

**Monday 10th September - Wednesday 12th September 2007
Mansfield College, Oxford**

Conference Programme, Abstracts and Papers

Concurrent Session 5b: Fear Organized, Laid Out, Transmuted
Chair: Stephen Hessel

Terrified and Terrifying: An Examination of the Defensive
Organization of Fundamentalism

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The targets of terrorism are not the mortal casualties of the act but the audience that bears witness to it. With the advent of globalisation and the sophistication of multimedia communications networks the attacks on the twin towers in New York on 9/11 were almost instantaneously witnessed around the globe. Around 3,000 people were killed but the impact reached a far greater population as it infiltrated into our lounge rooms and across our breakfast tables. Al Qaeda's message was to all those who allegedly participate in or collude with Western democratic hegemony – be afraid, be very afraid. The psychological processes that facilitate both the perpetration and response to terror are multidimensional and complex. A common response to 9/11 was to label Mohammed Atta and his fellow hijackers as monsters that were mad or evil and thus dehumanise them. The inability to deal with the terror unleashed was displaced so that it was the terrorists that became unfathomable – the anxiety exposed that required recognition that humans could be capable of such devastation and cruelty was split off and projected in to an enemy that could not be identified with as human. Our reaction to the terror created saw us employ the same defense mechanisms that allowed the acting out of the paranoid world that religious fundamentalism is itself accused of. It is only in this light of recognition and identification that we can begin to understand the processes at work. In a world where the only certainty is death, fundamentalism and its concomitant lack of reflexivity provides a structure of rigid and uncompromising certainty. This paper intends to explore the defensive organisation of religious fundamentalism by

using psychoanalytic theory, with particular reference to its understanding of paranoia and object relations. The paper will utilise material from the World Wide Web to illustrate both the lure of fundamentalism and its function for both the individual and collective identities of those that are engulfed by it.

Hope or Horror: Football as Metaphor of Contemporary France

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A vignette of Zinedine Zidane, the French captain of Algerian descent, sent off during the World Cup in 2006 after reacting against a racial slur captures the ambivalence surrounding football. In accordance with the Carneidian tradition, this paper will examine how this universal game may on the one hand ignite, fear, and conversely signify hope.

Football is commonly portrayed as nationalistic. It is argued that the unruly passions evoked by football encourage crowd violence, hooliganism and solidifies the antagonism between ethnic, racial, and national identities. Yet, the converse argument could be applied. One only needs to reflect upon the dominance of ethnically diverse players in the European league and the global attention attained to see the possibilities of hope. Upon winning the World Cup in 1998 it was argued that there was a shift in the French national psyche as flags were waved with the emblem - Black, Blanc Beur. The French victory was a metaphor of the new multiethnic France as exemplified by President Chirac's statement - "football team equals nation". The international attention and organisation of modern soccer is intrinsic to the process of globalisation and may facilitate social cohesion by enabling collective interaction through a universal language.

This tension will be explicated from a pragmatic perspective. As a philosophy of action, the pragmatic method seeks solutions to "real" human concerns and subsequently holds much relevance today.

Particular attention will be made to William James' "Sentiment of Rationality", which contends that emotion precedes action and shapes which future is realised. James' notion of the Alpine Climber highlights that the same situation approached with hope will invariably create a different future to one with fear and anger.

Consequently, fear, horror and terror may be supplanted by hope if the perspective of the actor is one of confidence and commonality.

Transmuting Fear, Horror and Terror: Post-Torture Testimonies in the Tibetan Diaspora

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Within the Tibetan diaspora, from the late 1950s to the present, English language auto/biographical texts and other forms of life-narrative have flourished. From the standpoint of current critical approaches to testimony, and considered in terms of political agency and action, it can be seen that the impulse that has driven the development of life-narrative in the Tibetan diaspora is not autobiographical, concerned with “self life writing” but *testimonial*: the impulse *to tell*, to speak, in an evidentiary and contestatory manner, to that which is silenced, unknown, hidden or erased in the situation of modern Tibet. A particularly important form of Tibetan testimony is the “post-torture” testimony of former political prisoners.

This paper will examine the representation of fear, horror, and terror in a range of testimonial narratives produced by formerly tortured ex-political prisoners in the Tibetan refugee community. These testimonies not only confront and narrate the fear, horror, and terror of state oppression and state-sanctioned torture, but they do so by re-claiming the Tibetan “voice” and Tibetan cultural “world” this torture and oppression seeks to silence and erase.

Within Tibetan Buddhist practice, certain meditation techniques involve the practitioner “inhaling” visualised afflictions – powerful negative emotions – such as fear, or anger, transmuting them, and “exhaling” visualisations of their antidotes – such as calmness and compassion. I argue that Tibetan post-torture testimonies operate in a similar way, transmuting the fear, horror and terror of the experience of violence and torture, through re-presenting these experiences in testimonial narrative accounts that are produced, and circulated transnationally, as a form of non-violent political action in the diaspora. In this way, state violence is transmuted into non-violence, victimisation is transmuted into the re-claiming of voice and power, and fear, horror and terror – intended to immobilise – are transmuted into non-violent, yet clear and strong, political action.