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Ego-Terrorism: The Benefit of an Anarcho-Psychological Perspective of Terrorism

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The threat of terrorism is not new, but the question of what motivates terrorists remains unresolved. In *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace* (1974), John Carroll delineated an “anarcho-psychological tradition” of critique that emerged from the ideas of Max Stirner, Friedrich Nietzsche and Fyodor Dostoevsky. This strain of metaphysical critique enables an examination of terrorism that portrays it as an attempt to overcome doubts about the meaning and purpose of life by imposing structure on the flux of modernity. For the terrorist persona, fundamental questions about the possibility of meaningful action and the value of a single life can find their resolution in symbolic acts of violence. In *Terror: A Meditation on the Meaning of September 11* (2002), Carroll provided his own reading of the meaning of the September Eleven terrorist attacks to a West that has lapsed into decadence. In it, he suggested that the perception that terrorism is the product of global economic inequality and American imperialism “misreads a metaphysical crisis” as a crisis of morals (2002: 97). Though not explicitly indicated by Carroll, the critique provided by *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace* and the writings of generations of terrorist philosophers directly relate to his reading of the character of Usama bin Laden in *Terror*. By pulling together the thought of Stirner, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, Carroll has provided the foundation of a strain of metaphysical critique capable of describing the terrorist persona and the rational and moral constructions that underpin it. Applied to the polemics, manifestos and manuals of terrorists of different ideological waves of terror, Carroll’s critique reveals a persistent terrorist persona that is obsessed with achieving self-realisation through violent struggle against institutionalised morality.

As uncomfortable as it is for the modern West to accept, terrorism is eminently *rational*. To understand its rationality, however, it is necessary to first understand how terrorists generate meaning in the world they occupy. That is, to understand the terrorist act, one must first understand the terrorist persona. Identifying the terrorist persona in turn requires a metaphysical critique such as the anarcho-psychological critique that Carroll provides. Fifteen years after the World Trade Centre was destroyed, Western nations continue to ask

what motivates terrorists to perform morally reprehensible acts. A metaphysical critique reframes this question by asking what violence means to terrorists instead of searching for its source in the founding ideologies of their movements. It reaches beyond the characteristics of ideology to interrogate terrorist ideas about the purpose of life and action in a manner which demonstrates the breadth of terrorist constructions of meaning and warns against reductionist conceptualisations of terrorists as mere ideologues. Despite the ideological and political diversity of terrorists past and present, metaphysical critique reveals the extent to which they share a consistent idea of what amounts to meaningful action. In the case of the anarcho-psychological critique emerging from Carroll's *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace* (1974), consideration falls upon the terrorist persona's relationship with ideology and morality. It involves identifying the intersections between the ideas of individual terrorist theorists and the ideas of Stirner, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, and then determining the extent to which these intersections are shared between the different ideological waves of terrorism. Ideas common both to the anarcho-psychological and terrorist tradition can then be used to establish aspects of the terrorist persona. Finally, the full extent of the anarcho-psychological critique can then be brought to bear on the terrorist persona to identify the flawed logic that leads it to rationalise the use of indiscriminate violence.

The anarcho-psychological tradition that Carroll describes in *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace* (1974) draws together the shared ideas of Max Stirner, Friedrich Nietzsche and Fyodor Dostoevsky to produce a consistent metaphysical critique. It is a critique founded on the perspective that natural morality is an illusion, that all moral values are constructions of the ego, and that it is the responsibility of the individual to overcome such constructions when they serve as impediments to self-realisation. Along with liberal-rationalism and Marxism, Carroll argues that anarcho-psychology represents one of the three great intellectual traditions that "have supplied contemporary Western civilization with its key social images of man" (1974: 1). It is distinct from the other two in that it represents a repudiation of the "progressive secularization of the religious quest for truth" that "governs the flow of all intellectual currents in Europe over the last three centuries" (Carroll, 1974: 5), and from its first complete representation in Max Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own* (1844), it has mounted an unremitting assault on the objectivity of morality and ideology. Its critique is anarchic in so far as it rejects the legitimacy of all external value structures, while its

preoccupation with the ego as a foundation for the creation of new values provides it with its psychological and moral components.

Carroll suggests that the targets of the anarcho-psychological critique are “the ideological veneers which distort human communication, which inhibit individual fulfilment and enjoyment, and thereby preclude self-realization” (1974: 17). It presents a threefold assault on the objectivity of morality, ideology and economics. The logic of the critique is encapsulated in Carroll’s description of Stirner’s “insistence that not only is the God of religion a projection of man’s alienated self, but so is every ideal, every cause, every ‘fixed idea’, for they all entice men into following a *spook* which is neither of their creation nor within their power” (1974: 21). Stirner’s preferred response to the tyranny of “fixed ideas” is neatly expressed when he suggests that:

I am my species, am without norm, without law, without model, and the like. It is possible that I can make very little out of myself; but this little is everything, and is better than what I allow to be made out of me by the might of others, by the training of custom, religion, the laws, the State (Stirner, 1995: 163).

The anarcho-psychological critique suggests that ideology, like morality and economics, is a tool of control that finds its origin in the mind. Stirner suggests that it must either serve the individual as property or will inevitably come to control the individual as a “spook” haunting the mind. For the proponent of the anarcho-psychological critique, the struggle for self-realisation is a struggle for ownership of ideas. This effort to take ownership over ideology is repeatedly demonstrated in the writings of successive terrorist theorists. Carroll observed the capacity of this critique to account for the values of artists, bohemians and students (1974: 1), but its application can also be turned upon the terrorist, anarchist or otherwise.

An anarcho-psychological approach to the terrorist persona suggests that the process by which dominant moral frameworks become destabilised by insurrectionary egoism may be as important as the prevalence of revolutionary ideology in forming waves of terrorism. Anarcho-psychology as a form of metaphysical critique is relevant to conceiving the terrorist persona because terrorist descriptions of society, like those of Stirner and Nietzsche, “develop as a critique of existing patterns of human thought and behaviour,” while “their driving

ambition is to provide the key to a revalued world” (Carroll, 1974: 17). Like Stirner and Nietzsche, terrorists confront the monolith of institutionalised morality by identifying it as an alien construction while simultaneously attempting to circumvent absolute relativism by imposing a new system of values that instead find their origin in the self. The terrorist persona is then led to suggest the importance of the criminal act to the process of overcoming the “fixed ideas” of institutionalised morality. In *The Ego and Its Own* (1844), Stirner proposed that state calls its own violence “law” while branding the individual’s violence “crime” [*Verbrechen*], and that “only by crime does [an individual] overcome [*bricht*] the state’s violence when he thinks that the state is not above him, but he is above the state” (1995: 176). Nietzsche too suggested in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), that “[a] criminal’s lawyers are seldom artists enough to turn the beautiful terribleness of the deed to the advantage of him who did it” (2003a: 97). For political revolutionaries grounded in an egoistic world-view this logic can seem a strident call to violent action.

Adapting Carroll’s anarcho-psychological critique to the study of terrorism suggests that the terrorist persona is characterised by its attempts to render ideology subject to *will*, rather than be governed by it. One side of the process of self-realisation that flows from this persona demands the creation of a personal ideology; another requires the destruction of the rational foundations of external ideologies. Whether it be anarchism’s critique of the state’s exclusive right to use violence, the New Left’s “smash monogamy” initiative, or anti-colonial and jihadist assaults on the rights of multinational superpowers, the anarcho-psychology of the terrorist persona demands the destabilisation of existing ideological institutions by arguing that they are built to serve a decadent hegemony. The irony that the terrorist’s own ideological standpoint is built on equally subjective foundations is inconsequential because it is imposed by the ego rather than from without. The terrorist persona’s commitment to ideology and the terrorist act itself is an outwardly directed performance of their strength of will and accordingly contains its own signification.

A weakness of the existing discussion of terrorism is that it has become dominated by a preoccupation with the role of radical ideology in inspiring political violence. While crucial to understanding terrorism, the pervasiveness of ideological analysis has come at the expense of the equally important endeavour of subjecting terrorism to metaphysical critique. In 2008,

Michael Chertoff, the then secretary of the US Department of Homeland Security, observed that “Al-Qaeda and like-minded organizations are inspired by a malignant ideology, one that is characterized by contempt for human dignity and freedom and a depraved disregard for human life” (2008: 11). His perspective captures a popular sentiment that terrorists are slaves to a dogma that pits itself against the rights and freedoms of the individual. This view leaves crucial aspects of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism unaccounted for, such as the preoccupation of terrorists throughout history with achieving rights and freedoms for individuals they claim to represent. For instance, the Islamist Sayyid Qutb’s essay “Jihad in the Cause of God” from his book *Milestones* (1964) is from the outset foremost concerned with *jihad* as a means of defending the “freedom” of Muslims (2004: 394). Focussing on the control Islamist ideology seems to exert over its adherents rather than the apparent incongruity between Islamist and liberal ideas of freedom, Chertoff proposed that the ideological roots of contemporary fundamentalist Islamic terror largely draw from the reservoir of twentieth-century Western totalitarian thought (2008: 12). Certainly, terrorism contains within it the effort to thwart the ambiguity of the modern condition, but it approaches this task egoistically, by imposing the terrorist self on the flux of modernity. By failing to recognise the complex dialogue between freedom and control that lies at the heart of the terrorist persona, Chertoff cuts off Islamism from a history of terrorism that also includes nineteenth-century anarchist and twentieth-century anti-imperialist movements. Without the complementary insight of Carroll’s metaphysical critique, ideological critique seems to suggest there is little continuity between the various waves of terrorism, and little to be gleaned from the terrorists of the past when trying to understand the terrorism of the present.

Carroll’s metaphysical critique, when applied to the history of terrorist thought, dispels the illusion that waves of ideology have produced entirely discrete kinds of terrorism. It also suggests that terrorists are not necessarily merely the victims of malicious ideologies. On the contrary, they are at times the manufacturers and owners of ideology, using it as a means of achieving self-realisation. The process of using ideology in this way does, however, seem to push terrorists inexorably towards pure dogmatism. Instead of asking what terrorism is, or what terrorists want, a metaphysical critique asks what terrorism means to terrorists and their sense of self. Within the context of Carroll’s anarcho-psychological critique, terrorism is an attempt at self-realisation by overcoming imposed moral boundaries. The terrorist persona

longs to rise above morality and create new moral structures of their own choosing. The terrorist attack itself is an example of acts violent insurrection against moral institutions imposed on the individual by society. The terrorist persona engages in acts of criminal violence not only to foment widespread revolution, but to demonstrate the persona's own liberation from moral strictures. This second goal is achieved at the very moment the terrorist attack takes place. The material overthrow of the state, capitalism or the West becomes concomitant to the symbolic performance of its overthrow. Like Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* (1866), terrorists tend to seek a moment of self-realisation at the very instant a grievous crime against morality is committed, because the criminal act itself amounts to a rejection of morality's capacity to govern the individual. Considering Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* (1864), Carroll suggests that "[s]cientific laws, or what Dostoevsky calls with some irony the laws of nature, enclose whoever accepts them like stone walls" (1974: 113). Like the underground man of Dostoevsky's novel, the terrorist persona "calls for the anarchist demolition of the new authority" (Carroll, 1974: 113), beginning with the rejection of the capacity of law to govern the self. The suicide attack takes this logic to its most extreme point, where even self-destruction becomes a reasonable cost of a grand symbolic crime against institutionalised morality¹.

Applied to the study of the terrorist persona, Carroll's anarcho-psychological metaphysical critique reveals new details in the historical landscape of terrorism. A dominance of ideological critique in the study of terrorism has encouraged its conceptualisation as a series of ideological "waves" of violence occurring since the late nineteenth century. It has seemed otherwise impossible to reconcile the values of nineteenth-century anarchists, early twentieth-century nationalists, mid-twentieth-century Marxists, and twenty-first-century religious fundamentalists. In this regard, the work of David Rapoport in establishing the existence of four discrete waves of terror has been paramount. Breaking the history of terrorism into waves of anarchist, anticolonial, New Left and religious ideology (Rapoport, 2004: 47), Rapoport seeks to understand the forces that operate *within* each wave, but also isolates each one from the others, even when multiple waves are simultaneously active. Where the ideological critique of terrorism focusses on the internal consistencies of a given wave of terrorism, and what marks it as distinct from the others, a metaphysical critique such as one adapted from Carroll's anarcho-psychology integrates the waves by depicting a persistent terrorist persona. The terrorist persona is a shared egoistic metaphysical perspective that

emerges in the mid-nineteenth century and is re-enacted in both the practice and theory of each ideological wave of modern terrorism.

The project of establishing a metaphysical critique of terrorism that can complement and sometimes contest the dominant ideological critique has already begun in earnest. As part of the project of developing a sociology of modern culture, John Carroll, Max Weber and Theodore Adorno have all contributed to describing the character of the terrorist persona, as indeed have others including Émile Durkheim in *Suicide* (1897), Terry Eagleton in *On Evil* (2010) and Frank Furedi in “Youth Rebellion that Embraces Authority” (2014). Nietzsche himself considered the character of the anarchist revolutionary in both *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1891) and *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), where he condemned it to varying extents. In his portrayal of Pyotr Stepanovich Verkhovensky² in *Demons* (1872), Dostoevsky provides his own depiction of the terrorist persona. There are surprising points of intersection between the personas they describe: intersections that are intensified when viewed in the context of the writings and seminal texts of subsequent waves of terrorism. It is important to note that establishing a consistent terrorist persona is not the same as establishing a consistent cause for terrorism, any more than establishing a shared ideology within a wave of terrorism amounts to discovering a cause for terrorism within that wave. Instead, it assists in understanding the variety of forces that drive individuals towards violent insurrection. It also strives at identifying the way individuals and groups rationalise terrorist acts and perceive the commission of these acts as a meaningful endeavour.

Existing Metaphysical Critiques of Terrorism

The terrorist persona emerges as one response to the anxiety produced by the conditions of cultural modernity. Terrorism in its contemporary form is a phenomenon that finds its earliest fully fledged examples in the anarchist violence of the nineteenth century. Randall Law suggests that the “French Revolutionaries introduced the language and purpose of modern terrorism in the late eighteenth century,” and over “the second half of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth, the number of groups devoted to the use of terrorism grew rapidly, as did the number of guises in which terrorism appeared” (2009: 74). Terrorism as it is understood today developed in tandem with cultural modernity. The contemporaneousness of cultural modernity and modern terrorism suggests the importance of

the sociology of modern culture to developing a metaphysical critique of terrorism. Faced with the threat of dehumanising scientific rationality on the one hand and the chaotic flux of total relativism on the other, the terrorist persona instead elects to thwart ambiguity with a structure that finds its locus in the ego itself. For the terrorist persona, meaning is found in terrorism as a vocation dedicated to imposing the individual ego on both scientific rationality and the flux of relativism.

In *Science as a Vocation* (1917), Weber describes the societal conditions that produce the metaphysical crisis of modernity. Applying Carroll's anarcho-psychological critique to the way the terrorists confront this crisis suggests that the terrorist persona finds meaning in imposing its will on reality. Lawrence Scaff suggests that Weber "realized that challenges to the "organic" cycle of life and its sense of "wholeness" can lead to a search for alternatives, for counter-cultural routes of escape from the iron cage of modern forms" (2000: 103). The terrorist persona presents one such attempt to escape. Weber observes that "civilized man, placed in the midst of the continuous enrichment of culture by ideas, knowledge, and problems, may become 'tired of life' but not 'satiated with life'" (1970: 140), leading to an eventual disillusionment with the broader project of Enlightenment. Scientific rationality, he suggested, itself shattered the dreams of the Enlightenment, and that after "all these former illusions, the 'way to true being,' the 'way to true art,' the 'way to true nature,' the 'way to true God,' the 'way to true happiness,' have been dispelled" (1970: 143) by reason, the modern condition demanded that "the individual has to decide which is God for him and which is the devil," (Weber, 1970: 148). Just as Tolstoy's response to this dilemma was to reject a science that fails to address the meaning of life (Weber, 1970: 143), terrorists too respond by rejecting the foundation of scientific rationality that girds modernity. Rather than succumbing to the abyss of total relativism that remains after the abolition of scientific reason, the terrorist persona falls back on the crutch of the ego as a foundation for meaning in a meaningless world. Because "[w]hat is hard for modern man, and especially for the younger generation, is to measure up to *workaday* existence" (Weber, 1970: 149), the egoistic persona of the terrorist is appealing to those who look not for the rational analysis of the teacher, but the leadership of a preacher who imposes structure and meaning on modern existence.

While John Carroll's *Terror: A meditation on the meaning of September 11* (2002) is, at its heart, an exploration of the internal response of Western civilisation to the most significant terrorist attack to occur on American soil, it is at the same time a metaphysical characterisation of Usama bin Laden. John Carroll identifies in the character and bearing of Usama bin Laden an analogue of John Ford's Liberty Valance, with both being an inversion of the idealised hero of the wild west transformed into a self-possessed nemesis of decadent Western civilisation (2002: 6). In Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962), Lee Marvin's Valance is the archetype of the "bad man" of the American western. Carroll observes that he stands "in his monumental badness" (2002: 7) as a test of will for the two leading men of the film, James Stewart's lawyer Ranse Stoddard and John Wayne's rancher Tom Doniphon. Valance is defeated not through valour but deception, and although Stoddard becomes lauded as "the man who shot Liberty Valance," his legend is founded on a lie. Carroll describes both Valance and Usama as Satanic figures who, confident and assured, match the gaze of American might and ask "What kind of man are you, Dude?" (Carroll, 2002: 7). Carroll suggests that Usama bin Laden's goal is not the establishment of a utopian state modelled on an Islamic ideal, but to assert *himself* as an existential adversary of Western civilisation (Carroll, 2002: 8). Islamism is an ideology he uses to provide a foundation for action. This view suggests that terrorism arises from a combination of a credible but immense *will*, an ideological program, and the capacity to view the dominant institutional framework itself as an *other* to be overcome.

Ultimately, terrorism is a kind of praxis that amounts to "pseudo-activity" as it is described by Theodore Adorno. In response to criticism that "his refusal to translate Critical Theory into a program for political action" amounted to a "resignation" from political life (Bell, 2014), Adorno offered an important critique of revolutionary self-realisation through praxis in the form of a radio address in 1968, itself entitled "Resignation". Included in his intended audience of "the radical student movement and Soviet intellectuals like György Lukács" (Bell, 2014) were certainly the likes of Ulrike Meinhof, the militant journalist who went on to co-found the Red Army Faction two years later. Adorno's critique of theory-informed praxis is also applicable to a broader terrorist program of self-realisation through action. "Resignation" provides a blueprint for the relationship between terrorist ontology and ideology. His description of pseudo-activity suggests a model that helps us understand the theatrics of terrorist violence:

Pseudo-reality is conjoined with ... pseudo-activity: action that overdoes and aggravates itself for the sake of its own publicity, without admitting to itself to what extent it serves as a substitute satisfaction, elevating itself into an end in itself (Adorno, 2005: 291).

The spectacle of terrorist attacks and concern with the publicity of demonstrations of “propaganda of the deed” are reinforced by a conceptualisation of the terrorist act as self-fulfilling. Egoism leans upon ideology as an avenue to self-realisation through action, and ideology runs unchecked by being continually reinforced by the confidence of the ego in being the source of all value. Adorno warns of the co-dependency of ego and ideology that takes root at the point of praxis when he suggests that “[i]deology lies in wait for the mind which delights in itself like Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, for the mind which all but irresistibly becomes an absolute to itself” (1973: 30). It is into this very trap that multiple waves of terrorists fall; overconfident in their will and capacity for action, they are pushed towards a program of self-assured annihilation.

Where the metaphysical critique of cultural modernity touches upon the phenomenon of terrorism it hints at the importance of anarchic nihilism and unrestrained egoism to the character of the terrorist persona. Approached from this angle the relationship of the terrorist with ideology recasts ideology as both a construction of the ego and an object of personal property. The dominant ideologies of society are neither produced nor owned by the terrorist ego, and instead become obstructions that must be overcome. Through praxis, the terrorist loses control over ideology and the relationship becomes reversed, with the formerly “owned” idea becoming a new imposed morality. Destructive violence becomes the only kind of act that retains any meaning, as a negation of all potentially obstructive thought. Locating the origin of all values within an individual ego that seeks self-realisation through the destabilisation and destruction of value systems imposed on the ego from without, this attitude finds its origins in the “anarcho-psychological tradition” that Carroll describes in *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace* (1974). Carroll suggests that the shared perspective of this tradition emerged independently in the work of Max Stirner, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

The History of Ego-Terrorism

The egoistic terrorist persona and application of an anarcho-psychological critique of society are employed by terrorist writers as diverse as the revolutionary Karl Heinzen (1809–1880), the Russian collectivist anarchist, Sergey Nechaev (1847–1882), the individualist anarchist Emma Goldman (1869–1940), the anti-colonial theorist Frantz Fanon (1925–1961), the Red Army Faction leader, Ulrike Meinhof (1934–1976), and the poet-philosopher of political Islam, Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938). In “Murder” (1849) Heinzen proposed that while all killing is undesirable, the state’s claim of “special privilege” to the use of murder means it is the responsibility of revolutionaries to undermine the exclusivity of this right (2004: 58). He called murder “the principal agent of historical progress” (Heinzen, 2004: 57), and posited the need for weapons capable of giving “a few lone individuals the terrifying power to threaten whole masses of barbarians” (Heinzen, 2004: 65). Viewing terrorism as a pragmatic consequence of an already established egoism he suggested that “egoists begin the murdering, and the men of ideas reply in kind,” where “the ‘ultima ratio’ of both is quite simply the obliteration of their enemies” (Heinzen, 2004: 57). Moral outrage is, according to Heinzen, “closely linked to the self-interest of those reacting,” and the “courageous bearing of the murderer seems to be of equal weight in the scales of judgement as the success of the attempt” (2004: 60). He suggested that murder is justified wherever it furthers self-interest and is committed with audacity, and in his own case this means the advancement of collectivist anarchism. It is not his ideology which he uses to justify killing, but an anarcho-psychological reading of the historical use of murder.

Another collectivist, Nechaev proposed in his *Catechism of the Revolutionist* (1869) that the revolutionary is required to break “every tie with the civil order and the entire cultured world, with all its laws, properties, social conventions, and its ethical rules” (2004: 71), and that all things are moral if they serve to foment revolution. By doing so he suggested even the ethics of socialism itself were no moral impediment to an act that brought the revolution closer to fruition, because the terrorist is not subject to ideology. The egoistic terrorist brings about ideological revolution by moving beyond notions of good and evil. Emma Goldman openly suggested in her preface to *Anarchism and other Essays* (1910) her admiration for the work of both Stirner and Nietzsche. Nietzsche, she wrote “called for a state of society which will not give birth to a race of weaklings and slaves,” while “Stirner’s individualism contains the greatest social possibilities” and the necessary avenue to a liberated society (Goldman, 1917:

50). In her memoir, *Living My Life* (1934), Goldman recalled responding to the charge by her lover Edward Brady that Nietzsche's "ideal is the superman because he has no sympathy with or faith in the common herd," by arguing that Nietzsche's "aristocracy was neither of birth nor of purse; it was of the spirit" (2006: 126). She went on to suggest that "Nietzsche was an anarchist, and all true anarchists were aristocrats" (Goldman, 2006: 126), linking anarchist revolution to aristocratic egoism.

Fanon's first major work, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), is bookended by egoism. In the introduction, he recalled that "Man's tragedy, Nietzsche said, is that he was once a child," but that "we cannot afford to forget that, as Charles Odier has shown us, the neurotic's fate remains in his own hands" (1986: 12). The closing pages of the book first suggest his Stirnerian desire "[t]hat the tool never possess the man" (Fanon, 1986: 231), before evoking Nietzsche's aphorisms in a final prayer that implores "O my body, make of me always a man who questions!" (Fanon, 1986: 232). More importantly, Fanon proposed a kind of violent action that, grounded in egoistic self-will, rises above *ressentiment*³. He suggested that consciousness desires to become absolute, and "wants to be recognized as a primal value without reference to life, as a transformation of subjective certainty (*Gewissheit*) into objective truth (*Wahrheit*)" (Fanon, 1986: 217–218). To this end, he proposes "actional" rather than "reactional" violence as a means of circumventing the resentment that exists in every instance of reaction, taking his cue from Nietzsche's *Will to Power* (1906) (Fanon, 1986: 222). Fanon came to ask "Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the *You*?" (1986: 232), in an intonation of messianic egoism that proposes to remake the world in his own image and provide a model for others to remake it in their own. His objective was not dissimilar to that of the anarchism that preceded it, but involved substituting the institutionalised morality of whiteness for the institutionalised morality of the state.

Jeremy Varon's authoritative history of the Weather Underground Organisation and the Red Army Faction, *Bringing the War Home* (2004), suggests the importance of an egoistic ontology to the actions of the two groups. He proposes that both organisations attempted a path between ideological Marxism and ontological egoism, at once aspiring to transcend capitalist individualism and achieve self-realisation through the transgression of state

imposed morality (Varon, 2004: 9). Meinhof's observation that "[t]he progressive moment in the burning of a department store doesn't lie in the destruction of commodities but in the criminality of the act, its breaking of the law" was an expression of this kind of insurrectionary and egoist agenda (Meinhof quoted in Varon, 2004: 41). It can also be seen in the recollection of David Gilbert, a former member of the Weather Underground Organisation, that the purpose of a "push on sexuality was to defy society's norms and restrictions" (Gilbert, 2012: 140). Varon's argument that a "real" existence "for New Leftists meant 'being what one becomes upon rejection of the conventions' learned through one's mainstream socialization" (2004: 88), once again reiterates the importance of rejecting institutionalised morality to terrorist self-realisation.

Once the impetus to equate Islamist terrorism with religious dogmatism is set aside long enough to propose that it might share an egoistic vocation with its predecessors, the relationship can be traced to the inception of political Islam. The work of the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal and the literary critic Sayyid Qutb are crucial to understanding the formation of this relationship. Iqbal was a central player both in development of the independent state of Pakistan and of the evolution of political Islam. His major work in English, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (1930), is a series of essays largely concerned with the renewal of Islamic thought in the context of modernity. In it he espoused a philosophy of Islam grounded in an existentialist reading of the Qur'an. The work blended together Nietzschean egoism and the prophetic archetype, and suggested that the self seeks "knowledge, self-multiplication, and power, or, in the words of the Qur'an, 'the kingdom that never faileth'" (Iqbal, 2012: 68). From this position, he went on to argue that "[t]here are no pleasure-giving and pain-giving acts; there are only ego-sustaining and ego-dissolving acts" (Iqbal, 2012: 95) and proposed a model of "the prophet" as an insurrectionary egoist who "returns to insert himself into the sweep of time with a view to control the forces of history, and thereby to create a fresh world of ideals" (Iqbal, 2012: 99). As one example of this prophetic mode of engagement with the world, he considered the importance of Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb to asserting just this kind of insurrectionary private judgement (Iqbal, 2012: 121), and tied it by extension to the broader project of Islamic puritanism and fundamentalism of which jihadism now asserts itself as part.

Iqbal's metaphysical approach to Islam girds the theoretical work of the Islamic scholar Sayyid Qutb. The impact of Iqbal's thought was not to advocate political violence, but to imbue the Islamic perspective with a character that promoted active engagement with the world as a path to realisation. He politicised (or rather re-politicised) Islamic thought. Farzin Vahdat suggests that while Qutb viewed Iqbal as having over-glorified the human "self" in his work, he agreed that Islamic revival was inhibited by mysticism's passivity and rejection of the self (2015: 95). Participation in the modern world had to be grounded in an Islamic "personality" [*khudi*], which Iqbal's work sought to construct (Vahdat, 2015: 95). This influence is demonstrated by Qutb's construction of *jihad* in his essay "Jihad in the Cause of God" in *Milestones*. In it he suggested that in "calling Islamic jihad a defensive movement ... we must change the meaning of the word 'defense' and mean by it 'the defense of man' against all those elements which limit his freedom," identifying that these "take the form of beliefs and concepts, as well as of political systems, based on economic, racial, or class distinctions" (Qutb, 2004: 349). He expounded a program that shares its targets with those of Stirner and Nietzsche; the institutionalised morality of Western civilisation and the mythological thinking that underpins them.

The influence of Qutb's thought on Islamic terrorism was recognised in the United States government's *9/11 Commission Report*, which stated that "Usama Bin Ladin and other Islamist terrorist leaders draw on a long tradition of extreme intolerance within one stream of Islam (a minority tradition), from at least Ibn Taimiyyah, through the founders of Wahhabism, through the Muslim Brotherhood, to Sayyid Qutb" (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004: 362). The commission did not recognise the influence of a broader history of terrorism on the Islamic strain, or of Iqbal on Qutb's conception of the Islamic "personality" and its relationship to action. These shortcomings are typical of an attitude to the study of terrorism that regards it as a purely ideological phenomenon. These connections emerge only when the question is raised of what ideology and action mean to terrorists on a personal level, and how they engage with the two to give their lives purpose.

Conclusion

The anarcho-psychological approach to existence need not be condemned out of hand. Reading Stirner and Nietzsche is not *ipso facto* a precursor of terrorism. Just as it is frequently displayed by terrorists, the egoistic character is common to a host of individualist archetypes including artists, writers and philosophers. Furthermore, there is an important distinction between the kind of praxis endorsed by Stirner, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky and that endorsed by Heine, Goldman and Iqbal. The first group highlight the importance of inner struggle and of overcoming one's self, and for them, the spooks, mythologies, and *idées fixes* of ideology can only be meaningfully challenged through acts of thought. On the other hand, terrorism is an outwardly directed manifestation of an anarcho-psychological critique of society. Rather than a program of inwardly directed self-overcoming through reflection and criticism, it pursues self-exaltation through acts of other-overcoming. Terrorists demand that the public bear witness to assaults on the foundations of institutionalised morality as emblematic of the indomitability of their will. This difference is crucial to understanding the objectives of terrorism and trying to combat its spread.

It can seem compelling to dismiss the terrorist act as merely a demonstration of *ressentiment*, emerging from the inability of radical political activists to overcome existing political structures. The seductive lure of this analysis is nowhere more apparent than in Nietzsche's depiction of anarchists in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nietzsche, through his speaker Zarathustra's parable of the "fire-dog", criticised the superficiality of anarchist revolutionary violence (2003c: 153). Zarathustra portrays the anarchist fire-dogs as "inventors of new noises" rather than "new values" (Nietzsche, 2003c: 153). He suggests that he has "unlearned belief in 'great events' whenever there is much bellowing and smoke about them," and that greatness is instead to be found "not in our noisiest but our stillest hours" (Nietzsche, 2003c: 153). Nevertheless, Nietzsche suggests more is at play in the violence of anarchist revolutionaries of his time than outward manifestations of hatred emerging from a sense of inadequacy as demonstrated by the "spiders" of liberalism and socialism (2003c: 123–126). Rather than an idealised, inwardly directed attempt at *self-overcoming*, Nietzsche identifies in the anarchist struggle an outwardly directed (and in his view, degraded) form of *other-overcoming*. The terrorist has failed to heed Zarathustra's warning:

The noble man wants to create new things and a new virtue. The good man wants the old things and that the old things be preserved.

But that is not the danger for the noble man—that he may become a good man—but that he may become an impudent one, a derider, a destroyer. (Nietzsche, 2003c: 71).

Nietzsche's criticism of anarchist violence explains the capacity of egoistic terrorists to engage in seemingly irrational behaviour and transgress the moral tenets of even their own ideological frameworks. Carroll's reading of Nietzsche, along with Stirner and Dostoevsky, provides the means by which the terrorist persona can be examined as the product of a flawed attempt to confront the existential crisis produced by the conditions of modernity. Particularly when dealing with the leaders and demagogues of terrorist movements, the anarcho-psychological critique that Carroll provides in *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace* serves to curb the ubiquity of ideology in contemporary studies of terrorism. As a form of metaphysical critique, it serves as a gateway to a better understanding of the terrorist persona and the way it generates meaning by imposing its will on the flow of history.

¹ The wave of suicide bombings beginning in the 1980s that were perpetrated by the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka are of note here, as they were not grounded in the notions of religious martyrdom and heavenly reward typically invoked when considering religious fundamentalists' willingness to sacrifice themselves. Instead, self-destruction represents the terrorist persona's symbolic victory over the moral law of the state. Death places the individual beyond the reach of the state and its laws, circumventing its capacity to respond. This view suggests that suicide attacks are not only used tactically, but are the natural outcome of the terrorist persona's distinct approach to the task of self-realisation.

² In his forward to the novel, Richard Pevear notes the influence of the murder of the young radical Ivan Ivanov "by a group consisting of two students, an older writer, and their leader, a hanger-on in university circles with credentials from the anarchist movement abroad, the twenty-two-year-old nihilist Sergei Nechaev" (2006: vii). The author of the terrorist manifesto *The Catechism of the Revolutionist* (1869), Nechaev became the basis for the character of Pyotr, who was indeed "called 'Nechaev' in the first sketches of the novel" (Dostoevsky, 2006: viii).

³ Nietzsche discusses his own conceptualisation of *ressentiment* most clearly in the first essay of *The Genealogy of Morals*, where he portrays it as "a resentment experienced by creatures who, deprived as they are of the proper outlet of action, are forced to find their compensation in an imaginary revenge" (Nietzsche, 2003b: 19).

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