

Chapter 10 - WAR

Reasons To Be Fearful

Part 2

"Juicy Bits" (Selected Extracts to give a flavour or quick reminder of the content)

Quick Links to the subsections within Part 2

(Throughout the book, passages underlined like this represent items I will eventually link to but haven't yet. Sometimes this is because I haven't yet found an appropriate source. Sometimes its because I have too many sources and perhaps need to create a portal/content page rather than simple link and just haven't yet got round to it! In any case, if you find useful sources - or refutations, please [let me know](#). Note also that I have begun to incorporate local mirroring of important sources as a way to deal with "linkrot". Hence external links that I fear might not stay alive will usually have a "local" link immediately following them which you can use [if the external link fails](#).)

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Reasons to be Fearful - Part Two

Am I just another "fear monger"?

It might seem odd – given the climate of fear that is all-pervading in the middle of 2005, especially after it's just received another boost from the London Bombings – that I should take time out to bolster an already successful paradigm. The reason I do so is to set the remainder of my comments in context. In previous chapters we have begun to look at examples of how to conduct the democratic debate in terms consistent with the philosophical precepts we established in the first few chapters. Here I wish to go one step further and see if we can use Philosophy as a serious tool rather than mere academic exercise. Broadly speaking, this chapter gets to the meat of what Philosophy ought, in my view, to be about - the application of rational analysis to real world problems. It is intended to illustrate how Philosophy can be (and, in my view, has to be) applied to the intensely practical problem of human conflict.

It's a classic [SBO](#) but the whole point of attempts to answer the [Third Question](#) is to resolve conflicts; specifically conflicts about the "right way" to behave. One of my contentions is that a major component of most human conflicts is that the majority of the people attempting to answer the third question haven't grasped the meaning or significance of [first two](#) questions and the broad philosophical and scientific consensus regarding their answers. We shall be examining the obvious example of that failure - the psychology of fundamentalist belief (usually but by no means limited to religious believers) - in some detail later in this section.

Let me emphasise the caveat in the previous sentence. It should come as no surprise to anyone who has read previous chapters that I am hostile to the religious world view in general and religious fundamentalists in particular. But there is a sense in which they are less guilty than what we might call the "secular fundamentalists" like the psuedo communist dictatorships of North Korea and China. The religious fundamentalist gives what I consider to be naive answers to the Third Question because - as we will examine in detail later - they are apparently genuinely unable to understand the logic and evidence which underpins the scientific consensus on the answers to questions one and two. They *may* have the excuse of ignorance. The secular fundamentalists have no such excuse. They understand the scientific method but consciously cherry-pick the results and conclusions which suit their prejudices and suppress all discussion of or reference to those results which contradict them. (That may also be true in the case of SOME religious fundamentalists but I am prepared to give the benefit of the doubt to most of them. They usually just don't [grok](#) it!)

My main targets in this section are, however, the religious rather than secular fundamentalists and that is for the simple reason that the dangers I am about to discuss are almost exclusively concerned with the so called "War on Terror" which, if it isn't already, is in danger of becoming a battle between Christian and Islamic fundamentalists - with the rest of us as the meat in the sandwich.

I could have attempted to remain outside the perpetual human power struggle and try to restrict myself to objective comments which can be applied to any conflict situation. But they don't come any more intractable or potentially lethal than the conflict we're in right now - that largely religious battle between fundamentalists. I wasn't joking when I referred - in part 1 of this chapter - to this being "the final war". I am confident that it will be final for one of two reasons. Either we will destroy ourselves and the human race will end, with no winners; or we will grow up and learn to deal with conflict resolution intelligently.

Thus it makes sense to take this opportunity to focus my attempt at conflict resolution on what has always been the world's greatest ever conflict - the one that underpins all the others. I'm not, therefore, about to suggest that the War on Terror is even more of a threat than the potential Nuclear Armageddon which chilled our souls for 40 years after the last world war. I'm talking, instead, about the War that has been going on for at least five thousand years, more probably fifty thousand. The war between controllers and autonomists; between master and slave, lord and serf, priest and penitent, king and subject, bourgeoisie and proletariat, commissar and comrade; Parliament and People.

Yes of course Parliament is better than Kings. But it is not better than *the People*. It just acts that way. Elected dictators are generally to be preferred to dynastic ones or those who sieze power militarily. But elective dictatorship is only a step along the way to democracy and it's time we took the next step or two. (Democracy itself is only a step along the way to Consensus but the human race is only just capable of taking one step at a time. Lets not rush things - that way lies the totalitarianism of the secular fundamentalists like the aforementioned communist regimes)

Given this angle on the nature of human conflict, you may begin to understand why I see Neocons, the Religious Right and Militant Islam as being on the same side - along with the Russian and Chinese plutocracies and, most other governments. Along, too, with all other authorities which seek, under a variety of constitutional arrangements, to set the rules under which society will be controlled and to police the obeisance to those rules. They're all essentially fighting amongst themselves on how to justify and implement their chosen method of controlling you and me. That makes them all our enemies. Indeed, it is only because "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" that we tolerate any of them. To be sure, any government which tries to limit our actions other than straightforward prevention of harm to third parties is hostile to our interests and we to its. But if it protects us from other enemies who seek to abuse us in even more threatening ways, we will reluctantly tolerate it - providing the price it demands for such protection is not too high. When the world is full of bullies looking for opportunities to target you, it pays to ally yourself with the biggest bully in the playground, and governments, generally, *are* the biggest bullies in the playground.

This view is entirely consistent with the views of the farsighted authors of the American Constitution and underpins such constitutional freedoms as their right to bear arms. This was always primarily intended to prevent the totalitarian results of having a Standing Army. The logic was that, at the time, even the most powerful weapons (rifles and cannons) were within the financial grasp of individuals or at least small bands of like-minded free militia. Thus a national Standing Army would be a) unnecessary and b) not inherently able to outgun its citizens.

"A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." (2nd Amendment to the US Constitution)

"What, sir, is the use of a militia? It is to prevent the establishment of a standing army, the bane of liberty" (Con Gerry: The Congressional Register, 17 August 1789 - one of many similar contributions to the debate at the time)

The United States abandoned its traditional hostility to Standing Armies and Conscription when it decided to join the First World War. Military technology, since the late 18th century, has raced ahead to the extent that today's most powerful weapons are so expensive that only the wealthiest of government's can afford them. Not even the richest local militias could finance a fleet of modern jet fighters and none could dream of owning their own nuclear weapons.

The implications of these developments for aspects of liberty like the right to bear arms are profound but will have to wait for another time.

Meanwhile, since the death of deference, which we can loosely regard as the main achievement of the social revolution we now refer to as "the Sixties", growing numbers of increasingly well informed citizens are awakening to the enlightened realisation that there is no fundamental reason why - other than to prevent harm to a 3rd party - any human being should control or restrict the behaviour of any other human being; not - at least - without their full, free, informed and reviewable consent. A growing number of people are beginning to understand that no country on the planet is yet run democratically. They're also beginning to understand how dangerously incompetent those in authority generally are; how exceptionally good they are at preserving their own interests and how exceptionally bad they are when it comes to protecting the wider interests of Humanity.

These newly awakened politically aware individuals have yet to coalesce around a political consensus on what to do about the mess we're in and haven't yet got the confidence to believe that they could run things any better, but they're beginning to understand that it would be quite difficult to do any worse.

In this context, you won't be too surprised when you read, below, some pungent criticism of the attempts being made to "deal with" the current conflict by the existing players. This will obviously place me firmly in the growing camp of critics of the American hegemony and, don't get me wrong, I don't object to being there. But I also have major criticisms of the other critics. In short, I don't believe that they have fully grasped the scale of the problem.

At its most basic, there are four major components of the present global conflict. First is the existence of "conditions of conflict". At this point it does not matter what those are. The pertinent point, which no-one would challenge, is that conditions exist which cause conflict between parties. Part of the conflict is centred on whether those conditions should be changed and, if so, how. The second component is the absence of agreement on how to address or resolve such issues; no consensus on a dispute resolution procedure. The third part of the problem is that, in the absence of agreed conflict resolution mechanisms, both parties feel free to make up their own rules to justify their behaviour. Thus one party to the conflict has adopted a strategy based on "[total terrorism](#)" which is akin to the concept of "[total war](#)". And the final part of the problem is that the other party to the conflict, in response to "total terrorism", feels justified in implementing draconian policies which exacerbate all the other components of the overall problem, essentially escalating it.

The net result in this particular instance is that - although it would a somewhat slower process than nuclear armageddon - the human race is probably at greater risk of self-destruction over, say, the next 50 years, than it has ever been; even during the peaks of the so called "cold war" - such as the Cuban missile crisis.

All the relevant issues fall clearly under the general heading of the Third Question - "How Should We Behave?" so they offer an obvious real world opportunity to apply philosophy rather than merely talk about it.

My problem with some of the well known critics of the Bush administration is that they only appear to recognise the fourth component of the global conflict and belittle or ignore the importance of the other three. Adam Curtis' [Power of Nightmares](#) will serve as the first - and major - example of this failure. [Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9-11](#) the second and lesser. The essence of both is that the American response to 9-11 is motivated by considerations other than the attack itself; that the response has been massively disproportionate and that the politicians are taking the opportunity to promote a climate of exaggerated fear in order to provide justification for a sinister totalitarian agenda. None of which,

broadly speaking, I disagree with. How can anyone argue? The Americans lost 3,000 lives on 9-11. They caused [at least as many](#) deaths during their retaliatory invasion of Afghanistan, while in Iraq they've so far caused somewhere between [23,000](#) and [over 100,000](#) deaths and aren't showing any signs of reigning in their warhorses. Meanwhile, every day back home they increasingly confirm their status as a fully fledged [Police State](#).

The problem is that while being justifiably critical of what has been done since 9-11, neither address the issue of what *should* have been done and what still needs to be done in order to address the very real issues which arose from that attack and the events since. Adam Curtis in particular appears to argue that there is really nothing to worry about!

The Power of Nightmares

Curtis produced three episodes in his series. The first two are selective - but useful - summaries of how we got into the conflict situation at the beginning of the 21st century of the Christian calendar. The third episode completely missed the target and, effectively, let the American administration off the hook. His central thesis is that the very real events of 9-11 and 3-11 have led the Americans to *imagine* that they are up against a global enemy that probably never really existed and, if it did, then since the bombing of Afghanistan, doesn't anymore. They have used this imaginary danger to justify their assumption of the authority which the elite had lost through failing to deliver the postwar dream.

I have no problem agreeing with the analysis that they have used the War to increase or regain their authority and to justify the imposition of many of the trappings of a [Police State](#). But the notion that the dangers are imaginary is, frankly, bizarre. The point I was expecting to see Curtis hammer home was that what started out as a real but limited and manageable danger has now been massaged into a real global menace precisely by the Americans response to 9-11 (which obviously includes the invasion of Iraq).

Let's examine his presentation in some detail: The central message is carried in the introduction shared by all three with minor variations for each episode. Below is the introduction to the last episode:

In the past, politicians promised to create a better world. They had different ways of achieving this, but their power and authority came from optimistic visions they offered their people.

I would like to take issue, one day, with that somewhat rosy vision of the past basis of political authority but for now I will just point out that this is a somewhat eccentric view of it. Anyway...

Those dreams failed and today, people have lost faith in ideologies. Increasingly politicians are seen simply as managers of public life. But now, they have discovered a new role that restores their power and authority. Instead of delivering dreams, politicians now promise to protect us from nightmares. They say that they will rescue us from dreadful dangers that we cannot see and do not understand. And the greatest danger of all is international terrorism, the powerful and sinister network with sleeper cells in countries across the world. A threat that needs to be fought by a war on terror. But much of this threat is a fantasy which has been exaggerated and distorted by politicians. Its a dark illusion that has spread unquestioned to governments around the world, the security services and the international media.

This is a series of films about how and why that fantasy was created and who it benefits. At the heart of the story are two groups, the American Neoconservatives and the Radical Islamists. Last weeks episode ended in the late 90s with both groups marginalised and out of power.

But with the attacks of September 11, the fates of both dramatically changed. The Islamists, after their moment of triumph, were virtually destroyed within months, while the neoconservatives took power in Washington. But then the neocons began to reconstruct the Islamists. They created a phantom enemy. And, as this nightmare fantasy began to spread,

politicians realised the new power it gave them in a deeply disillusioned age. Those with the darkest nightmares became the most powerful.

Curtis tries to portray Al Qaeda as an entirely manufactured - or at least "reconstructed" - myth created by the Americans. While partly true, it avoids the wider and later truth. Where the focus didn't initially exist in reality, the Islamists realised – as Curtis seems to recognise in part – after 9-11, that the Americans had given them a “brand” and they were intelligent enough to adopt it for their own purposes. It remains true that Al Qaeda is not the pinnacle of a terrorist network, but it is also true that their ultra violent paradigm has become dominant in [MIET](#).

Curtis then produces expert testimony to confirm that there is no coherent network or hierarchy with sleeper cells around the world ready and waiting for the command to attack. He then demonstrates how the American administration inflated the brand and used it to justify their global reaction to the threat. All of which is easily verifiable. But the mere fact that the Americans didn't properly understand or label the threat did not mean, as he implies, that the threat was trivial or non-existent. He has missed the point that the American response to their imaginary network is in fact responsible for producing precisely the coherence that did not exist at the time. Not yet (2005) a network, perhaps, but at least a growing coherent vision.

Curtis is partially correct when he says:

They (the Americans) took a failing movement that had lost mass support and began to reconstruct it into a powerful network of evil controlled from the centre in his lair in Afghanistan by Bin Laden.

They certainly inflated its importance among radical islamists and built its brand so well that it became a dominant player. But neither it nor MIET in general, *ever had* mass support. They still haven't. But - as the [London Bombers](#) have now illustrated - they only need a tiny percentage of support among the Islamic community to keep them going.

He then argues that, taking a leaf from their anti-soviet propaganda days, the Americans heaped global domination ambitions onto their inflated target in order to justify the extent of the military operation they were about to launch against them. This is actually unfair to both their Soviet analysis and their Islamic analysis. There is no doubt whatsoever that the early dreams of both Leninist/Stalinist Russia and Maoist China was that they would be the focus of the global movement in which the workers of the world would unite against their capitalist masters and institute the utopia of international socialism. It was the whole point of their revolutions.

Yes, it was obviously true that, by the mid 70s, the Soviets had become unable to deliver that global revolution. But it wasn't entirely unreasonable for a bunch of paranoid conservatives to hypothesise that they still harboured such ambitions. After all, the enemy still "talked the talk" and had not formally renounced their global aims.

The neocons unforgiveable error, however, having raised a legitimate question and having reviewed the evidence and having learned that there was, in fact, no basis whatsoever for their fears; was simply to use all the methods at their disposal to lead the American public into believing that there was indeed tangible evidence of both a current pursuit of those hostile ambitions and a capability to deliver them. (See the Team B references in part 1).

Similarly, it is the case that elements of both radical and militant Islam do indeed hold global ambitions (see the [MIET](#) link for details if you haven't already). It is equally clear that they do not have the capability to deliver those ambitions, nor the support, even within the Islamic community, to achieve the global Caliphate of which some dream.

It is also the case that the stronger motivation for their struggle is not global ambition, but restitution. They want justice for Palestine - and in this alone they are in sympathy with democratic support throughout not just most of the Muslim world, but the world in general. This is important because it's

the one thing we might be able to do something about which would dramatically reduce their support among other Muslims.

When it comes to their ambition for an Islamic Caliphate (i.e. Islamic control over the Islamic part of the world), they are merely a radical fringe. That ambition does not reflect a widespread demand or desire in Global Islam. This is also important because it justifies our continued support for their opponents and our intervention - when invited - against them within their own communities.

Which is why what they want most of all is that the West – for which read, mostly, America – stop interfering in their communities: by which they mean that America should not intervene to prevent them removing existing corrupt regimes and implementing Taliban style control in all Islamic nations.

These ambitions may not be properly described or understood by America or the Media in general, but they are verifiable and they are driving a growing – not reducing – wave of MIFT. Curtis seems to think that because it may not be true that MIFT want all *our* women to wear the veil, then there is no real problem. He points out that majority of foreign fighters in Afghanistan had nothing to do with Bin Laden but were only *“radical nationalists who wanted to create Islamic societies within their own countries”*

He delivers this information as though its a major revelation and we're all supposed to recoil in horror at how we've been misled because they had such moderate and reasonable ambitions. Bollocks. What on earth does he think they were doing in Afghanistan? They were fighting a war against people who didn't want the Taliban dictatorship. Why? Because they wanted to sustain the one regime that was going “in the right direction” and to learn the techniques they would need to practice in their own countries if they were ever to impose similar dictatorships there. The warlords they were fighting against were a pretty unsavoury bunch themselves, who weren't exactly fighting for democratic or western liberal values we might support, but we have no excuse to be under any illusions about what the [Taliban represented](#) ([cached](#)) and how they wanted to control their populations. We've seen and documented their tyranny.

As I argued in part 1, I see no distinction whatsoever between our own fight to avoid tyranny imposed on us and our practical support for the majority Muslim community which, itself, clearly rejects such totalitarianism. This is the core of Curtis' error. His argument essentially boils down to the – probably correct – contention that the real MIFT ambition is restricted to controlling their own societies, not ours, and that, therefore, there is no real basis for us to be at war against them. I reject this utterly.

The same argument was used by some to suggest that Britain should not have gone to war against the Nazis even after their invasion of neighbouring countries. After all, they had no intention of invading Britain. Indeed, they tried hard to get the British on board as Allies. It is, alas, not possible to argue that Britain went to war against Germany in response to the Holocaust. But it is certainly possible to argue that whenever they became aware of it, then, if they hadn't already been at war, that alone would have been a sufficient justification for going to war.

Thanks to the Taliban regime, (we should have noticed it in the Saudi Wahhabi model first, but we allowed governments and media to distract our attention and didn't pay enough attention to the likes of Chomsky. Sorry Noam) we are now aware of precisely how militant Islam wants to control society and we are equally aware of how little support exists for this vision among normal Muslims.

Thus, the question of our involvement is no more than a global scale instance of the same argument we discussed earlier in respect of [Female Circumcision](#). If the community under attack by MIFT wants our help then we are as entitled to give it as if we were coming to the assistance of a rape victim. We should, in other words, have been fighting the Taliban well before 9-11 (there were plenty of cries for such intervention which were studiously ignored until it suited the world to use them as excuses after the fact).

Obviously, the same logic dictates that we should have intervened in South Africa, Rwanda, The Congo, Darfur, China, Korea, Israel/Palestine and so on. Opponents of intervention seem to argue that because we usually fail to intervene, we should never intervene; a council of despair if ever there was one.

The fact that American motives are impure, confused, self serving and imperialist does nothing to undermine the validity of opposing, by all means possible, Islamic Totalitarianism. The fact that Americans either invented or erroneously believed they were chasing an organised network and have imposed many features of a Police State on their own people in the conduct of this war is, ultimately, good reason to oppose American Totalitarianism AS WELL. It is not a reason for ignoring the first offenders.

Opposing the [Police State of America](#) obviously poses enormous problems of its own which we will deal with later (in Part 3). But recognition of American stupidity or duplicity (either of which is appropriately named "counterintelligence") does nothing to counter the reality of the MIFT threat. As William Swor (defence lawyer in the Detroit sleeper cell trial) says (in Curtis' final episode):

The government had a legitimate concern but they took that concern and made it a panic. They had reasonable questions and took them and made a complete fantasy out of them. They started out with a conclusion and then filled in all the blanks to the questions. So this was totally driven by the need or desire to have terrorists... If you build assumptions on assumptions, you can go anywhere. Its a fantasy that it was politically expedient to sell.

So, no change there then.

It really was no great surprise. This is how people who don't understand the first and second questions think. It is how many of them are able to believe in a god, regardless of the complete absence of evidence. "*The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence*" is their favourite mantra in this context. It justifies almost any conceivable belief structure when abused by those who don't fully understand it. Do a [google for that phrase](#) and read some of what you come up with. Very revealing. The first two sites I looked up were apologists for Rumsfeld's pitiful excuses about not finding any WMD. The [third \(cached\)](#) was an unrelated site devoted to matters archaeological. It obviously belonged to someone who does understand the first two questions. It contained this nugget:

Third, the interpreter must use strict rules of logic while dealing with evidence. For instance an important principle to remember is that the "absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." Just because something has not been found, that is not to say that it will not be found. The absence of evidence is obviously a problem, particularly in archaeology. But it is only crucial when it can be proven that one has no hope of ever finding what one is lacking. On the other hand, beware of arguments that are intentionally based on a lack of evidence. That is, some people claim that the fact that there is no evidence proves something. This is called an argument from silence. It must be rejected for lack of evidence. (my emphasis)

but my favourite has got to be this extract from one of the "Intelligent Design" bunch we'll be discussing later. These are the Christian Fundamentalists who are doing their best to subvert the current scientific paradigm (Darwinian Evolution) from "the inside". In a site with the impressively technical (not to mention hyperbolic) title: [Abiogenic Origin of Life: A Theory in Crisis \(cached\)](#), we found this beauty:

Numerous authors support the absence of the "hot dilute soup." A. G. Cairns-Smith (1982), W. Day (1984), H. D. Pflug (1984), C. R. Woese (1979), Hulett (1969), Shapiro (1986), M. Delbruck (1986), most of whom probably subscribe to some sort of prebiological origin of life, all conclude there is no evidence of the process having occurred. In spite of this, an equal number of authors regard the origin of life scenario as so well established that it needs no justification! Sagan and M. J. Newman have even gone so far as to declare, "The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence." For those of us who believe that life could not have originated from a non-existent "hot dilute chicken soup," such religious statements of irrationality by the likes of Sagan added strength to our conviction that he is just wrong!(pardon my emphasis!)

I wonder what the author would have to say to Donald Rumsfeld about [his use of the phrase](#). The irony is that this religious believer could not have made that observation if he does not understand at least the second question. Which means he fully understands the logic of empiricism. His problem is that he can't

seem to apply the same logic to his own creationist "intelligent design" hypotheses. In general, however, those who continue to blather on using that cliché to defend all kinds of indefensible logic obviously haven't the same grasp of empiricism. This is not news. It is, as we saw in Part 1, the basis of the Neocons' standard MO. That's how Iraq's WMD became so prominent an issue and so on. In March 2005, the comprehensively titled "Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction" reported as follows:

One of the most painful errors, however, concerned Iraq's biological weapons programs. Virtually all of the Intelligence Community's information on Iraq's alleged mobile biological weapons facilities was supplied by a source, codenamed "Curveball," who was a fabricator. We discuss at length how Curveball came to play so prominent a role in the Intelligence Community's biological weapons assessments. It is, at bottom, a story of Defense Department collectors who abdicated their responsibility to vet a critical source; of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analysts who placed undue emphasis on the source's reporting because the tales he told were consistent with what they already believed; and, ultimately, of Intelligence Community leaders who failed to tell policymakers about Curveball's flaws in the weeks before war.

Curveball was not the only bad source the Intelligence Community used. Even more indefensibly, information from a source who was already known to be a fabricator found its way into finished pre-war intelligence products, including the October 2002 NIE. This intelligence was also allowed into Secretary of State Colin Powell's speech to the United Nations Security Council, despite the source having been officially discredited almost a year earlier. This communications breakdown could have been avoided if the Intelligence Community had a uniform requirement to reissue or recall reporting from a source whose information turns out to be fabricated, so that analysts do not continue to rely on an unreliable report. In the absence of such a system, however, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), which disseminated the report in the first place, had a responsibility to make sure that its bad source did not continue to pollute policy judgments; DIA did not fulfill this obligation.

That's about as egregious as any political act in history. And that's just in the overview. In the [detail](#) it goes on to clarify that "Curveball" was regarded as a self deluded alcoholic who was primarily interested in the Green Card he eventually got (after which the reports somewhat diminished). How on earth was this assessment hidden from the decision makers? That was the purpose of the [Office of Special Plans](#). To filter out the opposition, the caveats and the caution. True, Cheyney and Rumsfeld didn't personally withhold that assessment from the President, they just chose a team they could rely on to do the job for them. ([Update Feb 2007](#) - "Acting Inspector General Thomas F. Gimble told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the office headed by former Pentagon policy chief Douglas J. Feith [i.e. the Office of Special Plans] took "inappropriate" actions in advancing conclusions on al-Qaida connections not backed up by the nation's intelligence agencies."([cached](#))) ([Update Mar 2008](#). The BBC finally got around to covering the Curveball story. This [video](#) reveals his real identity. They missed the Office of Special Plans angle however and ended up interviewing one of the victims of the hoax - Col Larry Wilkerson, Colin Powell's representative on Earth - instead of one of the Perpetrators.)([cached](#))

It is not surprising, therefore, that Curtis also establishes that there is no network of sleeper cells around the world including America and Britain. He demonstrates clearly that western so called "Intelligence" is pitifully misnamed. He demonstrates that the media have been woefully negligent in challenging the propaganda. All of which I accept. But he uses this string of exaggeration and inept failure to argue that because their portrayal of the threat is so obviously wide of the mark, the threat itself doesn't exist. That is dangerously naïve.

I agree, however, with the comments of one of his witnesses - Bill Durodie (Director - International Centre for Security Analysis, Kings College):

I'm not saying that an atrocity might not happen on the British mainland, but what I am saying is that we have an exaggerated perception of the possibility of terrorism that is quite disabling

Curtis concedes that there are groups who want to foment terror:

What the British and American governments have done is both distort and exaggerate the real nature of the threat. There are dangerous and fanatical groups around the world who have been inspired by the extreme Islamist theories and they are prepared to use the techniques of mass terror on civilians. The bombings in Madrid show this only too clearly. But this is not a new phenomenon.

Really? Where are the precedents for Nairobi, 9-11, Bali, 3-11 (Madrid) and Beslan? You could argue that the only difference between these attacks and prior terrorist attacks is scale, not principle. But that's like arguing that Scale is the only difference between the killing of [Stephen Lawrence](#) by a bunch of racist thugs and the organised racist killings of the Ku Klux Klan

I have no argument with Curtis' next observation:

What is new is the way American and other governments have transformed this complex and disparate threat into a simplistic fantasy of an organised web of uniquely powerful terrorists who may strike anywhere and at any moment. But no one questioned this fantasy because, increasingly, it was serving the interests of so many people... "

The Islamists too began to realise that by feeding this media fantasy they could become a powerful organisation again – if only in peoples' imaginations.

The Americans *always* deal with the world through simplistic fantasies!

It's a product of their media; the Fox News approach to reality. If you can't summarise the issue with a sound bite, they calculate that it's probably too complex for the audience to understand. But, again, just because they describe the threat in fantasy terms does not mean that there is no threat. Just because they couch their responses in a format designed to favour their own interests does not mean that they shouldn't be responding at all. Obviously (I hope) I disagree quite profoundly with how the Americans are dealing with the problem. They have made it a thousand times worse than it needed to be. But that is quite different from charging, as Curtis does:

...the War on Terror allowed politicians like Blair to portray a new grand vision of the future. But this vision is a dark one of imagined threats and a new force began to drive politics: the fear of an imagined future.

What Blair argued was that, faced by the new threat of a Global Terror Network, the politicians role was now to look into the future and imagine the worst that might happen and then act ahead of time to prevent it. (my emphasis)

Curtis' main charge is, clearly, that the threat is imaginary. How he can sustain that after the attacks we've already witnessed I'm not at all clear. Is he saying that it is unlikely that further similar attacks will take place? Or that the attacks will be so rare that we shouldn't be that concerned about them? Or that so few people - relative to other causes of death - will be affected that we're getting the whole thing out of proportion? These are issues he doesn't confront.

What people like Curtis do not seem to have grasped is that – as Kant puts it (see part 1) - *“some confidence in the character of the enemy must remain even in the midst of war, as otherwise no peace could be concluded and the hostilities would degenerate into a war of extermination. ”*

This “confidence” is based on a fuzzy notion that, in a conflict situation, we all obey some basic rules of combat, so that when a battle is won, survivors on both sides can resume some kind of normal relationship. It's what the Geneva Convention is all about. What MIFT tactics illustrate is that they do not share this paradigm. Like the Hutus in Rwanda, or the Nazis in respect of the Jews (and other human flotsam they disapproved of) they are happy with the concept of a “war of extermination”.

Presumably, in their particular Islamic mindset, they can't lose. Either they achieve the Caliphate or they die trying. Either way, they will be rewarded by Allah for their efforts. They recognise no endpoint short of total victory for their side of the argument. THAT is what makes them dangerous, NOT the prospect of a hierarchical well organised network. Hence Curtis' accurate demolition of the myth of the network gives no reason whatsoever to reduce our estimate of the scale of the problem.

Indeed, we can make a strong case that the absence of an organisation actually makes the problem WORSE! If it were a coherent organisation it would be easier to attack. We could eliminate or subvert key players and massively reduce the effectiveness of their activities. We might even be able to negotiate with the organisation. Instead, they are probably still largely an unconnected "rabble" of pious, extremely angry Muslims who are deeply attracted to the role models and strategies revealed by the headline attacks we have all witnessed in the past few years. Before the American response to 9-11, we probably had cause to be concerned about the activities of a few hundred seriously committed Islamic terrorists. We now have the problem of keeping track of ten or twenty thousand individual potential suicide terrorists widely dispersed around the planet. This is a security problem beyond the scale of any we have tackled to date.

In addition, they now have a heaven-sent training and proving ground in Iraq which is serving precisely the same radicalisation and organisational role as did the war against the Russians in Afghanistan. This isn't just training them in the arts of modern street warfare, it is allowing them to build very real alliances and networks of precisely the type the Americans prematurely described. Iraq, in other words, is transforming the Neocon fantasy into a self-fulfilling prophecy. (Update: while this section was still in draft, Porter Goss, this week's boss of the CIA, made the [first public acknowledgment \(cached\)](#) of precisely this point:

Those jihadists who survive will leave Iraq experienced in and focused on acts of urban terrorism

- although, of course, he didn't go as far as pointing out the American culpability for the "[blowback](#)". A couple of weeks later and we are regularly hearing reports of the [increasing sophistication \(cached\)](#) of the insurgents. They are certainly making good use of their training ground.)

Curtis' analysis might have been more accurate and more appropriate in the first few months after 9-11 (which, to be fair, is probably when he conceived and created the first drafts of his series). What he has failed to account for is that the Americans' disastrous (others say "deliberate") mismanagement of their response to that attack has now created a problem on the scale of what they claimed to be afraid of at the time.

At one point he says: *"Islamism as an organised movement for changing the Muslim world was obliterated in Afghanistan"*

Can he seriously believe that to be true today?

I might, one day, be persuaded that the Americans have deliberately engineered the escalation to prop up the military industrial complex and the global financial hierarchy. But right now it *really doesn't matter* how the threat came about. We still have to confront it.

It should be no surprise, therefore, that I cannot agree with Curtis' attack on the "Precautionary Principle".

Durodie again:

in essence the Precautionary Principle says: that not having the evidence that something might be a problem is not a reason for not taking action as if it were a problem. ... a famous triple negative that effectively says that action without evidence is justified. It requires imagining what the worst might be and then applying that imagination upon the worst evidence that currently exists...

...but once you start imagining what could happen, then there's no limit. "what if they had access to it, what if they could effectively deploy it, what if we weren't prepared." What it is, is a shift from the scientific "what is" evidence based decision making to this speculative imaginary "what if" based worst case scenario.

The evidence, however, is legion. This [list](#), ([cached](#)) for example, is of suspected Al Qaeda attacks to date. It reveals 6 attacks in the 8 years prior to 9-11 and twice as many attacks in the 3 years following. It doesn't even include Beslan (because, though MIFT, it wasn't Al Qaeda). Unsurprisingly, in the majority of cases the targets are either Americans or their Allies. Just because the Americans are clearly paranoid does not mean that no one is out to get them!

What is potentially disastrous, though, is that his misplaced focus on the reality or otherwise of the "imagined" threat reduces the credibility of his attacks on what I regard as a problem of at least equal and probably greater magnitude than the terrorist threat - the growth of the Police State we've already mentioned.

...individuals were detained not for any crimes they had committed but because the politicians believed or imagined that they might commit an atrocity in the future even though there was no evidence they intended to do this.

David Cole, commenting on (then US Attorney General) John Ashcroft's "preventative paradigm":

Under the preventative paradigm, instead of holding people accountable for what you can prove they've done in the past, you lock them up based on what you think or speculate they might do in the future. And how can a person who's locked up for what you think they might do in the future disprove your speculation? It's impossible so what ends up happening is the government short circuits all the processes that are designed to distinguish the innocent from the guilty because they simply don't fit this mode of locking people up for what they might do in the future.

This is the nub of the real problem. Locking people up just because they're dark skinned, Islamic and know how to spell jihad, reveals the chimpanzee-level imagination of the Neocons and their hangers on. But Curtis, once again, cannot resist overegging the pudding:

The supporters of the precautionary principle argue that this loss of rights is the price that society has to pay when faced by the unique and terrifying threat of the AQ network, but as this series has shown, the idea of a hidden organised web of terror is largely a fantasy.

...they imagine the worst about an organisation that doesn't even exist.

... no one questions this because the very basis of the PP is to imagine the worst without supporting evidence. And instead, those with the darkest imaginations become the most influential.

The hidden danger in Curtis analysis is that **he implies that the authoritarian response is wrong only because there is no real threat**. Hence, - if we could ever convince him that there was a real threat (as I try to argue) - he would, presumably, have to concede that the repressive measures were justified. But there are much deeper objections to those measures than merely determining whether or not the threat they are supposed to counter is real or imaginary. We'll be coming to those later as well. Meanwhile...

... "...no one questions this..."

Huh??!!

It is true that there isn't as much questioning as we might expect in the mainstream media, particularly the American mainstream. But hasn't he browsed the web? Here you can find literally millions of people

questioning this behaviour in microscopic detail. Most of them are Americans. Indeed, I would argue that we can already see the possible roots of a new Civil War in the States between those who welcome the new authoritarianism and those who will not accept it under any circumstances. The opposition even includes some right wing Republicans who can also see that the State has grossly overstepped its boundaries.

What you won't find much support for is Curtis' notion that the threat is itself a fantasy. You'll find people arguing that the threat has been manufactured and that Al Qaeda is a convenient front but that the real planners of 9-11 were the international Zionist conspiracy, the Carlyle group or whatever. You'll find arguments that Dick Cheney is the mastermind and either engineered 9-11 or allowed it to happen in order to justify precisely the steps they've taken since then. But you won't find many arguing that there is no real threat.

And the problem we need to address – and this is the core of my contribution – the problem we need to address is the same **WHATEVER THE SOURCE OF THE THREAT**.

It doesn't matter to me whether the responsibility for 9-11 lies in the hands of bin Laden or Dick Cheney. I'm interested of course, but our response should not be shaped by our conclusions as to the source of the danger. Our response needs to be generic. How do we protect ourselves against such threats? Period. Not “how do we protect ourselves against Islamic Terrorists?” or “how do we protect ourselves against a global Jewish conspiracy?” How do we protect ourselves against violent attacks from any direction?

Traditionally, the answer is to have an army or at least militia. But armies are only effective on the battlefield, where they can confront an enemy within a fixed geographical area. Today's battlefield is Planet Earth. The main targets for the enemy are not based on where they are, but who they are. Traditional wars are fought over territory on the ground. Try to locate the territory this enemy is fighting for and the nearest location is the human mind. This is a War between Believers and they're fighting about their Beliefs.

Which is why Durodie is so way off beam with:

..what we are seeing now is a society that believes in nothing. And a society that believes in nothing is particularly frightened by people who believe in anything and therefore we label those people as fundamentalists or fanatics

I can only assume that he is talking exclusively about the UK, or possibly Europe – in which case the comments are irrelevant. He cannot possibly be describing America as a “society that believes in nothing”. A major part of the problem is precisely how much America does “believe”, how many of its people are also “fundamentalists or fanatics” with beliefs just as deeply felt and irrational as the beliefs held by their enemies; and how many of those are in positions of authority or influence. (American Artist Joel Pelletier has created a [wonderful painting](#) ([cached](#)) based on this issue. When you've had a good look at the painting, click on “[The Movement](#)” ([cached](#)) to read his take on the problem.)

Curtis ends on what might be taken as an optimistic note:

But the fear will not last. And just as the dreams that politicians once promised turned out to be illusions, so too will the nightmares and then our politicians will have to face the fact that they have no visions, either good or bad to offer us any longer.

I wish we had grounds for believing that summary. It suggests that the problems are just going to melt away and we'll wake up in ten years time wondering what all the fuss was about. The politicians will be discredited and presumably replaced by a more realistic bunch. The truth is much more likely to be that, by 2010, we'll have suffered at least one or two more attacks on the scale of 9-11 or greater and that the sub-bestial behaviour of Beslan will have become the norm. A major part of the reason for the continuation of the very real threats is the complete mismanagement of the problem by the Americans – with the naïve help of the British (who thought they could hold the Tiger by its tail).

Michael Moore

I turn to Michael Moore with considerable regret. My wife and I are big fans. In 2002, everyone on our Christmas card list received a copy of "[Stupid White Men](#)" ([cached](#)). We made everyone go and see "[Bowling for Columbine](#)" and we were among the first to get tickets for "[Fahrenheit 911](#)". If anyone could get the message across, surely it would be Michael Moore. It took me weeks to admit my disappointment. It is such fun to see all the pompous assholes ridiculed by an expert. But it so desperately missed the target that I find it painful to watch again. I'm not going to dissect it in the same detail as I've just done with Adam Curtis' effort. I'll restrict myself largely to the first and worst mistake.

Moore dwells on the scene in the schoolroom where Bush has been informed about the attacks and continues to listen to the kids reading out stories about "My Little Goat". He implies that this is some kind of failure on the part of the President.

"Seven minutes passed, with nobody doing anything"

I cringed as soon as I heard that line. I knew we were in trouble. Much as one may or may not despise the Bush regime, that was such a patently ludicrous line, it could not possibly be defended. If you don't know what was being done and want to know, read Richard Clarke's "[Against All Enemies](#)" ([cached](#)). In short, everything that could sensibly be done was being done. There are some interesting questions about strangely coincidental exercises that were being carried out at the same time, allegations that the air defences were deliberately "stood down" and some very real concerns about the lack of available interceptors, but though we might fairly blame the administration collectively for such failures, and even harbour conspiracy theories around them, none of that can be laid directly at the feet of George W Bush and neither was there anything he could have or should have done at that time.

It was highly likely that his entourage were gathering the facts and that, until they knew precisely what was happening, and, more importantly, until they required a presidential decision, there was no point in pulling the president out of the photo opportunity and disappointing the kids.

True, given the luxury of advance planning on how to react to such news, it might have looked more "statesmanlike" to the potential audience and to posterity if the President had stood up, apologised and excused himself because he had just been given grave news which required his urgent attention. But that would only have been necessary or desirable for the sake of appearances, not for operational purposes. And nobody had the luxury of advance planning on how to deal with this unprecedented set of circumstances.

Mere weeks after Moore's film was released, even Bin Laden took up the Moore theme – in his [election address](#) ([cached](#)) to the American people - by suggesting that the second attack on the World Trade Centre was only made possible by the few minutes of inactivity by the President. That was even more ludicrous and I suspect Michael will one day admit the embarrassment that blowback must have caused him.

American incompetence and complacency were shown up in detail that day (unless you're a conspiracy theorist; in which case it all went pretty well as planned!). They had a massive defence infrastructure, the biggest and best in the world and they completely fluffed it. But does anyone seriously imagine that their performance would have been enhanced by having George W Bush in the driving seat?

And I'm afraid, once you've sat through that ridiculous part of the movie, its very difficult to take the rest at all seriously. Which is a shame because Moore then proceeds to raise many much more interesting and legitimate questions and draws attention to some very interesting facts which deserve full exposure and analysis. My advice is to see the movie but skip the first 15 minutes.

Sorry Michael, I know you received unprecedented awards and made more money from this film than any other documentary in history, but, for me and millions of others begging for inspirational attacks on the Neocon mindset, you blew it. You attacked the people, their questionable relationships and some of their motives. You should have spent more time looking at their medieval and imperialistic ideas.

One of the oddest failures was that you didn't even mention the "Project for the New American Century"; the Neocon manifesto that essentially spelt out – at least as far back as 1996 – exactly what their aims and ambitions were. Iraq was in their sights well before 9-11 and it would have been useful to have that avenue given your special treatment.

The nearest the film came to revealing awareness that some of the American strategy had been pre-planned, was this snippet from Congressman Jim McDermott who commented:

Trent Lott said – the day the bill (USA PATRIOT Act – we'll be dealing with that later) was introduced - "maybe now we can do things we've been wanting to do for the last ten years"...

... they had all this on the shelf somewhere, ideas of things they would like to do and they got 911 and they said "its our chance, go for it"

which leaves me wondering if even McDermott was aware of the PNAC...

As we've previously said, critics, in general, of the American response make 3 broad charges.

- The underlying Motivation is Oil, Empire and Social Control. Terrorism is merely a convenient excuse.
- The Response has been massively disproportionate
- The Threat is being exaggerated - possibly even manufactured - in order to justify Authoritarian measures

All of which form the basis for a zillion conspiracy theories, none of which has yet persuaded me. All I will say about conspiracy theories in this context is that if any of them are true then they certainly don't provide grounds for downgrading the threat. If, for example, the real culprits responsible for 9-11 are not MIFT but either Zionists or Neocons, then this is not any kind of reassuring conclusion! The threat posed by either of those groups is considerably greater than anything MIFT could throw at us.

I do not, therefore, accept that the threat is overstated. If the conspiracy theories were true, and the real enemy is some variant on "the New World Order", then, of course, the threat is considerably understated. Assuming that MIFT is not a Neocon construct however, the threat is that they will continue to seek opportunities to launch attacks on any scale they can manage. It will be rare that they can achieve strikes equivalent to 9-11, not so rare for attacks on the scale of Madrid and small scale single suicide bombers are likely to become as commonplace across the world as they now are in Iraq.

No one should be under any illusion, however, that, should the opportunity arise to launch a vastly more devastating attack than any we've so far seen - such as the use of a tactical nuclear device if they ever get their hands on one - MIFT will not hesitate to attempt the attack. Whether they succeed is likely - at this stage - to be governed more by luck than judgement.

I do accept, however, that the reaction to the threat has been disproportionate, misplaced, largely ineffective and has increased rather than reduced the scale of the problem. Bruce Schneier has coined the term "Security Theatre" to describe what is going on, particularly in the United States. Read "[Beyond Fear](#)" for details. We'll be coming back to this later as well.

The motivation argument is more persuasive but essentially amounts to a dilute version of the conspiracy theories. If the MIFT threat - real or imagined - is being used as an excuse to impose intrusive security measures designed to achieve higher levels of social control, then that threat is still at least as bad as - I would argue worse than - anything MIFT can do to us.

In short, as I said above, whatever the source, the threat is much more real than the critics seem able to concede; which leaves us with perhaps not one but two very real problems: The first is - how do we deal with the prospect of one or more sufficiently motivated individuals or groups deciding to launch a lethal attack against civil targets? The second - how do we deal with the even greater threat to civil

liberties represented by the Neocon/Religious Right answer to that first problem? Let's take a closer look at both threats, MIFT first.

The Real Threat posed by Terrorism

Once you have a significant number of human beings prepared to die while launching any scale of attack against any target, the global security situation is fundamentally changed and challenged. Most security prior to 9-11 was predicated on the assumption that the attackers would not want to die themselves. That is why it was unthinkable - despite the capture of early plans to do just that - that any attacker would use an airplane itself as a weapon while they were on board. Indeed, although on board bomb threats had been used many times by earlier terrorists, their threat could only work if the defender had every reason to believe both that the terrorist was prepared and willing to die for their cause AND that, should the defender accede to their demands, they would avoid both suicide and homicide and release hostages unharmed.

Unless the defender had reason to believe both of those propositions, there was no point in negotiating. Clearly that would have been illustrated on 9-11, had the authorities ever actually made contact with the hijackers after they had successfully taken over the aircraft. No amount of negotiating would have prevented the attacks.

One of the achievements of the 9-11 hijackers is to make it much less likely, in future, that non suicidal hijackers will take the risk of hijacking a plane. Defenders now have to treat any future similar attacks as though they were attempts to duplicate 9-11. At least if they're American they will. And you can bet they're itching for you to try it!

You may have noticed that "trivial" hijacks have almost disappeared. There were a couple of suicide hijackings in Russia in 2004 and I'm sure I've heard of at least one "normal" skyjacking outside Russia since 9-11, but I'm unable to find a link to it. Certainly none of them are taking place en route to, from or within America. Indeed as [this research \(cached\)](#) reveals, large scale hostage taking incidents around the world have dramatically declined - in favour, unfortunately, of direct bombings. Can you imagine, today, some wino demanding "Take this plane to Cuba" and pointing a hand grenade at the crew?

Can you imagine the American response? My money is on a "Sky Marshall" putting a neat low velocity dum dum shell into his head after about 3 minutes.

If he blows it, or isn't on board that flight, the pilot should still be reasonably safe inside the locked cockpit and will take a contingency course which steers the plane away from high population areas. If the plane, without authority, comes within 20 miles of a sensitive target it will be shot down...

And some people will cheer...

The days of thinking we're protecting ourselves just by making sure that all luggage was accompanied by its owner are gone. The suicide attacker is a far more dangerous enemy than one who wishes to survive the attack. The latter will, for example, seek to leave themselves an avenue of escape. Security plans which ensure that, once an attack has been launched, no escape avenue exists, can thus expect to deter such attackers.

That defence has no effect whatsoever on the suicide attacker - other than to make them work hard to ensure that they have whatever means it takes to get close to the target. And, while they clearly do not have the sheer physical power or technical resources of the "Terminators", they are just as determined to get through to their target and, crucially, almost as intelligent. A self guided missile that can select its own target and time of detonation is, potentially, one of the most dangerous weapons we have invented.

It is not a new weapon. The word "Assassin" comes from the Arab name for an [elite sect \(cached\)](#) of hand picked soldiers whose job it was to infiltrate an enemy stronghold and target specific individuals - typically the leaders. While they were entitled to try to survive after delivering the attack, the

assumption and usual result was that they did not. They surfaced in 1094.

It's a long and esteemed tradition.

Today's suicide attacker has raised the stakes considerably. Those original assassins were almost always targeting a single individual. Today's suicide bomber is aiming to take with him or her as many victims as they possibly can. The more victims, the greater the value of the martyrdom. It is the decision to waive all distinction between combatant and non combatant which has changed the scale of the threat. We've had nightmares in previous generations about the threat, for example, of a terrorist group getting hold of a nuclear weapon and threatening to blow up London, New York or Paris unless "our demands are met".

Nobody even expects [MIFT](#) to make such threats or issue such demands - not, that is, until after the event. We can be almost certain that MIFT would strike first and make their demands or explanation later.

It is because it is so obviously reasonable to believe that they would use it to maximum effect if they had it, that the chief public concern, after 9-11, is about whether MIFT can get their hands on a tactical nuclear device, for example, the so called "[suitcase bombs](#)" that the Soviets are alleged to have developed in the early 80s. In fact, even if attackers obtain such weapons, they will still have quite a difficult task ahead of them. It is unlikely that the thieves who manage to obtain and sell the bomb will also have the arming codes. There will also be the problem of transporting it to the desired target without detection - difficult given its inherent radioactivity. Best bet - buried in the cargo of a large tanker able to sail right into the heart of Manhattan.

Both the arming code and delivery to target are major obstacles. In the absence of the correct code, for example, the terrorists would have to engineer their own means of detonating the device – a problem not far short of creating the device from scratch. We cannot rely on these obstacles to prevent all attacks but they should at least minimise them.

Not that I want you to take any comfort from that analysis

Even with almost no advanced technology MIFT have already proved just how lethal they can be. Consider other low tech attacks which we can - or perhaps ought to – expect in the coming months and years. Here are a few of the examples I'm...

hmmm... I don't want to say "anticipating". I'm not quite that pessimistic. Let's just say - like I was with 9-11 - I'll be shocked but not surprised if any of the attacks below take place.

The point of these is to illustrate the scale of the *real* security threats. This is so you can look at the so called security measures (like the PATRIOT Act) and ask the question: what do such laws do to reduce the risk from such threats? The obvious answer is "nothing". (The obvious next question ought to be: What is the real reason such laws exist?)

In selecting potential targets, we are spoilt for choice. I haven't, for example, even mentioned "poisoning the water supply". Lets start with Low Tech/No Tech attacks which require even less skill than flying planes into tall buildings...

Giant Petrol Bombs

How many fuel tankers are on the road at any time? How many of them have an armed police or military escort? In the absence of such escorts, how difficult would it be for an armed terrorist gang to hijack a tanker, place suitable explosive charges around it and crash their way into a densely crowded space; ideally, for example, a packed sports stadium but, if that's too difficult, even a busy shopping mall would do. Detonation and the resulting conflagration should be good for at least several hundred deaths, but if they get really lucky it could even be several thousand.

Closing the stable door after that particular horse has bolted will force us to escort all such dangerous

loads and probably force them to travel in convoys. Someone else can calculate the cost of such protection, but I'd be surprised if they thought they could do the job – in the US alone – with less than 50,000 additional armed police or private armed guards.

Biological Weapons

We worry about the terrorists getting hold of bio-weapons and reassure ourselves that, like nuclear suitcase bombs, you need a highly competent operator to handle them. However, it doesn't take any skill whatsoever to allow yourself to become infected with flu. The [nightmare scenario](#) ([cached](#)) for International Health bodies is that someone already infected with an existing human strain of the influenza virus will also become infected with one of the bird flu strains; that a hybrid strain will arise with the infectivity of the human strain and the lethality of the bird flu to which we have not evolved any immunities. This is believed to be the mechanism behind the 20th century's major flu pandemics and, in all instances to date, the hybrid has arisen accidentally. But what if [MIFT](#) decide to do it deliberately?

If enough terrorists become infected with human flu then expose themselves to bird flu carriers, there is a reasonable chance that a few of them would develop the lethal hybrid capable of infecting other humans. Once that exists, infecting people deliberately is a much easier task than, for example, subsequently identifying and quarantining the infected victims fast enough to prevent widespread infection. If the carriers can get themselves to half a dozen major airports and sneeze their disease as widely as possible, they can probably each infect a few dozen innocents travelling to their different destinations around the world who will all infect a few dozen more and so on.

An organised deliberate attempt to infect the population this way would be extremely difficult either to identify or prevent before it was too late. Within weeks, upwards of a hundred million humans will have been infected and between 10 and 25% of them will die – on a par with the infamous post WWI flu pandemic which killed more people than died during the hostilities of that war. (Update: New Scientist's "Comment" for the week ending 2 Feb 2005 paints the picture with a much higher rate of infection and up to 75% mortality resulting in 1.5 BILLION deaths but I reject that as far too pessimistic even in this context!)

Pedants will object that analysing whether the hybrid has indeed been created in any given volunteer is not a trivial task. It requires considerable expertise in the relevant scientific fields. Where would MIFT find such talent? How's about a disaffected ex employee of the former Iraqi regime bioweapons development teams? One or two of those might just be on the market about now. Not to mention those with Chechen sympathies.

Conventional Attacks on Mass Transit Hubs

I took my wife to Heathrow in December 2004. She got to spend Christmas in Seattle, while a broken ankle aborted my trip. (I was going mainly for the ski-ing and hiking. In my experience, you need a full set of working ankles for both)

Frankly, I felt dangerously exposed. The security increases as you get closer to the plane. There is zero visible security as you approach the terminals. You are probably passing several surveillance cameras, but unless you're driving a Sherman Tank or waving a Kalashnikov, they're not going to spot anything untoward. There is virtually zero security even when you walk into the crowded terminal. There were probably a few armed police wandering around but I didn't see any and there are, typically, a few thousand people jostling their way into the check-in queues and no serious attention is paid to anyone until they get to the front of the queue.

We could have walked into the terminal building wheeling a few hundredweight of high explosives wrapped in ball bearings and made to look like standard baggage. We could have joined any queue of our choice in the most crowded zone and picked our time to detonate.

We could have been one of a co-ordinated group of suicide bombers planting ourselves strategically throughout all the main terminals. As well as killing a few hundred passengers each, we probably would have destroyed much of the terminal buildings and put Heathrow out of business for a few months.

Such an attack would also force airlines around the world to institute security checks at a perimeter some way before the terminals or the car parks. Average entry time to an airport would at least double from its current two hours to four or five. The psychological effect would be similar to 9-11. The global disruption to air-travel would be massive.

Frankly I'm surprised they haven't already carried out such an attack. Its an obvious weak point and much easier to plan and execute than their alleged attempt to smuggle in and use a Stinger missile against a single aircraft.

These are just three credible examples of low tech attacks, with a very high mortality, which can be implemented for not much more than the price of the explosives. (You don't even need an airline ticket to be able to enter the terminals.)

Putting Ideas Into Their Heads...

Some readers may be thinking that it is extremely irresponsible for me to publish such examples. After all, if such attacks take place within a year or so of appearing on this web page, it could be argued that I may be responsible for putting the idea into [MIFT](#) heads.

My first counter-argument is that the probability of potential MIFT attackers reading this material, unprompted, is approximately zero. Only if the page comes to public attention, for reasons connected with these outline attacks, would it appear on their radar. (Update Aug 14 2005 - The US authorities have apparently [warned the UK](#) ([cached](#)) that MIFT are "plotting to drive hijacked fuel tankers into petrol stations in an effort to cause mass casualties in London and US cities in the next few weeks." If they got that idea from me that's pretty damn quick response - the first version of this page wasn't on the web till June!)

My second argument is that, if the authorities are not already aware of these vulnerabilities they damn well ought to be and if my description is what brings them to their attention then I'm performing a public service.

My third argument is that if the authorities are indeed already aware of these possibilities (and, presumably, many others) then either we can assume that - despite appearances - there are contingency plans in place to try to interdict such attacks, in which case, good luck guys; or, they are burying their heads in the sand and relying on the classic "[security through obscurity](#)" protocol. This depends on the attacker not being bright enough to figure out the attack for themselves. Such security strategies are dangerously naïve and need to be exposed at the earliest opportunities.

And my fourth argument is that I will, in Part 3, make equally credible suggestions about how to deal with the above threats and many others. The authorities are free to adopt my suggestions or to implement something better. The distinctive feature of my proposals is that they start from the point that the most important thing we are trying to protect is our liberty. Security measures which reduce liberty are an immediate victory for the enemy.

The correct response to a perceived risk is to take steps to reduce the risk at the earliest opportunity - not merely to ignore it in the hope that it won't happen. That's why we put lightning conductors on tall buildings, despite the fact that most won't ever be struck by lightning. And when we've spilt oil on the floor in a public place we, first, bring it to public attention by clearly marking the spill and, second, we clean it up. We don't just hope that no one else discovers the spill by falling on it.

Forthcoming Attractions...

So, there are plenty of low tech vulnerabilities the attackers could exploit without going to the expense, technical difficulty and risk of attempting a nuclear strike; and, as we'll see in Part 3, some reasonable, available and only moderately technical solutions to most of them.

However, add forthcoming technology to the picture and even the above attacks looks relatively tame.

Genetic Weapons

Genetic engineering of routine flu viruses has begun: Already, in fact, we have almost succeeded in [recreating the 1918 virus](#) ([cached](#)) and there is much talk about [genetically engineering the smallpox](#) ([cached](#)) virus. This is, understandably, already causing considerable consternation. We are also [very close](#) ([cached](#)) to producing entirely unique synthetic man made viruses that have never existed before. But on the future menu, we can look forward to "designer viruses" capable of killing targets who have a [particularly genetic configuration](#) ([cached](#)); and, in case you think that this prospect is just the product of fevered imaginations like mine or the author behind that link, [here is](#) ([cached](#)) the US Army War College discussing related concepts (do a search on the page for "Selective agents"). Alternatively we might find some lunatic – as in [Frank Herbert's "White Plague"](#) – targeting an entire gender.

As well as targeting millions or billions, at the other end of the scale, genetic weapons could become the perfect individual assassination tools. Ultimately, if you can obtain the genetic data on your target, there is a good chance you will one day be able to design a virus which might *infect* anyone, but will only *kill* him or her. All you then have to do is infect someone within a couple of links to the target and wait for the virus to find the victim...

Psychotropics

In the chemical field, the nightmare prospect is the development of psychotropic agents that could achieve anything from compromising the target's immune system to modifying their intellect and behaviour. These possibilities and how to address them are already under [serious consideration](#) ([cached](#)) by the US military, who, as we know, have spent many years trying to develop [mind control](#) ([cached](#)) weapons of their own - so far (despite the hysterical claims) without any real success.

Artificial Intelligence

Then we have the possibilities created by artificial intelligence. "[Software Soldiers](#)" ([cached](#)) and bombs that can be programmed to locate a target and attack it just like a human suicide bomber or assassin does. Such technology will, of course, initially be enormously expensive, so [MIFT](#) won't be funding such developments. The Americans will do that for them, primarily so they can send such weapons after the terrorists themselves. But once the technology has been developed, it will be close to impossible to prevent the other side getting hold of it. But, whereas the Americans might use it to target bin Laden in a cave or a house somewhere and aim at destroying just him, MIFT will use it to attack, for example, a chemical or fuel tanker in a densely populated zone.

Nanotechnology

The most lethal option likely to become available within the next few decades is a deliberately engineered variant on the "[grey goo](#)" option which is already much hyped by opponents of nanotechnology. I haven't even found anyone else discussing this particular danger. The argument has, so far, been on the basis of whether it is possible to control self-assembling nanobots, or whether they could get out of control, run amok and liquefy most of the organic matter on planet earth. It is almost certainly possible to design protocols and failsafes into the system which would render such an accident impossible.

The key word there is "accident". The real threat, however, is not from a runaway accident, but from someone motivated to bypass all such controls and develop a version of the nanobots which are deliberately designed to create just such havoc, perhaps against a narrowly defined target, perhaps, if they've decided Armageddon is overdue, globally.

The defences against these attacks don't exist today, any more than the attacks do. The key to defending ourselves against such attacks is to build the defences into the technology from day one - before the attacks are even possible. Whether that becomes a routine policy depends on people like you and me making a loud enough noise to ensure that the message gets across. Certainly it would be a literally fatal error - as I'll be endeavouring to explain at greater length later - to try to avoid the problem attacks by eschewing the problem technology.

All I will say on that subject now is that - as well as posing the greatest potential threat - nanotechnology also offers the greatest potential protections and other rewards. It will, if developed competently, eventually be capable of protecting us, internally and externally, from all possible sources

of harm, whether biological, chemical, human, or even astronomical. In fact, I conjecture that the survival of the human species will depend on whether we perfect nanoshield technology before the opponents of human evolution perfect nanoposition technology.

Be that as it may, the long and short of it is this. Today [MIFT](#) can kill dozens or hundreds with their low tech attacks. Occasionally they can launch a 9-11 scale attack and kill a few thousand. In 20 years time, for approximately the same level of commitment and resources, they - or their successors - will be able to kill millions.

As they have made it more than usually clear that they would have no compunction about doing so, the human race has no option but to take their threat seriously. More importantly, it isn't just their threat. In principle, Frank Herbert's scenario is even more plausible in 20 years time. A single sufficiently pissed off individual, with access to the wrong technology and expertise, could potentially wreak the kind of havoc that White Plague describes. And the importance of that observation is that it undercuts the argument that we can solve this problem politically - by reducing the causes of such hostility in the world. *There is no realistically conceivable set of circumstances arising in the next couple of decades which could produce a world in which not one single individual would have the motivation to trigger armageddon.*

In that sense, therefore, MIFT have done us all a big favour. By unleashing their fanaticism at this point in our history, they have woken us up and given us precious time. Time to develop the defences we need, not so much against a specific bunch of terrorists, but against anyone similarly inclined to try to destroy their fellow humans. Even if MIFT didn't exist, it would be prudent to assume that from time to time, one or more individuals may well be motivated to carry out various levels of homicide up to and including genocide and that they, too, will have MIFT level commitment and access to the same forthcoming techniques and technology.

We need to begin to prepare those defences today. In this respect, and this respect only, I agree with the fear mongers and disagree with those who argue that the fear is being overblown or that the reasons for fear are considerably less than stated. If anything, the reasons for fear are generally being understated because most people do not understand (or dare to discuss so openly) the potential of the technical developments already in the pipeline.

I hope I've made the case well enough for you to feel at least a touch more concerned about MIFT and related threats today and in the foreseeable future. Now lets discuss what really frightens me!

pick a title:

The Threat posed by the Response to Terrorism

The Re-Emerging Police State

The New American Dream

However concerned you may be about terrorism - either as a result of my efforts or through general awareness of the situation - part of my mission is to make sure you don't leave this chapter without being even more frightened by the actions and motives of those who have taken upon themselves the responsibility for directing the response to terrorism on our behalf.

The brief version: **They are dangerously incompetent, hypocritical, narrow minded lying control freaks whose behaviour is a much more serious threat to the survival of our species than any other, including well financed fanatical fundamentalist terrorism.**

I will attempt, in the following paragraphs, to justify that outburst. Given what I've already said about other critics of the American response it is important to say two things before I too begin to rip into them.

First, "Americans" is a form of shorthand. My comments are not aimed at all Americans by any stretch. If anyone is inclined to think I hate America, you should first be aware that I'm married to an American who, incidentally, like many of her compatriots, is often much more vitriolic about what is going on in her country than I am. By far the most effective critics of the American administration are themselves American. Chomsky, Gore and (the late) Arthur Miller are obvious examples - not to mention Michael Moore who, despite badly missing the target with F911, clearly has his heart in the right place as far as I am concerned.

So although I try to use "Neocons", "Religious Right" or "Bush Administration" where appropriate, there are too many occasions on which the criticism is justifiably aimed at all of the above and, sometimes the wider "less thoughtful" American public. My assessment, for what its worth, is that American society is split roughly 3 ways. 25% support the "rabid religious right". 25% support the "loony liberal left" and 50% are apathetic, indifferent, or even actively hostile to the entire political process and its participants.

Clearly my opposition is mostly targeted at the deeply conservative reactionary tendency but, as my comments above makes clear, I do not have qualms about criticising the left wing or liberals either. Nevertheless, whenever I just refer to "the Americans", I generally mean the American policy makers; the State and its major shareholders. (Media, Military, Money, etc) And although my attack is largely focussed on today's administration, which, in turn, largely means the Neocons and their warped philosophy, the pattern of American naked pursuit of self interest, to the detriment of the rest of the world, goes back to at least the end of the second World War when they formally took up the reins dropped by the no less selfish but somewhat more benign British Empire.

Furthermore I want to make it crystal clear that I do not criticise the Americans for responding to the attacks on them or for trying to prevent further similar attacks. I accept that they were more than justified to respond to the attacks. I also agree with their prioritisation of the problem. We do indeed need to take these issues extremely seriously.

My criticism is essentially that their response has been unintelligent and, as a result, has made the problem much worse than it already was. Their behaviour is entirely consistent with the analysis of the conspiracy theorists who argue that they have deliberately engineered the escalation of the threat. They always assume that if Rumsfeld's lips are moving he must be lying.

My question is:

Are they Lying, Stupid or Blind?

It's the only part of the "outburst" above that I have trouble with. I really can't decide if they are evil enough to simply be "lying".

As we and many others have already demonstrated here and elsewhere, it is not at all difficult to demonstrate that many of the statements these people make are selective, overstated, based on misinterpretations or just plain wrong. They contain legal, logical, empirical and even "moral" errors. But it is genuinely difficult to determine, in many cases, whether they are lying, badly misinformed or simply unable or unwilling to process or comprehend the relevant information.

My judgement is further complicated by the reams of evidence that their state of misinformation is itself often a deliberate conscious choice. As we've seen, they routinely replace, bypass and ignore experts who present conclusions they don't want to hear. Is actively running from the truth any less culpable than misrepresenting it?

Modern western governments (not just the Americans) frequently begin with a prejudice or ill informed opinion they wish to act upon. They would love to have the powers of an absolute monarch and simply issue an edict. But they recognise that the small fragment of democracy which has been introduced into the political system now curtails such behaviour. Today, because their actions will be reported on and discussed in the "free" media, they cannot act on that prejudice without what looks like a valid attempt to discover the "facts" and justify the proposed edict.

They have to pay lip service to the scientific method. So they commission research. If they don't like the results, they simply ignore or bury them and commission new research from people they trust to provide conclusions which support their initial prejudice.

We've already discussed Rumsfeld's track record in this regard with respect to Soviet anti-submarine technology in the 1970s and WMD/Al Qaeda in Iraq following 9-11. But there are literally hundreds of similar cases on the public record. The Bush (GW) administration is acquiring the reputation as one of the most egregious practitioners of this art. It is, for example, accused of wholesale distortion of many scientific debates, to such an extent that the majority of senior scientists in the United States are involved in an unprecedented campaign against their own government called "[Restoring Scientific Integrity](#)" ([cached](#)). However, while Bush may be the worst, he is certainly not the first western leader to try to twist the facts to suit his prejudices. We'll be discussing earlier examples in the next chapter.

The problem, though, is that when you watch someone like Richard Perle or Dick Cheney being interviewed about, for example, the links between Iraq and Al Qaeda, they appear to be confidently sincere. I would be keen to study expert [Neuro Linguistic Programming](#) (NLP) analysis of their body language, eye movements and other "tells", together with, perhaps, [Layered Voice Analysis](#) ([cached](#)) of their interviews, but, in the absence of such analysis, they certainly look convinced, if not convincing, to my untrained eye. Despite being often demonstrably wrong, there is little doubt that they appear to believe what they are saying. How can we account for this dissonance between belief and evidence?

It is nothing new, of course. Nor is it mere coincidence that this mindset and approach to evidence is common among the leading intellectuals in the Neocons' "constituency" - the Religious Right. We see precisely the same inability to fully understand the evidence and its implications when we listen to so called "Creation Scientists" trying to attack Evolutionary theory or modern Cosmology and validate their own bible based hypotheses.

They have, of course, become a great deal more sophisticated since their first court battle in the famous "[Scopes Monkey Trial](#)" ([cached](#)) in 1925. Today's leading proponents of "[Intelligent Design](#)" know their onions - and their biochemistry. In the Scopes trial we just saw - in defence of their attack on Evolution - rather pathetic assertions like "the Christian bible has always been good enough for me". Today you'll find passages like "*Before bumping into activated rhodopsin, transducin had tightly bound a small molecule called GDP. But when transducin interacts with activated rhodopsin, the GDP falls off and a molecule called GTP binds to transducin.*" in support of [Michael Behe's argument](#) ([cached](#)) that [irreducible complexity](#) is a fundamental problem with the theory of evolution.

Most people's eyes will glaze over when confronted with that apparent level of expertise. In fact his overall conclusions, despite a detailed understanding of the mechanism of vision which he is describing, are scientifically naive. The problem is that it often takes a similarly qualified scientist to explain Behe's errors in sufficient detail to satisfy the curious inquirer. An excellent collection of such refutations has been published under the title "[Why Intelligent Design Fails: A scientific critique of New Creationism](#)" and, online, you can go to the "[Index of Creationist Claims \(with refutations\)](#)"

The fact, however, that orthodox scientists have been forced to spend so much time and effort fending off the creationist arguments from Behe, Dembski et al, is, in itself, a massive propaganda victory for the creationists. First, they have given the appearance of being able to argue with orthodox scientists on their own terms and in their own language. To the non scientific community, this immediately gives the impression that the debate between creationists and evolutionists is one of substance on a par with other lively debates between scientists, like, perhaps, the different flavours of String theory which may finally meld General Relativity with Quantum Mechanics, or the battle in the late 80s between Cladists and Punctuacionists over which mutation/selection mechanism was likely to play the major part in Evolutionary theory.

These are battles between equals who, regardless of their disagreements, all at least agree on the rules which will determine which argument is most valid. (The rules of empiricism we've discussed previously) Until the empirical data is available, both sides start out with roughly equal scientific merit. Such arguments between scientists obviously deserve equal representation in the media, schools and

elsewhere. The fact that creationist arguments do not even attempt to conform to the rules of empiricism (by, for example, proposing ways in which their hypotheses could be either verified or falsified) and thus have little or no scientific merit, is invisible or incomprehensible to the watching public.

So when the creationists continue to lose their struggle to have Intelligent Design given equal treatment in schools, they begin to look like underdogs being oppressed by the system for no apparently good reason. In fact, it doesn't take a rocket scientist (or biologist) to puncture many of their arguments.

Dave Gorman is a comedian.

He'll probably be as surprised as you were to learn that he's just appeared, without warning, on this page but there are two good reasons. The first is that I want you to go and buy the dvd of his one man show the "[Googlehack Adventure](#)". It was our default Xmas present in 2004 and everyone we bought it for made a point of calling us up - sometimes very late at night - as soon as they'd finished watching it to tell us how brilliant it was. We haven't seen a reaction like that to any previous gift! It is certainly the funniest thing I've seen so far this century and, amongst other things, its a wonderful escape from the depressing realities of the modern world. It has absolutely nothing to do with politics, pollution, population or global warming. Just sit back and laugh. I'm sure, if you don't like it, Dave will give you your money back!

The second reason is that, on his travels, he met Dr Duane Gish. He didn't even know - at the time - who Duane Gish was. (Still is in fact. Last time I checked:- May 2005)

Gish was the one person Dave admits to meeting - on his extensive travels in pursuit of the elusive tenth googlehack - whom he did not like. And the reason he didn't like him is directly relevant to what we're talking about here. Let Dave tell you in his own words (he's written a book about it as well. Clever chap, Dave. This is from the book, not the dvd.)

The Second Law of Thermodynamics

In a closed system, all things tend toward entropy

Now that I've started this alarming scientific digression, I feel myself haunted by the sound of books closing. Don't worry reader, I'll be quick. We can take 'entropy' to mean 'disorder'

(er... actually I don't think we can Dave. They're closely related but two different things. Like music and song. Similar but not the same. Entropy can create order from disorder - eg the sorting of pebbles on the beach, snowflakes, human beings and stuff - but we still love you anyway)

so essentially the law says that all things tend to become more disordered and chaotic... in a closed system. The 'closed system' bit is important.

To quote the law without that bit means nothing. It would be like saying 'It is illegal to buy alcohol in Britain' when the law actually states that 'It is illegal to buy alcohol in Britain if you are under 18'. Unless you quote every clause of the law, you run the risk of looking stupid.

So... what does the 'closed system' bit mean? Well, if you put an apple in a dustbin and leave it there, it will eventually rot. In other words it becomes more disordered and chaotic. The apple is in a closed system. It gets eaten by bacteria and eventually the bacteria die and decay themselves, leaving the dustbin with nothing more than goo.

However, if, instead, you put the apple in the ground - and the conditions are right - something new will emerge. It will grow. It will thrive. It will bear fruit. It will become more ordered and less chaotic, grabbing atoms from the atmosphere and the soil to construct a complicated ordered structure otherwise known as an apple tree. This happens because the apple isn't in a closed system, because the sun shines, the rain falls and the earth nourishes.

I mention this because, even with my basic high school understanding of this fundamental physical law, I was aware that the highly qualified scientist sitting in front of me didn't seem to have a grasp of it at all.

There I was, biting my knuckle, when he suddenly threw in the following curve ball: 'Evolution [...] is an absolute violation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics [...] if you have simplicity it cannot transform itself upwards in the system we have today.'

Whether or not you've followed my amateurish explanation of the Second Law of Thermodynamics you should know this. What Dr Gish said about it was not true. He had either chosen to ignore the 'closed system' bit or perhaps he had chosen to define the world wrongly as a 'closed system' in which case he was ignoring the presence of the vast universe that surrounds us. As it goes, the universe as a whole is obeying the Law perfectly well thank you very much in that it is expanding and cooling down. What happens on our speck of a planet is, in the grand scheme of things, irrelevant.

Either Dr Gish had spent his entire scientific career failing to understand the Second Law of Thermodynamics or he had chosen to misrepresent it to lay people like myself in an attempt to back up an argument he must have known was flawed. I was convinced in that moment that he was deliberately telling me lies.

This was the first moment in which I was aware of thoroughly disliking any of the googlewhacks I'd met. Until that moment Gish may have seemed like a vainglorious, faintly ridiculous old man, but he had still been a cuddly, old-fashioned, well-mannered, cartoonishly physiqued old man with a passionate belief in something and I'd found him endearing for all of that.

Now I really believed he was a liar.

Is Gish Lying?

Perhaps I'm more charitable than Dave. I genuinely cannot decide whether Gish is lying or stupid. I'm even uncomfortable with "stupid". "Ignorant" is less derogatory. You see, if you believe he was lying, then you have to believe that he knows that what he was saying wasn't true (kinda goes with the territory of "lying"). Yet he believes that he can persuade us that it *is* true. So you also have to assume that he thinks *we're* stupid.

Now, when one of the Neocons tells us something which is clearly false, I can easily factor their potential belief in our stupidity into the equation. They've got bundles of straightforward materialistic ulterior motives and Leo Strauss' philosophy encouraging them to behave this way. I still have my doubts, but I can accept their belief in our stupidity as a possible explanation for their attempted deceptions.

It is much more difficult to discern the ulterior motives with a creationist. All they apparently stand to gain is the spread or continuation of a belief in the biblical creation myth as fact. And if they don't really believe in Creation, I can't see why they'd lie to us about the fundamental logic that underpins it. So they're unlikely to be lying about their creationist beliefs.

If Gish fully understands the Second Law of Thermodynamics and is deliberately misrepresenting it, he would understand that and be aware of how badly it deflates his argument. Like the Neocon interviews, I would like to subject his public utterances on this and related issues to expert psychoanalysis, but for the time being I am persuaded that he shows no signs of that awareness. His confidence appears to remain unshaken and I am thus forced to conclude that this highly educated well qualified Doctor of Biochemistry (Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley 1953) genuinely hasn't grasped what Dave Gorman grokked in high school.

Given that many many opponents have pointed out this weakness in his armour, in both public and private debates, his continued failure to grasp the fairly simple distinction between open and closed

systems that Dave has so ably described can only indicate a fundamental intellectual weakness. A conclusion perhaps supported by this tale:

Gish Revises Physics - Nobel Prize Winner Wrong

Ilya Prigogine won the Nobel prize in 1977 for his work on the thermodynamics of nonequilibrium systems. He wrote a related article in 1972 explaining how nonequilibrium thermodynamics solves the puzzle of how life can originate and increase its state of order in spite of entropy and the Second Law of Thermodynamics (Prigogine 1972). Simply put, the Second Law states that in a closed system, "useful" energy that can do work becomes gradually converted over time to energy that is unavailable for use---entropy, or an increase of disorder. (oops. sorry Dave!) Creationists interpret this to mean that complex living systems could not have evolved from simpler forms because overall, things run down rather than build up. However, living things are open systems and as Prigogine emphasized, are far from a state of equilibrium. They acquire energy from the sun and can locally decrease entropy and even increase their order and complexity without a violation of the Second Law.

(which is what I was referring to [here](#).)

In a debate with George Bakken (see Debates-Bakken 1987), Gish pretended ignorance of Prigogine's basic thesis and instead claimed that Prigogine said the origin of life was virtually impossible because of the Second Law of Thermodynamics (Bakken 1991). Prigogine's words were taken from the beginning of his article (1972) where he summarized the position that he was about to spend the next several pages refuting. Perhaps Gish only read the first page. However, he definitely knew before that debate what Prigogine really said. In a 1982 debate, Gish was told about Prigogine's article by his opponent, C. Loring Brace, who described it as "an unassailable refutation of Gish's claims" (see Debates-Brace 1982).

In Gish's book "Creation Scientists Answer Their Critics" (1993), he changes tactics by strongly implying that Prigogine is not competent to theorize on the origin of life. After casting aspersions on Prigogine's scientific method by claiming that he "hasn't spent any time in the laboratory in years," Gish says:

"Prigogine's theoretical ideas are buttressed with a large amount of complicated mathematics which few biochemists and molecular biologists can understand, but it all does look deliciously scientific. Since Prigogine's speculations lend comfort to his fellow evolutionists among the biochemists and molecular biologists, they are only too eager to bow to the authority of this Nobel Prize winner." (pp. 186-187)

A logical inference from this statement is that Gish, a biochemist who has not spent any time in the laboratory in years, likely does not understand Prigogine's mathematics himself. Unwilling to admit this, he imputes his lack of understanding to other scientists and concludes that they are paying blind obeisance to a Nobel prize winner.

For which we can thank [Creationism: Bad Science or Immoral Pseudoscience?](#) (an expose of creationist Dr. Duane Gish) by Joyce Arthur ([cached](#))

For whatever reason, Gish, and presumably those who think like him, despite having the intellect required to obtain a PhD in a scientific discipline, are apparently genuinely unable to grasp the significance of the "closed system" in the Second Law of Thermodynamics. You'll note, he doesn't try to challenge that law, or its interpretation. He just tries to pretend that his own interpretation of its significance with regard to the origin of life remains intellectually valid; a position only possible in the mind of someone who genuinely doesn't understand the Law.

I've come across this problem in many many theists. There are certain concepts that they seem quite unable to grasp. Probability, the predictable consequences of pure randomness and the sheer scale of the Cosmos are right in the centre of their blind spot. Even eminent [former atheist philosophers](#)

([cached](#)) have fallen prey to it. It is the root of their constant naive statistical challenges. *The chances of a protein self assembling are one in a googolplex, so [their argument](#) ([cached](#)) goes (I paraphrase), so, even if we accept your ludicrously old universe of 13.7 billion years, there hasn't been enough time for even a single protein to evolve, let alone Duane Gish.* To which the most concise answer can be found [here](#) ([cached](#)). My own, somewhat simpler attempt begins thus:

"How does a balloon keep its shape?"

I don't know. How?

"The random motion of the molecules inside it"

But they can't be random, or else the balloon wouldn't keep its shape.

...is a conversation I've had a thousand times. I have told more than one theist that, once they understand how the balloon keeps its shape, they'll begin to grasp how the sheer reliability of true randomness, occurring across the scale of our universe, and coupled with the known laws of physics and chemistry, can be responsible for creating all the building blocks required to permit and sustain the development of all the more complex structures in our universe, including life itself. I've never yet managed to succeed in making one of them cross that mental chasm. It seems to be a bridge too far. In particular they seem constitutionally unable to grasp the significance of tiny steps in the right direction. They don't understand how the laws of physics make the interactions between particles both possible and inevitable; how the scale and random distribution of those particles in turn make chemistry both possible and inevitable and how large scale chemistry makes biological precursors possible and inevitable and so on. They seem to think that the only relevant engine is blind chance.

Whatever effect selection may possibly have had on random processes in later biological reproduction, it is clear beyond any rational argument that chance processes could never have produced even the simplest forms of life in the first place. (Henry Morris from *their argument* link above)

I'll rehearse my attempt at a fuller explanation [here](#) and readers are invited to improve upon it at will.

The point is, I have to conclude that Duane Gish and other Creationists are indeed only guilty of "bad science" not "immoral pseudoscience". They're not evil. They're ignorant. Dammit. I'm not even happy with ignorant. Gish is fully aware of every argument against his position. He obviously doesn't understand all the arguments but he is certainly not *ignorant* of them. I refuse to concede that he is "stupid". If he is stupid, then so too is about 99% of humanity. And while I know that some will concur with that elitist sentiment, for me "stupid" is a relative rather than absolute term.

I was relieved to discover that I'm not the only one wrestling with the issue of their psychological state. Most people seem to be on Dave's side and just assume that because the Creationists are so egregiously wrong, they must be lying. But as Flint C argues in this [short essay](#): ([cached](#))

Some critics imply that creationists hijack the language, but this may also be misleading, because it implies that they know better but are doing so as a tactic in part of a larger battle. I submit that this isn't so. They are describing the world according to their own model. What Dawkins and others don't seem (at least to me) to quite realize is that believers Believe. Their minds are stuffed with crystalline certainties based on no evidence or experience they can share effectively with nonbelievers, and which do not seem capable of being altered through evidence or experience. The creationist strives to find some way, ANY way, to make external reality fit and support those certainties.

I couldn't put it better. This is why I propose "blind" - meaning "Concept blind". They appear to be literally unable to see the logical and usually obvious validity of a number of core concepts. There's probably a PhD in psychology for anyone who can explain how otherwise intelligent educated people can fail to grasp fundamental and relatively simple concepts like the difference between open and closed

systems.

And when I watch the Wolfowitz, Perle, Rumsfeld brigade in action, I still find it possible to concede exactly the same "charity" to them. Ignorance or blindness rather than evil.. They may genuinely believe what they are saying. The ulterior motives and self serving megalomania implicit in the myriad conspiracy theories may also be present, but, at least internally, they appear to believe that they are "doing the *right* thing" in *all* senses of that phrase. The major difficulty with that charitable view is that they are all obviously reasonably intelligent, even "bright" individuals. I would put their IQs between 130 and 155.

Part of me just finds it very difficult to understand how someone so apparently intelligent can reach such profoundly wrong conclusions when faced with the evidence. The only thing that squares the circle is blind/ignorant prejudice.

If, for example, you've accepted the last 80 years of conditioning with respect to the "evil" of recreational drug use, no amount of scientific evidence or logic is going to persuade you to accept the overwhelming moral, intellectual, economic and global security arguments for the decriminalisation of such behaviour. A blend of amazing psychological distortions and straightforwardly childish tantrums are routinely employed by the ruling layer of society across the planet to avoid their ever having to think such thoughts.

Nixon wasn't stupid. But when the Presidential Commission he set up specifically to examine Marijuana (and which he packed with hand picked opponents of drug use) [recommended decriminalisation \(cached - 517k zip\)](#) he went apeshit and refused even to read the report. Instead his [anti-semitic and homophobic prejudices \(cached\)](#) kicked off the current round of the intensified "War on Drugs". Today's rulers are no more rational than that. About Climate Change, about Fair Trade, about providing access to cheap medicine for the 3rd World, about going to War on a pretext when Oil is involved, about not going to War to prevent genocide anywhere Oil isn't involved; about ANYTHING.

It may seem that I desperately WANT to believe that they are sincere. After all the alternative is horrific. First it implies exactly what the conspiracy theorists are constantly shouting from the rooftops: that we're being deliberately and consciously lied to - about issues that are currently costing tens of thousands of human lives, and have, in the past, cost millions. If true, that would offer a more than adequate explanation for the United States continued [refusal to recognise \(cached\)](#) the International Criminal Court. They would have good cause to fear prosecution by it.

Second, it implies that they think we're either too stupid to see through their lies or too powerless to do anything about it even if we can. If they believe that we're too stupid, then, given the plentiful evidence that we're not, that would only serve to confirm their own stupidity, in which case, we could reasonably revert to assuming that they are indeed stupid enough to believe what they are telling us!

If they believe we're too powerless, they can only sustain that belief because they have sufficient control over society, particularly through their connections with the Military, Media and Money, to be confident that they can stifle dissent or at least control the extent to which it spreads.

This, I surmise, is the Chomsky view of the world. He sees the ruling elite in conscious control of the levers of power in this scheming Machiavellian and, above all, tactically intelligent - *smart* - sense. Unfortunately, I just can't bring myself to see the authors of something like the USA PATRIOT Act, the planners of the "Liberation of Iraq" or the leakers of the "[Case Closed](#)" [\(cached\)](#) papers as *smart*.

It's like playing chess with someone who can be consistently beaten with a 4 move checkmate. They're clearly more advanced than chimpanzees. But, in some respects at least, not by much. They clearly believed their own propaganda. They clearly still do. They appear unable, like Gish, to perceive the fundamental weaknesses in their own arguments. That's the biggest failure of their Intelligence - not the disputed tales of CIA and FBI bungling. Trouble is, they own and control the chess board and get to make their own rules.

This is a fundamental problem for both philosophy and psychology. Philosophically it goes back to our definition of "[Rational](#)". It is rational to accept (and thus "believe") an hypothesis when and while it continues to pass appropriate empirical tests capable of either verifying or falsifying it.

Update Feb 2011 - Wilful Blindness

Just over two years ago, I thought I'd found part of the answer to the "Lying, Stupid or Blind" question when I came across Bob Altemeyer's online book "[The Authoritarians](#)". I blogged [my response](#) to it in January 2009. However, it was only part of the answer. It described, in considerable detail, the predictability of the authoritarian response to various stimuli (by both authoritarian leaders and authoritarian followers) but didn't reveal much about WHY they behave the way they do. I've just discovered a book that looks like it may fill that gap in our understanding. I'm only halfway through reading "[Wilful Blindness](#)" by Margaret Heffernan and, already, on the plus side, it provides considerable relief to find that someone has, at last, taken the issue as seriously as it deserves. Unfortunately, it has to be said that her book and the conclusions that emerge from it do not provide any comfort or grounds for optimism. Indeed it left me struggling to find rational grounds on which I should even bother to continue my own timid efforts.

The case study of [Libby, Montana](#) illustrates the problem. Initially, you think you're learning about yet another Corporate crime featuring deliberate negligence and suppression of evidence. It comes as no surprise that government and business interests combine to resist all mention of the dangers. It's not even a surprise to learn that the corrupt American legal system once again allowed those with money to buy the result they wanted. But it comes as a shock to find that the victims of this crime are almost as hostile to those who revealed it as was the perpetrator. Even while they were visiting their friends in oxygen masks (a widespread consequence of the crime - the suppression of evidence regarding the damage caused by asbestos to those who mined it and, potentially, to anyone who came in contact with them) they were ostracising and sending hate mail to the "whistleblower" who exposed the crime as well as resisting the government funded efforts to clean up their environment to make it safe for them and their children to continue to live there. Why? Because allowing the government to treat the problem involved the admission that there WAS a problem.

This depressing behaviour struck me as bizarre as learning of survivors of the Nazi Holocaust protesting against the Nuremberg Trials. But Heffernan's studies dovetail somewhat painfully with Altemeyer's and, between them, they strongly suggest that this isn't the aberrant behaviour we might hope it is. It is the rule rather than the exception.

That being so, what already seemed like a gargantuan task - that of exposing the flaws and corruption in governments and virtually all authoritarian hierarchies; together with promoting the mechanisms we need to eliminate (or at least manage) the threat - just became astronomical. Now it seems that the victims of all but the worst form of authoritarian crime (torture, arbitrary killing of citizens etc) are complicit in their own oppression - preferring to live under (and defend) the devil they know rather than take the risk entailed by throwing off their chains in favour of the unknown.

Had it not been for the wave of uprisings simultaneously sweeping the Arab world, I might well have concluded that the whole project was pointless. Don't get me wrong. I am not starry eyed about the so called "revolutions" taking place across the Middle East. They are, in my view, naive kneejerks which - if they're lucky - may result in marginally more liberal forms of dictatorship, up to - perhaps - the level "enjoyed" in the West. But the mere fact that so many oppressed citizens who could be excused for fearing the retribution of militaristic authoritarian regimes were, nevertheless, prepared to fill the streets and face down the guns is hugely inspiring. If citizens who have lived under military dictatorship for several decades can finally get off their knees and refuse to surrender until they get what they think they need, what right have I to give up?

In any case, Heffernan's book reinforces the grounds for the psychological speculation I launch into below.

Social Psychosis

Psychologically, people who form firm beliefs - in the absence of the validated evidence we've discussed - are, essentially both irrational and gullible. (I wonder, in passing, whether they make the best hypnotic subjects.) If they continue to hold such beliefs when the relevant hypotheses have been falsified, then, I would argue, they are showing the early signs of [psychosis](#). When groups of like minded people share the challenged beliefs, it becomes a *social psychosis* in which members turn to each other for mutual validation of their shared and increasingly distorted world view. The [cognitive dissonance](#) ([cached](#)) they experience as more and more public evidence surfaces which both falsifies their own beliefs and verifies alternative hypotheses causes the psychosis to deepen.

As the psychosis deepens, two behaviours emerge. It becomes increasingly difficult even to raise, with them, the evidence which threatens their beliefs and they become increasingly defensive and, eventually, violent in defence of those beliefs. This is the pattern we have seen throughout human history, particularly in the Christian church whenever science has begun to challenge its world model. Much the same violent reaction and repression is true of all totalitarian societies, when their social experiments fail, science reveals an error in their analysis or the real world simply refuses to conform to the party line.

It is my conviction that this is, far and away, humanity's biggest problem. This shared delusional state I am calling "Social Psychosis" is the biggest obstacle to intelligent management of all our other problems.

Most people - and I do mean *Most* people; those humans capable of genuinely consistent rational thought, unhampered by prejudice, are, as yet, a small minority - *Most* people exist in a shallow form of psychosis, holding firm beliefs - which may be shared with many others - despite the absence of supporting evidence and, in some cases, even the widely acknowledged falsification of their core hypotheses and the verification of far reaching alternatives.

I don't exclude myself. I persist in believing that Mankind is more inclined to what I would define as good, positive, mutually life-enhancing and life-extending behaviour than the opposite. The evidence is clearly against me. Though individual humans often tend to conform to my expectations, large groups of humans tend to behave much less rationally than the individuals within them. (There's another thesis in that observation.) ([Tell me it's been done](#)) Meanwhile I have to face the fact that my belief is, therefore, an irrational, religious-like belief and I should agree to re-label it as a "hope" or dream.

Most political leaders among us (whether at gang or national level), however, reach their positions because they are driven by a deeper form of the psychosis, which seeks to act on their beliefs and which is reinforced by their success in achieving positions of leadership. This is the basis on which "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely". Achieving power validates the aspirant's belief structures even more strongly than mere membership of the group and the longer they retain power, the more justified they feel in eliminating any remaining doubts they may have held.

All of which is consistent with their being ignorant (or concept blind) rather than evil.

The only thing that pulls me back towards conceding that Chomsky's assessment - in respect of the ruling elite - cannot be dismissed is Leo Strauss. Deliberate conscious deception is one of his recommended stratagems - and Neocon philosophy is based on his.

Ironically, the problem is that, despite appearances, I would prefer Chomsky to be right rather than me. His analysis leads, in my view, to a more optimistic prognosis than my own. Lying might be more evil, but it is less dangerous than Stupid. If they were "only" lying, the threat would be reduced. The lies can be exposed. It would imply an intellectually competent adversary who might be open to intellectual argument.

Ignorant Believers, conversely, pose a much more serious problem. Intellectual argument is completely wasted on them, (as you will see if you visit creationist or southern baptist web sites). This is true whether the ignorant believers you are trying to negotiate with are American Conservative Christians and Neocons or Islamic Fundamentalists. As Robert Anton Wilson says (in [Prometheus Rising](#)): "*Failures in communication generally derive from sending a message to the wrong address.*" and intellectual

arguments are definitely going to the wrong address when put to ignorant believers!

Isn't this an elitist analysis? Aren't I basically saying that there are a few of us - and obviously I include myself in the few - who are sufficiently intelligent and self aware to truly comprehend what is going on, while the rest are a flock of mindless sheep led by a bunch of mad mullahs?

No. First, they're not mindless and second, they're not mad (I have to keep telling myself).

Nor are they "bad" - we've already spent 9 chapters rejecting such moral absolutes; we're hardly likely to reintroduce them now just because we fundamentally disagree with and disapprove of their behaviour. I've been wrestling with how to describe my perception of their condition and position. It is very difficult to approach such a problem objectively rather than emotionally.

Emotion is bound to be involved because, above all, watching how they are fucking up our planet really makes me very very angry. Certainly angry enough to have considerable insight into the minds of Donald Rumsfeld, Pat Robertson or Usama Bin Laden. I too can feel my own version of the blind rage that obviously powers their thought processes. But I hope I am learning to control it and prevent it colouring my analysis.

They clearly feel deeply threatened by me and "my type". Not me personally, of course. They wouldn't know me from Adam. Rather, they fear what I represent: the godless atheist trying to undermine their religions in favour of a universe where human beings are free to decide morality for themselves. For reasons they cannot fathom, I and millions like me have obviously rejected their world view and decided to think for ourselves - rejecting thousands of years of their acquired wisdom.

We not only reject any attempt by them (or anyone else) to tell us how to behave, We reject their right to tell other people what to believe or how to behave - other than in the context of democratic debate where we all have an equal right to present arguments and try to win a consensus. We are clearly arrogant enough to believe that our own powers of reason are equal or even superior to the divinity from whom they believe they receive their instructions.

They, conversely, have been taught that such self confidence is literally sinful (see point 5 of the "Statement of Faith" below). Human beings are born deeply flawed and incapable of the deep insights required to make such judgements. They have to be - like children - under constant direction and supervision. You wouldn't allow the children in a school to decide, democratically, who should be "headmaster" and how the school should be run. It would be chaos and would impede the purpose of the school; to impart an education.

American Fundamentalist Christians, like their Islamic counterparts, believe that all behavioural questions can be dealt with entirely by reference to their dogma (see point 4 of the same statement) but don't dare argue that strongly for the control of society itself, at least not in public; but any objective examination of their declarations, behaviour and attitudes clearly reveals that this is their wider agenda. The Islamic Fundamentalists are more honest in this respect than their Christian counterparts. They openly oppose democracy and advocate religious rule for precisely these reasons. The masses need to be taught how to behave and led by wiser leaders in full accord with the divine word. They cannot be permitted the freedom to decide for themselves.

Given the existing constraints of what passes for western democracy, what then, can Christian Fundamentalists do to wrestle control back from the masses? Well, "if you can't beat them, join them" seems to be their current strategy. It seems to have its roots in the "[Manifesto of the Christian Church](#)" ([cached](#)) drafted by the "Coalition on Revival" in 1986 (and to which our friend Dr Duane Gish was a prominent signatory). This lays out the theological strategy which dovetails rather neatly with the Neocon strategy we described in Part 1. It is well worth reading as a classic example of social psychosis and mutual reinforcement. But the key passage in this context comes at the foot of page 7.

After asking for our (yes OUR - as in those of us who have not yet bent our knee to Jesus) forgiveness for a number of their failures (like being such poor examples of Christ's love that we have rejected both

Him and them) they ask us to:

"Forgive us for failing to occupy our proper position as servants in the affairs of law, government, economics, business, education, media, the arts, medicine, and Science as the Creator's salt and light to the world, so that these spheres of life might offer you more help, justice, hope, peace and joy."

Looking around at what they've achieved in the past 10 years, it looks like they're doing their level best to atone for that particular failure. For a start, they've moved into the sciences. Hence the "Intelligent Design" movement and their naive attempts at subverting science, particularly "Evolutionism" and modern Cosmology. They have also put significant resources into a long term attempt to infiltrate the political and legal processes as we'll see below, but before we get there, it is worth pausing to ask the question:

Why does Evolution matter so much to the Fundamentalists?

To begin with, as many mainstream monotheists have been content to note, the Theory of Evolution does nothing to rule out the existence of their God. Such theists simply argue that Evolution is the mechanism He employed. Not so with fundamentalists. Their resistance suggests that even if an indisputable god showed up and appeared, personally, to every person on the planet in whatever form they could cope with; announced his godliness, perhaps apologised for any confusion he may have been responsible for and promptly declared the implementation of personalised paradise and omortality (that's "optional mortality" - you can live as long as you still think its a good idea) for all...

...then, unless he performed precisely as the fundamentalists prescribe, I am sure that at least half of them would promptly denounce him (and it had better be a "him" or else) as a blasphemer and charlatan. If, for example, he revealed that, "yes, well done mankind, you figured out quite cleverly (for a primate) how I shaped the universe with the laws of physics and evolution" the fundamentalists would go ballistic - even if this was indisputably coming directly from the deity himself.

Why? Given that they'd have concrete proof of god, why would they still want to oppose evolution?

Because, I suggest, unless that god confirms, without exception, that the description of how he created the universe as laid down in the bible is accurate, then though they'd win on the existence of god, they'd lose on the validity of the bible; and the validity of the bible has become a far more important issue to them than the exact nature of any prospective deity. This from the "Manifesto":

A. The Church Must Learn What is Reality

1. Inerrancy of the Bible

We affirm that the original manuscripts of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible were so inspired by God, that the human authors wrote the exact words and sentences God inspired them to write without misrepresenting God, history or the created world in any way. What the Bible says, God says.

Why so insistent on such doctrinaire nonsense?

Because what they are primarily concerned with is controlling social behaviour in strict accordance with their biblically derived prejudices. Undermine the authority of that source, by showing that its description of creation and evolution is, at best, a naive attempt by a prescientific society to explain mysteries beyond their comprehension - but no longer beyond ours - and you remove all basis for taking seriously many of the behavioural guides contained therein. *And with that goes all basis for religious control of society.* That is what is at stake. That is why they fight so hard to challenge science with their own naive attempts at subversion.

And it's not good enough - for them anyway - for us to point out that we'd still be happy to sign up to - oh I dunno, say - 70%? of the Bible's rules; because they are often common sense or deeply humane ways to behave and would easily attract an appropriate consensus. We particularly like many of the

recommendations made by the Nazarene. We don't, for example, have a problem with "Love thine enemy/neighbour" or "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone". And we quite like the subversive ambiguity of "Give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's". It concedes nothing.

As we discuss in more detail below, "Thou Shalt Not Kill" is a damn fine aspiration and we should all strive to get as close to it as we can, and as early as we can. Every death we cause is a defeat for that goal.

Not good enough!

For them, it must, by their definition, be all or nothing. Glory or Death.

Given the obvious irrationality of that position, it is not easy to see on what basis we can negotiate or reason with the people who share this mindset. This is the fundamental basis of the global problem we are now in the midst of. We're dealing with seriously psychotic people. Not stupid though...

In line with the "Manifesto", as we presaged above, their modern and more sophisticated approach seems to be based on Trotsky style [Entryism](#). What some claim as their more recent master plan appears to be outlined by the so called "[Wedge Strategy](#)" ([local](#)) apparently "leaked" (or at least publicised) to the web in 1999. These are its declared goals:

(Wedge Strategy) Governing Goals

- * *To defeat scientific materialism and its destructive moral, cultural and political legacies.*
- * *To replace materialistic explanations with the theistic understanding that nature and human beings are created by God.*

Five Year Goals

- * *To see intelligent design theory as an accepted alternative in the sciences and scientific research being done from the perspective of design theory.*
- * *To see the beginning of the influence of design theory in spheres other than natural science.*
- * *To see major new debates in education, life issues, legal and personal responsibility pushed to the front of the national agenda.*

Twenty Year Goals

- * *To see intelligent design theory as the dominant perspective in science.*
- * *To see design theory application in specific fields, including molecular biology, biochemistry, paleontology, physics and cosmology in the natural sciences, psychology, ethics, politics, theology and philosophy in the humanities; to see its influence in the fine arts.*
- * *To see design theory permeate our religious, cultural, moral and political life.*

They've already got a few scientists beavering away on the "Intelligent Design" project, most recently highlighted by the [cover story](#) (subscription required) of New Scientist 9 July 2005. But they also need to try to subvert the political process. How? By training a cadre of potential leadership candidates who can join the ranks of the support teams and eventual leadership candidates in the hub of Western power, the streets of Washington DC. For precisely this purpose, in an example of the effects of the fundamentalist revival sweeping the United States - also exemplified by the election of a "born again" President - they have recently (late 90s) established an elite "conservative college", not far from Washington, where one of the conditions of joining is that students sign a statement that they fully accept the creationist (and "Manifesto") starting point - a literal belief in the teachings of the bible.

Bob Jones University was founded in 1927 to shelter good Christian folk (or their children) from the dangers of secular education. But its [principle aim](#) ([cached](#)) is to train students for a "lifetime of service to Christ" and most of them enter "Christian Ministries". In contrast "Patrick Henry College" is America's

first university established for this overtly "entryist" purpose, again, mainly to service home schooled evangelical Christians - the ones removed from the pernicious public school system by their parents because the public system exposed their children to far too much secular nonsense! They're completely up front about their [mission, vision and Statement of Faith](#): (and it doesn't disagree by a jot or tittle with the aims of the "Manifesto")

The Mission of Patrick Henry College is to prepare Christian men and women who will lead our nation and shape our culture with timeless biblical values and fidelity to the spirit of the American founding...

The Vision of Patrick Henry College is to aid in the transformation of American society by training Christian students to serve God and mankind with a passion for righteousness, justice and mercy, through careers of public service and cultural influence.

Statement of Faith

The College is, and shall always remain, a Christian institution dedicated to bringing honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ in all of its activities. Each Trustee, officer, faculty member and student of the College, as well as such other employees and agents of the College as may be specified by resolution of the Board of Trustees, shall fully and enthusiastically subscribe to the following Statement of Faith:

- 1. There is one God, eternally existent in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*
- 2. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.*
- 3. Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, is God come in the flesh.*
- 4. The Bible in its entirety (all 66 books of the Old and New Testaments) is the inspired word of God, inerrant in its original autographs, and the only infallible and sufficient authority for faith and Christian living.*
- 5. Man is by nature sinful and is inherently in need of salvation, which is exclusively found by faith alone in Jesus Christ and His shed blood.*
- 6. Christ's death provides substitutionary atonement for our sins.*
- 7. Personal salvation comes to mankind by grace through faith.*
- 8. Jesus Christ literally rose bodily from the dead.*
- 9. Jesus Christ literally will come to earth again in the Second Advent.*
- 10. Satan exists as a personal, malevolent being who acts as tempter and accuser, for whom Hell, the place of eternal punishment, was prepared, where all who die outside of Christ shall be confined in conscious torment for eternity.*

Not much room for doubt there! (in any sense) They're happily training themselves to come to our rescue. Just what we all need. More religion.

Of course, religious fundamentalists aren't the only ones who regard Society as being in desperate need of their supervision, protection and guidance. It is a common feature of secular tyrannies too. The only advantage of dealing with a secular control freak is that, ultimately, they are slightly more amenable to reason. They will, of course, try to manipulate the facts and control media presentation of them, but it becomes impossible, eventually, to tell - for example - 350 million Eastern Bloc citizens that they are materially better off and more secure than their western counterparts.

The grinding incompetence of their system inevitably resulted in economic and political collapse. They

still haven't quite figured out what to put in its place, but at least they've come to terms with the fact that they were living a lie for the best part of 60 years.

Religious bigots, on the other hand, have literally had millennia rather than mere decades of conditioning and meme reinforcement. As a result they are peculiarly immune to logic and evidence which challenges or refutes their beliefs. What takes the secular psychotic 60 years to face up to, requires centuries for the religious mindset to adapt to. The catholic church eventually admitted they'd mistreated Galileo, for example, more than 300 years after they persecuted him for daring to support Copernicus with observational evidence.

Which illustrates the point that we're not just talking about their approach to religious belief. If it were only their religious beliefs at issue, they would be a harmless bunch of well meaning cranks and the world would not be in the perilous state it is. The problem is that they bring the same irrational psychological process to dealing with real world issues that they use to justify their core religious beliefs. After all, if it works for God, it must be good enough for Mammon.

Whatever the source of their imagined authority, the religious or secular controller has to address the question of who gets to perform the necessary tasks of direction and supervision of those of us clearly in need of their "help". They have to justify taking control. On what basis are they better qualified to make the critical ethical judgements on which the conduct of Society is based?

Here we used to have castes conditioned from birth to believe they were born to govern. If they'd had the language they would have argued that they were genetically superior to the common herd and thus entitled, nay, obliged to govern. We've made some progress. There are still a few people who think like that. But they rarely say it out loud any more.

Today, controllers come in two main flavours. Those who tolerate public dissent and those who do not. We used to use a "Free Press" as a measure but that is outdated. To qualify, in the 21st century, as a "dissent tolerator" the relevant controllers must a) permit the levels of free expression which allow unlimited criticism of themselves, their performance and their philosophy to appear on the web where anyone with free access to the web can read the criticism and b) permit the required free access to the web.

The significance of that distinction is that we can't even begin to address the populations controlled by those who don't tolerate dissent - their controllers block access to our ideas. Obviously that means we can't do much to influence the Chinese, for example, because - with Yahoo's help ([please see: Why you should Boycott Yahoo](#)) and the [support of Microsoft \(cached\)](#) (and other ethically indifferent Western corporations) - the Chinese people are barred from seeing most of what is on the web. About half the human race are still lorded over by such self appointed or dynastically derived Totalitarians. For whatever reason, they know best what is required to maintain their internal social cohesion and this excludes dissent and free debate.

Those who do still tolerate dissent (and are thus, perhaps, amenable to our persuasion, or at least debate) are further split between those who argue that they are qualified to control us by virtue of being *elected to govern* - which must, we presume, somehow improves their cognitive skills to the point that they become capable of this great feat of practical and moral judgement which remains forever beyond us mere unelected mortals: or, then again, perhaps we elect them on the basis of their [obvious intellectual gifts](#) (sorry - couldn't resist it).

...and those who accept that they are, in fact, no more qualified than anyone else to make judgements about *my own life*, but argue that they are *acting on/with the authority of a supreme being* who is solely capable of making such judgements.

The principle flaw among the "elected to govern" brigade is a stunted concept of democracy as we've discussed at various points throughout this book and I don't intend to rehearse those arguments here. Here I am concerned with straightforward "morality" issues, the more direct "divine" attempts to answer the Third Question which are, it is claimed, "revealed truths" derived directly from the Word of God. Let's

have a look at some of the behavioural guidance provided for us by the Supreme Being. You'd expect it to be considerably more advanced than anything we can come up with. Let's see if it stacks up...

The Ten Commandments are the obvious focal point. They are the core of the Judaic Bible and thus the core of the monotheist religions. It's really what the whole thing is all about. They are the monotheist god's answer to the 3rd question. And, for the most part, they're not an altogether bad answer. I can [defend 6 of the 10](#) as being in line with Survival Based Ethics.

SBE, as you may have noticed, doesn't do "commandments"; and it only has two "suggestions" (rather than "rules" - since they're both entirely optional for any given individual). They are: as widely and unselfishly as possible or reasonable in the circumstances:

- 1 Promote and Pursue Pleasure** and
- 2 Avoid or Minimise Pain.**

In that link above we've measured the 10 Commandments against those two guidelines.

We're not discounting the later Christian modifications to the rules of behaviour as documented in the new Testament. We've already indicated that we don't have much difficulty signing up to most of those. Indeed, I can't immediately think of one of Jesus' major "rules" which I would take serious issue with. (There's bound to be something. I'll have to take a look)

His promise of heavenly reward for those who followed his guidance is a trifle optimistic and his conviction that he was the direct descendant of the supreme being was a little more psychotic than most of us seem to be, but it never caused him to harm others, so we needn't be too concerned about it. What matters, surely, is what he had to say about the 3rd Question. And, regardless of who he was, and whether or not he performed any verifiable "miracles", and whether or not he was resurrected 3 days after being ritually murdered by the State, what he has to say about how to behave is pretty reasonable.

Fundamentalists seem to have a problem with the acceptability of his message if it isn't backed up by divinity; as though they would no longer agree that "turning the other cheek" or "Loving thy neighbour" was such a good idea if it hadn't been said by a representative of the supreme being. Why? How does the source of a proposition affect its validity? The answer, of course, is as above, it comes back to the "All or Nothing" approach. They can't defend their total social behaviour package unless the authority of the bible is beyond doubt and that means that nothing within it can be open to question.

In any case, our focus on the 10 Commandments is because it is common to all three monotheistic religions.

The essence of SBE based examination of anyone else's 3rd Question "morality" recommendations is to measure them against how well they promote the pursuit of pleasure and/or how well they help to avoid or minimise pain. It proves to be a very productive way of analysing behavioural propositions. First, they should all boil down to propositions promoting pleasure and/or escaping from pain. If we can't even manage that, then we're probably not even dealing with a behavioural proposition. (For example the very First Commandment - see the link above)

Assuming we have managed to recast the proposition into SBE form, we can now test the validity of the proposition usually with simple empirical or logical processes. And when analysed like that, it becomes remarkably easy to identify the rather naive reasoning that underpins much religious moralising. We went through all the Commandments in that side link above. Let's just concentrate, for a moment on number 6.

"Thou Shalt Not Kill" is an easy edict to defend. Pain avoidance to the max. Its SBE form would be something like:

- 1 Killing is the extreme end of the pain spectrum.
- 2 Killing is thus a breach of the second directive (Avoid or Minimise Pain)

Hence, "Thou Shalt Not Kill" fully conforms to SBE and we would anticipate a complete consensus in its favour.

Surprisingly (or perhaps not), biblical literalists seem not to have noticed that it's a bit sweeping. The injunction is not limited. It doesn't, for example, say simply "don't kill each other" or "don't kill other human beings". Unless, that is, its been badly translated from the original hebrew which, to be fair, is [claimed by some](#). This might be a fair point when discussing the issue with those who are capable of reading the bible in the original hebrew.

For the rest of us, however, on what basis are we supposed to accept the validity of either the translation we read in the standard non-hebrew bible or any alternative thrown up when we question the validity of the translated version? It would mean we couldn't debate any passage in the bible until we've had a peer reviewed assessment of the various possible translations.

Meanwhile, our common experience is that the average Christian Fundamentalist doesn't think twice about lashing out in moral outrage whilst quoting, without any such peer review, the translation they favour. And, in the translations most Christians favour, the injunction is crystal clear, unequivocal and absolute. "Thou Shalt Not Kill". Which clearly means we are instructed not to kill anything at all. Which would make life itself rather difficult. Even vegans kill most of what they eat.

Only when we challenge its comprehensiveness are we going to get anyone defending it through the "bad translation" argument. Not only does this then expose all other edicts to possible translation flaws but it skates over a much more important point. Why shouldn't the injunction be absolute? SBE certainly doesn't have a problem with it, as we illustrated above. If you need to make exceptions for practical reasons then each such exception constitutes a behavioural proposition in its own right. Recast them as SBE propositions and see how they stack up.

For example, we feel obliged to exclude the killing of plant life because it is the basis of the food chain and we need to eat to live. The SBE propositions?

Without food, we'll die. (Maximum pain, breach of second directive)

Killing plants to feed us will prevent our pain at the expense of theirs

Plants pain is less severe than our own

Thus killing plants to sustain us results in an overall reduction in pain.

The only contentious proposition is the third one. 1 is obviously true and there is already a large body of empirical data to support it. 2 is uncontentious. We can live on plants. That would minimise our pain. But it still leaves the plant pain. Number 3, however, is an animal prejudice (which I share). We have no idea whether the plants we kill to eat are suffering even more than we do when we starve to death. We have some evidence that maltreatment of plants cause suffering of a sort - not least because they too can die. But we have no means of ascertaining the extent or quality of that suffering. We can and do make a number of assumptions which may or may not be reasonable. For example, we can see that although plants are capable of transmitting some information from one part to another they have nothing approaching the complexity of an animal nervous system. It seems reasonable to me (definitely not expert in the field) that the less complex plant "nerve" system is inevitably less able to transmit all potential pain/damage indicators than an animal system. It seems reasonable to extend that to the conclusion that its overall ability to experience pain and suffering is similarly reduced in comparison to the animal model. As far as I know, though, no serious empirical analysis has "proved" such a conclusion to be valid. Logically, therefore, we probably ought to confirm that conclusion with appropriate experimentation. It is unlikely to be made any kind of priority, however, as the assumption is probably universally held and nobody would want to allocate resource to the necessary research. So, pragmatically, we'll note the absence of empirical data and equally note the consensus already exists as to the likely outcome of empirical tests. Obviously, if the assumption is true, then all four propositions are also true and we've justified the exception of Plant Life from the "Thou Shalt Not Kill" rule

Doesn't get us completely off the hook though. OK, for a given human population, we can justify the humane slaughter of a certain volume of plant life. We still have to concede that even if minimal, compared to animal suffering, plant death must involve some suffering. We are still, therefore, obliged, by SBE, to do what we can to minimise it. And one obvious way to minimise it is to minimise the human population that causes the suffering. Now, obviously, that doesn't mean killing humans to save plants. We've just agreed that human suffering outweighs plant suffering. But it does imply that we shouldn't add to the burden we already represent. Unless, that is, you wish to consider another set of SBE propositions:

Human lives are much richer and more rewarding than plant lives.

So much so that the net increase in pleasure represented by human lives outweighs the pain and suffering caused by the death of the plant life required to sustain those lives.

This justifies actively raising and killing plant life in optimal circumstances just to promote widespread human existence.

We call it Agriculture. And again, there is already a very obvious near universal consensus that this proposition set is also true. Thus we cannot and, generally, do not make an argument that human population should be limited for the benefit of plants.

The priest protests. We are getting into far too much detail. There is no real debate about whether we should eat plants to stay alive.

"He didn't mean it that literally"

Well why did he bloody well say it like that then - or why did humans translate it like that? The "Manifesto" forcefully reminds us that they were his *exact* words:

the human authors wrote the exact words and sentences God inspired them to write without misrepresenting God,

It doesn't mention bad translations. So, couldn't he spare the extra handful of syllables that would let us off the hook and allow us to kill enemies, sinners, animals, vegetables etc? No, there is simply no reason to ignore the obvious. The monotheist god is infallible, by their own definition, and thus was obviously sympathetic to the Bhuddist line and meant exactly what he said. "Thou Shalt Not Kill". (Presumably even the Bhuddha must have felt guilty as he murdered his daily hemp seed.)

Only a human (uninspired by god) would have been fallible enough to make the assumption, when issuing such an edict, that his audience would understand that the injunction applied only to the killing of other people (except enemies, adulterers, blasphemers, murderers, rapists etc). So either it means what it says, or it was written (or later translated) by a fallible and uninspired human. Guess which I believe. (For a wider investigation of the consequences of belief in the literal truth of the bible, [start here](#))([cached](#))

More importantly though, and despite its obvious human rather than divine authorship, I have no quarrel with the absolute injunction. In other words, even if the original instruction, properly translated only means "Do Not Murder Other Human Beings", I still prefer the more ethically absolute "Cause No Death". Granted, at the moment, some death is necessary to sustain our own lives, so it's not 100% achievable, for the time being, any more than perfection in any other field. Granted also that causing death might, in some situations, be the most humane and moral action - because it avoids prolonged pain. Nevertheless, as a moral target it is fully in line with my SBE aspirations.

Until we become a digital species we will probably remain dependant on organic food sources which entails some degree of regrettable killing. But "Cause No Death" is a perfectly reasonable ethical aspiration and it is not inconsistent to apply it as a standard in public and private life. The degree to which we meet the aspiration is obviously inversely proportional to the amount of killing we are

responsible for. One of my favourite cliches applies: "Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good." Minimising death is always better than failing to curtail it altogether. And it doesn't require tortured logic to justify the occasionally killing which remains necessary to feed us.

There is in fact only one lifestyle fully compatible with "Thou Shalt Not Kill" (in the absolute "Cause No Death" sense). It is not vegan or vegetarianism (vegetables are alive too - before we eat them - as [this site](#) is dedicated to reminding us.). It is to become a pure carrion eater and only to eat that which has, regrettably, already been killed by other agencies before we get to it. So rotting meat, fruit and veg are clearly what the deity had in mind for us when he issued that edict. Fortunately for modern society - in which most of us ARE carrion eaters (when did you last kill your own meat or harvest your own fruit and veg?) - refrigeration spares us the odors and infections that would otherwise accompany that lifestyle. And, of course, buying dead meat from a supermarket doesn't really absolve you from "Thou Shalt Not Kill" - we're just paying someone else to perform the sin on our behalf.

From there on, however, it becomes more problematic. Can we justify killing animals just to provide clothing, for example? Not really. We have perfectly adequate synthetics which perform all the necessary functions required to provide more than adequate clothing, so we don't even "need" to sacrifice the cotton plant.

Killing other animals for food is much more difficult to justify. Speaking as an occasional carnivore and full time carrion eater (carnivores and carrion eaters are both meat eaters, but only the carnivore does the actual killing) I find it impossible to justify my own behaviour ethically. I can explain it but that in no way justifies it. I've tried being a vegetarian, even vegan, for three years and it was the most boring dietary period of my life.

As someone who loves cooking and eating, food is one of my greatest sensual pleasures. Ultimately I have reverted to meat for pleasure. I do it fully conscious of the pain and suffering that entails. I have hunted, killed, dressed and eaten my own meat. I have attended abattoirs and watched the cattle and sheep having their throats slit after being stunned and hung upside down. I have watched their hides being expertly stripped from them before the last twitches of their lives have ended. I have watched and listened to the pigs screaming in terror because, unlike the sheep and cattle, they are intelligent enough to figure out what is about to happen to them.

So, I'm not one of those who thinks that ribeye steaks and lamb chops come painlessly and neatly wrapped from supermarkets. I regret eating meat. I regret the fact that there are still no really acceptable alternatives. As soon as someone can give me a non animal based steak which I can't tell from the real thing and which does no nutritional harm (and it might well be [on its way](#)) ([cached](#)), I'll switch. Until then I'll remain a hypocritical meat eater.

Killing animals for clothing is even less defensible. I can accept leather if it is the byproduct of slaughter for meat. If we've already killed the animal to eat it, we might as well use its hide as well. But fur farming? That's obscene! The idea of breeding and killing animals which we can't even eat just because they have attractive fur might have been justifiable when we lived in caves but not in the age of polymers.

One of the most difficult ethical issues of all is the question of killing animals in pursuit of medical research designed to benefit human beings. Why? In what way is killing for medical research any different, in principle, from killing for food? There are two answers to that - for me personally. Whether they can be justified as ethical principles is for you to judge. My first reservation is the degree of suffering.

When animals are killed for food, the death is usually quick and relatively painless. In contrast, many research animals are deliberately exposed to treatment or pathogens which give them a lingering death in captivity. It doesn't matter whether that lingering death takes minutes or months, it is different, in degree, from the efficient despatch carried out by an abattoir. It fails the "minimise pain" test.

My second reservation concerns the kind of animals we are prepared to kill in the research context.

Having once developed a relationship with the kids' pet rat (sadly now deceased) I am well aware that even this relatively lowly mammal has an active intelligence. It was certainly capable of recognising me (as distinct from strangers) and showing that it was pleased to see me. It would seek me out to play with it. It would laugh when I teased it. When it was tired, it would climb up on to my lap for a nap. It had a very distinct personality. In contrast to a number of hamsters we also went through - which, with the best will in the world, cannot be described as demonstrating any remotely similar level of intelligence.

Ever since that experience, I have been disturbed by the ubiquity of the laboratory rat. These animals are very definitely capable of feeling both pleasure and pain and we routinely subject them to death and suffering by the thousand and often for somewhat dubious purposes, such as the testing of cosmetics.

It is hardly surprising, given my feelings for the humble rat, that, for me, the idea of experiments leading to death or suffering of animals even higher up the intellectual ladder is truly horrific. In my experience, most pet-owners would react like me. If I found someone causing deliberate harm to one of my own dogs or cats, I would do whatever it took to stop them, up to and including killing them. Granted, I wouldn't be prepared to go quite that far if it was someone else's pet, but I'd certainly be prepared to use violence to some extent if that's what it took to prevent the harm.

Why, therefore, should I be at all tolerant of labs routinely performing experiments on thousands of cats or dogs? And given that attitude, why am I not campaigning alongside the ALF and petrol bombing research labs?

Well partly it's because, right now, there are approximately 10 million human beings undergoing similarly unjustified suffering at the hands of their fellow humans and I can't do much about them either - other than what I am doing right now; get this damn book written and do my bit to try to change the memes. I'm not about to let myself get distracted into a single issue campaign. In the scheme of things, stopping [MIFT](#) and preventing the growth and spread of the [Police State](#) are far more important issues than preventing unnecessary cruelty to cats and dogs, regrettable though that is.

Partly also, it's because there is already a pretty active and effective "Animal Rights Movement" who are doing well enough without my humble assistance.

Partly it is because I disapprove of tactics which cause harm to 3rd parties except in a genuine war to the death where it is "kill or be killed". We are certainly not in that situation in regard to abuse of animals.

And partly I accept that it is not an unmitigated evil because there is no serious doubt that many human lives are being saved as a direct result of some of the research going on, and I can't entirely ignore that benefit. Dogs and cats, though, are about as far as I'm prepared to concede.

When it comes to primates, therefore, particularly the higher primates, I find it very difficult to argue against the militant action of the Animal Liberation Front. The evidence strongly suggests that chimp and orang intelligence is approximately at the level of a 3-4 year old human. Would we permit experimentation on 3-4 year old children? I think not.

We are dragged into relativism by this issue. There are those who regard human beings as so vastly more important than any and every other animal that they would be prepared, for example, to sacrifice every remaining Orang Utan if it meant saving a single human. I certainly do not share that view. In most situations, given a choice between saving a single Orang and a single human, I'll choose the human. But there are some humans I would certainly not choose in place of the Orang. I'm sure you can think of a few yourself.

And what if the choice is between 2 orangs and a single human? I'd probably still go for the human. But what if its 20 orangs, or 200, or 2000 (which is probably all that remain in the world)? I'd have little difficulty choosing between the Orang species and a single human - particularly if I didn't know the human. I'd save the species. The difficult area - for me - lies between 1 orang and the entire species. I

acknowledge, though, that for some people no such grey area exists, they would be prepared to eliminate the species for the sake of a single human.

I probably ought to be attempting a calculus which determines how many cats or rats are equivalent to a single Orang but I feel a difference in principle between the lower order mammals and those who are nearer our intelligence. I'm not sure I can even justify it.

Emotionally I find the idea of holding captive any animal capable of self awareness, (to, say, mirror recognition standard) other than for its own protection, to be abhorrent. Where I merely regret eating meat, I draw the line at causing sustained suffering (which even friendly captivity must cause to a sapient being) to animals capable of introspection. These obviously include the great apes and almost certainly several species of cetaceans. And, of course, humans.

Keeping an Orca or Dolphin in large swimming pool is roughly equivalent to keeping a man in an 8 by 6 prison cell. The plentiful supply of fresh fish is not much of a compensation.

My concern is roughly proportional to the intelligence of the species. I have no philosophical basis for this, merely the queasiness of knowing that the higher the mental abilities, the more likely it is that the captive animal will suffer in the same way I would in their situation. As we approach that point, and the animals intelligence gets closer to my own, I feel increasingly constrained by the "golden rule" (reciprocity - "do as you would be done by")

I perceive Life as spread out across a spectrum of intelligence and their ethical or moral value being, like my concern, roughly proportional to their intelligence. For others, particularly the religiously inclined for whom mankind is inherently a species of unique value of a different kind, no such spectrum exists. Even one human is of greater moral import than any number of the "lower animals".

"Relativism" is clearly an important topic in its own right but I don't want to spend too much time on that issue here. I'll deal with it as a side issue here. And a "game" here.

If the above digression illustrates anything more than my tendency to ramble it is this: one of the fundamental misconceptions the theist holds in regard to atheism is that we atheists are somehow not capable of moral judgement because we don't believe in a deity. I suspect that those few theists who read the comments above, regarding the potential sanctity of life of "lesser" species will have to concede, even if they disagree with my conclusions, that my "morality" is actually more stringent, at least on the issues surrounding the 6th commandment, than their own.

By contrast, it requires a deeply tortured logic - fully consistent with clinical psychosis - to reconcile "Thou Shalt Not Kill" with flying loaded passenger planes into heavily occupied tall buildings. And no less tortured is the logic which has been deployed since to justify the military carnage euphemistically minimised as "collateral damage" but which has efficiently killed somewhere between 10 and 40 times as many innocent non combatants as were killed by the airplane hijackers.

Remember the question I asked above? ([Are They Lying Stupid or Blind?](#)) After all this discussion, my tentative conclusion is that they're not lying. Neither are they stupid. They are blind or "philosophically challenged". They lack the understanding of epistemology and empiricism which would guide them to intelligent analysis. The cognitive dissonance between the real world and the world they aspire to results in the psychosis I've already described

They're not balmy, they're bigots, they're not peccant, they're prejudiced. Big difference. Some very intelligent people are deeply prejudiced.

Incidentally, I'm not claiming that my self-assessed higher level of objectivity is itself either objectively true, or, even if true, that it justifies some special rights or treatment. It is more about recognising the scale of the task we're up against. Simplistically (i.e. in media terms) there are three sides to the "War on Terror" - The Neocons with their religious and political poodles; MIFT and their support base; and the rest of us who wish "a plague on both your houses". Most people will line up behind one of those flags.

Strange as it may seem, I oppose all of them (even the last which I'm obviously a member of!), to some extent and sympathise with all of them to some extent.

One of my self appointed tasks, for example, is to explain to my own group (the "plague on both houses" group) that there are some demands or policies followed by the psychotics on both the other sides which can actually be defended. For instance, I will - in Part 3 - (to some extent) defend, in principle, given the circumstances following 9-11, the need for something like Guantanamo. I will also be heavily critical of the Americans' brutal and bullying conduct but the principle itself is defensible. It's how we normally treat Prisoners of War. If the Americans had stuck to those rules they would have avoided one of their many self inflicted wounds.

That might place me in a very small minority. I don't feel that this minority is, in any way, an elite. If anything, I feel "exposed". The only comfort I can take is that my target audience is somewhat more likely to give me a fair hearing than the fundamentalists ever will.

Incidentally, one might ask, if arguing with prejudiced ignorant believers is a waste of time, does that imply that those sites and scientists which go to extraordinary lengths to counter the creationists naive nonsense are also wasting their time? Absolutely not. It may be a waste of time trying to educate someone like Duane Gish, but there are millions - potentially billions - of newly forming minds who are confused by the evolutionary debate and it is desperately important that they have access to authoritative peer reviewed intelligent rebuttals of the masses of "bad science" out there.

Similarly, is it a waste of time trying to make intellectual arguments about how to address Neocon behaviour? If they can't or won't understand what we have to say, what's the point? Partly it's the same answer. For the sake of the uncommitted who are trying to make sense of what the hell is going on with the world. They are desperately seeking signs of sanity. Hopefully we can provide some oases in the desert. Most important, perhaps, between us, we can offer some hope that there is a way out of this mess. But I'm getting ahead of myself. That's what Part 3 is all about.

Right now I simply want to emphasise just how serious the implications of their egregious errors are. I assume I no longer have to rehearse what those errors are. If you've come this far, you'll be fully prepared to accept that the Neocons and Religious Right have made one or two errors. The point I've been labouring is that those obvious errors present us with only two basic choices: they are either lying or ignorant/blind believers (or possibly, as my wife points out, a mixture). Whichever is true, **the conclusion that the leadership of the world's remaining superpower consists of either liars and/or ignorant believers presents a dramatically more dangerous problem than anything MIFT represents.** (Update 18 Nov 2005: See my Blog)

And I've already made it clear, I hope, just how potentially dangerous MIFT still are. In fact, however, one could argue that the most dangerous aspect of MIFT is the effect it is already having on the leadership of that remaining superpower. It is fuelling an already dangerous psychosis. Jeez, these people have access to the largest stockpile of "nukuler" weapons on the planet. The last thing we need to do is persuade them to "flip"!

So how - short of nuclear conflagration - do the dangers manifest themselves?

Disproportionate Response

The US has a deeply ingrained tendency to over-react to all its perceived threats. It also has a remarkably low ability to learn from its own history and mistakes. Its response to the attacks of 9-11 has clearly demonstrated these weaknesses. It might be emotionally satisfying if we could just pin this behaviour on the Neocons, but it's a consistent feature of American political judgements throughout most of the 20th century. The history of prohibition of both Alcohol and Drugs is the most unremitting example. McCarthyism, Vietnam, Kent State University and the continued blockade of Cuba, even after the end of the Cold War are just as psychotic. The Clinton/Lewinski episode, the OJ Simpson trial, and the row over Janet Jackson's nipple demonstrated to the world at large just how psychologically unbalanced the "superpower" is. The Neocons are not the cause, they are a symptom.

Part of the problem is - ironically - the American Constitution. It was designed to clip the wings of potential tyrants and, if applied as intended, it would do that far too efficiently for those who believe that firm control is more important than the will of the people. So what the elite have been doing over the past century or so is gradually introducing laws, institutions, judges, media ownership and - "some say" - a permanent state of threat and fear; in which the anti-authoritarian provisions of the constitution can be made to look like weaknesses and thus legitimately suspended or bypassed by the caring concerned leadership. That is obviously a crude summary. For the detail, read Chomsky et al. The important point is that the Neocons are the product of this engineering. As is the remarkably low political IQ of the American public. The media have successfully prevented the vast majority of their population from thinking seriously about what is really going on in their country.

It is a tribute to that "weak" constitution, that people like Chomsky are still able to a) uncover the truths he reveals b) disseminate them and c) stay alive. There are no other countries with the authoritarian streak rampant in the American psyche who also tolerate free spirits like Chomsky in their midst. But let no one be under any illusion. Although America is still in the camp of the "Dissent Tolerators", this is only because their controllers haven't yet figured out how to sell the blocking of dissent as being consistent with the "First Amendment" to that weak constitution. It also helps, in Chomsky's case, that he achieved an international reputation (for his politically neutral work on linguistics) well before he gained a similar reputation for his attacks on the corruption inherent in the American system. He was also fortunate that he came to prominence relatively shortly after the demise of McCarthyism. Short of assassination it left the authorities no real way to gag him without bringing international opprobrium and major loss of face.

[McCarthyism](#), of course is a classic example of their tendency to disproportionate responses and was not dissimilar to the Soviet and Maoist treatment of their internal dissidents, though, to be fair, somewhat less lethal.

The current and ongoing attack on Liberty and Privacy, triggered by 9-11, has probably finally justified the description of America as a Police State. As you may have already noticed, I have created a [separate page](#) dealing with that issue, which in turn links to several dozen of the most coherent arguments I can find, mostly supporting the proposition (that the USA is already a Police State), some opposing it (or arguing that the authoritarian measures are necessary) and some arguing that it hasn't yet arrived but is clearly moving in that direction.

What is particularly disappointing about America (given its revolutionary origins) is that the authoritarian tendency is not limited to the corridors of power. Like we see in other repressive regimes, the abuse of power is visible all the way down the greasy pole. Consider some of the insanity we've seen practised, since 1999, by petty tyrants in the school system: under the heading "[Zero Tolerance](#)". Like terrorism, there is no denying that there is a real problem (school based violence) to deal with, and, like their policy on terrorism, their schools policy has produced far more problems than they started with - and cannot be conclusively shown to have resolved any along the way.

Prohibition of Alcohol in the 20s was the first large scale example of their fundamentalist lunacy. The "War on Drugs" - which has mirrored, with stunning precision, all the mistakes, lies, corruption, exacerbation and complete failure of Alcohol prohibition - remains far and away the major example of intransigence, combined with intolerance and zero intelligence, but we deal with that in detail in the next chapter.

The American body politic and many of its supporters, to put it mildly, lack subtlety! The common thread to these policies is the complete absence of "common sense". What is alarming is the extent to which the perpetrators of the outlandish decisions based on these policies will, in even the most egregious breaches of civil behaviour, insist on defending them. They will - for decades if necessary - simply deny the reams of evidence describing the inhumanity and utter failure of their policies. When, occasionally, they are forced to confront such failures, their inevitable response is not that the policy needs revision but that it needs reinforcement. Theirs is the opposite of the engineer's mantra: "If it aint broke, don't fix it". They prefer: "If it aint working, we must need more of the same". Failure is never acknowledged and thus, of course, no-one is ever accountable for the policies or their inevitable ultimate failures.

They're all "just following orders".

I acknowledge that the use of terms like "group insanity" or "social psychosis" are emotive - but if that kind of consistent behaviour cannot be described in those terms, then we clearly need some new terms to describe it!

The Financial Costs

Before we turn, finally, to the consequences of this gross mismanagement, let's take a fleeting look at what is being spent to promote the current world war. To begin with, let's just pause and consider how many deaths have been caused by terrorism since 1990 and then look at how many deaths have been caused by our response to terrorism. First, take a guess. Given the turmoil caused by global terrorism, how many victims do you think have died as a result of terrorist attacks since, say, 1990? Millions? Hundreds of Thousands? Tens of Thousands? Thousands? Hundreds? Well no one is going to guess "hundreds" given that we can all remember 9-11 which, we all know, killed thousands on its own.

My own guess was about 12,000. The best answer I can find is by adding up all the figures you'll [find here](#) ([cached](#)) and in its related links. I adopted some simple rules. I didn't count attacks on military targets. I tried to exclude the deaths of the terrorist attackers. The totals I arrived at were 1273 for the 1990s and 6,539 from 2000 to 2004, a total of 7812 in 15 years. Al Qaeda are attributed almost exactly half of that total (3,913) and nearly 3000 of those died in the single attack we refer to as 9-11.

These 7,812 are the total deaths caused by terrorism during that 15 year period around the world. A little over 500 a year.

Now let's put that into perspective. That *15 year total* of 7,812 is about as many people as were [killed by Aspirin](#) type drugs (NSAIDs) in the United States in the year 2000. It's roughly two thirds of the number of Americans [killed by other Americans using guns](#) in the year 2002. It's about as many people as are killed in road traffic accidents, in the United States, every 10 or 11 weeks. (same ref)

Why are those comparisons relevant?

Consider how much money, time and effort are put into reducing deaths by those various causes. In fact I challenge the reader to find ANY national budget dedicated to reducing death by Aspirin, firearms or road traffic. Against that, the so called War on Terror has so far (June 2005) consumed a budget in excess of [\\$300 Billion dollars](#). ([cached](#))

Presumably the official bottom line justification for this spending is to reduce the death toll. So the first question is what justifies the difference in concern over deaths caused by firearms within the United States and those caused by other lethal weapons around the world? What makes the US government willing to increase military spending to approximately **\$25 million dollars per death** caused by terrorism while maintaining or reducing budgets aimed at reducing deaths from other causes? Or, to put it another way, assuming that their motivation is indeed to reduce deaths from all causes, how many more deaths could they prevent, each year, if, as we've already [mentioned here](#), they put just 20% of that funding towards tackling the malnutrition crisis in the third world? (and what would be the knock on effects on reduced recruitment for the terrorist cause? etc etc)

That's not my main point. It's obviously true but in this context, the premature death by starvation of a few hundred million 3rd world peasants is almost a side issue. The rest of the civilised world could cough up the \$40 billion required for that purpose if they really gave a damn, which they obviously don't.

The point I'm making here is that, amongst other things, the War on Terrorism is just another American over-reaction. The grandmother and grandfather of all panic measures. And, like most over-reactions, it has - as I've argued extensively above - exacerbated rather than ameliorated the problem. Again, it doesn't matter whether that was conspiracy or cockup. The consequences for the world are the same.

When you are confronted with an unwanted fire, it's generally not a good strategy to hose it down with petrol.

The Consequences of the War on Terror, Freedom and Privacy

The consequences of their gross over-reaction are what we are already living with today. These begin with a massive amplification of the Risks. What began as a few hundred initial Islamic Militants are now numbered in thousands. This in turn has necessitated increased security throughout the world, particularly in the main target areas - the United States and England (I say England rather than Britain or UK because terrorists, whether Irish or Islamic, tend to recognise that the source of the decisions they resent is very English based. No Scottish or Welsh location has ever been targeted by international terrorists. Yet)

The London Bombings

In the UK, as of July 7 2005, we now have to confront the reality of home grown suicide bombers. (subject - at the time of writing - to the possibility that they were duped into believing they were delivering bombs that would explode later and didn't know that the timers or other control signal would be activated when they were.) Although the death toll was mercifully trivial by comparison with either 9-11 or 3-11, the implications are profound.

It is amazing - one week after the bombing - to witness how deep the state of denial is. The politicians are denying that the attack had any connection with their policy on Iraq, Afghanistan or what's going on in the Middle East. I listened to The Moral Maze on 13 July and endured Melanie Phillips (the nearest thing we have to an Ann Coulter) ranting that the only reason for the attack was that the young men were all religious fanatics. Meanwhile the Imams are denying that it has anything at all to do with their religion - despite [Urshad Manji's](#) sterling attempts to get them to open their eyes. Everybody is shocked and surprised.

My personal reaction was a mixture of resigned disgust and mild relief that the death toll was below 3 figures. I've been anticipating some form of attack since we invaded Iraq and I expected something considerably worse than what we have, so far, suffered. I was certainly not surprised. I didn't even shed a tear. It didn't hit me emotionally until I watched the BBC Ten O'clock News footage covering the 2 minute silence held one week later. The dignified scenes of people all over the country visibly "standing up to be counted" - with absolutely no commentary was one of the most moving collages I've ever seen. And allowing the Bus Driver - [George Psaradakis](#) ([cached](#)) - to represent the Voice of Britain was sheer editorial genius. This was TV News doing its job properly. (From both his name and accent, I would guess that George is a first generation Greek immigrant. Not feeling it necessary to comment on that was all part of what made it such a fitting media choice for our multicultural society)

Back at Ground Zero; the political and religious links are obvious. The sense of injustice felt by many Muslims is even shared by non Muslims. Me for one. I can fully understand why some Muslims would feel angry enough to attack the UK for its support of the USA in what they perceive as a War against Islam. The motivation for the attack is no mystery at all. The mystery, if any, is why so many people are trying so hard to resist such an obvious conclusion. Its another classic [SBO](#). The self-delusion emphasises the importance of the provocative question I asked above (Are They Lying, Stupid or Blind?). It is just as relevant to those in denial this side of the Atlantic.

It is rarely this easy to prove that politicians are Lying

We can thank the New York Times for [the clincher](#). ([cached](#)) Someone leaked a confidential report to them in which the Joint Terrorist Analysis Center (the peak of the UK's security pyramid) gave the background to the historically unimportant decision to lower the UK threat level about a month before the bombings. It was unimportant because no credible case can be made that this decision increased risk or reduced the probability of interdicting the bombers. What is important, however, is that the report contains a glaring admission which flatly contradicts the frenzied denials being made regarding any link to Iraq:

"Events in Iraq are continuing to act as motivation and a focus of a range of terrorist related activity in the U.K.," said the report, a copy of which was made available by a foreign intelligence service and was not disputed by four senior British officials who were asked about it.

I suppose the politicians could deny that they had the faintest idea that their security experts were of this opinion but that would involve such an admission of gross government incompetence that we can reasonably exclude the possibility. Note, incidentally, the use of the word "continuing" which implies that this is not a new notion.

I'm guessing that the reason for this pathetic attempt to steer the public away from the obvious truth is that any cost directly attributable to the war in Iraq provides further ammunition to those who opposed the war in the first place.

But does it? I opposed the invasion but I can't say that this particular consequence offers any new grounds for opposition. It goes without saying that if you attack someone, there is a risk that they will fight back. It is both indisputable and no surprise whatsoever that a number of Muslims around the world saw the occupation of Iraq as an extension of the "Zionist-Crusader" war against Islam. It should have been no great surprise to anyone with an IQ in double figures that some UK Muslims would be amongst the wider Muslim group who held such views, and that they should consider it entirely valid that they should assist their side by attacking the Capital city of one of the main players in the "Zionist-Crusader" alliance.

Surely, we would be entitled to be much more critical if the politicians who claim they are trying to protect us were to admit that the possibility of a home grown attack had not occurred to them! I would much rather they admit what I understand to be the truth - that they have been constantly on the lookout for signs of just such an attack ever since 9-11 and even more so since the invasion of Iraq.

So, we know they're lying. But what does it tell us about their collective mental condition that they believe they can sustain the lie? Like the possibility that [Duane Gish is lying](#) about what he believes in regard to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, if the Government is consciously lying about the Iraq link, they must believe that we're stupid enough to believe their denials - or that they have sufficient control of Society to suppress any conceivable dissent that might arise as a result of the exposure of that lie. In fact, other than George Galloway, who took the golden opportunity to hoot "[I told you so](#)" (metaphorically, of course) ([cached](#)), nobody else has made much fuss about the link because everybody else has been taking it for granted.

The *only thing* that is making anyone at all interested in this angle is the warmongers' eyepoppingly brazen attempts at pretending the link doesn't exist! In contrast:

"And I don't dispute that one of the rationalisations for terrorism is the presence in Iraq just as the reconquest of Andalusia in 1492 is one of the rationalisations. That doesn't mean that its justified."

That from Walter Slocombe (former director of National Security and Defense in the Iraq Coalition Provisional Authority) on BBC2's Newsnight 14 July 2005

If our own politicians merely regrettfully acknowledged the link in similar fashion, the media would have made it headlines for a few days but it would not have swelled the ranks of the opposition by more than a handful of pillocks for whom such a prospective link was a new concept!

Instead, we now know that they were lying. And that's a much more serious issue than what they were lying about. That's what cost the then Spanish Government the election after 3-11.

Tony Blair [is the lead liar](#) ([cached](#)) ([further evidence](#) of prior warning of the link; leaked letter from Permanent Secretary Foreign Office published 29 Aug 2005)([cached](#)) on this issue, with some of the weakest arguments I've ever seen him attempt:

If it is Iraq that motivates them, why is the same ideology killing Iraqis by terror in defiance of an elected Iraqi government?

...is such a naive question that it beggars belief that he meant it seriously. But he compounds it with:

"If it is the plight of the Palestinians that drives them, why, every time it looks as if Israel and Palestine are making progress, does the same ideology perpetrate an outrage that turns hope back into despair?"

If it is Afghanistan that motivates them, why blow up innocent Afghans on their way to their first-ever election?

"What was 11 September 2001 the reprisal for?"

He supplies his own answer:

Such violence was not in response to any particular policy or founded in any injustice, but in a "fanaticism" that had to be confronted

Why, we must ask, would a politician of Blair's standing prefer to appear confused and ill-informed to the point of looking and sounding like an imbecile - rather than the intelligent but wounded Statesman reluctantly accepting the attack an inevitable part of the "price we must pay for trying to do the right thing?"

And how could we hope to tackle the problem if the political leaders really didn't even begin to understand it? Does he really think that posture of "surprised ignorance" is more reassuring than resigned competence? What on earth are they thinking??

Here, in brief, are the well known answers to his naive questions:

Why is the same ideology killing Iraqis? To begin with, I can find no independent observers anywhere in the world - let alone the population of Iraq - who regard the "elected Iraqi Government" as either legitimate or particularly representative. The attacks, however, are coming from three separate sources which may or may not be collaborating. The first source is internal and consists of Iraqi Sunni ex Fedayeen, Saddam supporters and sympathisers who refuse to accept the transition to Shia dominated Iraq and are fighting a a very straightforward power struggle which looks like it will inevitably lead either to partition or civil war.

The second source, also internal, consists of a number of non-sectarian Iraqis who simply oppose the occupation and get mileage from killing other Iraqis (particular those they see as collaborating with the occupation) by demonstrating that the occupiers are incapable of maintaining control. The third source is largely based on foreign fighters although they are bound to have recruited some local support. They are [MIFT](#) "Jihadi" insurgents who oppose the very concept of democracy and also recognise that this is their best opportunity to inflict on the USA a military defeat similar to the humiliating defeat they inflicted on the Russians in Afghanistan - with, at the time, massive support from the Americans. As discussed on the MIFT page, their object is to ensure that the West stop meddling in Islamic affairs so that they can institute a Wahhabi/Taliban style totalitarian Islamic Caliphate across the Islamic World. A small minority might also have ambitions to extend that Caliphate globally.

It is now almost certain that the London bombers were MIFT and thus shared their long term goals. Making life difficult in the UK is clearly designed to put pressure on the UK government both to reconsider its involment in Iraq and its participation in the wider "War against Islam".

The Palestine question is simpler. In short, the reason Hamas, Hizbollah or Islamic Jihad frequently derail Peace attempts whenever they look like they might be getting anywhere is because they are never involved in the peace negotiations and they simply refuse to permit the Palestinian leadership to concede what they consider to be a sellout. You don't even have to understand WHY they consider it a sellout, or whether they're right or wrong to hold that opinion; just that they do.

The Afghan Taliban attacks are, of course, based on the MIFT objection to democracy we've mentioned previously.

9-11 was a *reprisal* against the USA and its collaborators for their long term support for Israel; the first invasion of Iraq - or rather, the permanent stationing of US troops on Saudi soil following that invasion - and the US long term support for corrupt Islamic dictators. MIFT also charges the "Zionist-Crusader" alliance with responsibility for "Massacres in Tajikistan, Burma, Cashmere, Assam, Phillipine, Fatani, Ogadin, Somalia, Erithria, Chechnia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina". It was the continuation of a war, declared quite openly (but ignored) by [bin Laden in 1996 \(cached\)](#) and again by the "[World Islamic Front](#)" ([cached](#)) in February 1998. Six months after which they struck the first "official" blow. Remember the [1998 attacks \(cached\)](#) on the US embassies in Africa? There were "unofficial" blows well before that with the 1993 attempt on the World Trade Centre; And more recent attacks like the seaborne suicide attack on the USS Cole in 2000.

None of the above are news. None are controversial analyses. How and why would serious politicians pretend to be unaware of them and their connections with the present conflict? Even more mysterious - why would a member of the main political opposition party support the lie? Here is a golden opportunity for them to put the boot in and, instead, they're collaborating!!

Oliver Letwin - a Tory shadow cabinet member speaking on the panel of "Any Questions" (BBC Radio 4 July 15 2005) gave full support to the Government "no link" lie and, at one point, added:

"I'm a Jew and I witness Jews in Israel being bombed and murdered by Muslims in Israel from time to time. Does that mean I'm entitled to go and kill other Muslims?" (approximate quote, I didn't record the show, but that was the gist)

What a strange question and what an interesting insight into the disturbed mind of the average politician. It may even explain the "official" attitude...

The question implies that understanding someone's grievance means a) accepting the basis of the grievance and b) condoning their reaction to it.

Who drew that connection?

For the sake of the philosophically challenged, let me make it plain. You do not need to agree with an opponent's list of grievances in order to understand them. You do not have to argue that - even if you did agree with them, you would not, in their position, act as they have done. Some - like both Letwin and Blair it would seem - want to use the argument that - because "rational" people wouldn't react like the bombers to that particular set of grievances - that those grievances could not have been the motives for the attack

Who said they're rational Oliver? Tony?

We know that "normal" people wouldn't behave like the bombers did. But like the creationists we've been talking about above, these are *not* normal people! They have become sociopaths. But it doesn't help one iota to talk - as Blair does in the piece linked above - about an "Evil Ideology". They are no more "evil" than the creationists. They're obviously just as misguided and, in pursuing such violent policies, they are clearly much more immediately dangerous.

But those politicians or community leaders who refuse even to understand - or worse, as in this case, *pretend* not to understand - the enemy's published motives are behaving just as irrationally as the bombers or creationists and are just as unlikely to come to terms with real world issues.

Their final puerile argument is that to accept the link implies that pro-linkers believe that were we to get out of Iraq tomorrow, the attacks would cease. Or, put another way, we probably would still have been attacked even if we hadn't joined the "coalition of the willing." That may or may not be true, though I don't recall hearing even George attempting to argue otherwise. The general common sense consensus, shared by the [Chatham House report \(cached\)](#) and, as we now know, the government's own experts, is that UK involvement in the Iraq War merely increased the risk of such an attack. I've come across no serious attempts to argue that ending our involvement in Iraq would eliminate that risk altogether. There

are multiple causes. Iraq is merely one.

Muslims Deny that it has anything to do with their Religion

I've even heard Muslims trying to argue, despite the emerging evidence, that it might not be an attack carried out by Muslims! Yet another bizarre reaction! Do they think the world would be any safer if that were true? Are they really so concerned about the PR problems of their Faith that they would prefer the attacks to have come from another source of insanity? Isn't it bad enough to have one bunch of complete nutters on the loose? How is it preferable to have a new one springing up out of the blue? Attacking Londoners for what? The imposition of the Congestion Charge?? Or perhaps they were French suicide bombers retaliating against London's victory over Paris (the day before the bombings) in winning the contract for the 2012 Olympics!

Ferchrissake! I've written over 33,000 words in this section trying carefully to explore and explain the nature of the threats we are facing and now you're trying to tell me there's another - non Islamic - group with similar suicidal tendencies, lethal disregard for non-combatants and coincidental hatred of Londoners - of whom no-one anywhere in the world has any hint or knowledge prior to July 7th??!! That hypothesis, sir, fails [Occams Razor](#) test! Amongst other things, the [MIFT](#) hypothesis (that the bombers were MIFT and operating, almost certainly, in partnership with other MIFT) passes the first empirical test - Verifiability. Many of us PREDICTED the attack. Now we have to try to falsify the hypothesis. My money is on it consistently passing that test too.

And why should normal Muslims feel so defensive? We KNOW that normal Muslims don't do this sort of thing. We are pointedly NOT tarring them with the same brush. Read the introduction to my MIFT page, for instance, if you haven't already. The relevance - to you Muslims - of their Islamic origins is simply that you're the logical first choice to sort them out. You might be tempted to argue that the Christian community wasn't charged with the responsibility for sorting out the Nazis, or KKK, or the IRA or whatever. But then, to be fair, that was largely because such groups never promoted their actions "in the name of Christ".

Furthermore, the issues that provoked the bombers are very real injustices which they were perfectly entitled to get very *very* **very** angry about. WE SHOULD **ALL** BE THAT ANGRY ABOUT WHAT IS GOING ON "IN OUR NAME" dammit!

No criticism is aimed at their anger and disillusion, only at their means of expressing it. I can't claim to be AS angry as they are, but I can certainly empathise.

My atheist morals, however, wouldn't permit me, any more than Letwin's Jewish morality would let him - were I or he in their position - to attack innocent 3rd parties nor to countenance a naive distortion of the democratic paradigm to support the contention that the citizens of a country are responsible for the actions of its government and, therefore, legitimate targets (see part 1). The question for the Muslim [Umma](#) is whether or not Islamic morals - as MIFT argues - DO permit such violence. Only the Muslim community can answer that question loudly and widely enough for it to have any prospect of undermining religious support for MIFT. Only Muslims can issue the relevant fatwas.

The whole point of this book is to find ways of dealing with injustices and imbalances of power - even of this magnitude - in ways which achieve both consensus and closure - for all concerned. Believe me, I know how tall that order is. The last part of this "chapter" will go into this in some detail.

Legitimate Targets

Meanwhile, this is a war. Bin Laden declared it in 1996. Bush declared it in 2001. He must, therefore, accept that he - and his political supporters and allies - have made themselves legitimate targets. As has bin Laden and his cohorts. If anyone in either of those groups are attacked and killed, neither they nor we will be entitled to complain on any moral basis. Such attacks would certainly not constitute terrorism - unless they deliberately target non-combatants as well.

Lets make that absolutely crystal clear. Bush and Blair are NOT non combatants, any more than bin Laden. They ARE legitimate targets. If they go down, many of us will regret it. No doubt some won't.

The question arises, obviously, as to what moral basis exists for the definition of ordinary Londoners as legitimate targets. This, of course, is no different to the question of what made [24 children \(cached\)](#) legitimate targets in Baghdad on 13 July 2005 - a story which, though mentioned in passing among the headlines, received almost no further discussion or coverage at all (here in the UK) other than a few belated mentions in the context of [this depressing news \(cached\)](#); so routine have such atrocities become in Iraq. It is no different to the question of what made the children of Beslan legitimate targets, or the occupants of the Twin Towers.

The answer, of course, is the twisted philosophy based on a distorted analysis of the teachings of the Koran as we've spelt out on the [MIFT](#) page. Religion, however, is certainly not the cause of these attacks. The causes are all political. Religion merely provides the moral underpinning for the attackers. In exactly the same way as it has always done for our own warriors whether launching their Crusades, or fighting the Third Reich, or dropping Atom Bombs on Japan, or Daisycutters on Afghanistan. I haven't looked, yet, but I bet you will even find some Christian commentators prepared to provide religious backing for the obscenities in Guantanamo or Abu Ghraib. **The religious connection is not unique to Islam.**

It may not be obvious to those with the fundamentalist mindset that I would not be happy to see attacks even against those I accept as legitimate targets. Their simplistic analysis will be that because I can nominate legitimate targets, I must want to see them attacked. Well, its partly true - but only in the sense that if ANYONE is going to be attacked, it ought to be the decision makers ON BOTH SIDES. And, yes, I would quite like to be able to transport all the decision makers on both sides to a neutral planet somewhere and let them fight it out among themselves, while the rest of us get on with our lives in peace. (Pink Floyd's 1983 "[Fletcher Memorial Home](#)" ([cached](#)) comes to mind)

Short of that, I don't want to see any further attacks by either side. I want to see the application of intelligence and compassion to the problem, rather than the religiously inspired blind rage which currently fills the vaccuum abandoned by diplomacy and common sense.

Whilst I would agree that attacks against Bush or Blair would be wholly deserved or justified, the consequences would be horrendous for society at large. The escalation towards total war would increase. Our liberties and privacy would be further decreased. Conservatively, we could also expect another 100,000 Muslims to die, somewhere, in the knee-jerk paroxysm that followed. And bin Laden would be laughing all the way to whatever passes for his hideout nowadays.

The Enemy Within

The deeper implications arise from what we know, so far about the London bombers. In short, they [did not stand out \(cached\)](#) from their community in any obvious way. This is emphasised by the shock evinced by those who thought they knew them.

"A suicide attacker could be anyone," said Daniel Benjamin, a former Clinton administration official and terrorism expert who is the author of "The Next Attack," due to be published this fall. "He doesn't have to be trained, just indoctrinated. There's no profile; that's what makes it so hard to defend against." (NY Times 13 July 2005)

How then can we expect the Intelligence services to identify future potential bombers? At the moment the only obvious profiling characteristics are that they were young male, British and Muslim and a couple of them spent a few months being taught in Pakistani [Madrassas](#). Are we now going to institute intrusive surveillance on all young male British Muslims? Or just those who spend any time out of the country? Or even forbid them to visit their ancestral homeland?

And, when that fails, because, for example, it has provoked females to join in, or worse, white non Muslims who are appalled at the imposition of Big Brother against a British minority, do we then extend the intrusive surveillance to the entire population? And when that fails, because a sizable proportion of the population is now alienated against its own government, how will we avoid the Civil War that these incoherent responses have produced - exactly as bin Laden has planned, anticipated and prayed for?

The USA is, of course, much further down this path than we are, as we can see from their [Police State](#) page.

The legitimate requirement for increased security, albeit generated by their own possibly illegitimate action, has in turn provided the spurious basis for the most intense and sophisticated attack on liberty and privacy seen since the Stalinist purges in the 1950s or the Maoist "Cultural Revolution" in the 60s.

To the world at large it is already obvious that the response to terrorism has been far more dangerous than the terrorism itself. The minimum cost in innocent human lives is at least 10 innocents killed by the Americans (and their few allies) for every innocent death caused by a terrorist attack. The maximum (and, for most people the most probable) cost is around 30 innocents for each death caused by a terrorist. Put that together with the unprecedented and democratically illegitimate assault on liberty and privacy and finally note how ineffective all these measures have been in either controlling Iraq or global terrorism and that's a pretty serious failure of policy by any analysis. As well as a wholly disproportionate response, many would argue that it also illustrates the low regard or even contempt that Americans have for the lives and welfare of citizens of other countries whom it has so freely attacked, bombed and invaded.

America - The Greatest Threat

It is thus no surprise that a [worldwide poll](#) in May/June 2005 found that the United States of America was rated the greatest threat to global security alongside North Korea and Syria. And given what they're prepared to do to their own citizens, it is hardly surprising that they're indifferent to the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent bystanders in other countries. But I'm not American. I don't live in America. Why should I give a damn? Or, more precisely, why should I give more of a damn about the American Police State than either the Russian or Chinese ones? After all, however much I may criticise the US, the ex communist Russians and the still communist Chinese are both still in a different league of totalitarianism compared to the Americans.

The answer to that is simple. There is no chance whatsoever of a European government trying to emulate either Russia or China. But there is a considerable danger that many of them will think its a good idea to emulate America.

The fear-mongering isn't as rabidly unintelligent here as it is in the States, largely because the European media isn't controlled - to the same extent - by [right wing billionaires](#) and still largely exhibits a considerable degree of journalistic integrity and genuine political diversity. This makes it impossible for the same kind of stupidity to be given serious air time over here. A European watches something like Bill O'Reilly or Ann Coulter (both Fox News) with stunned disbelief; not so much because they can't imagine some people holding such distorted world views - there are a few of those over here too - but because they can't understand:

- a) how a news channel can broadcast such drivel in the guise of objective news rather than rabid right wing opinion (and have slogans like "Fair and Balanced" or "We Report You Decide" permanently displayed - over the American Flag - like an icon). and
- b) how the domestic viewing public and pundits could allow it to happen without laughing it off the air (and satirising it to death) as it would be almost anywhere in Europe.

Nevertheless, Europe in general and the UK in particular are already caving in to many of the American's totalitarian demands for *one way* [access to data](#), biometric passports, *one way* [extradition](#) arrangements and so on. The demands for data retention, ID cards, border controls and so on have all been provoked by the [MIET](#) campaign against us and will affect us all in the long run. So all Europeans ought to be seriously concerned - for their own sakes - about what is going on in America - where they lead, we appear to be blindly following. But I would also argue - almost like I do when arguing for intervention to prevent female circumcision - that we owe a moral duty to help our American cousins; or at least those who want our help.

The American regime is as close to clinical insanity as any regime in recent history. As the sole surviving superpower, they wield vastly more influence on what goes on around the world than any other nation.

It is, at bottom, in all our self interests to join the battle against them. Hopefully, this is a battle we can fight with intelligent activism and the few democratic levers available to us rather than suicide bombers and all out warfare, but it is a real battle. If there are casualties, I would expect them to be on our side rather than theirs. Taking on a psychotic superpower is not a trivial enterprise, but someone's got to do it!

Unenlighted Americans, like their President for example, or the bulk of the Fox News audience, will choose (if they ever get to read it) to misinterpret my declaration of opposition to the American regime as meaning (in line with Bush's "You're either with us or with the terrorists" nonsense) that I and anyone who agrees with me are on the same side as their other enemies - MIFT. I know it is unnecessary to counter that argument for the benefit of those most likely to be reading this passage, but for the sake of the philosophically challenged, let me make it quite clear.

Many of us now perceive you - the American Regime currently led by Neocons and supported by the Religious Right - as the single greatest threat to global Security and Liberty on the planet. You have demonstrably killed vastly more people around the world than your MIFT enemies and you have imposed repressive and intrusive restrictions on your own population and potential visitors which are probably fully in line with what MIFT would like to achieve but way beyond their capabilities. You have already succeeded in persuading other governments around the world to begin following your perverse and dangerous lead. We hate MIFT and what they represent too. But the threat they pose to us is tiny compared to the threat you have become. That is why we now fear and oppose you even more than we fear and oppose them.

I'm probably even more isolated now than I was a few paragraphs ago! Certainly if you're still inclined to support this line of reasoning, and to consider activities which may contribute to our opposition to the biggest bully in the playground, then you now have my permission (as if you needed it!) to be afraid. Very very afraid!

But...

During the 2004 US Presidential election campaign, Bill Clinton was stumping around the country in support of John Kerry's bid. He said something which stuck with me:

"One of Clinton's laws of politics is this," he said. "If one candidate is trying to scare you and the other trying to get you to think; if one candidate is appealing to your fears and the other one is appealing to your hopes — you better go for the person who wants you to think and hope."

In line with Clinton's soundbite, my closing message for Part 2 is, that despite the plentiful reasons to be fearful, which we have explored in some detail, there are also tentative reasons for optimism. If we can use our collective intelligence to reach a consensus, there are practical steps we can take to avert this belated stampede into "1984". If we can indeed "think" rationally, then there is definitely "hope". Part 3 explores our options.

or it will when I've finished writing it...

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