



The Unforeseen: Education and the flowers of sacrifice

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EDITORIAL

The Unforeseen: Education and the flowers of sacrifice

‘For wisdom, listen not to me but to the Word, and know that all is one Whoever cannot seek the unforeseen sees nothing for the known way is an impasse.’¹—Heraclitus, *Fragments*

‘modernity is ... a way of shaping a sequence of moments in such a way that it accepts a high rate of contingency’—Jean-Francois Lyotard, ‘Time Today’ in *The Inhuman. Reflections on Time*, G. Bennington and R. Bowlby (trans.) (Stanford University Press) Stanford, 1991, p. 68.

The 2014 Peshawar school massacre by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, (‘the Taliban Movement of Pakistan’) killed 145 people, including 132 schoolchildren, as revenge attack for Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the Pakistani military’s military offensive in North Waziristan. Abu Shamil,² a Chechen fighter, led a group of Arabic-speakers from Afghanistan, Egypt, Morocco, and Herat in a retaliation for Malala Yousafzai’s Nobel Peace Prize. *Pakistan Today* carried the headline ‘After Beslan, Peshawar’³ and suggested the nature of the attack was similar to the Beslan school hostage crisis of 2004 in North Ossetia where 385 people were massacred and 783 were injured. Shamil Basayev, the Chechen warlord, used the hostages to demand recognition of the independence of Chechnya and Russian withdrawal.

These incidents causally unrelated in time, territory and but not in ideology bear the same imprint and led to the same horrendous and unforgivable mass slaughter of young innocents. Other commentaries have remarked on the similarities between the Beslan and Pakistan school massacres. Both were the result of attacks by Islamic terrorists and bear all the marks of the religious extremism that characterize it: false appeals to the Qur’an, among other texts and prophets, in order to justify the use of Jihad against non-Muslims and the struggle as a religious duty against those who do not believe in Allah.⁴ Yet, it might be argued that the basic principle of Shar’iah is to see the will of God done on earth, a will known though revealed scripture that is both a moral code and religious law, to bring about compassion, kindness, generosity, justice, fair play, tolerance, and care in general, as opposed to tyranny, cruelty, selfishness, exploitation, and murder. Shar’iah is based on mercy that can be understood in terms of the education of the individual, the establishment of justice and upholding of morality, and the prevention of hardship and oppression.

In 2011, Anders Behring Breivik shot and killed 69 people mostly teenagers at the Workers’ Youth League (AUF) camp on the island of Utøya, and bombed

government buildings in Oslo, killing eight people. His militant ideology described in the electronic manifesto *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*,⁵ a compilation of texts from existing websites, declared violent opposition to Islam, *Eurabia* and multiculturalism, attacked 'cultural Marxism' and argued for the deportation of Muslims from Europe. The text was emailed to 1003 addresses 90 min before his attack. In this tract, Andrew Breivik suggests 'the root of Europe's problems is the lack of cultural self-confidence (nationalism)' and goes on to claim 'You cannot defeat Islamization or halt/reverse the Islamic colonization of Western Europe without first removing the political doctrines manifested through multiculturalism/cultural Marxism'. Breivik's far-right militant anti-Islamic terrorism calls for the violent annihilation of 'Eurabia' and his motive for his atrocities was to draw attention to his manifesto. His deep-seated hatred of Islam echoes the intensity of ideological-inspired hatred against the West by fundamentalist Islamic militant terrorists. It raises the question concerning the ideological, sociological, and religious similarities between fundamentalist Islamic and Christian groups rather than their differences.

It might be argued that Breivik's Manifesto and acts of terrorism were motivated by a fundamentalist religious extremism against the fear of Islamization. Nick Gier, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Idaho, writes:

There are some chilling parallels between Christian and Islamic fundamentalists. Both divide the world between believers and unbelievers, and by deciding for themselves who is saved and who is damned, they think that they can play God with our lives. Both have also declared war on the secular culture of liberal democracy, the most peaceful and prosperous means of social organization ever devised by humankind. They both reject the separation of church and state and would set up governments based on their own views of divine laws.

Of greatest concern, however, is the fundamentalist view of the violent end of the world. A common scenario is a great war in the Middle East in which the armies of God destroy the armies of Satan. Radical Muslims of course identify Israel and the USA as the forces of evil, but Christian fundamentalists see Islam as the ultimate enemy. The horrifying implication is that the Jews, Muslims, and Christians of the Middle East will be the primary victims of this holocaust. <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/ngier/parallels.htm>⁶

These school massacres and other events like them including attacks on civil society especially women and children share the characteristic of their radical contingency: they are motivated by forms religious extremism that select schools and school children or youth as soft targets striking at the heart of an enemy society often with the explicit agenda of attacking the principles of western education with its universalist provision including equality for girls and women.⁷

According to the Global Terrorism Index since 2001, religious extremism has overtaken national separatism to become the main driver of terrorist attacks around the world. The report recorded 18,000 deaths in 2013, a rise of 60% on the previous year and most of these fatalities were attributable to just four groups: Islamic State (Isis)

in Iraq and Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and al-Qaida. There has been a fivefold increase in the number of deaths from terrorism since the 9/11 attacks.⁸

The ‘Pedagogy for the Unforeseen’ expresses a notion central to the philosophy of radical social change in an increasingly interconnected world characterized by interdependent systems that produce global networks ‘that we do not understand and cannot control well’, as Helbing (2013) argues:

These systems are vulnerable to failure at all scales, posing serious threats to society, even when external shocks are absent. As the complexity and interaction strengths in our networked world increase, man-made systems can become unstable, creating uncontrollable situations even when decision-makers are well-skilled, have all data and technology at their disposal, and do their best. (p. 51)

Where Helbing (2013) calls for a ‘Global Systems Science’ to create the required knowledge and paradigm shift in thinking, by comparison, and following Levinas’ (2004) *Les imprévus de l’histoire* (translated as ‘Contingencies of history’ or ‘Unexpected history’ or ‘Unforeseen history’), I emphasize a philosophy that calls on the unexpected, the unpredictable, and the unimaginable nature of history.⁹ These elements become central to a new interconnected notion of ‘space-time’ that has become the central metaphor for understanding globalization: where the ripple effect reverberates in the system. Political and historical contingency as a part of the study of the unexpected, the accidental and the unforeseen (Shapiro & Bedi, 2007) is also central to the pedagogy of the unforeseen, that teaches us the survivalist lesson against all forms of fundamentalism that history and politics could have and could be different. What is more, the unexpected and the unforeseen may be accounted for in a systematic way as we come to grasp the dynamics of globalization. We can come to terms with the enigma of the unexpected in a way that prepares students for a future global society based on a philosophy of radical contingency.

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Notes

1. Heraclitus is the central figure in the mystical philosophy of *logos* and discourse that runs through the Orphics, Pythagoreans, Empedocles, Plato, the Stoics, and Platonists. *Logos* (the Word) emphasizes opposites are necessary for life, but they are unified in a system of balanced exchanges. The world is not identified with any one substance but is a set of interrelated processes governed by a law of change that demonstrates an ever-changing universe. For *Fragments*, see <http://www.heraclitusfragments.com/> and <http://www.classicpersuasion.org/pw/heraclitus/herpate.htm>. See also Daniel Graham entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heraclitus/>.
2. Ashfaq Yusufzai in a *Daily Telegraph* story carried by the *NZ Herald* names the leader of the attack as Saddam Jan, see http://www.nzherald.co.nz/world/news/article.cfm?c_id=2&objectid=11379523.

3. See <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2014/12/16/comment/after-beslan-peshawar/>.
4. The term 'jihad' in its exact form appears only twice in the Qur'an at 60:1 and 9.24, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jihad>.
5. See http://fas.org/programs/tap/_docs/2083_-_A_European_Declaration_of_Independence.pdf. The compendium covers: 1. The rise of cultural Marxism/multiculturalism in western europe; 2. Why the Islamic colonization and Islamization of western europe began; 3. The current state of the Western European Resistance Movements (anti-Marxist/anti-Jihad movements); 4. Solutions for western europe and how we, the resistance, should move forward in the coming decades; 5. + Covering all, highly relevant topics including solutions and strategies for all of the eight different political fronts.
6. See also 'Fundamentalism versus Modernity: Contrast and Comparison between Christianity and Islam' by Charley Earp at https://www.academia.edu/2,054,836/Fundamentalism_verus_Modernity_Contrast_and_Comparison_between_Christianity_and_Islam.
7. See my 'Western Education is Sinful': Boko Haram and the Abduction of Chibok School-girls (Peters, 2014).
8. For the Global Terrorism Index see <http://economicsandpeace.org/research/iep-indices-data/global-terrorism-index>. For an analysis of *Education, Globalization, and the State in the Age of Terrorism* see Peters (2005).
9. *Unforeseen History* is the English translation of early essays by Levinas published by University of Illinois Press that foreshadows some themes of his mature thought. McDonald (2010) begins his account of 'Levinas, Heidegger, and Hitlerism's Ontological Racism' with the statement: 'Emmanuel Levinas developed his ethical philosophy in response to the ontological thought of Martin Heidegger in the wake of the latter's active complicity with Nazism as well as his ensuing silence, after the War, about the Holocaust' (p. 891).

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