EDUCATION AGAINST EXTREMISM

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Introduction

We have always had extremism which leads to violence and death – whether the Crusades, pogroms, large scale slaughters in the name of religion or nationalism, and of course martyrs. Is there anything new? Clearly, there is, because of technology and the speed of communication, and the greater amount of power wielded. Timothy Garton Ash writes in his book *Free World* of the clash of power and vulnerability, that the more the White House learned about possible ways for terrorists to use atomic, biological or chemical weapons, the more alarming it became.

> However, the people at the top also knew better than anyone what extraordinary, no longer just metaphorically 'space age' military power lay at their disposal. The so-called 'revolution in military affairs' had already taken them another technological generation beyond the satellite-controlled precision bombing of Kosovo. Like the Martians in H.G.Wells's *War of the Worlds* , they possessed the technology to find and destroy almost anything or anyone, anywhere in the world, with the target never knowing what had hit him. Yet it was they, the Martians, who had been hit. They must fight back, and win. But how, and against whom? (p118)

As we know, there are political and military solutions to extremism – sometimes more extremism, or extremism disguised as liberation – but I want to look at educational strategies. These cannot be 'solutions' – education is not that powerful – but at least they can be challenges. My two immediate questions are:

1. How do you prevent individuals joining extremist or violent movements? But also
2. How do you enable people to make challenges to extremist or violent movements or to extremist or violent governments?

This actually leads to big interlinked questions:
      a) How do we deal with identity?
      b) How do we deal with justice?
      c) How do we deal with critique?

Definitions of extremism
First I need to define the ground. Archbishop Desmond Tutu on a debate in Doha, Qatar defined extremism as '*when you do not allow for a different point of view; when you hold your own views as being quite exclusive, when you don't allow for the possibility of difference.*

In reality, and for the purposes of this lecture, I would want to add in '*and when you want to impose this view on others using violence if necessary'.* Some definitions say that extremism is the use of violence in order that a population forces their

governments to the table of negotiation or to some changes in their policies – that is, extremism is not just about views, but has a political end.

Who are the extremists?

The next question is 'who are the extremists?' There is a website which monitors other websites devoted to extremism (http://s170032534.websitehome.co.uk/extremismonthenet.html), and they list 'political fascism, skinhead fascism, Nazi parties, white supremacy, militia groups, Holocaust Denial, race hate, religious cults, anti-homosexuality, anti-Semitism, world conspiracy, Islamist militancy, pro-anorexia/bulimia, violent animal rights, sports hooliganism, violent political activism, bomb-making and suicide assistance'. By an irony, many of the Al_Qaeda websites are hosted by US companies…..

Thus there are many forms of extremism, and it is important to state from the outset that I am not just looking at the more obvious forms, such as suicide bombers – although they perhaps represent the extreme form of an already extremist movement Robert Pape in his book *Dying To Win* (2005) has analysed suicide attacks in great detail, looking at 315 attacks over 25 years, and concluded that 'there is little connection between suicide terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism or any of the world's religions'. Instead, he says what they have in common is a specific secular and strategic goal: to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from the territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland. 'Religion is rarely the root cause, although it is often used as a tool by terrorist organisations in recruiting and in other efforts in service of the broader strategic objective' (Pape 2005)

So the link between religion and terrorism is a complex one. We are seeing the politicisation of religion – the rapid growth of political Islam, the political reach of 'born-again' Christianity, Jewish extremism, or the Hindutva movement. There is certainly the exploitation of religious identity to feed into political polarisation – the Shariah-ization of Indonesia, Malaysia, despite a history of multiculturalism, and the distinctions between a Muslim country and an Islamic state becoming blurred (in an Islamic state, a non-Muslim could not be elected President). The key issue for our time then is the state sponsorship of extremism. Hussain Haqqani, former Pakistani ambassador to Sri Lanka talks of the need to deal with 'the depths of Pakistan's problem with Islamic extremism. He argues that the disproportionate influence wielded by fundamentalist groups in Pakistan is the result of state sponsorship of such groups and he warns that 'an environment dominated by Islamist and militarist ideologies is the ideal breeding ground for radicals and exportable radicalism'.

But many governments will use extreme measures to achieve their political and economic objectives. We can understand why US and UK have been accused of being 'terrorists' in their invasions and their support for Israel. In 2002 US spent more on 'defence' than the next eighteen biggest spenders combined – 42% of global spending. UK spends more than France, although a tiny country in comparison, and twice as much as Iran (2.2%). UK makes more out of arms sales than it gives in development aid – often to the countries it sells arms to. It could be argued that military intervention is justified only if there is genocide or real likelihood of attack – but not just to topple a dictator.

There are good reasons why statesmen from the signatories of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 to the authors of the UN Charter in 1945 set such store by respect for state sovereignty and non-intervention. If I think I'm justified in invading your country, you may equally well feel you're justified in invading mine. Or someone else's. President Putin clearly felt encouraged by America's unilateral action over Iraq to continue his oppression of Chechnya; and China felt it had a freer hand in Tibet. The road back to international anarchy is a short one. (Garton Ash, 2004:243)

Garton Ash continues 'I don't yet see a single example of a post-intervention international occupation which has successfully 'built' a self-governing free country'.

So I will leave open the question of what constitute 'extremist acts'. The spirit is perhaps captured in the winner for a recent funniest religious joke competition, which is actually about extremism:

Walking across a bridge, I saw a man on the edge, about to jump. I ran over and said:
'Stop. Don't do it;
'Why not?' he asked.
'Well, there's so much to live for!'
'Like what?'
'Are you religious?'
He said 'Yes'
I said, 'Me too, Are you Christian or Buddhist?'
'Christian'
'Me too. Are you Catholic or Protestant?'
'Protestant'
'Me too. Are you Episcopalian or Baptist?'
'Baptist.'
'Me, too. Are you Baptist Church of God or Baptist Church of the Lord?'
'Baptist Church of God'
'Me, too. Are you original Baptist Church of God or Reformed Baptist Church of God?'
'Reformed Baptist Church of God.'
'Me, too! Are you Reformed Baptist Church of God, Reformation of 1879 or Reformed Baptist Church of God, Reformation of 1915?'
He said, 'Reformation of 1915'.
I said, 'Die, heretic scum' and pushed him off.

How do we deal with identity?
Going back to my three questions, the first issue – and challenge – is that of people's identity. How do you give young people a secure identity without labelling or hardening this – what is sometimes called an 'essentialist' identity? – the notion that a person is 'essentially' a female, or essentially a Christian or Muslim, and this conditions every part of who they are. Social identity theory suggests that how we think about ourselves tends to vary along a continuum, from the perception of self as unique to the perception of self as very similar or identical to in-group members. In certain situations, we become *exemplars* of them – a process of depersonalization (Cairns 1996). Collective identity – and identity politics – is therefore a disturbing

force. It is through the creation of collective identities that ethnic and national movements, and the land-right claims they make, gain their force…they mobilise culture, tradition, religion and notions of history and place to evoke a sense of unity (Cockburn 1998:10).

Much is made therefore of the need in our multicultural societies to acknowledge our multiple identities – being simultaneously white, British, female, music-loving, broccoli hating etc. Mostly these things are in relative harmony [there is a joke about the guy who says: I hate 2 things: one of them is racism; and the other one is Indians]. The problem comes when one identity takes complete precedence. Amartya Sen in his book *Identity and Violence* claims 'Being a Muslim is not an overarching identity that determines everything in which a person believes' (p65)- although I am not sure whether that is in fact a choice for some Muslims, a total way of life. But Sen importantly draws attention to the failure to distinguish between Islamic history and the history of Muslim people (that is, not all priorities and activities and values need to be placed within their singular identity of being Muslim).

So there are two questions at this point: the choices that we make about our identities in particular contexts, and how we ascribe identities to others. Gandhi deliberately decided to give priority to his identification with Indians seeking independence from British rule over his identity as a trained barrister pursuing English legal justice. But the difference was of course that he did not then 'hate' or label all non-Indians. His struggle was a universal one. We know much about ascription of identities from the wars in the Balkans, how Serb and Croats had to choose, and then would be seen in that light, as in Rwanda with Hutus and Tutsis. They were seen to represent the rest, and the history of conflict. Even five years after the end of the war in Bosnia, I talked to a Croat teenager who said 'I'm not sharing a desk with a Serb'.

A strong sense of collective identity thus may mean a labelling or even a hatred for 'others'. For Michael Apple, evangelicalism is crucially linked to identity, to 'self' and to 'other'. He describes how, in the USA, the religious Right has a sense of justice which is guided by 'hate' for gays. For the majority of conservative evangelicals, they see themselves as 'nice' people. 'real Americans' who stand for things the rest of us have given up upon, 'true' motherhood.. I have seen a Western Baptist site in the US which has the URL 'godhatesfags'.

So I think we need more in the end than the concept of multiple identity, and I prefer Homi Babha's (1994) concept of 'hybridity'. He challenges the constructions and 'exotisisation' of multiculturalism and cultural diversity, which stress recognition of difference, and prefers admissions of long histories of cultural and ethnic mixing. Many writers in Silva's collection on Sri Lanka draw on this, showing the 'hidden history' of hybridity in culture, art or music, and challenging the notion of single or pure cultures. Extremism is often about some call for an imagined purity.

Hybridity means more than just a collection of multiple identities, but new combinations, and I like the idea as the original 'repeated as something different – a mutation, a hybrid.. at once a mode of appropriation and of resistance [to the mother culture]' (Babha,p111,120). In educational terms, then the game is to play up such originality – not push children into camps by getting other children to learn about 'their' Asian food or go on visits to the Sikh temple. The trick is to enhance the

resistance to such simple labels and categorisations, and give children a bit of status by showing how original and special each of us is.

Where I do agree with Sen therefore is in his questioning of 'community'. Being assigned to a 'community' (Muslim, Christian, Somali) implies the absence of choice.
> 'When the prospects of good relations among different human beings are seen (as they increasingly are) primarily in terms of 'amity among civilisations' or 'dialogue between religious groups' or 'friendly relations between different communities' (ignoring the great many different ways in which people relate to each other), a serious miniaturisation of human beings precedes the devised programmes for peace (pxiii)

His concept of 'miniaturisation' is a useful one, and also his doubts on 'representatives' of a community. I also have problems with 'community' – the assumption of a physical and homogenous reality – the Muslim community, the international community – and as Sen points out, the' well-integrated' community where residents do great things for each other, can be the very same that throws bricks through the windows of immigrants. When does solidarity become nepotism? I have similar problems with the Christian world, the Western world – the only reality is Toyota world and the World of Leather.

The problem with schools and identity is that schools, being selective agencies, are so hell bent on miniaturisation. A positive academic identity for the successful is fine, but this is bought at the expense of the negative academic identity of the less so. *As Bart Simpson said 'So let me get this straight…..We're in the catch up class and we're meant to catch up by going slower than they are?'* A friend of mine tried to counter this negative labelling by saying brightly to a parent *'Your child is in the top 98th percentile!'.* But even the most successful may continuously fear failure, as they go to University. As I have written before (Davies 2004), the testing regime in schools at best does not create secure identities and at worst creates a life time of anxieties leading to conflict – now being confirmed by research, noted by Harber in his book *Schooling as Violence.* And as in Rwanda, schooling success or failure can be linked to ethnicity, creating even more frustration and anger. So: the task for education is to celebrate not a bland diversity but a *resistant hybridity*, an originality in each child; and to try to mitigate the worst excesses of competition.

How do we deal with justice?

Linked closely to identity and purity is the notion of revenge and honour. There is an old Chinese saying that '*he who seeks revenge must remember to dig two graves'.* The Hamas phrase'We will not stop killing their children until they stop killing ours' is a chilling one, but by no means exclusive to that movement. The dynamics of the Israeli Palestinian conflict take the shape of retaliatory attacks on both sides – with the usual spirals and amplifications. The recent attacks by Israel on Lebanon were a classic example of using one smallish incident to generate a massive attack and loss of life; but many of the arguments were about whether the attacks were 'disproportionate' – as if there was anything ever proportionate about killing civilians.

A psychiatrist heading the Gaza community mental health project has studied the suicide bombers and found two roots: firstly trauma – witnessing suffering or personally suffering humiliation, and secondly wanting to take revenge. 'Arab honour has to take revenge for family honour and dignity. The vehicle is usually Islam, and the trigger is anger.' (Eyad Sarraj, quoted in Goldenburg 2002). The settlement of debts is a prerequisite for martyrdom, otherwise the gates of paradise are closed to a bomber. The 'shaming' experience of living under Israeli occupation is also talked about. Al-Qaeda documents claim God has sanctioned the punishment on the west, with the right to destroy not just villages and cities, but 'the economy of those who have robbed our wealth and to kill civilians of the country which has killed ours'. This is not 'senseless' attack, as the media claim. This is not only a religious or ideological war, but an economic one.

Most Muslim scholars would entirely reject the claim that Islamic injunctions can require or sanction or even tolerate terrorism, although, according to Tariq Ali, many of them would argue that a person would not cease to be a Muslim even if he were to interpret his duties differently, as long as he adhered to the core Islamic beliefs and practices. I suppose we would ask what was 'core' and whether this included non-violence.   Tariq Ali cheekily comments 'Meanwhile, 'good' Muslims are being paraded on TV arguing that violence is not advocated in the Koran and therefore the bombers are wrong. The implication here is that, if the Koran permitted them, such actions would be fine… The Koran of course has many different readings. The Old Testament on the other hand has no passages in praise of peace. Revenge, torture and rape are all available here. What if some Muslims convert to Christianity and start to implement the prescriptions contained therein?' (p86)

The whole issue of honour, shame and insult is a difficult one, as we see from the recent controversy over the Danish cartoons. A question to you is: if someone insulted Gandhi, or even the name of Gandhi, or Gandhian views, what would he want us to do? I think, not riot, not burn effigies of the insulter, not shout slogans nor burn down offices.

The opposite or alternative to revenge is restorative justice. This is an attempt to refocus crime as a conflict between people, to bring together those people directly involved and to address the impact of an offence on the victim, the offender and the community. Unlike retribution and the eye for an eye matching seriousness ideology,. the theory of restorative justice has developed from utilitarianism which seeks the greatest good or greatest happiness for the greatest number. More suffering should not be inflicted; collaboration seeks to repair damage, giving the offender an opportunity to express remorse and make amends. It is often part of truth and reconciliation programmes, for example in South Africa and Rwanda. The '3Rs' of restorative justice outlined by Alexander in his work on the 'citizenship school' (2001) are: recognition of the **reasons** behind the action and the needs driving the behaviour; the perpetrator takes **responsibility** for their actions and accepts they have done wrong; the perpetrator makes **reparations**, which might include restitution, restoration and reconciliation to settle differences.

We should nonetheless acknowledge some difficulties in applying this to schools. It can be particularly contentious to identify victims and offenders: if a pupil attacks a teacher with a knife, then this seems a clear case of an offence; yet in this, and

certainly in more minor confrontations, the pupil may claim an 'offence' by the teacher which led to this reaction.   Certainly in my and others' research (Davies 1984; Leoni 2005), pupils will claim a series of 'offences' and insults by teachers which precipitated a response. Restorative justice, unlike 'no blame' approaches, does not mean that wrongdoers evade responsibility; there must be amends; but these may need to be on both sides. Yet the key is that amends are not the same as revenge. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Committee, and the case studies of *Advocacy for Social Justice* in the Oxfam Manual (2001) do want to bring to justice perpetrators of crime or genocide; but that is not the same as committing the same offence in a retaliatory fashion.

A core problem is that schools condone and use revenge in their punishment regimes – actions unrelated to the 'offence', such as detentions for rudeness, or in some countries, beating a child for being late or for giving the wrong answer. The message is that it is acceptable for the powerful to exact swift retribution. One task of a school for peace is to question the efficacy of revenge in and out of school settings, and to explore alternatives.

How do we deal with critique?

I outline four sorts of critique or critical analysis which are needed in the counter to extremism: critical respect, critical thinking, critical values and critical action. The opposite to extremism is not in fact being moderate. It is what I call 'interruptive democracy', the 'excuse-me' reflex which recognizes and challenges social injustice. We need to know when we are being 'hard' or conned:

> Archbishop Desmond Tutu recounted:
> When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible, and we had the land. They said, 'Let us pray'. We closed our eyes. When we opened them, we had the Bible and they had the land.

The first aspect of critique is **'critical respect'**. One of the problems is the fear of offending hard-line religious or cultural groups, because this is seen as intolerant. But we need to be intolerant. I do not tolerate wife-beating, female genital mutilation, or the stoning of those labelled adulterers. Cultures are fluid and dynamic, and only improve if seen not to work or when people stop backing them. Schools need to teach mechanisms for when and what to respect and when and what to reject. This is not an exact science, and needs a value base in order to do this, but my stance is that a base in human rights gives a good a framework as any, which I return to below. Teachers can of course model respect for the individual (many don't of course, and prefer to humiliate or insult), while questioning particular behaviours of that individual. One can be irreverent – a very important social skill – without being disrespectful.

b) Critical thinking
Here I want to focus on the particular area of the media. Chomsky's statement was
> …a democratic society is one in which the public has the means to participate in some meaningful way in the management of their own affairs and the means of information are open and free (1997:5)

Yet this implies two things: a fundamental responsibility of the media, and the ability of the readership to deconstruct messages. In conflict societies, however, the hate media has been a counter to democracy and peace. Hate radio played a key role in starting the genocide in Rwanda (Gardner 2002). Privately owned but government controlled, RTLM (Radio Mille Collines) was created in mid 1993 with shareholders that had strong ties to the ruling regime and its security forces. After securing a listenership through pop music, it then broadcast political propaganda and death warrants, encouraging the killing of Tutsis. It even read over the air the names of people to be killed. In the Balkans, confrontations between the stabilization force peacekeeping troops and Serb hardliners for control of television stations in Bosnia's Srpska Republic illustrate how valuable broadcasting can be in a conflict situation, with the attempt also to try to destroy the enemy's communication lines. It is ironic that in the interests of liberation and free speech, the Americans bombed the Al-Jazeera TV stations which were presenting a different view of the situation in Iraq than the US propaganda.

So critical media education is crucial – both analysing spin and propaganda, and conversely in recognising the importance of media in investigative journalism and in freedom of speech and critique. Buying a newspaper is a micro-political act. Being part of the public voice is both a danger and opportunity for politicians. In looking at the justification for extremism we need to look at 'truth' and 'myth'. The power of rumour and distorted information is significant. An instructive account of the religious conflict in Ambon, Indonesia shows how this was triggered by wrong information (Poerwawidagdo 2002). After centuries of peaceful co-existence between Christian and Muslim, a quarrel between two young people quickly spread into a massive conflict resulting in hundreds of deaths and destruction of property. It was fuelled by rumours about *impending* attacks, purposefully spread to provoke fear and defensive violence. Wrong information can be used intentionally by the political elite or the military. fear has a strong amplifying effect. Vulnerability of groups can mean that fear drives them into pre-emptive strikes. The same 'fear' is what apparently drove the US, aided by UK, into a pre-emptive strike on Iraq. Michael Moore is excellent on how the gun culture of US, the fear of attack, can be mobilised across a huge population. The power of small bits of (mis)information – the 45 minute strike - are enough to cause or justify aggression on a massive scale.

Our question might be how to spread a rumour about peace. Is fear so much more powerful than happiness? Will reporting ethnic violence incite more violence? Is withholding information for the sake of social and communal peace morally correct and ethically appropriate? It is a debatable point.

So who controls history and memory is key to conflict. The use of 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983) gives considerable leverage to political leaders bent on using ethnicity as a mobilisation device. Such ethnification of politics is greatly helped by modern communications technology, which :

> ….now enables the most atavistic rhetoric of ethnic leaders to reach a far wider audience, with a great deal more vividness than the old tribal chieftain could ever dream of. Ancient prejudices are transmitted through the most sophisticated media, just as ancient vendettas are carried out with the most modern military weaponry (Bardhan 1997:79).

What is disturbing of course is that politicians may choose to ignore information from their constituents – in spite of current fashions for 'focus groups'. Two million people marching against the war in Iraq was denied by the Blair government in UK as being evidence of public opinion; instead the demonstration was publicly interpreted in a twisted way by Blair simply as a sign that we were a free society which could march and protest and this somehow justified the war on Iraq - which was not such a society.

So we need to enable young and adult learners to engage in critical analysis of newspapers, TV reporting, and government information campaigns. This is an essential survival skill at individual level and at national level. Journalists themselves have learned to be disillusioned by information given to them by 'informed officials'. Many reporters in former Yugoslavia have stated that they were at times astonished by claims and information given to them by the United Nations Protective Force, later proved incorrect (Gardner 2001). Yet political and media literacy in schools is not always seen as a vital part of language learning: in Brcko, the teachers working on curriculum harmonisation I was 'advising' on preferred the safety of literature and comprehension rather than using newspapers as resources, feeling threatened by anything that appeared 'political'. Teacher training may be a key area here, developing skills and orientations towards teaching controversial issues and analysing discourse.

Tariq Ali (2005:19) quotes Mark Danner in the New York Review of Books:
> Power, the argument runs, can shape truth: power in the end, can determine reality, or at least the reality that most people accept – a critical point, for the administration has been singularly effective in its recognition that what is most politically important is not what readers of the *New York Times* believe but what most Americans are willing to believe. The last century's most innovative authority on power and truth, Joseph Goebbels, made the same point but rather more directly. *'There was no point in seeking to convert the intellectuals. For intellectuals would never be converted and would anyway always yield to the stronger, and this will always be 'the man in the street'. Arguments must therefore be crude, clear and forcible, and appeal to emotions and instincts, not the intellect. Truth was unimportant and entirely subordinate to tactics and psychology.'*

Or as Plato said 'Those who tell the stories also rule the society' (Republic).

Cortes in his book on media education concludes that 'school education about diversity will *always* be self-limiting in its effectiveness if school educators do not seriously engage the reality – the inevitability – of students learning about 'otherness' through the media' (2000:pxvii). He uses a concept of 'media textbooks' – that media products (TV, newspapers, shows etc) ultimately function as public textbooks, and teach. (Whether consumers learn is another matter). So whenever embarking on a 'multicultural' programme of 'awareness', we need to find out what students already 'know' (*Mark Twain: 'education consists mainly in what we have unlearned'*). We need to know what young people extract from The Lion King to know whether this is racist, sexist, homophobic etc. Cortes classified four types of societal curriculum – the immediate curriculum (home, family, peers, neighnorhood); the institutional

curriculum (youth groups, religious institutions, voluntary associations; the serendipitous curriculum (random personal experiences, chances interactions, foreign travel); and the media curriculum. World War 2 media was called upon by the Federal government to support mobilization, so ridiculed and dehumanised the enemy, particularly the Japanese. Rosie the Riveter was symbol of government's appeal for women to take their place on the assembly line (afterwards a rapid about face, calling on Rosie to return home, raise her family and leave jobs to their rightful possessors).

Cortes asks teachers to reocognize that 'multicultural' learning is taking place, to analyse its patterns, and to provide multiple perspectives. . Techniques for multicultural education training might include keeping a media curriculum journal – records of and reactions to multicultural teaching they encounter; analytical journals of the mass media treatment of a diversity-related topic for a week working with parents; working with media itself – with PR departments, communicating concern to newspapers etc; and inviting media makers to the school. He warns however about over-simplistic stuff - endless games of pin-the tail- on-the-stereotype

Media education of course needs education about the web and cyberspace. This is dominated by niches, people heading for specific sites. This can be democratic and peace promoting, such as the CyberPeace project involving dialogue between Jewish Israeli, Arab Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian , using intergroup conversations. But is can also contribute to polarisation and foster bigotry – hate based and conspiracy websites (Kaplan and Bjorgo 1998).

One of the terrorist bombers whose rucksack failed to explode told investigators that the would-be bombers of July 21st had psyched themselves for the attacks by watching 'films on the war on Iraq….Especially those where women and children were being killed and exterminated by British and American soldiers….of widows, mothers and daughters that cry'.

> The contrast between the price tag the Western media place on their own citizens – the photos of smiling faces, the intimate details recalled by friends and family – and on the tens of thousands of those nameless, uncounted bodies shot, tortured or blown up from 30,000 feet on the command of Bush and Blair, could hardly be starker. It is this that fuels the anger (Ali 2005:52)

Parallel to media analysis is political education which seeks to understand not just national politics but the global economic system. Interestingly, a study of a multicultural Gandhi school in Bali, Indonesia (Tamatea 2006) found them certainly implementing Gandhi's cultural approaches, but at the same time preparing young people uncritically for participation in the capitalist system. Tamatea points out that Gandhi is well known as a man of self-sacrifice who strove to overcome India's caste, class and religious differences to achieve independence; yet less well known is Gandhi's critique of the education system in India under the circumstances of British capitalist industrial imperialism. The school however was concerned about accreditation, career options, English as a global language and employability within the globalising capitalist economy. Tamatea says the school's different economic orientation to that which Gandhi envisaged (vocational education, appropriate technology etc) may ultimately thwart the emphasis on tolerance and diversity. This does not however claim that the school

> … is in any way responsible for acts of violence. Instead it comprises reflection on the utility of teaching for tolerance and diversity while reproducing the credibility of the hegemonic economic system, which perhaps reproduces the conditions which those who perpetrate violence drawn upon to establish their legitimacy and support. (p214)

Ghandi thought text-book learning was often divorced from the real world of the students, doing little for spiritual development and facilitating boredom (Gupta 2002). But lack of political education is perhaps more dangerous than simple boredom. At Taman Rama there was segregated religious education, taught by members of their community, using state approved religious texts. Gandhi was very ambivalent about separate classes for religions and way of state involvement in religious education (Richards 2001). He argued that the basics of a religion should be taught in the home, while schools should teach only the truths common to all religions (Gupta 2001). However, the school did have a resolute emphasis on peace and non-violence, they remained open after the Bali bombings, not to let the terrorists win.

My view is that we have to be pragmatic – we do need to ensure employability and that does mean qualifications. Schools on their own will not overthrow the capitalist system – probably nothing can. . We can in schools however minimise the testing and labelling regime associated with credentialism and we can try to give the knowledge of the global economic system and the skills to challenge its worst excesses – whether militarisation, corruption, lack of fair trade, or impact on the environment.

Humour and satire
Still within critical thinking, I want to turn to a key role of media in a free society, which is that of satire. This section ventures into the thin dividing line between giving offence or insult and doing the necessary or harmless piss-taking. There is a wonderful bit in the film the *Life of Brian* when Jesus heals the leper and the leper is furious because his livelihood of begging is gone. 'Bloody do-gooder', he says gloomily.

Yet in UK at the moment we are debating the implications of new bill against the incitement of religious hatred. But we have plenty of laws already on this area, and this plays into the hands of the fundamentalists – the co-author of *Jerry Springer the Opera* received a death threat from Christian fundamentalists. He says 'It's the duty of comedians to attack religious belief because you test the elastic limit of a thing by probing it, and belief systems based on faith rather than facts need to be tested'.

Sandy Fox, the comic and Buddhist, recounted 'The Buddhist demo was a nightmare. There were 10,000 Buddhists shouting 'What do we want?' Nothing! 'When do we want it?'

Macintyre points out that satire is the mark of a healthy democracy, the pricking of pomposity that reminds our leaders that they are not self-anointed' (2005). As George Orwell said: 'Every joke is a tiny revolution. Whatever destroys dignity and brings down the mighty from their seats, preferably with a bump, is funny'. Osama bin Laden became staple of playground humour – tasteless and defiant jokes began to emerge after 9/11, the natural response to the oppression of terror, a tiny revolution against fear. The wonderful female Muslim comedian Shazia Mirza started one of her

shows with: 'My name's Shazia Mirza. Or at least, that's what it says on my pilot's licence'.

Tyrants and terrorists try to elevate themselves above humour. Anti-Nazi jokes became punishable by death in Germany, just as they flourished outside it. In North Korea, satire is banned for the simple reason that since the Communist state is officially perfect, there is nothing officially to satirise. 'The first sign that a tyrant's days are numbered comes not with the sound of gunfire but the gentle ripple of disrespectful laughter' *The joke going round Baghdad cafes was 'following the attack, the Iraqi Information Minister has summoned all Saddam's body doubles to a meeting to tell them: the good news is that our beloved leader has survived, so you all still have jobs. The bad news is that he has lost an arm'.* The snigger is mightier than the sword.

However, while we might all agree that political satire is necessary and important, satirising religious leaders arouses much more debate. For believers, they are not self-appointed; like Kim Jong II in North Korea, they are perfect; and to joke about them is to joke about the whole religion. It is a puzzle to me that if they are all powerful, why can't they take a joke? Why should they need defending? It would seem to display an insecurity about religion and its spokespersons, just as politicians may be insecure. But nonetheless, part of humour education would be to discuss the whole notion of 'insult' and 'offence' and when it is necessary and when it is gratuitous. None of us likes racist or sexist jokes (although I actually quite like a lot of sexist jokes).

A WOMAN'S PRAYER:

DEAR LORD
SO FAR TODAY, I AM DOING ALL RIGHT.
I HAVE NOT GOSSIPED
LOST MY TEMPER
BEEN GREEDY
GRUMPY
NASTY,
SELFISH OR
SELF-INDULGENT.
I HAVE NOT WHINED
CURSED OR
EATEN ANY CHOCOLATE.
HOWEVER
I AM GOING TO GET OUT OF BED IN A FEW MINUTES
AND I WILL NEED A LOT MORE HELP AFTER THAT.
AMEN

A brilliant article by Richard Dawkins describes the highly additive drug 'Gerin oil' (or Geriniol in its scientific name). This, he says, acts directly on the nervous system to produce a range of characteristic symptoms, often of an anti-social or self-damaging nature. If administered chronically in childhood, it can permanently modify the brain to produce adult disorders, including dangerous delusions which are hard to treat. The four doomed flights of September 11th were all Gerin oil trips all

19 of the hijackers were high on the drug at the time. Gerin oil fuelled Salem witchhunts, massacres of South Americans by inquistadores, wars of European middle ages, and on a smaller scale, Ireland. Gerin oil addiction can drive previously sane people to run away into closed communities, limited to one sex, and forbidding sexual activity, as well as preventing others, particularly homosexuality. It can be hallucinogenic, hearing voices – but such people can be venerated as leaders. There is bizarre psychedelia such as the cannibalistic fantasy of 'drinking the blood and eating the flesh' of the leader. Oil-heads can be heard talking to thin air or muttering to themselves, apparently in the belief that private wishes so expressed will come true, even at the cost of mild violation of the laws of physics. As with many drugs, refined Gerin oil in low doses is largely harmless, and can even serve as a social lubricant on occasions such as marriages, funerals and ceremonies of state. But experts differ as to whether this is a risk factor, upgrading to more addictive forms. It can lead to mutilation, particularly of the genitals. You might think that such a potentially dangerous drug would top the list of proscribed substances. Yet it is readily available, and does not need a prescription. Pushers are numerous, organised in hierarchical cartels and opening trading on the street and even in purpose-made buildings. Governments grant a tax-exempt status; worse they subsidise schools with the specific intention of getting children hooked.

Dawkins says he was prompted to write the article by a picture of a very happy man in Bali. He was ecstatically greeting the news that he was about to be executed by a firing squad for the brutal murder of large numbers of innocent holiday makers whom he had never met. He punched the air, delirious with joy that he was to be 'martyred' to use the jargon of his particular sub-culture of Gerin oil substance abusers. For, make no mistake about it, this beatific smile, looking forward with unalloyed pleasure to the firing squad, is the smile of a junkie. Dawkins concludes it is easy to regard such people as evil criminals, but the problem would not arise in the first place if children were protected from becoming hooked on a drug with such a bad prognosis for their adult minds

Critical values: human rights

As intimated above, some sort of value base is needed to engage in analysis – whether of media, political positions or serious and humorous attacks on those positions. I hold a somewhat contradictory position – I have an unshakeable conviction that we must teach acceptance of ambiguity, of more than one 'truth'. Yet this is more than just relativism.

Joke about two sociologists who meet in the street. One said to the other 'How's your wife?' The other thought for a minute; 'Compared to what?'

Brian Murphy talks of our postmodern world meaning that we live constantly at the 'fulcrum of ambiguity'.
> A great deal of the nostalgia we often see among people who have experienced hard times or crises – war, depression, external emergency – relates to the fact that, for a time, there was no ambiguity; one could live and act with single-minded dedication to a cause and to survival. And I suspect that the recent phenomenon of the proliferation of cults, religious

> fundamentalism and psychic movements…is a response to people's need to
> avoid ambiguity, to escape from freedom' (1999:35)

We're going back here to Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941) and Revel's *The Totalitarian Temptation* (1976). There was an account in the newspaper recently of a schoolgirl who had converted to Islam who said 'It's great. It's all set out for you. You don't have to keep weighing things up'. I find this chilling; education should be about constantly weighing things up, making judgements, sorting out. Admittedly, we do need a base to start to engage in this, but the view of many is that this should a secular one which is acknowledged to be 'man-made' and therefore can be 'un-made' or even 'woman-made'. Human rights do not provide every answer, but they do provide a framework for debate – and action, not compliance.

Churchill famously said 'democracy is the worst of all political systems –apart from all the others'. For me, the least worst value base that can inform our teaching and thinking is human rights. This comes from study of conflict societies as well as so-called stable ones.   Bernath et al (1999) argue strongly that human rights education (HRE) is not only an essential component of just societies, but is a necessary element of re-establishing stable and just post-war societies. Their research claims 'strong empirical evidence' that HRE reduces violence in situations of conflict.   Three fields are needed in order to tackle factors of violence and social trauma: these are cognitive (the knowledge needed to promote human rights); attitudinal (self-help, trust, commitment to fairness); and behavioural (mobilising, organising, documenting violations). Bernath et al say '*In practice, the content we saw varied from lectures to illiterate peasants on the French Revolution to harangues to overthrow the government'*.   There may be a dilemma of making HRE consistent with authoritarian schooling. It would seem obvious that teachers who demand unquestioning obedience or use physical punishment undermine the development of non-violent, democratic behaviours among students (Bush and Saltarelli 2000).

Spencer (2000) gives an example of activities in South Africa in which young people can learn about the law and about conflicts between fundamental rights, while developing practical skills. She reports the University of Western Cape running mock trial competitions for secondary schools, citing one example where schools had to choose between being the prosecution or the defence for a case concerning a 6 year old child with AIDS whose deeply religious parents refused medical treatment and who died. The students had to argue the cases – a lesson on the law, on criminal procedure, but also on conflicting rights. Young Peoples' Parliaments now operating in many parts of the world are also providing preparation for such debate and awareness of procedure.

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art 26.2), HRE would be an integral part of the right to education; various articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child affirm directly or indirectly that children should be informed about rights, and that States must disseminate the principles of the provisions of the Convention as widely as possible – which implies a systematic and sustained HRE for adults and children. Yet the UNESCO Global Monitoring Report finds this is not widespread necessarily. .   Yet as Lansdown points out

> Respect for childrens' rights in school is clearly closely linked with the
> obligation to provide human rights education. Article 29 asserts the need for
> education rooted in a commitment to the development of the child's potential,

> promotion of respect for fundamental human rights, respect for parents, one's
> own and other cultures, for diversity and equality of sexes (2001:54-55)

Presumably, one could not develop such respect without knowing what these rights and freedoms were. This obligation is found not just in Article 29. Article 13 states that

> the child shall have right to freedom of expression; this right shall include
> freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds…

Again, one would assume that one prime aspect of this would be 'to receive and impart information' on human rights themselves; and Article 42 concerns the responsibility of State Parties to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, to adults and children alike.

Verhellen points out, importantly that CRC is not just about protection, but something more active.

> ….Legal protection has some very basic requirements, including
> - One must *have* rights
> - One must be *informed* about one's rights
> - One must be able to *exercise* one's rights
> - If necessary one must be able to *enforce* one's rights
> - There must be an interested community *to advocate* one's rights
>
> All of these requirements are *interdependent*. If one of them is not met, or is poorly met, legal protection is seriously jeopardized. (2001:181)

UNICEF UK has as one of its current missions and target indicators that CRC becomes a compulsory part of the curriculum for all schools in UK. There had been resistance to this from the authorship of the Crick Report on citizenship education in UK, on the grounds that teachers might teach it by rote; but there is no substance to this (or conversely it could be argued that much of the rest of the curriculum is taught by rote anyway). In fact, research in schools where children are explicitly taught the CRC does find them reciting the Articles, but in a strategic way – they have memorised them because it is in their interest to do so (Covell and Howe 2005). Past research has shown that when children are taught about their rights as described in the CRC, in a rights-consistent classroom and school, there is a contagion effect (Covell and Howe, 1999; Decoene and De Cock, 1996; Howe and Covell, 2005). The research on the Rights Respecting Schools programme in UK found that as they understand their own rights, children become more respecting of the rights of all other children. Teaching about rights has the effect of empowering teachers, reminding them that their day- to-day interactions with children really do have the potential to improve society – thus reminding them of why they went into teaching. Teachers report children using rights discourse to settle problems and to be ready to accept responsibility for their errors and to behave appropriately when a rights-based explanation of what is unacceptable is used.

The critiques of the cultural base to HR and HRE are therefore an issue, and alternatives such as the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights warrant examination. This Declaration (1981) at first glance appears very similar to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) – with articles on the right to life, freedom, equality, justice, education, protection of minorities etc. There would however be major distinctions. The source of human rights is seen to be the Divine Law, and all references to 'the Law' (as in being equal before it) are to Shari'ah Law.

There would be a right to a fair trial, but definition of a crime and its punishment shall be awarded according to Shari'ah Law – not national or State law. Articles that would *not* be found in the Universal Declaration would be such as 'The Right to Protection of Honour and Reputation (Article VIII), whereby 'every person has the right to protect his honour and reputation against calumnies, groundless charges or deliberate attempts at defamation and blackmail'. This does not specify how such honour would be protected, but one can only assume it would not be in contradistinction to other articles such as the right to life (although the notion that no one shall be exposed to injury or death 'except under the authority of the Law') might offer some different interpretations. This might be justification for the 'revenge' I talked of above. The key issue is revealed in the Preamble which cites the 'obligation to establish an Islamic order', 'wherein obedience shall be rendered only to those commands that are in consonance with the Law'.

All this has interesting implications for the teaching and learning of HRE. The declaration reminds us that 'pursuit of knowledge and search after truth is not only a right but a duty of every Muslim' and one would assume that this would include knowledge of this declaration itself – as well as all the other declarations and conventions. The question would be how critical the education would be, and how far one could see all declarations as products of their time and therefore to be considered as part of a broad critical and political education.

The *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* (written in 1981) is another interesting example of adaptation, but one which does refer back to all the other international conventions as the binding force, rather than being derived from divine law. Differences to the Universal Declarations would derive from the 'statement of the problem' – the duty to achieve the total liberation of Africa and to 'eliminate colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, Zionism, and to dismantle aggressive foreign military bases and all forms of discrimination, language, religion or political opinions' (2004:1). This becomes reflected in Article 20 on 'the right of colonized or oppressed peoples to free themselves from the bonds of domination by resorting to any means recognized by the international community', and Article 21 that 'all peoples shall freely dispose of their wealth and natural resources'. Interestingly, the Charter upholds the right to national and international peace and security, so that individuals enjoying the right of asylum do not engage in subversive activities, and that 'territories shall not be used as bases for subversive or terrorist activities against the people of any other State Party to the present Charter' (Article 23). Whether they can be used against other peoples is not clear. However, Article 25 has a very explicit statement: 'State Parties to the present Charter shall have the duty to promote and ensure through teaching, education and publication, the respect of the rights and freedoms contained in the present Charter and to see to it that these freedoms and rights as well as corresponding obligations and duties are understood'.

Garton Ash's argument that so-called 'Western Values' – democracy, human rights, free speech, rule of law etc - are not really western but can be traced back to ancient Athens, Jerusalem, or Rome, However, they are also not empirically universal – apparently Chinese language did not have characters for 'human rights' until the 19th century. But we should not designate values according to a label such as Western, or even universal - but we should say what we mean – e.g 'democratic values'. (Ash p237)

Tariq Ali comments on the value position of New Labour in UK:

> 'Christianity is a very tough religion', wrote Blair in 1993. 'It is judgmental, There is right and wrong. We all know this of course, but it has become fashionable to be uncomfortable about such language'. Under his aegis, it's fashionable to be entirely comfortable about it. Religion does not explain Blair's warmongering; that is policy driven. But it has helped to characterize its tone. New Labour's message has been very simple. We have no politics, we don't believe in social democracy, but, despite the emptiness of our souls, there is a God. Blair is undoubtedly the most religious Prime Minister that Britain has thrown up since Gladstone. Not only does the deity exist, but a muscular Christianity is need to fight on His behalf. A Republican in the United States, a Christian Democrat in Europe; on this side of the Channel the divine being is definitely New Labour (p12).

At this point I need to get into the thorny issue of *faith schools*. I quote Sen, that a 'confounded view' of a multi-ethnic society led to the encouragement of Muslim schools – 'young children are powerfully placed in the domain of singular affiliations well before they have the ability to reason about different systems of identification that may compete for their attention' (p13). For him, faith schools encourage a 'fragmentary' approach to the demands of living in a desegregated Britain.

> 'Many of these new institutions are coming up precisely at a time when religious prioritization has been a major source of violence in the world (adding to the history of such violence in Britain itself, including Catholic-Protestant divisions in Northern Ireland) – not unconnected themselves with segmented schooling). Prime Minister Blair is certainly right to note that 'there is a very strong sense of ethos and values in these schools'. But education is not just about getting children, even very young ones, immersed in an old, inherited ethos. It is also about helping children to develop the ability to reason about new decisions any grown-up person will have to take. The important goals is not formulaic 'parity' in relation to old Brits with their faith schools but what would best enhance the capability of the children to live 'examined lives' as they grow up in an integrated community (p160).

Interestingly, Sen talks of the 'uncanny similarity' between the problems Britain faces today and those that British India faced, and which Gandhi thought were getting direct encouragement from the Raj. Gandhi was critical in particular of the official view that India was a collection of religious communities. When Gandhi came to London for the 'Indian Round Table Conference' called by the British Government in 1931, he found that he was assigned to a specific sectarian corner in the revealingly named 'Federal Structure Committee'. Gandhi resented the fact that he was being depicted primarily as a spokesman for Hindus, in particular 'caste Hindus' with the remaining half of the Indian population being represented by delegates, chosen by the British Prime Minister, of each of the 'other communities'. (p165). He insisted that while he himself was a Hindu, the political movement he led was staunchly universalist and not a community-based movement; it had supporters from all the religious groups in India. He made a plea for the *plurality* of diverse identities of Indians. He wanted to speak not for Hindus, but for the 'dumb, toiling, semi-starved millions' who constitute over 85% of the population of India. (He could, with some effort, even speak for the rest – princes, landowners etc!)

Gender was also important for Gandhi – the authorities had given no special place for considering the problems of Indian women. Gandhi had to remind the PM that women 'happen to be one half of the population of India. Gandhi insisted he was trying to resist 'the vivisection of a whole nation'.   Gandhi would also have been extremely pained by the sectarian violence against Muslims that was organised by sectarian Hindu leaders in his own state of Gujerat in 2002. But he would have been encouraged by the condemnation of such barbarities by the Indian people and the defeat of political parties involved.

> Much has been written about the fact that India, with more Muslim people
> than almost every Muslim majority country in the world (nearly as many as
> Pakistan) has produced extremely few homegrown terrorists acting in the
> name of Islam, and almost none linked with Al-Qaeda. The growing economy
> clearly an influence, but some credit must go to the nature of Indian
> democratic politics and to the wide acceptance in India of the idea,
> championed by Gandhi, that there are many identities other than religious
> ethnicity that are also relevant for a person's self-understanding and for the
> relations between citizens of diverse backgrounds within the country (p168)

Gandhi asked 'Imagine the whole nation vivisected and torn to pieces; how could it be made into a nation?'…The disastrous consequences of defining people by their religious ethnicity and giving predetermined priority to the community-based perspective over all other identities, which Gandhi thought was receiving support from India's British rulers, may well have come, alas, to haunt the country of the rulers themselves (Senp169).

In like vein, Tariq Ali also says there should be a 'moratorium' on state sponsorship of religion. Over one-third of British state schools are religious and the National Secular Society has published figures that reveal Labour permitting 40 more non-religious state secondaries to be taken over by the Church of England, with another 54 about to go. The then Education Secretary, a paid up member of Opus Dei stressed that the 'bombs' would not stop her encouraging the formation of more single-faith schools'. I think Gandhi, while supporting a resistant view, would not have agreed with her logic. Sadly, UK is not just an 'imagined community' but now 'an imagined national federation of religious ethnicities' (Sen, p165)

Critical action

Finally, if we have established critical thinking and a critical value base for this in universalist human and children's rights. I turn to what can be done. This is for me both about the big and abstract idea of 'building civil society' but also about individual acts of resistance to violence and extremism . The international treaty to ban landmines for example. When Jody Williams, who won the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in bringing that about, was asked how she did it, she replied 'e-mail' (Ash 251). We must 'refuse the illusion of impotence'.

It is interesting that extremist reform in Pakistan has not wiped out completely the human rights movement – why? Sen's take on this is that the resistance comes from
- using civil laws
- courage and commitment of civil dissidents

- fair-mindedness of many upright members of the judiciary
- the presence of a large body of social progressive public opinion
- effectiveness of the media in drawing attention to inhumanity and violation of civil decency, issues for the attention of a 'reflective public' (2006:73)

There is a problem that the US led war on terror has been preoccupied with military solutions, and there has been neglect of the importance of civil society. Blair always meeting 'Muslim leaders' has bolstered and strengthened the voice of religious authorities while downgrading the importance of nonreligious institutions and movements. The problem is that we do not have 'secular leaders' or 'humanist leaders' – I don't necessarily want or have people to speak for me, unless I directly mandate them.

> 'Efforts to recruit the mullahs and the clergy to play a role outside the immediate province of religion could, of course, make some difference in what is preached in mosques or temples. But it also downgrades the civic initiatives people who happen to be Muslim by religion can and do undertake (along with others) to deal with what are essentially political and social problems'. (p78)…..What religious extremism has done to demote and downgrade the responsible political action of citizens (irrespective of religious ethnicity) has been, to some extent, reinforced, rather than eradicated, by the attempt to fight terrorism by trying to recruit the religious establishment on 'the right side' (p83) .

I am therefore cheered by the growth of an active and non-sectarian citizenship education in many schools and countries, which is encouraging action in the community as well as in school. We have just conducted a review for the Carnegie Foundation (Davies, Williams and Yamashita 2005) on the impact of pupil decision-making in school and community, and, looking at over 80 studies worldwide, found evidence of young people taking action not just to improve the community, but to hold local and national government to account (which was my second question). Young people's J8 summits, Youth Parliaments and Local Government consultation groups may not have a lot of teeth, but they are at least teaching skills of advocacy, lobbying, negotiation – that is, creating change not through violent means but through legal and micro-political processes.

One large scale study found that in schools with a commitment to student voice, students were much more confident in expressing their views about a range of topics, including government policy, than students in schools where there were little opportunities for student voice . Similarly, a project I am involved in on developing School Councils finds - unsurprisingly - that students given powers and responsibility develop a sense of agency and improve their confidence to change things. This is not rocket science – but it is interesting how resistant some teachers still are to student involvement. One part of the project which involves pupils observing teachers to provide systematic feedback on teaching and learning evoked the response from one teacher: 'I'm not having kids watch me teach'….

I do not therefore underplay the individual and institutional barriers to an education which might tackle extremism. Nor would I or should I speak for those in far more difficult circumstances than me or than children in UK schools. When we conducted a Global Review for UNESCO on their Associated Schools in 172 countries (Davies,

Harber and Schweisfurth 2003), we asked schools what activities in the community they were doing for peace and tolerance etc. We had some inspirational examples – kids on marches, peace vigils, advocacy work in the community. But we also had bitter responses from children in occupied Palestine and Gaza strip who said a) that they were not allowed free movement, that the checkpoints, walls and brutality from Israeli soldiers prevented them doing anything and b) we should therefore be asking the Israelis about peace, not them. It would be facile to suggest some universal panacea or curriculum for education against extremism.

But my talk is not about providing blue-prints – it is simply about avoiding some of the worst excesses, within schooling and within societies. I still think our educational task in 'weighing things up' is threefold: one, to give children a secure, but hybrid sense of identity, so that they are less likely to be drawn to 'membership' of single-identity, single-issue, ends-justify-the-means groups; two, to demonstrate and act out fair and non-violent ways of achieving justice; and three to give skills in critical appraisal, critical values and critical action. The basis of all this is, what do we take seriously? Peace, yes; politicians and religious leaders, not necessarily. Here's a news release about extremism:

Math Teacher arrested at airport

New York: a public school teacher was arrested today at JFK international airport as he attempted to board a flight while in possession of a ruler, a protractor, a set square and a calculator. At a morning press conference, Attorney Alberto Gonazales said he believes the man is a member of the notorious Al-gebra movement. He did not identify the man, who has been charged by the FBI with carrying weapons of math instruction. 'Al-gebra is a problem to us' Gonazales said. They desire solutions by means and extremes and sometimes go off at tangents in search of absolute values. They use secret code names like 'x' and 'y' and refer to themselves as 'unknowns', but we have determined that they belong to a common denominator of the axis of med-ieval, with coordinates in every country.

When asked to comment on their arrest, President Bush said 'If God had wanted us to have better weapons of math instruction, he would have given us more fingers and toes'. White House aides told reporters they could not recall a more intelligent and profound statement by the President.

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