

The Utility of a Psychoanalytic Mentality concerning Artificial Intelligence and the Jihadis: The Need to Integrate Maternal Attachment and the Shame of the Jihadis into those Algorithms

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*Never trust anything that can think for itself and you don't know where it keeps its brain -
J.K.Rowling as quoted by Cynthia Storer former CIA analyst -Bin Laden*

In 1988 Sherry Turkle was among the first to explore the new-relationship between Artificial Intelligence and Psychoanalysis.¹ In this essay she sketched out parallels between the two analytical endeavors by delving into the unconscious terrain of behaviors. In 2002 she proceeded to explore psychoanalytic culture and computer culture, wondering how computers would change us rather than us changing them.² She noted, “If one were afraid of intimacy yet afraid of being alone, a computer offers an apparent solution.” This illusion (or delusion) of companionship without the demands of friendship” has indeed become popular. “In the mirror of the [digital] machine,” Turkle continues, “one can be a loner yet never be alone.” Unwittingly she has described for us the overall reason why jihadis seem so often to attach to the computer, a hard object, and various social media platforms. Turkle also writes: “For some people, cyberspace is a place to ‘act out’ unresolved conflicts, to play and replay characterological difficulties on a new exotic stage.” Uncannily perceptive, she articulates how cyberspace has become the training ground for ‘armchair’ jihadis, who then go on to recruit and plan attacks in the comfort of their home at their computers. Planning attacks using social media platforms can be likened to a nefarious computer game that leads to massive school shootings, like Columbine. Indeed, psychoanalytic theory has been explicitly imported to computer games by Muñoz Fernández (2012).³ Undoubtedly more collaborative efforts between AI and psychoanalysis will be encountered in the future. The burgeoning interest in

¹ Sherry Turkle, 1988, “Artificial Intelligence and Psychoanalysis: A new alliance,” *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Winter. Vol.117, Nu. 1 of the Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, p. 240-268.

² Sherry Turkle, 2002, “Whither Psychoanalysis in a computer culture?”

http://web.mit.edu/sturkle/www/pdfsforstwebpage/ST_Whither%20Psychoanalysis.pdf, accessed 7 June 2019.

³ E. Muñoz Fernández, September 2012, A Psychoanalyst Artificial Intelligence Model in a computer game, (M.A. thesis, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology, Vienna University of Technology), https://upcommons.upc.edu/bitstream/handle/2099.1/17335/PFC_Enrique_Munoz_%28electronica%29.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y, accessed 10 January 2019.

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neuropsychanalysis—a fusion of neuroscience and psychoanalysis—has been witnessed for the past several decades. In *The Feeling Brain* (2015)⁴ Mark Solms picks up where Freud left off when he abandoned his “Project for a Scientific Psychology” in 1895.

The general public and most non-scientific academics, however, fail to realize the significance of unconscious behavior in AI, despite the fact that 95% of brain activity is beyond our conscious awareness. Van Rymenant, a neuroscientist, has emphasized its importance.⁵ As algorithms now begin to plunge deep into this previously unexplored terrain, the backbone of AI thinking, the unconscious has long been the meat and potatoes of psychoanalysis—in fact, for over 124 years. Interest and interaction between the two fields is currently growing. Just to cite a few examples, many interesting questions arise mutually shaping one another being coextensive and not mutually exclusive.

D. Richemond-Barak, chair of the International Law Desk of the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, Herzliya, Israel, in an interview given to the *Jerusalem Post Magazine* in which she raised the issue of integrating AI into military chain of command structure and its decision making raised the question if AI could be a deputy to human commanders? She stressed that as of now human judgment accedes that of Artificial Intelligence but will it forever? *Once this issue is opened up [AI as a deputy in the chain of command], the question becomes how to balance AI capabilities, which are ***superior to human ones, with human judgment, which – at least to date – is still superior to AI in addressing unexpected scenarios and being able to improvise.*⁶ The interplay and tension between a non-human deputy is juxtaposed to a human. However, this juxtaposition temporarily presents the AI deputy as if autonomous from human thought when in fact it has arisen out of the fantasy of a human being who created the AI deputy. The fantasy arises from the unconscious, again the meat and potatoes of psychoanalytic experience in all its nuances and multiplicities.

J. Alper contemplates such similarities and differences in his essay “A Psychoanalyst takes the Turing Test”. There he raises the fundamental question: can a human being ascertain if he or she is communicating with a live person or a machine?⁷ Alper notes that no matter how wonderful AI projects are, they all lack one thing – culture, that is, other people, how they think and feel, and how they collectively experience history. While it is not within the scope of this essay to provide a complete review of the literature concerning psychoanalysis’ relationship with AI, these examples underscore the complexity of the subject matter as well as provide a point of departure for psychoanalytic thinking and may be applied to studying how the jihadis relate to the internet, social media platforms and how they act out their sadistic fantasies of revenge. Will AI replace psychoanalysis and make psychoanalysts obsolete as translators?

⁴ Mark Solmes, *The Feeling Brain* (Routledge, 2015).

⁵ Marc Van Rymenant, 95% of brain activity is beyond our conscious awareness, <http://www.simplifyinginterfaces.com/2008/08/01/95-percent-of-brain-activity-is-beyond-our-conscious-awareness/>, accessed 8 June 2019.

⁶ Yonah Jeremy Bob, The Future of AI in Warfare and Counterterrorism, *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, <https://www.jpost.com/Jpost-Tech/The-future-of-AI-in-warfare-and-counterterrorism-615112>, accessed 27 January 2020.

⁷ Jerry Alper, 2017, A Psychoanalyst takes the Turing Test, <https://medium.com/@ja.alper20/a-psychoanalyst-takes-the-turing-test-78cdad731d52>, accessed 7 June 2019.

There are already cartoons depicting this, it remains doubtful due to the unique skills that trained psychoanalysts develop over years of experience and in-depth listening, a listening referred to by Wilhelm Reich as listening with “the third ear”. Psychoanalysts are translators of the unconscious but in a way different from AI translation. Psychoanalysts use their human body like a tuning fork to experience their analysands’ nonverbal communications of facial and hand gestures and visual and visceral projections and most especially olfactory impressions. One adult confronted with the option of using an “affective” computer therapy program designed to be used instead of therapy sessions with a real human being, aptly put it: “Why would I want to talk about sibling rivalry to something that was never born and never had a mother?”⁸ But what about the contemporary professional’s standby concept of maternal attachment?

“Maternal attachment is a biologically-driven construct, inherent within humans and other primates, designed to preserve the species through nurturing and protective behaviors.” When using the words “mother” or “maternal,” what is meant is the primary care giver, regardless of gender, the person who is predominantly available close by to nurture and bond with the baby.⁹

Can AI understand and depict the emotions and terrors arising in the maternal attachment? It is a key question, since maternal attachment—and all that it implies in ethics, empathy and morality—are ascribed to this phase of development. It is known that maternal abandonment can turn on and off genes, contributing to violent behavior.¹⁰ The mother builds¹¹ the brain of the baby *in utero* until age three, the age when it quadruples in size. This is also the critical time- frame when empathy is ignited and emotions are learned with the mother as she is the first cultural interpreter for the baby. It is known that addictions arise out of problems in maternal attachment.¹² Terrorism is an addiction and at its base it is about unmet needs in the maternal relationship.

Social Media Platforms – A Few Highlights

But first a few words about only a small number of social media platforms out of the many that the jihadis have turned to for their nefarious ends. Their choice reflects a surprising disturbance in maternal attachment. The reason is complex but reveals itself in the symbolic substitution of electronic conversations for human empathy. Weimann has written extensively on the use of social media by the jihadis.¹³ Quoting Kohlmann, “Today, 90 percent of terrorist activity on

⁸ Sherry Turkle, 2002, *Whither Psychoanalysis in a computer culture?*, http://web.mit.edu/sturkle/www/pdfsforstwebpage/ST_Whither%20Psychoanalysis.pdf, accessed 7 June 2019.

⁹ John Bowlby 1982/1969; Bowlby 1978.

¹⁰ Hesketh, Scientists scan brain of psychopathic murderer to reveal what makes a killer, 16 November 2019, <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/scientists-scan-brain-psychopathic-murderer-20895807oomed>, accessed 17 November 2019.

¹¹ Literally so: for it is her constant gaze and soothing presence, her nurturing breast and magical kisses that stimulate proper nerve growth and inhibit the formation of unneeded or harmful synapses between these nerves. And it is the absence of such nurturance and physical caring that create dysfunctional personalities.

¹² Flores, P. *Addiction as an Attachment Disorder*. New York: Jason Aronson Inc., 2011.

¹³ G. Weimann, 2014, *New Terrorism and New Media*, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/STIP_140501_new_terrorism_F_0.pdf, accessed 14 May 2019.

the Internet takes place using social networking tools. These forums act as a virtual firewall to help safeguard the identities of those who participate and they offer subscribers a chance to make direct contact with terrorists representatives, to ask questions, and even to contribute and help out the cyberjihad.”¹⁴ On Twitter Al-Shabaab, the Somali terrorist organization, was the first to use this platform to give a live commentary of the Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi, Kenya in September 2013.¹⁵ R. Paz , former head of research for the Shin Bet, Israel’s National Security Services, coined the phrase, the “Open University of Jihad” with specific reference to the internet.¹⁶

Weimann places Instagram and Flickr Terrorism together because they were both adopted as photo-sharing services, with Flickr even creating a virtual monument for foreign fighters killed in Syria. However, it was Instagram that the Tsarnaev brothers, Dzhokhar Anzorovich and Tamerlan, turned to in order to venerate and coopt the image of Shamil Basayev, the Chechen Jihadi mastermind who was killed in 2006.¹⁷ A major aim of the site was to inspire disenfranchised Muslims to join the jihad through sadistic imagery. It is therefore a continuation of jihad by other means, to paraphrase Clausewitz’s famous remark. Yet, despite this important insight, Weimann does not deal with the issue of shame. It is the *sine qua non* of our understanding. We seek to find out not just what happens turn seemingly ordinary and innocent young men into jihadis, but how and why: how have they been made susceptible and why do the processes work on some people. It is the *sine qua non* of our understanding. We seek to find out not just what happens turn seemingly ordinary and innocent young men into jihadis, but how and why: how have they been made susceptible and why do the processes work on some potential terrorists and not on others?

Could this unexplored appeal to a mentality of shame/honor be the hidden reason why Instagram has been found to be the worst social media for mental health? In a recent survey of almost 1,500 teens and young adults, the platform was found to be the most emotionally fraught social media available. A. MacMillan postulates: “While the photo-based platform received points for self-expression and self-identity, it was also associated with high levels of anxiety, depression, bullying and FOMO, or the ‘fear of missing out.’”¹⁸ Drawing attention to the issue of emotions under discussion, she reports that this social media platform was specifically identified with precisely those emotions likely to engage with the dysfunctional backgrounds of young men like the Tsarnaev brothers—anxiety, fear, depression and bullying. Interestingly

¹⁴ Weimann, p. 2. Weimann quoting Bergin links the phenomenon to pedophilia – targeting those to be girls, and recruited – potential victims (p.3). See also Kobrin, *The Jihadi Dictionary*, pps. 13, 44, 181, and 187. I have argued that de-radicalization is like trying to de-sex a pedophile. The problem is so ingrained in the characterology of the jihadi that superficial processes at best swap one problem for another offering allegedly a “cure.”

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 8.

¹⁶ Jonathan Stevenson, “Tackling Al Qaeda where it thrives,” *Culture*, 21 July 2008, <https://www.wired.com/2008/07/st-essay-22/>, accessed 7 July 2019. I personally worked with Paz who was fluent in Arabic and brilliant with regard to the culture. Yet he confessed to me that I was the first person to explain to him the psychodynamics of the mother in Arab Muslim culture concerning in particular the first born male baby and mother in the maternal attachment. He admitted that he did not know the formative work of Abdelwahhab Bouhdiba, *La Sexualité en Islam*, Paris : Quadrige, Presses Univ. de France, 1975.

¹⁷ See Kobrin, *The Maternal Drama of the Chechen Jihadi*, download at www.psychotherapybooks.org.

¹⁸ Amanda MacMillan, Why Instagram is the worst social media for mental health, *Time*, 25 May 2017, <http://time.com/4793331/instagram-social-media-mental-health/>, accessed 7 June 2019.

enough. Shame is not mentioned in MacMillan's list, even when in fact it is the key emotion that triggers anxiety, depression and most especially bullying. But where do such emotions come from?

Where Emotions Begin – The Maternal Attachment

Melanie Klein points to the maternal relationship as the launching pad for an infant's emotional life. Klein is the founder of child play therapy and the field of British Object Relations Theory, a subfield of psychoanalysis. In her book *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works* (1946-1963) she devotes an entire essay to "Some Theoretical Conclusions Regarding the Emotional Life of the Infant".¹⁹ She developed play therapy for children who could not express themselves in language. Such children's make-believe games is a way of acting out what terrors they hold without them being mature enough to name or classify the experience. In her studies, she focuses on how the children bonded to objects and used them. In this way, play therapy opens a window on to paranoia and reveals how children experience maternal terrors and their dependency needs. During the course of my psychological engagement with potential jihadis and already recruited jihadis, I came to transpose her theory to jihadi behavior learning how to discern what their earliest terrors were in the maternal attachment. Jihad is actually all about the mother, *ummi*.

J. Bowlby extends Melanie Klein's work by shifting into studying maternal deprivation and maternal abandonment. He especially focuses on maternal deprivation noting the importance of the creation and maintenance of a healthy maternal bond often missing in infants who had been separated from their primary caretaker. Bowlby is particularly interested in delinquent behavior and children who lack empathy. His first major monograph was *Maternal Care and Mental Health* (1951).²⁰ His work remains relevant for the investigation of jihadis, many of whom are underage and have had previous run-ins with the law. This approach has also come to be known as maternal bonding. For us, a key insight into how children become susceptible to such anti-social behaviors is that *jihadis bond violently to their victims*.

In psychoanalytic thinking, there are several ideas that underpin investigations such as Klein's and Bowlby's; and, while it may seem obvious to keep in mind the following, it is nonetheless important to cite specifically seven key maxims:

- (1) *All behavior is potentially meaningful,*
- (2) *We are more like than we are different,*
- (3) *It takes a culture to raise a child*

Hence:

- (4) *Child rearing practices are tremendously important.*
- (5) *Violence is violence, the label is irrelevant to the nonverbal communication*
- (6) *Labels are artificial constructs.*

¹⁹ Melanie Klein, *Envy and gratitude, and other works*, 1946-1963 (Los Angeles, CA: Psychoanalytic Electronic Publishing, International psycho-analytical library, 2007).

²⁰ John Bowlby, *Maternal Care and Mental Health*. Master Work Series. 2 (Softcover ed.). (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1995) [1951].

Finally:

(7) *Everybody has a mother.*

There is a general consensus that the prologue to violence arises during early childhood in conjunction with the maternal attachment. This carries over into society according to H. Barakat, the Egyptian sociologist who notes that the family is a microcosm of society.²¹ If the family is dysfunctional, the corollary is, that the society will be dysfunctional – think of the so-called Arab spring. V. Volkan, the Turkish Muslim Cypriot psychoanalyst, further argues that the need to hate and the need to have an enemy are in place developmentally by age three.²² The problem that the jihadis manifest in their violent acts is grounded in early childhood development. To paraphrase D.W. Winnicott home is where we start from. To further develop this point about the crucial nature of early childhood development and the maternal bond, one only has to look to Lovenheim's work on the attachment effect to see how the maternal bond persists and shapes all subsequent interactions throughout life.²³ Thus an insecurely attached infant will carry this trauma throughout the course of his or her entire life, re-experiencing the trauma of abandonment, neglect, abuse, etc.

There is a paradox here. The devalued female in a shame honor culture becomes the mother "Intel" for the producing the brain of her baby. The capacity for empathy, ethics and morality is developed during the maternal attachment experience, and if this bond is broken, weakened, mocked, abandoned or in other way questioned the quality of empathy does not develop to its full potential, if at all. There are many supporting sources for this assertion, ranging from Churchland's ground breaking work in her *Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us about Morality* (2018) to Govrin's *Ethics and Attachment* (2019). While we may not know by name the mothers of the men and women who built the computer chips for Intel's computers, what we can contemplate is that their maternal relationships helped to inspire creativity and ingenuity in the developers of computer science, even influencing AI as noted earlier. However, in regard to the domestic context of young jihadis, the focus is on the devalued female: she who has been chronically abused, flooded with stress hormones and nevertheless tasked with bonding "calmly" with her baby. It is a tall and unrealistic order to fulfill. Indeed Lovenheim tracks how the early maternal attachment experience is reflected in and embodied throughout life in all subsequent relationships. It sets the template for how to feel in bonding with others.

How does this apply to the jihadi and his or her violent bonding behavior? It can be traced back to the maternal bonding experience. The Iraqi Muslim child psychiatrist S. Timimi has disclosed the main difference between children raised in western cultures and those in Arab Muslim cultures; this is something that can be extrapolated to any child raised in a shame/honor culture. It is a social and cultural taboo against severing the bond between mother and child.

²¹ Halim Barakat, *The Arab World: Society, Culture and State* (Berkeley, CAL University of California, 1993, p. 118).

²² Vamik Volkan, *The Need to Have Enemies and Allies: From Clinical Practice to International Relationships*, (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1988).

²³ Peter Lovenheim, *The Attachment Effect: Exploring the Powerful Ways our Earliest Bond Shapes Our Relationships and Lives* (Los Angeles, CA: TarcherPerigee, 2018).

To our eyes, this is unbelievable or inconceivable: for while the maternal bond is unseverable, this bond is precisely the point of unbearable tension and dysfunction in many non-Western societies that are shame honor cultures. *Western practitioners do not see, let alone understand this cultural difference.* This means that there is no separation or individuation stage in development as there normally is in western cultures.²⁴ Missing this important crucial developmental step inhibits a person from being able to turn the corner and take a look at themselves. They have no introspection and must constantly blame others. A majority of converts to Islam who radicalize reveal in their family histories that they came from shame/honor families, either highly authoritarian, where there was parental abuse (psychological but also often physical); or from single parent families with no recognizable authority figure to establish boundaries and respect for authority. Instead, the domineering person in the household (sibling, uncle or aunt, or even a stranger) is often uneducated, even illiterate.²⁵

The lack of an individuation-separation stage is the psychological key to understanding the difference between shame/honor cultures and modern secular societies. Shaming inhibits a child from separating and discovering his or her capacity to be a fully functioning independent critical thinker rather than remain locked into a herd-type group mentality. Life is regulated by shaming practices to control, most especially the vulnerable little girl. Shame is one of the nine body language signals that babies use before they can talk: lowering of the eyelids, loss of muscle tone in the face and neck causing the head to hang low, communicating inferiority and hence intimately connected to issues of self-esteem; and, very importantly, it is a built-in response to the loss of pleasure, the interruptions of interest, enjoyment and curiosity which is so important for creativity.²⁶

Shame is a complex in-born signal. It speaks to a mismatch between the expectations of the infant and the response of the shame caregiver. To give Holinger's excellent simile, it is as if the infant intentionally pours out her cup of milk and says nonverbally to her mother: "Oh Mom! Look at how neat that milk looks cascading off the highchair on to the floor... and the splashes! How cool!" And Mom replies: "What in the world are you doing? Stop that. Don't ever do that again. Now look at what a mess you've caused and I have to clean it up!" The baby is then crestfallen with shame is written all over its face.

The psychoanalytic definition of shame differs from the ordinary dictionary which focuses on feelings of guilt, regret, or sadness that comes from doing something wrong; ability to feel guilt, regret, or embarrassment; dishonor or disgrace.²⁷ Instead the psychoanalytic definition contrasts to guilt. Guilt involves a capacity to make reparations and to admit fault. It is socially

²⁴ Sami Timimi, *Pathological Child Psychiatry and the Medicalization of Childhood* (New York: Routledge, 2002) p. 22.

²⁵ Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin, *Political Serial Killing by Proxy*: Christian Ganczarski the chief perpetrator, Nizar Nawar his proxy and the Djerba Synagogue Bombing, Anil Aggrawal's Internet Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology [serial online], 2007; Vol. 8, No. 2 July - December 2007, http://anilaggrawal.com/ij/vol_008_no_002/papers/paper001.html, accessed 27 January 2020.

²⁶ Paul Holinger, *What Babies Say before They Can Talk: The Nine Signals Infants Use to Express Their Feelings* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2009) p. 15.

²⁷ Entry "shame", Webster's Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shame>, accessed 12 June 2019.

oriented. Contrariwise, shame is an internal emotion experienced as a defective version of the self. Developmentally, shame is not as advanced and the individual cannot admit having done wrong or apologize for the act. Shame-ridden people never apologize; they deny, hide, blame others.... and this is a signal that the psychopathology of shame is the mark of a borderline or even sociopathic or psychopathic personality. The latter two types know---in a sort of way that they have done something wrong but they just don't care.

But why does a shame-ridden person feel defective? The sense of dysfunctionality and inadequacy results from the child-rearing practices in a shame/honor where inappropriate and excessive uses of shaming take the place of an introjected sense of right from wrong. This hampers the strength of character needed to signal interest, enjoyment and curiosity so essential to creativity. Shame eats into the soul and erodes self-esteem. It does not promote critical thinking. It leads to paranoia and the feeling of constantly being under attack. Where there is smoke there is fire.

In part shame has to do with one's dependency needs and the concept of needs being "dirty" and toxic. In shame/honor cultures the developing individual cannot get their needs appropriately met. For example, a female doesn't have the right to go to the bathroom by excusing herself in front of males. Instead, she must painfully restrain the urge to urinate until all the men leave the room and only then she can answer the call of nature. This little example indicates how basic needs like urinating in such cultures are considered toxic and dirty. The only conduit to alleviate such a need is to project one's own sense of impurities, i.e., defects, on to the other. The other is always those persons who have no power, most especially in the family, female children. Purification of the self occurs repeatedly in those kinds of cultures; in order to rid one's self of the humiliation caused by the shaming one must humiliate, punish and sometimes kill the other. Only then does the individual feel purged and powered, yet only for a short time. The old sense of being polluted and dishonored soon returns, recycling the contamination of the exquisitely shamed self.

In shame/honor cultures the honor-killing occurs as a means of redeeming family honor which has been shamed. Blood must be *willfully* spilled by the male in order to regain his honor, i.e., the family honor—which is mythically conceived as control over the site of that honor, in order words, the vagina (Ar. *'ird*). Paradoxically, the *'ird* is the location of both desire and disgust. The female herself is powerless to purify herself other than being honor - murdered or committing suicide. She can redeem family honor by becoming a female suicide-bomber as a proxy for male honor. We see this in the case of Reem Riyashi, the Hamas female suicide bomber, who was involved in an affair with her Hamas handler. Not the man but the woman is shamed. Not his desire but her desire or submission created the shame and so it was decided by her husband and her lover to kill her under the guise of a suicide bombing, and thus regain their honor.

Religions like Islam go hand in hand with shame/honor cultures. Some scholars recognize that Islam is a shame honor/religion as well as a political movement based on two key passages in the Koran: Sura 4 concerning wife beating, i.e., abuse of the female, and Sura 9 *qital* (Ar. slaughter) or the blow to the neck of jihad. From such pieces of Holy Writ, it may be inferred that the group-self is more important than a person. Note that the word "individual" is not used

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because there is an unspoken unconscious psychological taboo to individuated and separated from their mothers. Thus the maternal attachment effect of the maternal fusion carries over into a group fusion, such as the tribe, *hamula* (Ar. clan), *qabil* (Ar. tribe) *qabila* (Som. tribe) or *teip* (Chechen clan) as such a group may be called. This social construct fosters codependent personalities and unacknowledged micro-aggressions that occur daily, along with outright bullying. In Object Relations Theory, envy is the cause of an “attack”. The bully envies the strength of the Other and hence attacks him or her. This is also the essence of paranoia and splitting the world into black and white. Mosab Hassan Yousef, the Green Prince (also known as the Son of Hamas) who left jihad and converted to Christianity puts the matter bluntly: “The greatest enemy is shame.”

The jihadis are not only filled with shame, they are also terrified----of others, themselves, the world. But what is terror? It is not fear. According to Melanie Klein, terror is early developmentally and a nonverbal sense of insecurity and inadequacy related to the incomplete maternal attachment and culturally charged fantasies about the mother and her body. These terrified individuals bond violently to people. They become the terror and project it into us through their wild threats and bloody actions. They communicate nonverbally through a pantomime of their terrors which I have named *Jihadese*. This is a word coined from the linguistic concept of *motherese*, the verbal connection holding together the emotional frame of the maternal bond or attachment. In this first relationship in life. Vulnerable children learn that people are merely objects, things not persons with basic needs, both a poison sack for unwanted feelings and a source of narcissistic needs. But while they did not develop empathy, they become good at feigning it, as if they have empathy. It is not real empathy, only an apparent and temporary hiding of only an apparent and temporary hiding of their rage to inflict aggression, to manifest brutality and violence on or into the other—often including the denied and encrypted self, hence the prevalence of suicide bombings.

The complexity of shame in conjunction with early maternal terrors can be further understood by the fact that it involves primitive mental states. In psychoanalytic parlance, this is a catch-all term that covers areas pertaining to proto-mental states, that is, mental states, not yet differentiated from concepts of one’s own body. These phantasy constructions also involve prenatal and/or neonatal imprints on the mind and body. Often this arises from early attachment trauma. These *unmentalized* states (meaning “undigested” experiences) cause great disorganization of the mind because of the violence of unbound affects.

Due to primitive mental states, jihadis remain psychologically stuck in the past developmentally. Therefore, we can surmise that from early childhood, the future terrorists have been unable to “metabolize” positive experiences in their lives. *Positive* for them means the opposite of how we think of it. For jihadis, it means death and destruction. I was once asked by a leading Israeli criminologist authority on suicide bombing if Islamic suicide bombers were borderline. This naïve question led me to understand that many counterterrorist experts struggle

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to understand borderline psychopathology because they lack clinical experience and have not treated the different kinds of psychopathology.²⁸

Primitive mental states happen when an individual has poor social skills and a lack of intimacy—and jihadis have no sense of intimacy, even when they are sexually active or married. For them, sex means aggression, mastery of a subject over an object. The jihadis are the coercers. In their case, coercion replaces empathy, love and intimacy. Coercion is a form of bullying and, given the family dynamics, the first-born privileged son of “honor” is often the designated bully. Honor is nothing more than manipulation of power, control, and forced submission over the targeted victim by terror.²⁹

The way to deal with this dangerous formulation of a lethal blind spot in minimizing the jihadi behavior must be in establishing a psychological edge by knowing and understanding the mechanics and dynamics of primitive mental states, mechanisms of defense, and their misuse of objects (which is the definition of a perversion), all of which constitute perverse anti-social behavior. If we, as professionals in the field of counter-terrorism, cannot do this, we will simply continue to spin out of control in circles of frustration. The best example of this blind spot is the “resistance” among counterterrorism experts to investigate early childhood development, and domestic violence with regard to the workings of the mind and behavior in domestic and small group situations where the first signs of future jihadis are manifest. This is counterterrorism’s countertransference problem.³⁰

Primitive mental states entail paranoia and hence are predicated on splitting into opposites such as dominance and submission. They are primitive because the states cannot be consolidated into a coherent sense of self. The splitting causes a cognitive deficit and functions as a defense mechanism, maintaining power and dominance to gain submission of the feminized other.³¹

Trauma is another word for the limit of the ego’s ability to master psychic phenomena. And the destructive forces are not just past, but are present, operating in the psyche currently so that they cannot take in communications from others and learn from their experience.³²

Thus the jihadis live in a reverse superego psychotic world where what is good is bad and what is bad is good. Even the sages of the Bible understood that there were people who did not develop empathy as articulated by the reverse reality that they draw in Isaiah 5:

*Woe unto them who call evil good and good evil,
that call darkness light, and light for darkness;
bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.*

This is due to their failure to separate psychologically from the mother rather than remaining symbiotically fused to her and an inability to overcoming splitting of the world into paranoid

²⁸ Kobrin, *The Jihadi Dictionary*, p. 40.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 51.

³⁰ *Op. cit.* p. 60.

³¹ *Op. cit.* p. 82.

³² *Op. cit.* p. 193.

black and white thinking. Shaming severely damages the psyche in a shame/honor culture where needs can never be appropriately met because such deficits are considered dirty, toxic and must be projected out on to the *kufar* and blame them to the point of annihilating them as a bizarre purification of the toxic shame infested self.

But what of the ideologies that exploit these mental conditions in individuals and whole cultures? They play an important role but not as important as experts would like to make out, because they overlook the driver behind the ideologies.

- (1) First they act as a kind of girdle for these fragile personalities full of murderous rage. The ideologies cleverly package violently shared fantasies.
- (2) Second ideologies cleverly mask the unconscious meaning of the behavior hiding it in plain sight. To give one example – the rage against the mother due to the social taboo against separating from her, has led to domestic assaults, honor killings and even wargasm, i.e. jihad.

The male can unconsciously kill off his mother by projecting his rage on to his wife. The same goes for killing off the infidels because the other is always feminized [think of the hatred of the homosexual] or an unconscious hated image of the smothering mother. In sadomasochistic terms, this is a huge war, an orgasm of self-destruction. This is how they can momentarily feel alive and not dead. They are obsessed with death because they feel dead but fail to have the capacity to recognize and name their emotions.

Heilman and Witztum have noted that religion is the idiom and means of coping with stress.³³ Religious extremism, as in the case of the jihadis, is a symptom of a maternal attachment disorder. A downside of experts focusing obsessively on ideologies is the failure to discuss emotions and specifically the role of shame which inhibits getting one's needs met. This allays the experts' own terrors and the targeted audience's leaving us in denial; hence a psychological resistance to seeing the elephant in the room.

Yet what of the shared violent fantasies of the ideologies? They play an extremely important role since the toxic ideologies harness and put to use have an adverse effect on the young people growing up in such an environment. They make concrete the bizarre phantoms produced in the minds of the children and inciting the latent power of the annihilating fantasies. In other words, such ideologies, like windmills, capture the energy of violent psychosexual sadistic fantasies. It is hard for many western professionals to understand the extent of the rage. That is why I coined the term *volcanic iceberg mentality* to make graphically evident the seething cauldron of unconscious rage that lies below the surface of supposedly "normal" personalities and that becomes conscious through acting out the violent fantasies. The jihadi nice guy next door is a prime example of this phenomenon. "External Life-Mask of Sanity" is what Hervey M. Cleckley (2015) the famous criminologist called serial killers who had a hidden internal life of

³³ S.C. Heilman and E. Witztum, E. 2000. "All in faith: Religion as the idiom and means of coping with distress," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 3(2), 115-124.

violent psychosexual fantasies.³⁴ In Islam there are the ideologies of *taqiyya* and *kitman* which externalize, concretize and institutionalize the concept of deception. Thus, one is permitted not to tell the truth for the sake of Islam, so that the jihadi can pretend to be the nice guy next door.

They have a rage that exceeds murder itself, like the serial killer who repeats and must keep on repeating his crime. Their world is like a bad version of Pete Docter's Pixar movie *Inside Out*³⁵ where teens learn to identify and label their emotions. Indeed, their violent internal psychotic world spills on to the canvas of a crime scene. Major Nidal Hassan, the killer of thirteen people in Fort Hood on 5 November 2009 managed to hide his psychosis behind his profession as a psychiatrist in plain sight until he exposed his real psychotic self in the crime scene.

What underpins the shame/honor world? It is not the dysfunctional mother, even though the male child is smothered by her failed attempts at maternal love rather it is the figure of the female at the eye of the shame/honor storm. The real mother is seen as heroic and this is a psychological defense. And yet she is at the same time the female who was devalued and chronically abused by the daily micro- and macro-aggressions perpetrated by the entire group; they tell her she is a nothing, they treat her as though she were the stinking garbage pail for all their toxic projections. She is shit. They must evacuate what is hated in themselves into her – the object of hate. This contradictory function stabilizes their fragile rage filled personalities. That is why they also hate any *other* because the *other* is feminized – the Jew, the Christian, the Yazidis, the Hindus, and, of course, the homosexuals.

They hate what they want and seek to purge themselves of all that is uncomfortable inside of them, all that feels dirty. So how could they know what intimacy is? Sexuality for a male who has not separated from his mother psychologically is enormously intimidating. He has not gained any social skills. He doesn't know how to relate to a female. His awkwardness is more than gaucheness or shyness: it is a great source of humiliation. Hence the frequency of rape rather than intimate loving sex is common. His approach is about power, control and making the other submit—in the same way he had to submit as an infant. The attachment can only be achieved through violence – political violence because it is a constant source of humiliation to feel sexually inadequate and it is all the fault of the other. The other he wants to possess and the other inside himself he projects into her.

This is in part why there is so much rape – it is a forced, literally, concrete physical fusion and a repeat of being fused to the mother in a rageful way – hatred of the maternal object displaced on to a poor unwitting victim. As mentioned at the beginning Turkle noted that the internet is a way to avoid intimacy and hence a draw for the jihadis.

Even seemingly benign structures in architecture. for example, can reveal the obsession with the mother, according to the German Iranian rapper Shahin Najafi,³⁶ whose music album

³⁴ Harvey Clackley, *The Mask of Sanity: An Attempt to Clarify Some Issues about the So-Called Psychopathic Personality* (New York, NY: Martin Fino Books, 2015).

³⁵ Wikipedia: “*Inside Out* is a 2015 American 3D computer-animated comedy-drama film produced by Pixar Animation Studios and released by Walt Disney Pictures.”

³⁶ Wikipedia: “Shahin Najafi (Persian: شاهین نجفی) (born in 1980 in [Bandar-e Anzali, Gilan, Iran](#)) is an Iranian [musician](#), [singer](#), [actor](#), [songwriter](#) and [political activist](#)^[1] currently residing in [Germany](#).

caused him to go into hiding due to death threats. The album cover graphically displayed the mosque's cupola as a swollen breast with a thin flag arising out of the nipple portraying a phallus. When you are culturally forced to be married to your *ummi* (Ar. mother) it becomes difficult to experience intimacy with a wife, hence polygyny is embraced. While it may be argued that it is a strategic means of increasing one's population, it also hides in plain sight (like Poe's "Purloined Letter") the inability "to put all your eggs in one basket" due to terrors of being engulfed by one's mother's body.

But what of the female suicide bomber? She merely internalizes male rage of the female (due to not having separated from her mother) as self-hatred. As mentioned above, the whole Muslim culture cleverly allows for the annihilation of the female.

The death fusion is the upshot of trying to separate psychologically from the maternal fusion something which children should have mastered by age three. The death fusion is the essence of Islamic suicide bombing. The suicide bomber, fused concretely and literally in death with his targeted victims, believes he is liberating himself or herself from the mother---that is their essential fantasy. It is a classic rebirth imago. In 2007, the Centre for Social Cohesion in the United Kingdom-geo-mapped the entire nation and found where there were jihadis there was domestic violence. In 2019, more than ten years later, the survey author Niwar Afzal concluded that incidents of domestic violence must be taken seriously by the police as indicating they had potential jihadis on their hands. When I pressed him on the issue in a 2007 email, he had refused to make that connection. But I sensed I was on to something crucial and I came out blogging that the FBI needed to do the same kind of geo-mapping after the Boston Marathon Attacks when Tsarnaev had committed domestic violence. A suicide bombing is an attack on what should have been a healthy maternal attachment. It is what I called the *maternal cameo* – a Madonna and child image – prenatal and/or post-partum. Like a palimpsest,³⁷ the living maternal cameo is the original icon over which in the graphic violent picture of the death fusion of the suicide bombing is inscribed.

It was by "pressing the mute button on my mind's eye t.v." that I could begin to decode the jihadi's behavior. It was like having a child in play therapy who can't express his or her emotions verbally. The jihadi spoke in this pantomime of jihadese. Like little boys building towers with Legos and knocking them down, Bin Laden did the same, recall that he was an engineer, but he knocked them down in reality and that is psychotic. Jihadis' impaired thinking involving shared annihilating fantasies which they concretize. They do this in part because they never learned to separate out fantasy from reality through play in their shame honor cultural world. There is no genuine free play in shaming cultures because one is always under surveillance of the "evil eye" in order to preserve family honor.

Terrorism is now "*glocal*" = global and local. In this swirl of seemingly uncontrollable and ubiquitous terror, the maternal *wifi* is wired and the social media are used in nefarious ways by

³⁷ It may also be thought of the as a *crypt*, a place of silence and death, which nevertheless can be made to speak and reveal its presence after the event.

the jihadis. As the title of the New York Times Magazine front page exposée on Zacarias Moussaoui, the alleged nineteenth hijacker of 9/11 proclaimed: “Everybody has a mother!”³⁸

Closing Words

If you feel I have wandered too far afield in trying to describe the jihadi’s obsession for his mother, consider what was written in the kamikaze pilot’s manual during World War II. Traditional Japanese culture too is a shame/honor culture and shows many of the same features as Muslim societies. They have high rates of suicide. The female is devalued and abused – merely an object, like a toy. They have the tradition of the Samurai warrior and the sword that goes along with it for beheadings. The kamikaze pilots were told not to fear death because when they were within meters of their target to fuse with them concretely in an explosion of death, the face of their mother would appear and they would rejoin her. This is a classic rebirth fantasy.

So what can we do, we who wish to not only curtail the incidence of jihadi terrorism but also very much to help young boys and girls in confused traditional societies grow up to be happy, productive citizens of the modern world? Obviously, we must aid those communities and families to invest emotional and social value in the female because she makes the brain of the baby of the next generation. Then there is a need to identify our own terrors, our own inner terrorist so that we do not inadvertently trip over our blind spots, our points of resistance. And we should never give up hope because that is precisely what the jihadis want us to do, to buy into their death cult.

However, there is much more that can be done. For instance, in depicting the imagery, the connection between violently shared fantasies and their ideologies, I have tried to show in a very limited way how psychoanalytic thinking works with the unconscious. Like AI, it too delves into the unconscious. Turkle and Alper have foregrounded why psychoanalytic thinking and most especially its unique tradition of “listening with the third ear” (Reik 1983) with the psychoanalyst using his or her own body as a kind of tuning fork (Stone 2006) when working with patients at this very deep level, to be able to make sense out of the chaos of the unconscious.³⁹ If 95% of cognition is arising from the unconscious, the day when AI has developed a virtual third ear, may indeed be the day that psychoanalysis becomes obsolete and the day that the AI deputy surpasses human commanders on the battle field. However, since that doesn’t seem to be lurking on the horizon to the best of my knowledge, and I haven’t yet met an algorithm that can hear, psychoanalysis stands at the ready to help and enhance what the AI teams have been uncover concerning how jihadis use social media platforms such as Instagram (which is considered to be the worst for mental health) for their nefarious intents. Fusing the micro with the macro may assist in “cracking the nut”, breaking the linguistic code, augmenting it and systematically writing out the unconscious language of jihadese. It should be possible to do as we are more alike than we are different. The paradox of AI lies in the fact

³⁸ Susan Dominus, “Everybody has a mother, *The New York Times Magazine*, 9 February 2003, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/02/09/magazine/everybody-has-a-mother.html>, accessed 12 June 2019.

³⁹ Theodore Reik, *Listening with the Third Ear* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Stone, Martin, 1983). See also, Martin Stone, The analyst’s body as tuning fork: embodied resonance in countertransference. *The Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 2006, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-analyst%27s-body-as-tuning-fork%3A-embodied-in-Stone/a029e5a640bd15c8606868f878a92ccb6aef8a3a>, accessed 12 June 2019.

that it has arisen out of its human beings' unconscious. B. Ganor⁴⁰ noted that a key task of using AI lies in its constant critiquing and assessing and setting guidelines in order that its deployment safeguards against disasters.

⁴⁰ Yonah Jeremy Bob, The future of AI in warfare and counter-terrorism, 25 January 2020, <https://www.jpost.com/Jpost-Tech/The-future-of-AI-in-warfare-and-counterterrorism-615112>, accessed 26 January 2020.

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