

"There is No Right to Be Stupid": A Voegelinian Analysis of Islamist Terrorism with Reference to the "Elements of Reality"

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In the following essay I make three claims. First, in agreement with Eric Voegelin and Barry Cooper, I illustrate why a comprehensive study of politics requires that attention be paid to the symbols "God and man," "the Good", and "the soul" (Section I). I then briefly wonder if Voegelin and Cooper, despite offering cogent analyses of pernicious ideologies, ask too much of their readers? If so, what are the prospects for a competent political science and a healthy democratic populace (Section II)? In Section III, I suggest a different way of applying Voegelin's theory to an analysis of Islamist ideology, wherein I lay out ten "elements of reality" and five distilled "fundamental truths" derived from these elements. To the degree that someone distorts or neglects these elements of reality, he is a pneumopath. He may be very smart. But, alas, he is a "philosophical and religious ignoramus,"^{1 [1]} and hence stupid. And, as Voegelin reminds us in *Hitler and the Germans*, "There is no right to be stupid." To be sure, if we allow ourselves to submit to stupidity, the gangster animals will be sure to mockingly let us know:

^{1 [1]} Barry Cooper, *New Political Religions, or An Analysis of Modern Terrorism* (Columbia : University of Missouri Press , 2004), xii. Cooper describes Sayyid Qutb's and other terrorists' "dogmatic certainty" as resulting from their being "philosophical and religious ignoramuses."

"Yoohoo, silly ass!"² [2] In the Concluding Notes, I lay out what I consider to be the gist of Cooper's argument, and I briefly comment on his Appendix in *New Political Religions*.

I. "God and Man" -- "The Good" ↔ "The Soul": Relevant to a Science of Politics? To Civics?

Political science, if it is to deal comprehensively with politically relevant topics, cannot be reduced to the study of behavior, the exercise of institutional and organizational description, the study of national or international lawmaking, the influence of non-state actors, or geopolitical prognostication. Any work of political science, if it is truly to contribute to the fund of knowledge about men and women in community, must have an appreciation for the full range of human experience. Eric Voegelin teaches us that this human experience (also known as "reality" or "the community of being") comprises an open soul's or community's experience of the variously interpreted symbols, "God and man, world and society."³ [3] Voegelin's contribution to the study of politics includes the fact that no sense can be made of political action until one has interpreted the manner in which "God and man, world and society" appears in societal narratives.

² [2] Eric Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), pp. 106-107. After describing a story of a refined camel who gets suckered (i.e., torn apart) by an evil, mocking raven, Voegelin applies the lesson to the German polity's complicity in Hitler's rise to power: "You should remember this "yoohoo, silly ass" each time you think about the upright citizens who agreed with the Enabling Law for Hitler."

³ [3] Eric Voegelin, *Order and History, Volume One: Israel and Revelation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), p. 1.

Hence, it is clear that to do political science, we must eagerly take up an analysis of "God and man"; yet, when was the last time one read an intelligent word about "God and man" in our mainstream journals of political science?

One of Voegelin's contemporaries, Leo Strauss, makes what I consider to be as close to an airtight argument as I've seen for the consideration of another taboo subject in graduate-school classrooms and journals of political science--serious discussion of the Good. It is our fortune that his argument is compact:⁴ [4]

1. All political action aims at either preservation or change.
2. When desiring to preserve, we wish to prevent a change for the worse.
3. When desiring to change, we wish to bring about something better.
4. All political action is then guided by some thought of better and worse.
5. But thought of better or worse implies thought of the good.
6. The awareness of the good which guides our actions has the character of opinion; it is no longer questioned, but, on reflection, proves to be questionable.
7. The very fact that we can question it directs us towards such a thought of the good as is no longer questionable--towards a thought which is no longer opinion but knowledge.

⁴ [4] Leo Strauss, *What is Political Philosophy? And Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988 [1959]), p. 10.

8. All political action has then in itself a directedness towards knowledge of the good: of the good life, or of the good society.

9. For the good of society is the complete political good.

Just as political scientists are chary of submitting such fundamental political symbols as God and the ground of being to rigorous analysis, so are they reluctant to delve into analyses of the Good. Thus, today's political scientists routinely ignore what Voegelin and Strauss consider to be among the most fundamental units of the scientific study of politics.

Harvey Mansfield identifies a similar neglect on the part of his colleagues. At the conclusion of an article on Machiavelli, Mansfield wrote that crucial areas of study drop out of view as a result of the contemporary political scientist's neglect of the soul: "Perhaps, then, not the asserted existence of soul but loss of moderation in the soul has been the cause of our troubles. But we shall never learn whether this is so if we hold to a political science that routinely excludes soul from what it calls 'behavior' and flutters at the mention of virtue."⁵ [5] This institutional, professional neglect is shameful--and dangerous--since it is the souls of flesh-and-blood, concrete human persons who, by understanding "God and man, world and society" in peculiarly dangerous ways, advanced the programs of the European National Socialists, the Soviet Communists, the Rwandan Interahamwe, and, now, Al Qaeda's terrorists.

Voegelin, in his *Hitler and the Germans* (to take just one example), evaluates not principally the *behavior* of the fools (a technical term for Voegelin) in Germany who allowed (through acts

⁵ [5] Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., "Machiavelli's Political Science," *The American Political Science Review* 75 (1981), 305.

of commission and omission) National Socialism to obtain; Voegelin focuses principally on the *spiritual hygiene* of Hitler's foolish contemporaries and of those fools who, in their efforts to "master the past" of Germany's Hitler experience, fail to recognize that the pathology affecting Germans in the 1930s and 1940s was a problem afflicting human persons' souls, and that it was a problem not just of Hitler, but of Hitler and the Germans.

Very few persons today approach the phenomenon of Communism, National Socialism, or Islamist terrorism as a spiritual problem, which serves as an indicator of the philosophical and religious aptitude of the political scientists and philosophers who--were they to take their cues from Voegelin--would include an analysis of the human soul in their analyses of terror. It is fortunate that most political scientists and philosophers know that Islamist terrorism is wrong and that they spring forth to attack it. Yet it is undeniable that most attack it not as a consequence of convictions arising from their scientific, philosophical, or theological studies, but from a common sense buttressed (unknowingly) by the spiritual capital gained by centuries of philosophical and theological advances. The question arises, is this spiritual capital dissipating?

In a 1959 essay entitled, "Democracy and the New Europe," Voegelin makes plain the responsibilities inherent in democratic citizenship. He criticizes the German citizens during Hitler's rise: "We had a democratic constitution before. But it was paralyzed in its functioning by a majority bloc from the right and left; and it was swept away by a force that did not arouse the resistance of an organized counterforce." Voegelin next assigns an academic and spiritual task to every democratic citizen: "A democracy is no Cockaigne in which the peaceful citizen can pursue his affairs and enjoy the economic miracle; rather it is a state of daily, well-exercised, and habitual vigilance and discipline in the fundamental questions of political life. Democracy is

possible only where civic virtue exists. And the first of virtues, without which all others lack a proper basis for action, is sound knowledge of the principles of social coexistence among free men in a free society."⁶ [6]

There you have it. The democratic citizen must accost--as a matter of crucial importance--"the fundamental questions of political life." Moreover, he must practice the "first of virtues" requisite to democratic citizenship. The citizen must accumulate a "sound knowledge of the principles of social coexistence among free men in a free society." This is all very good; however, what constitutes this "sound knowledge of the principles of coexistence"? For nowhere in my formal education--whether secular or religious--have I heard someone identify or dilate on the "principles of coexistence." I shall reintroduce this question in Section III.

II. What if Voegelin and Cooper are right, and nobody listens?

Professor Cooper applies Voegelin's understanding of spiritual disease, or pneumopathology, to the problem of Islamist terrorism. His book, *New Political Religions*, submits the findings of the more conventional, pragmatic describers of terrorism and its banal aspects to a philosophical analysis that appreciates the elements of human existence, to include the symbols of "soul" and "God." It is my hope that Cooper's book gets as wide a reading as possible among members of the profession of arms, our security bureaucracies, politicians, and students of politics. I also believe that a careful study of the book by persons of all religious and philosophical commitments would yield enormous fruit, particularly if a table of agreed-upon points (such as the aforementioned "principles of coexistence") could be identified. My worry,

⁶ [6] Eric Voegelin, "Democracy and the New Europe," *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 11: Published Essays, 1953-1965*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), p. 59-60.

however, is that Cooper's book, which employs rigorous philosophical instruction, requires such a meditative, prolonged effort that it will not receive its proper due. Indeed, Cooper requires his reader, regardless of his philosophical or religious convictions, to commit to (1) an intellectual program of gathering a conceptual understanding of Western and Islamic history, religion, philosophy, and politics, and (2) a spiritual program of meditative struggle (a) to validate his and Voegelin's approach, and (b) to make sense of the conclusions resulting from Cooper's application. One would expect that Cooper's sobriety and acumen in approaching among the gravest of all contemporary problems would raise some interest. But has it raised enough?

Let us pause to ask some important questions. (1) Is Voegelin correct in stating that democratic citizenship requires accosting "the fundamental questions of political life"? Must the democratic citizen accumulate "sound knowledge of the principles of coexistence"? Does the accumulation of such knowledge require an historical and philosophical investigation of the symbols "God and man, world and society"? Does an adequate understanding of such scandals as Auschwitz necessitate an investigation of pneumopathology? And, finally, does an adequate understanding of Islamist terrorism--a topic which is certainly in fashion among mainstream politics students--require familiarity with Cooper's analysis of pneumopathology? Yes or no?

I cannot help but answer each of the foregoing questions in the affirmative. The range of political topics Voegelin and Cooper cover, their employment of a broad range of philosophical and theological tools, and--quite frankly--the elegance of their non-dogmatic exposition has been too convincing to me for too long to be ignored. Yet too many serious and smart people have no awareness of their approach and findings. Will this neglect have a degrading effect on the depth of analyses of political pathologies or civics education? How soon?

III. Let's identify the "elements of reality" (or "first reality") and "the principles of coexistence"

Keeping the foregoing considerations in mind, I should now like to outline a program of instruction that I believe is useful in several different contexts. The program is important for several reasons. Everyone student of Voegelin believes that every human person has a duty to seek the truth, and that this search requires academic and spiritual rigor. If citizens are not formed by such an investigation--or at least capable of drawing (albeit unconsciously) on the spiritual capital formed by previous generations' investigations--, then the Stalins, Hitlers, McVeighs, and Bin Ladins take over. Yet, it is also true that such an investigation smacks of religion, and religion--so good secularists claim--has no place in a classroom. Of course, Voegelin is not proffering a religion when he discusses "God", but it takes a competent teacher and a spiritually attuned student to realize this.

By neglecting the spiritual dimension of the human person and its relationship to politics, we get thousands of new high-school and university graduates every year who have never asked about their purpose for doing one thing or another (for every rational action must be linked eventually to some ultimate purpose), yet they commit hundreds of actions a day (perhaps without a true application of reason); these graduates never question what it means to love (for to love, don't they know, means to desire the highest good for the beloved), yet they seem most preoccupied with something resembling love; nor do they ask whether they are their brother's keeper, or whether indeed citizenship is exhausted by the principle of, "I can do what I want so long as I don't harm (physically?) another." And such persons have never examined their metaphysical commitments--indeed, too many believe that only religious freaks hold such

commitments, and that no good atheist, or liberal-democrat, or educated person, would believe in such things. Yet, these same persons have--if pressed--a difficult time accounting rationally for the commitments they do hold fast to; e.g., human equality, human dignity, human rights, and freedom of conscience and autonomy, and love. The notion that such symbols arise through the same process of metaxic existence at concrete moments in time will never cross their minds. Hence, Voegelin's important lesson that the religious symbol of [e.g.] Burning Bush and the putatively secular symbol of [e.g.] human rights share revelatory status will go unexamined by our sophisticated, metaphysics-denying graduates.

Military soldiers and officers need such a program, which provides the greater context for the exercise of the military virtues. After all, one can be a good soldier in Hitler's regime, an Islamist terrorist cell, or in the United States Army.

Young students need such a program, which provides the context necessary for exercising civic virtue; for one can be a good, content liberal democrat in 1930's Germany, 1950's Mississippi, or 2005's Spain.

Persons interested in inter-religious or intra-religious dialogue need such a program, for education in the "fundamental principles of coexistence" provides--if the principles are true--the necessary basis for peace.

For the remainder of this presentation, I should like to lay out the program I've prefigured above. On p. 40 of *New Political Religions*, Professor Cooper uses some interesting terms. He states, "*The reality* that terrorists carefully avoid facing is that killing the innocent is inherently illegitimate." What is this "reality", I ask? Moreover, what about the other similarly provocative

terms Cooper uses, e.g., "this truth", "this ethical reality", "commonsense reality", and "the common reality of worldly existence"? What about the term he quotes from Voegelin on p. 41, wherein he discusses the error of omitting "*an element of reality*" in order to create the fantasy of a new world" [emphasis mine]? And, finally, on p. 46, what is the "first reality" that conflicts with an erroneous "second reality"? These terms, whose employment jibes fully with Voegelin's instruction, are not the stuff of workaday civics education or political science, yet there is good reason to believe that recognizing these "elements of reality" constitutes the "first virtue" of democracy and their substance composes the "sound knowledge of the principles of coexistence." I now attempt to lay out what I think constitutes the elements of first reality, obviously basing my attempt on my study of Voegelin's work.

I believe that each of these elements expresses an undeniable part of the human condition. When they are fully assembled, one's level of spiritual hygiene is indicated by the degree to which he or she acts in accordance with the reality described. The pneumopaths, such as those whom Cooper identifies, will be identifiable as such to the degree that the pneumopath denies or distorts one of the elements below.

1. The range of human experience. The human person (i.e., each and every human person) has the following natures: inorganic, vegetative, animal, passionate, instrumentally rational, and spiritual. He also exists in Society and History. No dimension of existence is unimportant or deniable. The manner in which the human person orders her passionate, rational, and spiritual natures constitutes the specific ordering of her soul. There is no dogmatic description of the soul available, but for the purpose of this presentation, Plato's tripartite soul (consisting of rational, desirous, and spirited components) fits the bill. A person's soul points to the human person's

experience of interiority (wherein such experiences as love, joy, anger, hope, despair, faith, and alienation occur). A human person, because he has a soul, is most fully human when he seeks to know the truth of his own being, his world, and the fundamental mysteries of existence.⁷ [7]

2. Anthropological Principle^a⁸ [8] Society is man writ large, also known as Voegelin's Anthropological Principle: "As a general principle it means that in its order every society reflects the type of men of whom it is composed."⁹ [9] Any community, whether religious, cultural, political, etc., gets its principal attributes from its citizens; more specifically, from its citizens' souls. If an Army unit is disciplined, it is not principally on account of the barracks architecture, or its standard operating procedures, or its unit designation. If an Army unit is disciplined, it is because its soldiers' souls are disciplined. If a state is consumerist, it is because the state's influential human souls are consumerist.

3. Representation. Every community, comprising a population of soul-possessing human persons, must have representatives. Every community needs representation in order for the community to move through history. Such a representative, regardless of composition and selection, must fulfill two purposes if it is to succeed. It must fulfill the burdens of existential representation, and thereby ensure that the basic necessities of a preponderance of its subjects are met (food, clothing, shelter, security, etc.). It must also fulfill the burdens of transcendent

⁷ [7] Please note that each element of reality (1 through 10) corresponds to a certain area on the accompanying Powerpoint illustration.

⁸ [8] Eric Voegelin, "Reason: The Classic Experience," *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Volume 12: Published Essays, 1966-1985*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), pp. 265-291, and especially 289-290.

⁹ [9] Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 61-62.

representation insofar as the words and actions emanating from the representative jibe to an adequate degree with what a preponderance of the community believes is the unseen measure. Put otherwise, the subjects will evaluate the representatives not solely in accordance with the criteria proffered by the representatives themselves, but with some intangible notions of truth and justice.

4. Narratives/Societal Truths. Every community and its representation must be unified by an assortment of narratives. No community and its representation can move through history without such a narrative. These narratives, or societal truths, constitute the "community substance" (Voegelin's term) without which a community cannot survive. E.g., a community may have a very fine constitution, but without a shared narrative sustained by the souls of the community, the community will fail. These narratives, composed of symbols that make the subjects' hearts go pit-a-pat, provide the intangible criteria of truth and justice I referred to earlier. Put otherwise, narratives comprise to a large degree provisional answers to the big, timeless questions. Such answers, which constitute the "right opinion of the city," to use Plato's Socrates' words, are meant to be true, however provisional they might be at any point in time. For instance, at the founding of the United States, the citizens believed that all men were indeed "created equal." Yet this expression, which originally meant that all peoples are equal to other peoples in their ability to declare independence, changed its meaning progressively with Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the 19th Amendment protecting the right of women to vote in 1920, the civil-rights legislation of the 1964 and 1965, and the ethos of most every boy and girl in the United States in 2005. In 1776, the founding generation believed Jefferson's phrase to be true; however, today we believe it to be true for vastly different reasons than did the founders. (Cf. *NPR*, p. 7)

5. Big Questions. Part of the human condition is the inexhaustible existence of Big Questions, most of which have remained unanswered since the beginning of humankind. What are our origins? What is our purpose? What is the right way to live? What is the meaning of human existence in society? What is the correct unseen measure? The provisional albeit sacred answers different communities of various kinds give to these questions constitute the narratives of societal truth. In each case, the narratives presuppose some truths about the human person and the human condition (i.e., an understanding of "God and man, world and society").

6. Open Souls. Societal truths comprise symbols that, as a matter of fact, could not have been first discovered or developed by the community at large. Put otherwise, societal truth's symbols originated first in the heads of concrete, flesh-and-blood persons at quite specific moments in time. Although some of these open souls' (again, Voegelin's term, borrowed from Henri Bergson) symbols of order become regnant, it is also true that open souls never cease to come on the scene by discovering or innovating new symbols that oftentimes challenge societal truths. That is, open souls (e.g., mystics, religious thinkers, philosophers, theorists, activists) posit new, theoretical truths that identify perceived errors or posit an improvement in a community's societal truth.

7. Metaxy and Transcendence (7a). The interplay between a human person's spiritual dimension (or the part of one's soul that reasons about the Big Questions) and the fundamental mystery (or the ground of being, or *Divien Nous*) amidst which he lives is fundamental. One might also use the symbols Absolute, Transcendence, Mystery, Beyond, Infinite, or God to specify this fundamental mystery. Voegelin explains the relationship between the human person, Big Questions, and the fundamental mystery:

What does it mean to exist as constituted by reason and spirit? The experiences of reason and spirit agree on the point that man experiences himself as a being who does not exist from himself. He exists in an already given world. This world itself exists by reason of a mystery, and the name for the mystery, for the cause of this being of the world, of which man is a component, is referred to as "God."¹⁰ [10]

Here "God" is a symbol for the mysterious Beyond in which such answers to the Big Questions as "Why is there something and why not nothing?" and "Why is something as it is and not different?" reside. With respect to moral-political questions, one might say it is the complete, hypothetical mathematical set of all moral truths that humankind has recognized and that humankind will one day come to recognize. The tension between the unknown Beyond and our immanent human existence may be responsible for the decision to question an unjust law, criticize one's society, or ask, "How should I live?" *In short, the tension between our reason and a Beyond may be the source of our ethics.* Put otherwise, any person who looks at his immediate environment and concludes that something is simply not right is prompted by some thing or for some (frequently inchoate) reason. I.e., where previously one was satisfied with the political or social goings on around him, he is now disgusted with them. Nothing else has changed except for the sudden realization that his social and political surroundings disgust him. In a sense, this person has, after a not completely understandable prompting, decided to turn away from his surroundings and attempted to find some measure by which to rationally justify his critique of society.¹¹ [11] It is this prompting and desire to reach out for a new table of values or ethics--

¹⁰ [10] Eric Voegelin, *Hitler and the Germans*, p. 86.

¹¹ [11] Cf. Plato's *Republic*, 368b, in which Socrates explains the tension he feels to defend justice: "And the more I trust you, the more I'm at a loss as to what I should do. On the one hand, I can't help out. For in my opinion I'm not capable of it; my proof is that when I thought I showed in what I said to

although these values or ethics are not yet known--that is signified or symbolized by the terms "In-Between" or "metaxy"; i.e., in between the human person's immanent, ultimately unsatisfactory existence and the mystery that contains the answers he seeks. Most importantly, it is the analysis of the fruit of metaxic experience that composes the substance of History. History is that hypothetical treasure-chest of humanity that includes the symbols of metaxic advancements, and these symbols--regardless of their philosophical or theological origins--share the attribute of being revelatory.

This brings us to Voegelin's **Anthropological Principle_b (7b)**. Simply by questioning "truths" (i.e., by wondering whether a societal truth must be evaluated by some criterion other than "might makes right"), we set ourselves up as representatives of truth, i.e., as theorists. Hence, Anthropological Principle_b: "the discovery of a true order of the human psyche and the desire to express the true order in the social environment of the discoverer."¹² [12]

Now the symbols "God" and "metaxy", to be sure, have a religious flavor, but the symbol need not be religious in the sense of an embrace of, say, one of the world religions. Plato, for instance, was not an adherent of a world religion, yet he posited an analogue of the Divine Nous in his symbol of the Good. Furthermore, one can be an atheist and still feel compelled to defend human dignity. So long as a person refuses to succumb to the radical question of, "Why be ethical at all?" by answering, "I don't need to be ethical," or "There are no real ethics," the person

Thrasymachus that justice is better than injustice, you didn't accept it from me. On the other hand, I can't not help out. For I'm afraid it might be impious to be here when justice is being spoken badly of and give up and not bring help while I am still breathing and able to make a sound. So the best thing is to succour her as I am able."

¹² [12] Voegelin, *NSP*, p. 62.

will experience that there is some tension, or perhaps some pull, that causes him to go beyond nihilism and ask questions about justice and right action. The divine ground of being may operate on atheists as well.

8. Philia. Now, when a group of individuals who experience a shared tension toward the truth in the form of a desire to create a better environment assemble together in community, we see a manifestation of the open soul's or theorist's metaxic tension extending from the single individual toward the societal level. The open soul, having experienced the potential of a new, preferable state of affairs, communicates his experience to similarly interested open souls with the use of language symbols. Each open soul is united in his common love of the truth. The communion of open souls has its binding force in the purest form of *philia*, or love of the divine ground:

Self-love in the sense not of a satisfaction of passions but of having due respect for the cultivation of the noetic self--that is, the divineness, the divine part, in man. Beyond this, since every man participates in love of the transcendent Being and is aware of such a ground--Ground, Reason, *Nous*--out of which he exists, every man can, by virtue of this noetic self, have love for other men. In theory, this is the secondary phenomenon--in theory, not in practice. In practice we love others right away without having a theory for it. But in theory that is secondary because there is no particular reason--*reason*, I say now--to love other men unless they also participate in the same divine *Nous* and have such a noetic self.¹³ [13]

13 [13] Eric Voegelin, *CW11*, pp. 230-231.

Each open soul desires the highest good for himself, and he strives to discern this good. He recognizes in every other human person a shared capacity to strive for the good, and he becomes united to a distinct group of persons who become conscious of this love and capacity, and who deliberately unite themselves in *philia* with others seeking the highest good. Moreover, it should be emphasized, every human person has the potential of joining with any other person in this love. All that is required is a deliberate attempt to strive for the truth and communicate one's results to others through symbols.

9. Homonoia. If the group in *philia* achieves an advance in truth through metaxic experience and philosophical or theological deliberation, the truth may become socially effective in the society. A society whose societal truth and conduct approximate the theoretical truth of the open souls in *philia* is said to exist in *homonoia*, or a state of like-mindedness with respect to some right approximation of the unseen measure. If we apply an example from Plato's *Republic*, a society is in *homonoia* if its subjects' souls are disposed to attune themselves to right reason (as opposed to [e.g.] honors, money, or pleasures).

10. The clash of societal truths. Now these elements and processes (human persons' souls, community, representation, narratives or societal truths, Big Questions, open souls, theoretical truths, *philia*, and *homonoia*) occur in every political community. Hence, the world witnesses an inevitable clash of societal truths. In light of everything that's gone before, what is the proper way to respond to this clash of truths?

I should now like to distill five provisional "fundamental truths" (or "principles of coexistence") derived from the foregoing exposition. My claim, you will recall, is that the level of one's spiritual hygiene is indicated by the manner in which he thinks and acts relative to the

reality described. The pneumopath, I argue, is such because he distorts or denies one of the elements of reality, from which are derived the following provisional "fundamental truths" or "principles of coexistence." In order to give this claim added plausibility, I have juxtaposed examples of Islamist hate ideology taken from prominent mosques in major urban centers within the United States . Hence, Thrasy-machus is here in America , and he is battling for the souls of our youth. My proposed *fundamental truths* include points "a" through "e" below:

(a) That each and every single human person is most fully human when he desires to know; that each and every human person lives amidst the same mystery; that there is a solidarity or brotherhood of all persons in light of this shared human condition; and that advances in pulling back some of the mystery through metaxic experience are valid not just for one person or one group, but for all of humankind.

Violation #1: "Our doctrine states that if you accept any religion other than Islam, like Judaism or Christianity, which are not acceptable, you become an unbeliever. If you do not repent, you are an apostate and you should be killed because you have denied the Koran."14 [14]


Violation #2: "The effect of this sinful call [interfaith dialogue] is that it erases the differences between Islam and disbelief, between truth and falsehood, good and bad, and it

14 [14] Freedom House, "Saudi Publications On Hate Ideology Invade American Mosques," 2005, p. 38. This comes from an "Urdu-language publication (Document No. 55), published by the Saudi Ministry of Religious Affairs and gathered from the King Fahd Mosque," Los Angeles , CA . It quotes Sheik Bin Uthaimin.

breaks the wall of resentment between Muslims and nonbelievers, so that there is no loyalty and enmity, no more *jihad* and fighting to raise Allah's word on earth..."¹⁵ [15]


Violation #3: "[Believers] should realize that their self-value derives only from Islam, without which they are like animals or worse. They must know, however, that true honor can never be achieved unless they continue actively to involve themselves in the Islamic Movement. Those who remain in isolation will be in the Hellfire. Those who join in the Islamic Movement are joining themselves with honorable people."¹⁶ [16]

(b) That each and every single human person, and hence those with whom he might unite (that is, potentially any other human person), has the potential to think of something absolutely new, in the spirit of Hannah Arendt's well-known appreciation of natality:

The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, natural' ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted. It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the new beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope, those two essential characteristics of human existence which Greek antiquity ignored altogether, discounting the keeping of faith as a very uncommon and not too important virtue and counting hope among the evils of illusion in Pandora's box. It is this faith in and hope for the world that found perhaps its

¹⁵ [15] Ibid., 57. Freedom House quotes a "Ruling" the Saudi government's Permanent Committee for Scientific Research and the Issuing of *Fatwas*, which appear in various American mosques.

¹⁶ [16] Ibid., 59. Freedom House quotes from a tract in the Al-Farouq Mosque (Houston) wherein Sayyid Qutb's passage appears.

most glorious and most succinct expression the few words with which the Gospels announced their glad tidings': "A child has been born unto us."17 [17]

Violation #1: "If a person said: I believe in Allah alone and confirm the truth of everything from Muhammed, except in his forbidding fornication, he becomes a disbeliever. For that, it would be lawful for Muslims to spill his blood and to take his money."

Violation #2: "Along the same lines, if a person said: I believe in Allah alone, and believe in all the prophets, and Mohammed (pbuh) as their leader, except in forbidding homosexuality; he becomes a disbeliever, his blood would be ok to spill, and his money ok to take by the Muslims, if you can that he is such a person."18 [18]

(c) That it will be a normal part of the human condition that the fruits of natality, as typified by the diverse expressions of humankind's open souls throughout history, will be differ from each other, and it will be this variation (with respect to each peoples' understanding of "God and man, world and society," that gives each culture its shape. John Paul II recognizes this fact:

Man is understood in a more complete way when he is situated within the sphere of culture through his language, history, and the position he takes toward the fundamental events of life, such as birth, love, work, and death. At the heart of every culture lies the

17 [17] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 247.

18 [18] Freedom House, p. 35. The document quotes the late Bin Baz, a religious leader of the Al-Faroug Mosque in Brooklyn , New York .

attitude man takes to the greatest mystery: the mystery of God. Different cultures are basically different ways of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence.

When this question is eliminated, the culture and moral life of nations are corrupted.¹⁹

[19]

Violation: "I am the first to reject it [freedom] and take it as an enemy, and seek closeness to Allah through denying it and its propagators...we disbelieve in you and enmity and hate is between us, until you believe in Allah alone."20 [20]

(d) It is a fundamental part of the human condition that we exist amidst insurmountable mysteries. Hence, no human person is capable of a final and complete certitude of the answers to the Big Questions to the extent that he may claim legitimacy in slaughtering others while executing God's or History's or Nature's will.

Violation: "[Muslims should work] to form a society that is committed to the Islamic way of thinking and Islamic way of life, which means to form a government that implements principles of justice embodied in the *shari'a*...Until the nations of the world have functionally Islamic governments, every individual who is careless or lazy in working for Islam is sinful."21 [21]

19 [19] John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1991), section 24.

20 [20] Freedom House, p. 46. Freedom House quotes from a publication by the formerly Saudi government-sponsored Institute of Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America, which was found in a mosque in Washington, D. C.

21 [21] Ibid., 58. Freedom House quotes from a document published by Saudi Arabia's International Islamic Publishing House. The document was found in the Al-Farouq Mosque in Houston, Texas.

(e) It is an inevitable fact of human existence that societal truths will clash with theoretical truths, as well as that societal truths will clash with each other. This is a natural state of affairs, and the differentiations toward a right approximation of the unseen measure empirically take centuries. These differentiations simply cannot be accelerated (particularly by force of arms). Nonetheless, clashes need not be violent, particularly if the elements of reality are readily understood.

Violation: "Our task in general is to stand against the flood of modernist civilization overflowing from the swamp of materialistic and sinful desires. This flood has swept the Muslim nation away from the Prophet's leadership and Koranic guidance and deprived the world of its guiding light. Western secularism moved into a Muslim world already estranged from its Koranic roots, and delayed its advancement for centuries, and will continue to do so until we drive it from our lands. Moreover, we will not stop at this point, but will pursue this evil force to its own lands, invade its Western heartland, and struggle to overcome it until all the world shouts by the name of the Prophet and the teachings of Islam spread throughout the world. Only then will Muslims achieve their fundamental goal, and there will be no more 'persecution' and all religion will be exclusively for Allah..."²² [22]

Again, my claim is that the narratives of Islamist terrorism violate all five ("a" through "e" above) of these fundamental truths. And violations of these truths amounts to a negation or distortion of the ten elements of reality I identified above. My emphasis in applying Voegelin's

²² [22] Ibid., 59. Freedom House quotes the writing of Hasan al-Banna, which appeared in a Saudi tract, again in Houston .

analysis to Islamist terrorism differs from Professor Cooper's insofar as I emphasize an explicit identification of the elements of reality alluded to throughout Voegelin's work and in Cooper's book. In any case, I believe that my approach is consistent with Professor Cooper's approach, which puts to good use the findings of much of the more conventional approaches to terrorism. Indeed, his philosophical analysis challenges and brings sense to the cottage industry of terrorism studies.

Concluding Note

Below I outline in seven steps what I consider to be Cooper's argument relative to Voegelin's theory. I have chosen not to comment on *NPR's* Appendix, but it certainly raises issues. Voegelin's analysis of Christianity quite clearly brings out those tendencies with the religion that make it susceptible to ideological abuse. There should be no fear among Christians in specifying and studying these dangers, and there should be no reluctance in applying rigorous scholarly approaches to every aspect of Christianity's pragmatic history. There is some question, then, as to whether this openness (or desire to know) is regnant among the Muslim faithful toward its own pragmatic history and scriptures. Of course, such openness on the part of Christians has not been easily granted, and it is still strongly resisted in many quarters.

My understanding of Professor Cooper's Argument

(i) the Islamists are "philosophical and religious ignoramuses"^{23 [23]} insofar as they are ignorant of the philosophical and theological contributions Western civilization has made to

^{23 [23]} Cooper, xii.

humankind;²⁴ [24] moreover, with regard to Islam, so-called Islamist theorists "were able to purge the religious discourse of Islam of its serious remaining spiritual content, its mysticism, and any experiential concern for a world-transcendent God. Islam thus changed into a uniform, single, and dogmatic social, political, economic, and cultural blueprint, revealed by God to an electric engineer who sets about to impose his vision of the world." Put otherwise, Islamists are "enshrining ignorance."²⁵ [25]

(ii) Islamists reject the West's secularity and the state-system in which "Courts and jurists, not gods or God, are the sources."²⁶ [26] The consequence is that the West is "spiritually empty," and hence composed of nothing more than persons who are "just moving like dead bodies."²⁷ [27] Moreover, among Islamists' goals is the "destabilizing and delegitimizing [of] the entire state structure by means of which modern politics is conventionally conducted."²⁸ [28]

(iii) Terrorists claim for themselves and exceptionality derived from a belief that they are a part of cosmic struggle between good and evil. By implication, "a terrorist killer also makes the accusation that his audience and his victims alike are unexceptional for the simple reason that their refusal to act is evidence they lack a moral personality as great as his. Moreover, the

²⁴ [24] Ibid., 23, 173.

²⁵ [25] Ibid., 130.

²⁶ [26] Ibid., 9.

²⁷ [27] Ibid., 22. Cooper quotes Mahmud Abouhalima, an accomplice in the World Trade Center attack of 1993, about the "dead bodies" comment.

²⁸ [28] Ibid., 28.

terrorist has placed his audience in the position of appearing to have asked the killer to do murder on their behalf."²⁹ [29]

(iv) The exceptionalism of the Islamists and the pathology of the older-style of terrorists have in common the willingness to kill innocents as a spectacular performance. Thus, all terrorists, old or new, exercise "a pneumopathological consciousness [that] projects a second reality and acts murderously within first reality by killing a lot of otherwise innocent people."³⁰ [30] The new terrorist is marked by same pneumopathological consciousness, but his performance "is conducted on an imaginative ♦cosmic' stage, a stage with an imaginary world-transcendent dimension, as well as upon the mundane stage of the commonsense world, the real world of first reality."³¹ [31] Since the terrorist is concerned solely with acting in accordance with the God of his second reality, "the only audience that counts is divine."³² [32] So much for other human persons and other cultures.

(v) The new terrorists, on account of their deformed understanding of the elements of reality, proceed as if in a dreamworld, a second reality. Consequently, "when things go wrong, as invariably they do in reality, that misfortune can be attributed to an imaginary spiritual adversary. In commonsense terms, the enemy becomes satanic." If one is engaged in a cosmic,

²⁹ [29] Ibid., 49.

³⁰ [30] Ibid., 50.

³¹ [31] Ibid., 56.

³² [32] Ibid., 59.

spiritual struggle and encounters the resistance of satanic forces (i.e., members who hew stubbornly to first reality), what else is to do but "extinguish" the enemy?³³ [33]

(vi) Now if one asks, what is the endstate of the new terrorist's violence against innocent civilians, he runs through the following logic: I am engaged in a cosmic struggle as a humble but certain servant of God.³⁴ [34] Those who resist me are resisting God. Hence, I may kill them. Yet, what is to come at the end of all the killing? Human persons will continue to desire to know. They will accost Big Questions in the metaxy. Some will challenge the current societal truth (of the regnant Islamists, who have now rid the world of all resistance) with a newly discerned and shared theoretical truth. Since cultures are an inherent part of the human condition, diverse theoretical and societal truths will emerge. It appears that the new terrorists are in for an endless struggle. The elements of reality simply cannot be made to change. Much less can the elements of reality be made to disappear forever. Yet this is precisely what those such as bin Ladin seek: the "pneumopathological expectation of an ecumenic transfiguration of human life."³⁵ [35] Put otherwise (in the words of bin Ladin's World Islamic Front), "The struggle will continue against regimes in Muslim countries until al-Khilafah (the Islamic State) is re-established and the law of God dominates the world."³⁶ [36]

(vii) Thus, Cooper's employment of Arendt's distinction between the mode of fabrication and the mode of the political is helpful in illuminating the pneumopathology of the terrorists.

³³ [33] Ibid., 57.

³⁴ [34] Ibid., 125.

³⁵ [35] Ibid., 147.

³⁶ [36] Ibid., 153.

Political activity comprises "that peculiar combination of words and deeds where words disclose the meaning of deeds rather than obscure them, and where deeds are not simply violent, meaningless, and futile but reveal the character about whom a meaningful story can properly be told."³⁷ [37] The new terrorism, however, approaches politics as a means of crafting flesh-and-blood persons to achieve a certain product; i.e., "the application of violence to human material in order to create a desired product."³⁸ [38] But since human persons possess the potential of natality, there can never be a final product. Hence, "every so-called product is temporary and, in the context of violent making, nothing more than the pretext for further violence."³⁹ [39]

³⁷ [37] Ibid., 39.

³⁸ [38] Ibid.

³⁹ [39] Ibid. Note that I have left out the "intellectual" genealogy of Islamist terrorism Cooper constructs. The genealogy is important, for it draws careful distinctions between jihadism, Salafism, apocalypticism, traditional terrorism, and new terrorism. He employs these terms with unusual precision, which is necessary given his mode of analysis.