

Prepared Questions

1. *The importance of language*, and various means for its control, e.g., common sense, empirical heuristics, reflective understanding, etc.)
2. *The “nature” of Islam:*
 - a. Is “nature” the question to ask?
 - b. Why has this now become an issue? (pivot point)
 - c. And how would one know? (transcendental method, functional specialization)
3. *Paying attention to others foundational horizon and categories* (terms, concepts) people use to make sense of things. (interiority)
4. *Is “Islam” itself a marker* of progress/decline?
5. *The ways in which power holders/seekers can justify their “right” to have dominion over others*—is “religion” one of these? How would you know?
6. *Marker? Downgrading or sidestepping the individual* as the source of meaning.
7. *Marker? Reality gaps* between what one is told and what one experiences.

RCB

Takeaways:

1. **Mechanisms.** The individual is a threat to any totalitarian ruler, so important markers of a civilization in decline would be the existence of mechanisms whose function—deliberate or otherwise—is to crush individual initiative. This includes putting people in difficult moral positions so whatever they do will go against all human morality.
2. **Victim-hood.** Since authoritarian systems have to maintain a total belief in the leader, any problems that arise from the leader’s plans and policies must have outside origins. Since such leaders end up being paranoiac, often for good reason, these failures must be due to external enemies out to get them.
3. **Our own investigation is firmly grounded in Christianity**, particularly in the Patristic period of the first few centuries that also included the Desert Fathers. Hence the Gramscian/Benedictine “memes.”

White-board Notes (Stream 1)

1. **Muslims and Islam.** Like many Christians, the vast major of Muslims are acculturated to Islam without necessary being true believers. But only Islamic “religious” institutions are there for anyone undergoing spiritual distress over the meaning of their lives. When they turn to such “transcendental” religious groups around them, they may become practitioners—in which case they take up not only the Koran but follow in the path of Mohammad via the Hadith. However, in Islam that is as far as the individual can go, because he then becomes part of the collective in which individuals as such have no place. Thus they can rarely if ever shift to the transcendental level of being in love with God, for Allah is essentially a god of hate that requires unquestioned obedience.
2. **Muslims and the Mafia.** Both engage in protection rackets by providing both muscle and threats to “protect” others often from themselves. Islam sanctifies this practice under sharia law by institutionalizing the practice of dhimmitude, where “people of the book” fall under their protection as long as they pay “taxes” (jizera) and show themselves suitably abased. All others are beyond the pale.
3. **Fundamental incompatibility.** Muslim countries are organized around family, clan, tribe, etc. in which for example the head of the family has the right if not the obligation of protecting the family honor (status, ranking within the Muslim community) by the explicit use of force. This accounts for the practice of wife-beating and honor killings, both of which are legitimate in Sharia “law” (note that Sharia is not the same as Western legal systems but more in line with interpretations of the Koran issued at fatwas). In Western societies, the only institutional that has the right to inflict capital punishment is the government.
4. **Corruption.** Societies based on tribal affiliations places a higher value on taking care of one’s relatives than performing the organizational duties to which they have been assigned. Westerners, well grounded in civil law, “perceive” this as corruption while to those engaged in it, is simply business. Civil law itself becomes a tool for enhancing one’s tribe, as in the practice of holding elections until one is in power and then curtailing any further “democratic” practices.
5. **Alpha males.** Islam is probably the best social and political system for incubating alpha males, all of it justified through making the process a “sacred” duty of any devout Muslim—survival of the fittest in a conflict-ridden world.
6. **An all-powerful Allah.** Sometime during the 10th century, an issue arose in Islam over whether Allah’s power could be constrained in any way. The group that won enshrined the belief that Allah could not be constrained even by himself. This means that Muslims cannot develop any notion of science, since that requires a belief in universal laws. To devote Muslims, science works by mastering jins. Also, when Allah directly wills everything that happens, he becomes a most capricious god who forestalls any individual responsibility.

1. *A Wise & Honest Arab Muslim Man Tells Muslims the Truth About Themselves (5:21)*
MEMRI, 2014: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUQh_4DxUr-M&index=6&list=PLo1Jq23H_s5XVxAseMKYJA4aH3cOI07si&t=0s

White-board Notes (Stream 2)

1. **It is no longer sufficient to ask a question about the “nature” of something.** In fact, to ask such a question can easily lead to various forms of racism, as in “the nature of (fill in the blank) are to be “narrow minded, self-absorbed, drunkards not fit for public office.” While there is a central form, the conjugate forms do not necessarily follow. Far better to take an empirical theoretical approach and identify recurring patterns of operations with their associated probability of emergence and survivability. Following a critical realist approach, “history” is not a matter of naive realism, empiricism, or conceptualization.
2. **The reason why “Islam” is becoming an issue is that prior to 20 or 30 years ago Westerners had little or no real encounter with Muslims,** Daily contract plus news reports suggest that all is not as rosy has had been presented, i.e., there is emerging a reality gap between what people are being told about Islam and actual encounters with Muslims. For example, Muslims are forcing universities to provide places to pray, often close down debate by threatening violence, and in general expect others to take them seriously without actually contributing to society (Allahu Akbar).
3. **Those in power seek to justify their own desire to dominate others, using the media to gain the trust and allegiance of those they would rule.** In totalitarian regimes, all power becomes concentrated in the “leader” whose judgments cannot be challenged. This requires a number of mechanisms to enforce the “official” narrative, one of the best of which is to place individuals in a position where they have to do evil in order to prevent another evil, as in the case where an official has to allow those under his control to starve to death in order to protect his own family from being executed.
4. **Jesus ignored as a source of meaning (1st century).** Jesus also proclaimed a universal membership in the kingdom of God that transcended pagan family, tribe, and clan affiliations. Unfortunately for Western development, this message was layered on pagan practices that brought about the wars fought over what group or nation were to be considered the “chosen people.”
5. **Reforming Islam is a near impossible task,** for unlike Catholicism there is no one authority that can pronounce the meaning of Christianity such that others have to follow. The most that can be done in Islam is the issuing of fatwas (interpretations, rulings based on the Koran) by important Mullahs. Even the Caliph, if one now existed, cannot dictate what all Muslims are to believe. This is not a bug but a feature, for it sets into motion conflicts the combine as one religious issues, the political power of clans and tribes, and the interests of the individual all into one powerful package.
6. **Daniel Greenfield’s approach is to see what is coming before hand, whether one likes it or not, and start preparing now.** This is the same approach we take in this Emergent Cosmopolis project, working out what needs to be done now to face emerging problems over the control--or lack of control--over meaning in the future.

2. *The Real Meaning of “Allahu Akbar” (15:00, with additional commentary on current event to 36:43)*
The Glazov Gang, 2015: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQPks5t-41M0&list=PLo1Jq23H_s5XVxAseMKYJA4aH3cOI07si&index=5

The Emergent Cosmopolis Project
Brainstorming markers for progress/decline
March 7th, 2018, Russell C. Baker