what we already crave, and we respond without thinking -- some with violence, others with fear or prejudice....

Devising and executing a strategy to counter jihadi extremism will require not only immense wisdom in leaders, but also flexibility - since many initial choices will be incorrect; self-confidence - since results will only appear slowly; and, above all, imagination at least equal to that of the adversary. From the public at large, it will require patience, maturity, and trust in each other and their leaders. War, intelligence and surveillance may well be part of the strategy, but most of it will have to be political and psychological - just as it in on the other side. Surely, it is beginning to dawn on world leaders that leadership in the age of globalization is a completely different thing than it was even within relatively recent memory

Noopolitics and memetic warfare: The shift of focus to subtler realms recalls arguments for an understanding of memetic warfare in relation to [noopolitics](#), namely an information strategy of manipulating international processes through forming in the general public a positive or negative attitude by means of mass media. The aim is to reframe external or internal policy (of a state or block of states) such as to create a positive or negative image of ideas and promulgated moral values (David Ronfeldt and [John Arquilla](#), *The promise of Noöpolitik*, *First Monday*, August, 2007; A. V. Baichik and S. B. Nikonov, *Noopolitik as Global Information Strategy*, 2012). Although *Realpolitik* is commonly equated with hard power, and seemingly *Noopolitik* with soft power, both are broader in their embodiment of a form of organization. Specifically, *Realpolitik* is not limited to hard power and coercion, but embodies a hierarchical form of organization. Likewise, *Noopolitik* is not limited to reliance on knowledge and soft power, but embodies a networked form of organization.

As noted separately (*Noopolitics and Memetic Warfare within the Noosphere*, 2014), seemingly there are as yet no studies of "memetic warfare" (as such) in relation to "noopolitics" (as such). As yet to be clarified is the extent to which "memetic warfare" is a primary characteristic of noopolitics, as might be readily assumed. It has been explored as warfare of the future (Brian J. Hancock, *Memetic Warfare: the future of war*, *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin*, April-June 2010). As a primary instrument of *Realpolitik*, the use of "missiles" merits consideration, especially given the manner in which metaphoric use of the term may be indicative of a transitional condition to *Noopolitik*. Such "intermediaries" have been considered separately (*Missiles, Missives, Missions and Memetic Warfare: navigation of strategic interfaces in multidimensional knowledge space*, 2001).

Reframing "combat": In terms of thinking otherwise, however, there is a strong case for reframing the very meaning of strategic "combat" and "winning" in the light of insights from the philosophy underlying the Eastern "martial arts", as separately noted for example (*Ensuring Strategic Resilience through Haiku Patterns: reframing the scope of the "martial arts" in response to strategic threats*, 2006). Ironically, with *jihad* understood as a form of spiritual combat, it is the very nature of any such subtle "combat" which merits new thinking with respect to framing and engaging with an "enemy". Curiously this recalls a variety of traditional spiritual preoccupations of a range of religions, most notably Christianity:

- [Lorenzo Scupoli](#): *The Spiritual Combat*, Catholic Way Publishing, 2013
- Jonathan Robinson: *Spiritual Combat Revisited*, Ignatius Press, 2003
- Paul Thigpen: *Manual for Spiritual Warfare*, TAN Books, 2014
- David Brakke: *Demons and the Making of the Monk: spiritual combat in early Christianity*, Harvard University Press, 2009

Hyperreality and choice of ground: In the famed *The Art of War* by [Sun Tzu](#), particular attention is given to an understanding of the "ground" on which an opponent is encountered, notably remarking:

On dispersive ground, therefore, fight not. On facile ground, halt not. On contentious ground, attack not.
On open ground, do not try to block the enemy's way.
On the ground of intersecting highways, join hands with your allies.
On serious ground, gather in plunder.
In difficult ground, keep steadily on the march.
On hemmed-in ground, resort to stratagem.
On desperate ground, fight.

In the martial arts it is recognized that the choice of ground is vital to the outcome of any encounter with an opponent. This may offer a key to engagement with jihadists if there is now a degree of recognition that the ground takes far subtler form. How are the forms of ground then to be distinguished, as suggested by Sun Tzu -- especially when they take memetic and "spiritual" forms? If "hyper" is to be the fashionable new indicator as to the nature of terrorism, there is a case for exploring the nature of the [hyperreality](#) in which that terror may be experienced.

Problematic as Demonique? One speculative exploration reframed the engagement with the complex "problematic" (identified by

the Club of Rome) as more fruitfully understood as a "demonique" -- with its corresponding "resolutique" then to be identified as an "angelique" (*Engaging with Hyperreality through Demonique and Angelique? Mnemonic clues to global governance from mathematical theology and hyperbolic tessellation*, 2016).

This provides a way of benefitting from traditional insights into problems as demons (reframing current tendencies to demonisation), as well as into valued inspirations articulated in angelic terms. The spiritual combat is then personalised, as is claimed in the case of jihad.

Hyperchange? Given the insights of A. J. P. Taylor and Margaret Mead (cited above) regarding the role of small groups as catalysts of global transformation, it is appropriate to note the extent to which most advocacy groups (of whatever size) now seek a fundamental **makeover** of the rest of the world in the light of their own preferred image -- through "hyperspace", as variously understood. This is as true of the religions as it is of other schools of thought, and is especially evident in social media. Hyperreality, or communication space, thus provides a new kind of ground for what might be understood as "hyperchange". **Most actors now seek change in others, whilst being subject to multiple pressures from others variously seeking their own transformation.** Imaginative insight into these processes could be considered urgent (*Hyperaction through Hypercomprehension and Hyperdrive: necessary complement to proliferation of hypermedia in hypersociety*, 2006).

Especially ironic, given the preoccupation of this argument regarding the question "why", is that there may be no simple answer in any conventionally satisfactory sense. In communication space, the challenging process of questioning conformity might well be fruitfully understood in the light of catastrophe theory (*Conformality of 7 WH-questions to 7 Elementary Catastrophes: an exploration of potential psychosocial implications*, 2006). Shifting the focus to the "why" of violence, away from the conventional preoccupation with "who" and "how" (at immense cost), could well offer previously unconsidered insights.

As noted above, the radicalisation now perceived as a threat might be understood otherwise -- even, imaginatively, in terms of "hyper-who" (*Radicalisation of Existence and Identity: recognizing the global emergence and influence of daimonic dynamics*, 2015; *Coming Out as a Radical -- or Coming In? Risks of cultivating negative capability in a caliphate of normality*, 2015). Similarly, there may now be a need to engage with what might be suggested by "hyper-why" and "hyper-answer". In contrast with conventional understandings of wisdom, "hyper-wise" might even offer an indication, as a playful derivative of "hyper-whys".

"Thinking otherwise" may well involve "being other wise" in ways that are indeed a strategic challenge to new modes of comprehension, as tentatively explored (*Being Other Wise: dynamics of a meaningfully sustainable lifestyle*, 1998). This may require avoidance of premature closure and cultivation of the art of living with incomprehensible (*Engaging with the Inexplicable, the Incomprehensible and the Unexpected*, 2010; *Living with Incomprehension and Uncertainty: re-cognizing the varieties of non-comprehension and misunderstanding*, 2012). Should a space be envisaged in which thinking otherwise is the primary focus -- even a new kind of "university" (*University of Ignorance: engaging with nothing, the unknown, the incomprehensible, and the unsaid*, 2013)?

Mapping the system of uncritical thinking?

As argued by **Rami G. Khouri**, after decades of failed military action we still don't know what drives citizens to terror (*World Leaders Perpetuate Failed Anti-terror Policies*, *Al Jazeera*, 27 July 2016). Why not?

A valuable case study is provided by William J. Federer (*Western bewilderment at a Religious-Political-Military system: What is True Islam? Koinonia House*, Ausut 2016). This includes a table indicating 16 characteristics of the non-violence of Jesus, matched in each case with indication of the violence of Mohammed. The table is presented with the argument:

Some may say, Muslims killed people, but so did Christians, but instead of comparing "followers", the comparison must be made of "founders". If one's computer acts up, the owner reloads the software to the way it was left the factory store, if one's religion acts up, we must look back to the example left by the founder.

In asserting the validity of its assumptions, the article treat as irrelevant how many followers were inspired to violence in each case, or how many deaths resulted. Arguably there is every reason to believe that (statistically) a far greater number were inspired to violence by Jesus, and that both continue to inspire their followers to violence. There is no question of the possibility that, to some degree, the avoidance of violence by Jesus may in some perversely curious way have inspired Christians to engage in violence and to rationalize the case for doing so over centuries. The uncritical nature of the argument avoids the challenge of comprehending violence today by implying that comprehension is somehow inherent in the articulation of the founders and how their insight has been interpreted -- despite the case made that both argued extensively for peace. By avoiding more fundamental analysis, this could be considered an instance of "derivative thinking", as argued separately (*Vigorous Application of Derivative Thinking to Derivative Problems*, 2013).

There is a case for framing the factors inhibiting the process of questioning "why" through some sort of mapping exercise -- perhaps as a **mind map**, a **concept map**, a **semantic network**, or an **argument map**. The fact that such mapping is not undertaken is effectively an aspect of what such a map should hold. The following is merely a tentative step towards that end.

Factors inhibiting the process of questioning why?



The above map follows from previous exercises of some relevance, supported by more extensive argumentation and schematics (*Mind Map of Global Civilizational Collapse: why nothing is happening in response to global challenges*, 2011; *Recognizing the Psychosocial Boundaries of Remedial Action: constraints on ensuring a safe operating space for humanity*, 2009; *Mapping the Global Underground: articulating Insightful Population Constraint Consideration (IPCC)*, 2010; *Convergence of 30 Disabling Global Trends: mapping the social climate change engendering a perfect storm*, 2012). There is a case for consolidating such maps in the spirit of the *Global Sensemaking Network*.

Ignorance of history used systematically to justify incomprehension of violence
<p>Condemning the killing of police officers (Baton Rouge, Dallas, 2016), Barack Obama declared that <i>There is no justification for violence against law enforcement. None</i> (<i>Obama Calls Baton Rouge Police Shooting "The Work Of Cowards Who Speak For No One"</i>, <i>The Huffington Post</i>, 17 July 2016). The question is how this understanding would be received by those struggling against law enforcement by colonial and occupying powers -- as exemplified by the struggle against Great Britain in the course of the <i>American Revolution</i> (1765-1783), <i>French Revolution</i> (1789-1799), or that during <i>Israel's War of Independence</i> (1947-1949).</p> <p>At the time of that declaration by Obama, the deaths of 84 innocent people in Nice on Bastille Day has been acclaimed to be yet another incomprehensible shock to France (<i>Nice Attack: at least 84 killed by lorry at Bastille Day celebrations</i>, <i>BBC News</i>, 15 July 2016). This was strangely matched by the pride expressed in the official French news on that same day with respect to its prowess as a world leader in arms production (<i>La France championne de ventes d'armes</i>, <i>FranceInter</i>, 14 juillet 2016; <i>France: Saudi Arabia's New Arms Dealer</i>, <i>The National Interest</i>, 10 August 2015). As the latter notes:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">As the world's fourth largest arms exporter (behind the United States, Russia, and China), France sold nearly double the amount of arms in the first five months of 2015... than in all of 2014. From 2010 to 2014, 38 percent of French arms exports went to the Middle East, making it the most important region for the country's arms industry.... France's arms sales for the first half of 2015 created more than 30,000 jobs -- significant for a country grappling with record high unemployment.</p> <p>Readily understood as an effort to relativise the prowess of France, the role of Europe as a whole has since been disclosed (<i>Revealed: the £1bn of weapons flowing from Europe to Middle East</i>, <i>The Guardian</i>, 27 July 2016).</p> <p>Clearly both the President of the USA, Europe as a whole, and France (especially acclaimed for its philosophical education) are profoundly ignorant of the implications of the insight offered by the philosopher <i>George Santayana</i>:</p>
Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it
<p>History may find the extensive mourning for the limited number of tragic deaths of innocents within either the USA or France to contrast curiously with the indifference there to the tragic deaths of the far larger number of innocents in the countries for which their arms production is so systematically employed. Is the willingness of Theresa May to accept the deaths of others elsewhere matched by her willingness to accept a similar number of deaths in any response (<i>Theresa May says she would kill '100,000 men, women and children' with a nuclear bomb</i>, <i>The Independent</i>, 19 July 2016)</p>
<p>For while Europe knew the facts that preceded August 1914, certain truths were kept from ourselves fifteen years ago. We could ask "who" had committed these crimes against humanity (19 men calling themselves Muslims) or "how" (box-cutters, airliners, tall buildings), but anyone who asked "why" (these included myself) were excoriated as "terror lovers", "friends of terrorists", etc. (<i>Robert Fisk, They called the War on Terror a new world war -- and then forgot all about it</i>, <i>The Independent</i>, 15 September 2016)</p>
Incomprehension of violence explained by The Streetlight Effect?
<p>A policeman sees a drunk man searching for something under a streetlight and asks what the drunk has lost. He says he lost his keys and they both look under the streetlight together. After a few minutes the policeman asks if he is sure he lost them here, and the drunk replies, no, and that he lost them in the park. The policeman asks why he is searching here, and the drunk replies, <i>"this is where the light is"</i>.</p>

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