Strategic Opportunities of the Twice Born

reflections on systemic camouflage of mass deception

This document draws on a structured overview of the variety of web resources concerned with rebirth in some form: Varieties of Rebirth: distinguishing ways of being "born again" (2004). This provides links to a separate document, an annex, offering brief excerpts from such resources or introducing them: Web Resources on Being "Born Again": Annex to Varieties of Rebirth (2004).

Introduction

In the current period the core leadership of the Coalition of the Willing, and their core supporters, share an unusual belief system distinct from that which prevails in a secular world. George Bush explicitly acknowledges that he is a "born again" Christian -- associating himself with the politics of the Christian Right. Tony Blair does not appear to have made the claim to be "born again", but much has been made of the influence of his deep Christian beliefs on his decision-making. John Howard is strongly associated with "born again" Christian groups in Australia, notably the Lyons Forum in parliament. There is reason to believe that this mindset may be shared by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, but to what degree remains unclear. Paradoxically Kofi Annan is also frequently named as the Anti-Christ by some on the Christian Right in the USA. Curiously, in a world that many consider regrettably secular, the three main monotheistic religions -- variously understood as the People of the Book -- are, through their unresolved relations with one another, engendering a violent preoccupation with "Evil". This they tend to see primarily in each other, whilst each seeing themselves as the champion and embodiment of "Good" in a form of Crusade or Holy War.

It is in this context that the initiative of the Christian-inspired Coalition of the Willing in Iraq has been empowered and sustained by what is now formally described as a massive "failure of global intelligence" and an equally massive "failure of imagination". What follows here is an exploration of the possibility that being "born again" offers access to a particularly powerful form of intelligence sustained by a particularly powerful form of imagination. Far from being a "failure" then, the dynamics of terrorism (in which the Coalition of the Willing is so intimately involved) is a manifestation of a remarkable "global intelligence success" and a commensurate "imaginative success".

The argument here is that -- whatever its other merits -- being "born again" creates a strategic opportunity through which massive deception can be effectively camouflaged. The challenge is to distinguish between the many forms of being "born again" to determine how deception of those not so transformed is liable to be engendered -- and how other higher forms of insight may be inhibited or perverted. Whilst the intelligence and imagination of those perpetrating 9/11 can in no way be considered a failure, what measure should be attributed to al-Qaeda, and what to rogue agencies of western governments, remains a matter which conspiracy theorists will continue to debate. To what extent should those exhibiting such apparent intelligence and imagination, whether terrorist or conspirators, be considered "twice born"?
Context

It is increasingly clear that right-wing Christian beliefs are the basis for a very strong international political agenda of which the actions of the Coalition in Iraq are but one example. Jimmy Carter was the first American president to declare himself to be "born again". Over 40 percent of Americans are now claimed to define themselves as "born again", as reported by Nicholas D. Kristof (Born-again Christians surge in influence, International Herald Tribune, 5 March 2003) [more | more]. This percentage is controversial because George Gallup, from whose surveys such data has been obtained, is himself an evangelical Christian [more | more | more]. Whatever the percentage, they represent the core of the support for George Bush -- irrespective of the widely publicized deceptions associated with Iraq.

In a much cited Prayer Service for Disaster Victims (11 September 2001, Pepperdine University), Andrew Benton makes the curious statement:

Today, we are twice born, some of us thrice born. But God, and this remarkable community, will help us respond, to keep going, in this stormy and dangerous world.

What exactly is the significance of such beliefs for a world society that many had assumed had abandoned the superstitions associated in centuries past with the dominant, and often insidious, influence of supernatural belief on governance processes? Scorn has been poured by the West on an early Christian belief in reincarnation -- still important to other religions and their political decision-making. Ronald Reagan was renowned for the role that astrology played in his initiatives at the heart of these tensions.

These convictions are exacerbating the tensions of world society. The violence they breed -- always the fault of the other -- now constitutes a massive distraction from the problems of society and the planet, a distraction matched only by attempts to reach other planets. All this despite the widely extolled capacity of centres of excellence in interdisciplinary studies of complexity, cybernetics and general systems -- and the profound spirituality of the leaders of the three religions at the heart of these tensions.

Distinctions

There are a number of threads that indicate quite different senses of being "born again". These threads may interweave to reinforce each other -- or may reflect contrasting, even incommensurable, understandings or experiences. In a larger multi-dimensional scheme all these threads may together constitute a larger fabric of insight to which humanity has yet only partial access.

The threads or clusters are explored in detail in a separate paper (Varieties of Rebirth: distinguishing ways of being "born again", 2004). They are tentatively ordered in terms of increasing experiential implications for the individual. Two "paths" may be distinguished to relate the clusters:

| Experiential rebirth (operacy, flow, embodiment of mind, speaking with God, born-again, possession, psychedelic experience, embodiment in song, spiritual rebirth) | Cognitive perspective (metacognition, critical thinking, philosophy, aesthetic sensibility, orders of thinking, systematics, orders of abstraction, disciplines of action) |
| Therapeutical rebirth (release from trauma, mentors, self-help, discipleship) | Developmental rebirth (education, perspective, initiation, cultural creativity, individuation) |
| Psycho-behavioural rebirth (sin-to-virtue, changing patterns of consumption, conversion, | Socio-religious rebirth (birthright, destiny, reincarnation, social status, ceremony, ritual, group affiliation, games, sports) |
| Cultural rebirth (renaissance, aesthetic birth, mytho-poiesis) | |

In the structural overview from which the above schema was derived (Varieties of Rebirth: distinguishing ways of being "born again", 2004), links are provided to excerpts from web resources presented in an annex (Web Resources on Being "Born Again": Annex to Varieties of Rebirth, 2004). Some of the distinctions made there, and above, are quite artificial. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive. There is a high degree of overlap or mutual entrainment between some of those highlighted -- consistent with their interweaving within a larger fabric. In considering understandings of rebirth from the above distinctions, it is however useful to draw attention to the following:

| Perspectives for the understanding of forms of rebirth (derived from Varieties of Rebirth: distinguishing ways of being "born again", 2004) |
| Metaphors of qualitative emergence |
| Lateral metaphor | A "rebirth" may not necessarily result in significant new insight; it may be more the transition to a parallel or alternative perspective, or to even "more of the same". Political "conversions" may well be of this kind. As noted by Karin Jironet: "conservation of a dual conceptual structure can prompt the re-birth of the once-born, the twice-once-born". [text] Such alternatives are suggested by Howard Gardner's classic study Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983). |
| Cyclic metaphor (repetition) | A succession of "rebirths" may repeat in a cycle, a concept explored in the Hindu and Buddhist understanding of the "wheel of suffering", "wheel of birth", or the "wheel of life", to which individuals are "bound", being currently unable to achieve the insight to release themselves from it |
| Depth metaphor (superficial vs profound) | Any term such as "born again" does not adequately distinguish between superficial (even very superficial) experience and that which is profoundly transformative of understanding. The "rebirths" of some may therefore be considered essentially trivial by others. In these terms, "birth" is potentially the emergence of greater insight, possibly understood as integration of the unconscious in an individuation process -- and notably the reframing of the relationship between subject and object, knower and known. But some "births" may be a "peak experience" of only momentary significance, possibly only temporarily evoked by circumstances. |
| Embodiment metaphor | Being "born again" may be understood in terms of being embodied by reality or embodying reality to a progressively greater degree. For example: Michael Murphy (The Future of the Body: explorations into the further evolution of human nature, 1992) identified 12 attributes or developmental classes that give rise to the extraordinary: perception, cognition, volition, the hedonic response (namely relation to pain and pleasure), sense of self, movement abilities, abilities to manipulate the environment, capacity for love, and the very structure of the body itself [more]; or the work of Francesco Varela, et al. (The Embodied Mind: cognitive science and human experience, 1991). Christians use this metaphor in terms of embodying Christ or being embodied by Christ. From a shamanic perspective there may be a sense of possession by spirit. |
| Vertical metaphor (levels) | Different degrees of understanding may be understood as being achieved by a succession of "births" through which more comprehensive perspectives are progressively achieved. According to the understanding of various spiritual disciplines, access to these may be described in terms of a metaphor of "ascent" (see Navigating Alternative Conceptual Realities, 2002). Being "born again" may then be understood as being "twice-born", "thrice-born", or possibly more. Esotericists may distinguish a number of "initiations". Freemasonry may distinguish up to 33 "degrees" of understanding, into each of which a person may be successively "born". Many computer-based (internet) games allow for a number of levels to which access may be achieved. Some works of art, especially sacred literature, may be explored at different levels of significance -- possibly skillfully hidden. |
| Transcendence metaphor (grace) | The quality of experiential "rebirth" may be dependent upon factors that lie beyond human ken. This might be understood as the supernal dimension. |
| Sudden vs gradual | It is often implied that "rebirth" as a peak experience is "sudden" and spontaneous. However, in Buddhism, for example, a distinction is made between "sudden" and "gradual" processes of enlightenment, both of which are recognized (Peter N. Gregory (Ed). Sudden and Gradual: approaches to enlightenment in Chinese thought, 1991). |
| Entrainment metaphor | This understanding of "rebirth" is associated with the sense of being drawn into new experience as if by a "strange attractor" (Human Values as Strange Attractors, 1993; Varieties of Encroachment, 2004). The attractor may be understood in terms of the highest spiritual experience or those of the greatest perversion. |

**Interrelationship**

| Symbolism | Understandings of rebirth, or being "born again" at one level may be primarily symbolic of qualities of rebirth at another level, possibly only indicative of their nature. |
| Resonance | The symbolic relationships, notably in ritual, may activate resonances important to understandings of subtler forms of rebirth. |
| Nesting | Different forms of rebirth may be considered as "nested" within other more external, mundane or less subtle forms through which they may be sensed by others. Experience on more tangible and mundane levels may then embody one or more levels of insight of a progressively subtler nature -- or it may only appear to do so, or be claimed to do so. As with a set of nested Russian dolls, from the outside it is challenging to verify how many layers within have been transformed by the rebirth. |
| Non-linear | The above listing suggests a reality to a linear sequence of "births" when the relationship between them may be neither circular nor nested; any mytho-poetic cultural "births" may be very intimately related to the experiential "births" of the individual. |

**Authenticity**

| Verification | Education (through a succession of qualifications) can model the succession of "rebirths", and the facility through which they may be achieved. Authenticity may be challenged by "tests" and "interviews", and recognized by "certification" and "qualifications" following specified periods of training or experience. As with education, the qualifications may also be obtained by deception, by payment, or be associated with false claims and counterfeit certificates with the complicity of bodies of the highest repute [more | more]. The nature of the rebirth may be a matter of assertion by those so "reborn" and any lack of verification may be tolerated by their communities. |

Both the schema (Varieties of Rebirth: distinguishing ways of being "born again", 2004), and the selection and presentation of web resources (Web Resources on Being "Born Again": Annex to Varieties of Rebirth, 2004) are considered tentative. They merely serve as a basis for introducing the following argument regarding the vulnerability of society to those of "higher" orders of insight -- who may not necessarily act in the interests of those of "lower" orders of insights, whether or not they make the unverifiable claim to be doing so in the longer term.

**Comprehension of rebirth**

**Appearance of superiority**: Those achieving rebirth, or claiming to have achieved it, tend to be perceived as superior in some way by others. This superiority may either be experienced as admirable or as provoking hostility. As indicated by A. W. Tozer (Man: The Dwelling Place of God):

> That hostility exists between the once-born and the twice-born is known to every student of the Bible; the reason for it was stated by Christ when He said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

**Sense of superiority**: Those achieving rebirth, or believing that they have achieved it, are faced with the challenge of how to understand their relationship to those who have not. Again, as indicated by A. W. Tozer (Man: The Dwelling Place of God):
One of the more pathetic aspects of any recognition of twice-born, or N-born, insights, is the chronic competitiveness it apparently evokes. The sense of superiority may be notably reinforced by a focus on the formal certification of "rebirth". Such certification can often be acquired for a fee, possibly in payment for a training course. However it is also possible to become "born again" via an online website. One such website "Conversion Central" offers a means of converting groups from any selected religion to any other selected religion.

**Sense of exclusiveness:** Also associated with the tendency to a sense of superiority is a tendency to a sense of exclusiveness. Given that those who are reborn are necessarily fewer than those who are not, the sense of belonging to an exclusive group readily emerges and is a basis for reinforcing such exclusivity through rituals and other devices such as membership of exclusive clubs.

**Acquisition of a birthright:** Being reborn may well offer a fundamental sense of natural "rightness", of returning to one's "true home". This is reinforced in the case of rites of passage, aristocratic inheritance, and the culmination of careers inspired by a sense of destiny.

**Sense of righteousness:** The sense of superiority tends to be accompanied by a sense of righteousness -- a sense of occupying the moral highground. As implied by this military metaphor, this is then understood to offer strategic advantage in relationship to those not so strategically positioned. However this metaphor also suggests that others may occupy yet higher moral ground.

**Sense of complacency:** The sense of being "born again" may be strongly associated with having "made it" and a sense that all is well. For Christians concerned with the afterlife, there may be a sense that their place in Heaven is assured.

**Sense of transition:** Where being reborn is less strongly associated with comparison with others, and more in terms of a shift in perspective independent of others, the emphasis tends to be on the process of transition and the new vista or panoramas that open up -- as with getting to the top of a mountain or crossing a pass. Such shifts in perspective may be discussed with more neutrality from geometric or other mathematical viewpoints (discussed below).

**Sense of complicity:** The sense of complacency, exclusivity and superiority combine to reinforce an unquestioning confidence that, with select others, one "knows" the truth beyond the ability of those of lesser birth to grasps it. This complicity (as noted in the *Aquarian Complicity*, 1980 of Marilyn Ferguson), encourages behaviours unconstrained by the norms of the wider population -- "above the law".

**Sense of education or journeying:** Here the emphasis is on learning breakthroughs, whether arising from formal study and acquisition of skills, or from life experience.

**Comprehending the prerequisites of birth**

The birth metaphor is indeed widely used to facilitate comprehension of any form of renaissance (*Challenges of Renaissance: suggestive pattern of concerns in the light of the birth metaphor*, 2003). But, most curiously in civilized western societies any such birth is associated with an extraordinary degree of prudery. The birth seemingly comes about by the grace of God only. It is not even a form of "virgin birth" -- and is in no way preceded by the reality of intercourse. The dynamics of the drama between the opposites that challenge human relationships at every level of society are simply designed out. It is as though the birth was ensured miraculously by a traditional "stork" -- without any "mummy" or "daddy" engaging in unusual behaviour together to achieve an ordinary miracle. In fact there is no "mummy" or "daddy", not even a virgin "mummy". The born again are simply the result of a "transmutation" simpler in concept than the parthenogenic characteristic of some lower plants (called agamospermy), some invertebrates (e.g. water fleas, aphids), and some vertebrates (e.g. lizards, salamanders, and some fish) where a male is not required.

In the absence of a recognizable "mummy" and "daddy", it is not surprising that this prerequisite for any natural birth tends to be projected into a highly problematic understanding of the dynamics between any complementary opposites in society. In the absence of the creative,alternation of intercourse, the world is then faced with the sterile polarization between "Good" and "Evil". One consequence is indeed Sam Huntington's much discussed *Clash of Civilizations* (1993) -- with the complex interaction between biological organs -- the penis and the vagina -- simplified, euphemized and instrumentalized into a clash between the long-distance rocket and the suicide bomber (see also *The Coalition of the Willy: musings on the global challenge of penile servitude*, 2004). A "global failure of imagination" indeed -- far from any understanding of the archetypal symbols of the sword and the chalice. As metaphors, the variations envisaged by the *Karma Sutra* and *Tantric Yoga* clearly have much to offer in building understanding of the potential relationships between opposites -- in contrast to the mechanistic mind-set inherent in "clash" (see *Enhancing the Quality of Knowing through Integration of East-West metaphors*, 2000).

With such confusion about the nature of birth, it is perhaps no surprise that those most articulate about the importance of becoming "born-again" are precisely those most central to the controversy associated with issues relating to constraints on natural birth --
contraceptives, abortion and premarital sex -- a key feature of support for George Bush. Could questions be usefully asked about the nature of any rebirth that may well be constrained by problematic mechanistic attitudes to the relationship between complementar opposites -- affecting open understanding of the way that birth is engendered? How is it that it is the two leading countries of the Christian-inspired Coalition of the Willing that have the highest incidence of teenage pregnancy of industrialized countries? [more]

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<th>Destroying the Global Social Fabric</th>
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<td>There appear to be groups in both the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds who believe that a clash of civilisations is needed for religious reasons. The Christian fundamentalists believe that Christ will be resurrected once the people of the Jewish faith are resettled on the banks of the Euphrates. The Muslims extremists believe that the Mahdi will arrive when the battle between Muslims and non-Muslims intensifies. This political scenario is threatening to undo the entire global social fabric built since the end of the second world war -- one based on the tolerance between different faiths, races, genders and cultures. A clash of civilisations can lead to Armageddon, where there will be no winners on earth. But perhaps the religious extremists are not searching for winners on earth. (Former prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, <em>Without a war on poverty, we will never defeat terror. The Guardian</em>, 9 August 2004)</td>
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### Alternative pathways

Ironically politics typically distinguishes between the "Right" and the "Left" -- terms also applied to the distinction made by esotericists between the forces of the "Right hand" in contrast to those of the sinister "Left hand" path [more]. Fundamentalists have traditionally associated women with the "sinister" temptations of evil. Polarization is now fundamental to the "Good or Evil" politics of the Coalition of the Willing. This may follow from a form of religious "syllogism" such as the following, with its implicit "corollary":

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<th>&quot;Corollary&quot;?</th>
<th>&quot;Syllogism&quot;?</th>
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<tr>
<td>God is necessarily right</td>
<td>We are a people chosen by God [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>We believe we are people of God</td>
<td>I am born again in Christ [more]</td>
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<tr>
<td>If we are proven to be in error…</td>
<td>&quot;He who is not with me is against me&quot; [<em>Matthew 12:30]</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Then we are clearly not with God</td>
<td>&quot;You are either with us or against us&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are we not then with Satan?</td>
<td>Those against us are therefore with Satan</td>
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This polarized perspective can usefully be reviewed in the light of the comment of A W Tozer (*Man: The Dwelling Place of God*): A. W. Tozer (*Man: The Dwelling Place of God*): "It is a grave error for us evangelicals to assume that the children of God are all in our communion and that all who are not associated with us are ipso facto enemies of the Lord. The Pharisees made that mistake and crucified Christ as a consequence."

Fundamentalists of all persuasions are vigilant in explicitly distinguishing the role of Satan in all who are in disagreement with them. There is perhaps a case for exploring how the "born again" might recognize the merits of a gnostic framework such as the following -- given the special attentiveness of gnosticism to the relationship between the "forces of light" and the "forces of darkness".

In discussing the *Trinity and Gospel*, H Rajinder Nijhar (*The First Gnostic Principles of One Good Faith*) argues that there there are seven types of people: four of the Kingdom of God and three of the kingdom of Satan. He distinguishes

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<th>People of the Kingdom of Satan</th>
<th>People of the Kingdom of God</th>
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<tr>
<td>Once-born hylics or the people of flesh</td>
<td>Once-born hylics or the people of flesh</td>
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<td>Twice-born of evil spirit</td>
<td>Twice-born doubting people of spirit</td>
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<td>Twice-born Beast</td>
<td>Twice-born firm believers</td>
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<td>Saints</td>
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Nijhar relates this division to the biblical parable "For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three" (*St Luke 12:52*) in terms of the corresponding spiritual states of the soul. As such it reflects the conflict between the people dominated by "ego" against those by "mind" whilst the people, who are led by "wisdom" or the Holy Ghost are at peace because they are the "Royal Kings" i.e. contented with their lot.

The three dominated by "ego" are

1. family or tribal "seed" e.g. a white person may feel superiority over the black person,
2. physical strength and/or prowess, and
3. pride of the "Letters" e.g. a person who has read many books by the "letters", say on the subject of religion, may feel an air of arrogance as the Pharisees and Sadducees felt and the present theologians of "letters" still display more.

Whilst the two dominated by the "mind" are

1. greed that the clever people like Judas Iscariot exercise over the simpletons and
2. worldly temptations, the third temptation of Satan to Jesus and the typical example is the Papal empire.

So, there is always a conflict between the clever "cheats" led by "mind" and the "cheated", the simpletons; whilst the people led by "wisdom" or Holy Ghost always live by their "lot", exercise "mercy" in their deeds and do not impose their own views upon the others [more]

- perspective connectivity
Reflections on the nature of "sinister" rebirth

The concern in what follows is to explore the experiential implications of becoming "born again", the sense of righteousness and exclusiveness to which it gives rise, the sense of occupying the moral high ground, as well as the liberation from constraints by which others may be bound -- and the sense of antipathy which such attitudes and status may evoke in others. Many of the "positive" threads (identified in Varieties of Rebirth: distinguishing ways of being "born again", 2004) will therefore not be explored further, especially when they are more rhetorical devices and descriptors rather than indicative of a new perspective or insightful as to its nature. It is assumed that much can be learnt about the "positive" implications of rebirth from such "negativness" alternatives.

The "negative" threads call for exploration at this time because of the lack of attention to them -- except perhaps as dramatic plot themes in many media and fictional presentations and the efforts of those dismissed as conspiracy theorists. A situation has been created in which the "positive" rebirths are a key feature of "real" international policy-making through "born again" leaders supported by "born again" followers, whereas the analogous "negative" forms of "rebirth" have been marginalized into "unreal" stories and myths offered for popular consumption. However, the relation of the many "real" incidents of corruption and scandal associated with key figures has not been linked to the possibility of such "negative" forms of "rebirth" -- which can safely be framed as "unreal", although ironically, the "born again" freely demonize others as "satanic".

**Education:** The question here is how would some choose to go about "educating" those it is desired should be oriented to the "left-hand path"? It is their rebirth that would open them to more possibilities that are more exploitative of others. Some possibilities of such education might include:

- "re-education" and brainwashing processes typical of many political ideologies
- experiences of physical and/or psychological cruelty that cause the person to adapt to the mindset that treats them as normal. This may be the inadvertent consequence of military experience, but is especially the consequence of the kind of training and experience offered to interrogators in defence of the core values of their civilization. It may also be the consequence of having to survive in urban ghetto gangs
- indoctrination techniques employed by doctrinaire religious groups may trigger problematic forms of rebirth, especially in those labelled groups marginalized as cults
- techniques used by some occult and esoteric groups, distinct from well-documented processes of brainwashing. Processes associated with satanic masses have been widely presented as resulting in forms of rebirth characterized as "demonic possession" in contrast with "possession by the spirit"
- techniques to "break the spirit", "pervert", "corrupt" and "bend" people, as publicized in certain movies, possibly by offering (or imposing) experience in sexually perverted contexts, however these are understood
- deliberate use of drugs to undermine inhibition, alter perception and dull sensitivity, possibly in support of other approaches
- psychological warfare techniques that may trigger a form of "rebirth" in their most skilled practitioners, but also in those who succumb to their influence as they become habituated to their patterns
- mass media as deliberately used, with "spin", to distort perception and "educate" people to particular forms of understanding that may trigger a rebirth

Training schools for such perverted forms of education might be expected to exist. But, consistent with their purpose, it is to be expected that their real purpose would be disguised under a cloak of positive values. A possible example is the highly controversial School of the Americas -- subsequently renamed as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation [more]. More obvious examples might include certain kinds of political, ideological and religious indoctrination centres, training camps and courses.

**Assessment:** The question here is whether rebirth of the "left-hand path" is distinguishable from rebirth of the "right-hand path", and by whom? A challenge for a group recognizing some form of "rebirth" is the means by which its chirality is verified and by whom it is authenticated -- and whether, or how, such authentication is of significance to the individual. Christians in particular could usefully be challenged to provide some form of "quality control" on the numerous untested claims to being "born again". Issues of relevance are:

- there is every possibility that a "once-born" person would be unable to distinguish between a "twice-born" person of the "left-hand path" and one of the "right-hand path"
- there is every possibility that reborn people of the "left-hand path", if they needed to disguise themselves, would seek to do so as reborn people of the "right-hand path"
- there is no equivalent to the "Turing test" (by which it is hypothesized that artificial intelligence can be distinguished from human intelligence) that might be used to distinguish adequately between the reborn of one degree and another, particular if they are on one path rather than another. The tests of "genuineness" of synaesthesia, in its various possible forms, are indicative of the nature of the challenge (see Synaesthesia: union of the senses)
- psychiatrists are obliged to assess people who may be mentally "ill", but it is unclear how they would assess or distinguish those who had been "reborn" to different degrees -- especially those who may be mentally more "healthy"
- spiritual directors (notably in the Catholic tradition) are obliged to deal with individuals who claim that "God speaks to me" or who have what are claimed to be mystical experiences. In contrast to psychiatrists, such investigators are however obliged to give
some credence to the possibility that God may indeed be communicating in that way -- as has been claimed for some who have been successfully examined for beatification

- individuals can claim that through prayer or inspiration, they are effectively instructed to certain actions by God, or that their intentions are sanctioned by that means. Such claims are normally not assessed according to either psychiatric disciplines or with the insights of spiritual directors -- notably when the claims are by political leaders of powerful countries. The dimensions of the challenge have been highlighted in the case of incitement by a priest (via SMS) to murder [more].
- the ability to distinguish between "left" and "right" at a particular level may be a valuable indication of having been "born into" that level, although the challenge of how to verify or communicate that assessment remains
- self-assessment of having been "born" into a new level may be closely associated with appreciation that one's perceived enemy is but an aspect of oneself, although this does not preclude subsequent awareness of new "enemies" at the level into which one is "born"

The challenges of assessment are well expressed by the classical phrase: *Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes?* They may perhaps best be understood in terms of the cybernetic principle known as Ashby's *Law of Requisite Variety*. The point being that any such assessment can only be effectively made from a more insightful perspective -- associated with a higher degree of "rebirth". This does not however respond to the challenge of how the authority of the assessor is to be assured for those who need that assurance. Traditionally this authority has been guaranteed through communicating a sense of "holiness" to those of "lower birth". But it is clear that such a communicated sense of holiness can be used as a disguise.

**Opportunity:** The question here is how can the insights obtained be used to achieve an effect opposite to that claimed or assumed by others. The point to be emphasized is that being reborn offers a sense of a new engagement with the surrounding world -- and with reality itself. This may be understood as a new form of cognitive apprehension. This detached engagement is accompanied by a distance, a disengagement or a sense of perspective. This is, for example, reflected in the subtitle of the autobiography of M K Gandhi. (*The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 1927). He deliberately engaged in experiments with his reality. It is also reflected in the autobiography of Mary Catherine Bateson (*Composing a Life*).

The perspective has been described by mathematicians in endeavouring to give people a sense how an inhabitant of a 3-dimensional world would perceive one living in a 2-dimensional world (Edwin A Abbott. *Flatland: a romance of many dimensions*, 1884; Dionys Burger, *SphereLand*, 1965), and -- through generalizing -- how someone in a N+1 dimensional world would perceive someone in a N dimensional world (Ron Atkin. *Multidimensional Man: can man live in 3-dimensional space?*, 1981). The important point is the increased number of degrees of freedom of someone -- born into the N+1th order world -- to maneuver in ways that are difficult to comprehend by someone constrained to a world of lower dimensionality. As with a laboratory glove-box, an inhabitant of an N+1 dimensional world can reach into the constrained world and manipulate it freely -- possibly with minimal disturbance.

These explanations are neutral but the issue here is how to understand the implications of situations when they are not. Those openly labelling themselves "born again" Christians, for example, readily assume that it is understood that their actions will necessarily be imbued with positive values out of which they can act towards others in a more constrained reality. This is a typical image of the nature of becoming "twice born". The question is what should be understood about those who are "born again" and choose to act in an ill-intentioned manner in relation to those constrained in lower dimensionality.

Curiously the challenge of consciousness -- how the activity of the brain produces sensory experiences; and more generally, how it produces consciousness -- is a subject explored by Francis Crick and Christof Koch (*The Unconscious Homunculus*, 2000) using the alchemical metaphor of a homunculus. A homunculus is usually thought of as a "little man inside the head," who perceives the world through the senses, thinks, and plans and executes voluntary actions. (see homunculus as a visualization of the connection between different bodyparts and areas in brain hemispheres). The authors, following F Attneave (*In defense of homunculi*, 1961), argue that the concept of the unconscious homunculus is not a trivial one and can be used to understand levels of consciousness:

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We all have this illusion of a homunculus inside the brain (that's what "I" am), so this illusion needs an explanation. The problem of the infinite regress is avoided in our case, since the true homunculus is unconscious, and only a representation of it enters consciousness. This puts the problem of consciousness in a somewhat new light. We have therefore named this type of theory as one postulating an unconscious homunculus, wherever it may be located in the brain. The unconscious homunculus receives information about the world through the senses and thinks, plans and executes voluntary actions. What becomes conscious then is a representation of some of the activities of the unconscious homunculus in the form of various kinds of imagery and spoken and unspoken speech. Notice that this idea does not, by itself, explain how *qualia* arise.

The question is whether the levels of consciousness explored by neurobiologists mirror in some way the realities into which an individual may be born -- notably as the unconsciousness is progressively integrated in the kind of individuation process envisaged by depth psychologists.

**Questions:** Here the issue is whether there are particular characteristics to the questioning undertaken by the "once-born", the "twice-born"...or the "N-born". One possible approach to this is via the explorations of Arthur Young (*The Geometry of Meaning*, 1978). His scheme of 12 dimensionless constants is based on the different kinds of vigilance required by an operator to control a vehicle -- a minimum of six observations are required to determine the behaviour of a free agent [more]. Its adaptation elsewhere to a *Typology of 12 complementary dialogue modes essential to sustainable dialogue* may be further adapted (see *Intereacting Modes of Cognitive Vigilance: clues to questions distinguishing degrees of "rebirth",* 2004 ***) to offer useful metaphors regarding the relationship between questions of different order. This focuses on a formal mathematical understanding of the nature of "bent" and "twisted", notably in relation to orders of complexity and the fundamental role of "coiled coils" and their symbolic significance.
Understanding the possible degrees of "twistedness" would help to formulate better questions to detect, or hypothesize, deception. Questions formulated at level N-1 may be inadequate to penetrate stealth at level N. So being able to formulate questions of level N+1, sensitive to stealth at level N, is increasingly a strategic necessity. What kind of questioning procedure -- other than total paranoia -- can envisage and detect "black operations" of any level of complexity?

The interesting challenge is the condition under which it is appropriate to assert deceptively the existence of a "Tooth Fairy", "Goblins", or "Father Christmas", or some other superstition, as part of an educational process. How is this to be compared to asserting the existence of a "Bogeyman" -- in a world preoccupied with levels of terrorism far less lethal annually than traffic accidents?

**Exploitation of the strategic advantages of rebirth**

**Disguised initiatives and camouflaging deception**: Public relations is readily used to decorate, "disinfect" and "perfume" initiatives that may be perceived as problematic. Use is made of carefully cultivated "positive" values -- whose quality only the overtly perverted would publicly dare to question. The disguise is thus held in place by the ease with which any who note that it is slipping can be accused of being opposed to family, patriotic, or universal values. This process has been a prime characteristic of the difficulties of the Democrats in the USA in out-maneuvering the Republicans in American post-9/11 politics.

Because of their coloring, many animals blend seamlessly into their environment, making it difficult for predators to detect them. It is claimed that there are four basic types of camouflage: concealing or cryptic coloration (matching colours or patterns), disruptive coloration (spots, stripes, blotches), counter shading (dark and light), disguise or mimicry [examples | more]. Such camouflage in animals encourages both predators and prey to review critically what they appear to be seeing. Similarly in response to widespread use of spin by government and corporations to disguise their initiatives, people are educated in the need to question the apparent content of information presented to them -- or become victims of predatory initiatives seeking their exploitation. Extensive use of disguise is of course made in interpersonal relations of any kind. The demand for cosmetics can be understood as a recognition of this need.

"*Cloaked initiatives*": So-called "cloaking devices", dependent on the achievement of one or more "levels of stealth", have been extensively popularized in science fiction movies and internet games [more | more]. Considerable military research has been devoted to so-called "stealth technology", to developing higher "levels of stealth", and to the need for more sophisticated detection systems in response to its use by others [more | more]. The possibility of secret use of such "invisibility technology" has inspired readily dismissed conspiracy theories [more | more]. The degree of "stealth" is also a feature of transsexual lifestyle choices [more]. "Levels of stealth" are also a concern in relation to biological and computer viruses.

More interesting, in relation to the arguments of this paper, is the effective use of "cloaking devices" and "stealth technology" by organizations in the pursuit of their agendas and initiatives. There are many "secret organizations" operating "under a cloak of secrecy" (see Alan Axelrod. *International Encyclopedia of Secret Societies and Fraternal Orders*, 1998). Public relations and media spin may serve the purpose of camouflage as indicated above, possibly through techniques of "mass distraction" known to rulers down the ages ("circuses", etc). The use of such "stealth technology" by governments and organizations raises the useful question as to the possible "levels" of stealth with which regulatory agencies and others should be concerned. Clearly well-resourced organizations with controversial agendas may find it appropriate to invest, like the military, in "stealth technology" of a higher order. With the ever increasing penetration of the military-industrial complex into government, it is only to be expected that governments will seek to benefit from stealth-disposed mindsets in envisaging viable policies -- and increasing the degrees of strategic freedom to maximize "what they can get away with". Criminal groups must necessarily perceive this as offering competitive advantage -- as with any predator.

Strategically, the development and control of "front organizations" (or "facade" organizations) is recognized as an essential process in both the guerrilla effort to carry out an insurrection and in the promotion and protection of particular special interests by corporations (such as pharmaceutical companies), governments, ideological or religious groups [more | more]. The existence of legitimate "front organizations" may be deliberately confused with terrorist "front organizations". Criminal groups may also make use of "front organizations", notably for purposes of money laundering.

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**Morality as Polyfilla**

Maybe the morality of all political parties gets tattered after a certain period in office, but the order of Blair's moral betrayal has gone well beyond that.... We asked the wrong questions of the young leader in waiting; the issue was not whether he was sincere. He was. What we underestimated was his remarkable capacity to convince himself of the moral rectitude of his own actions.... Later, he used morality on the international stage to dress up a government bogged down in managerialism and public-sector reform. The metaphor which comes to mind is morality as a kind of all-purpose Polyfilla which Blair has used to great effect to build the coalitions, and mask the internal contradictions of policies on both the domestic and international front.[more] (Madeleine Bunting, *The Guardian*, 16 August 2004)

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**Examples of disguise, stealth and perversion of declared values**

The following are indicative of contexts in which the highest human values are promoted as a disguise for their stealthy subversion:

- **Conservation**: Various reports question the uncritical relationship between conservation and the wildlife media as having a tragic impact on subsistence and traditional communities. Use of the values of conservation to disguise agendas ensuring the exclusion of people from their traditional environment then smacks of colonialism.

- **Sport**: As indicated by the bidding scandals associated with the Olympic Games, the values that they claim to represent are used by the highest authorities in the organization of the games as a cover for personal advantage. It is to be expected that this pattern at the international level would be reflected at the regional and national levels -- if not a direct instigation of such double standards. The incidence of doping is also a reflection of such standards.

- **Humanitarian intervention**: As has been amply illustrated in the case of Iraq and Afghanistan, the highest human values are
used to disguise agendas of national interest, in this case to gain control of oil reserves and its transportation. The point was most ironically made when cluster bomblets were dropped in packaging very similar to dropped food packages, whether deliberately or inadvertently [more]. This recalls the use of smallpox-infected blankets to exterminate the American Indian population in the 18th century [more | more]

- **Science:**
  - **Scientific whaling:** Marine biologists are totally complicit in the continuing slaughter of whales authorised by the International Whaling Commission -- claimed to be necessary for the further advance of knowledge and the protection of whales.
  - **Space exploration:** Astronomers and space scientists readily claim that their efforts lead to vital advances in knowledge. This obscures the fact that huge budgetary allocations to achieve escape velocity from gravity wells are effectively ensure the escape of expertise from addressing problems of greater gravity. These are exemplified by the scandals of mis-governance in the poorest regions of the world, or by the challenge of integrating gypsy communities in industrialized societies, or by the "war against drugs", or by ordinary criminality.
  - **Pharmaceutical research:** Arguments are readily presented by the pharmaceutical industry concerning the stark choice between supporting their research or forging the possibility of saving lives -- arguments that effectively disguise the potential of alternatives that are skillfully marginalized, as with the suppression of methods of eliminating disease in favour of creating long-term drug dependency as a costly palliative.
  - **Genetic engineering:** As with pharmaceutical research, unverifiable claims are made for the lifesaving potential and necessity of genetic modification -- disparaging any questions concerning the long-term risks.
  - **Corporate social responsibility:** This is widely promoted as the key to good citizenship and accountability on the part of corporations. Nothing is said of the use of social responsibility audits to disguise the fact that many of the largest corporations pay little or no taxes -- as good corporate citizens might be expected to do. Major corporations may even vigorously promote transparency amongst smaller competitors in order to render them economically non-viable -- where larger bodies have opportunities and resources to bypass such accountability constraints.
  - **Care for the vulnerable:** Much is made of the devoted care offered to the vulnerable (aged, orphans, handicapped, etc) in specialized institutions. Considerable efforts have been made to disguise the extent of the systemic abuse by the carers and the cover-ups undertaken by their superiors. The case of sexual abuse by priests has achieved the most publicity despite considerable pressure to claim that cases were exceptional and isolated.
  - **Development agencies:** The process of "development" has been universally presented as a panacea -- used by many individuals and institutions to disguise the failure of such initiatives according to their own declared values, despite the considerable benefits reaped by those engaged in the implementation of development programs. Whereas their benefits, even their long-term benefits through agency pension schemes have been guaranteed, the benefits of their actions for those on the ground have not. Maurice Strong, a UN insider, in his book Where On Earth Are We Going described the condition as "leaders preying on the people who look to them for help."
  - **Construction contracts:** As with "development", construction contracts are typically promoted under a marvelous array of values, promising win-win benefits to all. Again, as with development programs, such projects are typically of guaranteed benefit to those who engage in them (especially with tolerated cost overruns) but of totally questionable benefit to those for whom they were destined. Examples include major dam projects, the UK Millennium Dome, etc.
  - **Military appropriations:** Defence departments are typically vigorous in their presentation of essential expenditure, vital to national security, without which the country would otherwise be dangerously vulnerable. Much has been made of the cost scandals associated with such appropriations.
  - **Art:** This is typically promoted as excellent, representative of cultural insights to be highly valued -- but this is typically to protect vested interests and inflate prices.
  - **Intergovernmental resolutions:** These are the key instrument enabling action by the international community, notably in the case of the United Nations. They are presented as exemplifying the highest values, and in defence of the highest values, but are typically structured in such a way as to avoid any need for action -- even in the event of imminent starvation or massacre.
  - **War against terrorism:** As in any dictatorship, a twice-born perspective may readily suggest that those dissidents opposed to its proclaimed agenda be framed as terrorists -- even assassinated -- as with the witches and heretics of the past. Conspiracy theorists seek to document the extent to which rogue agencies may be deliberately embedded in seemingly admirable security initiatives in order to undertake "black operations" that represent values totally in contrast with those which the security agency formally claims to defend.
  - **Health and safety:** These are promoted as the most precious values under which human life must necessarily, and unquestionably, be protected. As noted above, these values are readily used to disguise exorbitant security appropriations, inappropriate research, or the need for investment in reconstruction of questionable value. In the case of medical practice, appeals to these values are skillfully used to protect the vested interests of the "qualified" and to marginalize the "unqualified" -- whatever the health or cost implications for the patient or for a national health service.

Further examples are presented in *Varieties of Encroachment* (2004). This raises the question of degrees of encroachment. Also to be explored is the nature of the subterfuge to be encountered when confronted by strategic dilemmas (see Configuring Strategic Dilemmas in Intersectoral Dialogue, 1992).

History may express amazement and dismay at the tendency of this period to focus vast resources on unchallenging problems of limited social significance, whilst neglecting the more obvious, and more complex, problems that could lead to the rapid destabilization of modern civilization. Space exploration must be considered a prime example of such arrogant misallocation of resources.
Orders of deception and stealth -- in relation to orders of complexity

It is useful to recognize that international policy since 9/11 has been inspired and driven by American neoconservatives explicitly inspired by the political philosopher Nicolo Machiavelli who wrote in 1520:

> When it is absolutely a question of the safety of one's country, there must be no consideration of just or unjust, of merciful or cruel, of praiseworthy or disgraceful; instead, setting aside every scruple, one must follow to the utmost any plan that will save her life and keep her liberty.

Many neocons now in positions of influence in Washington can trace their status back to Leo Strauss of the University of Chicago -- and Paul Wolfowitz's PhD supervisor [more]. One of Strauss' books was *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. William Pfaff (*The Long Reach of Leo Strauss, International Herald Tribune*, 15 May 2003) describes Strauss' followers as a "cult", noting that Strauss believed that "essential truth about human society and history should be held by an elite and withheld from others who lack the fortitude to deal with truth." In their view "it has been necessary to tell lies to people about the nature of political reality...The elite keeps the truth to itself...This gives it insight and...power that others do not possess." As noted by Jim Lobe (Leo Strauss' Philosophy of Deception, 19 May 2003), deception is considered by them to be the norm in political life. Strauss holds that the political order can only be stable if it is united by an external threat. Following Machiavelli, he maintains that if no external threat exists, then one has to be manufactured. In his view you have to fight all the time [more | more]

Some have interpreted the "con" in "neo-con" as referring to "confidence" as in "con-man" and "confidence trickster" -- especially given the neo-cons financial ties with arms corporations benefitting from conflicts the neocons engender. The much publicized Grilli quest novel by Dan Brown (*The Da Vinci Code*) makes a telling point through the anagram of Da Vinci's "Madonna of the Rocks" that gives "So dark the con of man".

<table>
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<th>Exploiting &quot;motherhood values&quot;: The Public Good</th>
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<td>Before he was hanged at Tyburn, near today's Marble Arch station, in 1725, Jonathan Wild, the infamous thief-catcher, government adviser on crime and trader in received goods, penned a letter from prison advising his successors in how to succeed where he had failed:</td>
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<td>&quot;The public good, which has ever been the mask of self-interest and private avarice, must always be on the tip of your tongue. This notable phrase is swallowed down by the multitude with great approbation ... they cannot be made to think ill of the person whose favourite topic is the welfare of his country, notwithstanding his more secret intentions are upon the most selfish principles in nature.&quot;</td>
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In the light of the above it is then useful to consider how the positive values -- claimed for initiatives in relation to human rights, development, peace, justice, environmental health, etc -- might be suborned and perverted to different degrees in the case of the following:

- **Organizations**: Conspiracy theorists remark on the problematic nature of well-known organizations of elites, typically including bodies like: Club of Rome, Triilateral Commission, and the Bilderberg Group [more | more]. Clearly a case can be made that any organization has members and activities operating at different levels of understanding, possibly with nested agendas the only become apparent to those selected into an inner circle. The existence of any deceptive inner agenda can of course be easily denied. A particular problem for complex organizations, like the United Nations and the European Community, which purport to be transparent, is that it is extremely difficult to convince those who have reason to believe otherwise that such hidden agendas and modes of operating do not exist.

- **Meetings**: As with organizations, there are many regular meetings perceived by conspiracy theorists to be problematic in concealing agendas that are not in the wider interest. But it is also useful to reflect on how a meeting could be simultaneously conducted at different levels of significance, from the explicit to the highly implicit. This may in part be dependent on the perception of pattern beyond the serial interventions and the obviously polemical interactions. A question might for example be raised about the possible dynamics at the archetypal "roundtable" envisaged at Camelot (see *Pattern of Meeting Participant Roles: Shadowy 'roundtable' hidden within every meeting*, 1993), notably in the light of modern efforts to move in that direction (*A Congress that Dared the Unthinkable: report on the First New Age Congress, 1978; Transdisciplinarity through Structured Dialogue, 1994; Gardening Sustainable Psycommunities: Recognizing the psycho-social integrities of the future, 1995; Spherical configuration of interlocking roundtables: Internet enhancement of global self-organization through patterns of dialogue, 1998; Evaluating Synthesis Initiatives and their Sustaining Dialogues, 2000*)

- **Aliens**: The deception associated with the purchase of Manhattan for beads, much quoted in history tales, raises interesting questions. Although the tale has been declared false, it continues to circulate [more | more]. There was little to restrain the
colonists in engaging in such a sale, or in celebrating it for centuries thereafter. The tale bears reflection because of the possibility that extraterrestrials may well engage in a similar transaction with humanity -- selling what for what, and claiming what thereafter in the light of "universal" values? Some of the issues involved have been explored in various renderings of Faust and the role of Mephistopheles [more]. (see Distinguishing Patterns of Assumption in Dialogue with Aliens, 2000)

The Challenge of Discernment

In February of 1988, Jimmy Swaggart, the world's most watched televangelist, was caught consorting with a prostitute in New Orleans, Louisiana. A Mercer University study by Michael J. Giuliano (Thrice Born: The Rhetorical Comeback of Jimmy Swaggart, 2002) examines Swaggart's successful rhetorical campaign to salvage his ministry in the face of those actions and to justify his claim: "I am worthy of forgiveness and continued support". The study of his narrative and doctrinal arguments shows how Swaggart was able to demonstrate to his audience that he was not at fault for his actions, that his actions could be accurately blamed on other individuals, and that the entire ordeal would lead to an improved Swaggart. Giuliano demonstrate that such rhetorical strategies are not unique to Swaggart, indeed that when any celebrity defends his or herself in the face of scandal, similar themes tend to emerge.

The challenges to discrimination in the context identified above can usefully be reviewed by comparison of two contrasting exercises:

- Strategic Briefing for the Messiah: Based on professional insights from preemptive news and image management (1999)
- Strategic Briefing for Satan: Based on professional insights from preemptive news and image management (1999)

The challenge of operating out of the insight of "higher" orders of complexity, with respect to comprehension of them from any "lower" order of complexity, is then one of presentation. The rationale and coherence of the "higher" order will not be apparent from the more restricted perspective -- only the ability to make unusually successful and stylish "moves", easily labelled and cultivated as "brilliant", "magic" or "holy".

The art is then to engage those who do not "understand", whether they aspire to do so or not. Under such circumstances, that understanding may be misrepresented, whether deliberately or inadvertently. This can be done so as to motivate those who do not understand in the light of their own comprehension -- whatever the degree of misapprehension. They can be encouraged to project their highest values and aspirations onto a potential understanding that may indeed be the full realization of that potential -- or its total perversion. Prior to that realization, those motivated by their highest values may be expected to be fully committed -- even unto death -- to the vigorous defence of what they do not yet fully understand. Any doubts they may have may be challenged as lack of faith in the nature of that understanding and as lack of trust in those leading the way to such understanding for their benefit -- even as a treasonous betrayal of their confidence and mission. A context can be created in which they are made to feel guilty about having such doubts and meriting, in the eyes of others, a response appropriate to traitors.

The Challenge of Discrimination

"I am concerned that every time something happens that's not good for President Bush, he plays this trump card, which is terrorism... It's just impossible to know how much of this is real and how much of this is politics, and I suspect there's some of both in it." (Interview with Howard Dean, former contender for the Democratic Party presidential nomination, CNN, 2 August 2004)

Concluding questions

Are the future approaches to governance at the national and global level to be based on:

- a religious equivalent to the military arms race?
- the emergence of an equally problematic analogue to the military-industrial complex -- or its transformation into a religious-military-industrial complex?
- a shift in political discourse and political campaigns to claim a greater degree of divine inspiration than opponents, thus framing any political opposition as spiritually misguided -- and perhaps dangerously so?

At what level in a hierarchy do people:

- acquire the power to take up and completely disguise agendas and values that are apparently totally incompatible with those to which they claim to subscribe?
- effectively stand above the law or any regulatory process which might otherwise challenge their initiatives -- even if those mandated to undertake such regulatory investigations were of sufficient intelligence, insight and imagination to make the challenge?

Who has the power and the insight to:

- frame as the work of terrorists the assassinations that they themselves deliberately undertake in pursuit of their own agendas
- frame as terrorists the dissidents who demonstrate their disagreement and disapproval

Is the almost addictive need to be challenged by higher forms of deception (carrying insights forcing emergence of new modes of learning) characteristic of:

- all more advanced cultures and modes of social organization?
- only inherently dysfunctional societies?
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