

The Great Tautological Fallacy

Bob Avakian

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The following is from the 2017 speech *THE TRUMP/PENCE REGIME MUST GO! In The Name of Humanity We REFUSE To Accept a Fascist America: A Better World IS Possible*. The full speech, and other of Bob Avakian's works, can be accessed at www.revcom.us. Bob Avakian has brought forward the new communism and leads the movement for revolution in the U.S.

In confronting and moving to prevent [the full imposition of fascism], one of the biggest obstacles standing in the way, and weighing people down, is American chauvinism—the disgusting notion that America and Americans are better and more important than everybody else. This is a poison infecting people broadly in this country, even among the bitterly oppressed, and there is a great need for people to *break* with this American chauvinism. *Free yourself from the GTF!—the Great Tautological Fallacy*. A fallacy: an idea, or a way of thinking, that is false, wrong. A tautology: a round-in-a-circle way of reasoning that asserts something and then claims to prove it by merely asserting the same thing again. So, the Great Tautological Fallacy to which I am referring is the notion that America is a force for good in the world, and therefore whatever it does is good (or at least done with “good intentions”), even if the same thing when done by other forces, especially forces opposed to “us,” is bad, is evil—because... because America is a force for good in the world. Thus, in the grip of the Great Tautological Fallacy, when one is told by the authorities in government and the media, etc., that North Korea developing a small number of nuclear weapons and a few long-range ballistic missiles poses a “grave threat,” one does not question, one does not ask why *that* is a “grave threat,” while *the only country ever to use nuclear weapons*, the United States, having thousands of nuclear weapons and the capability to use them, anywhere in the world, is somehow *not* a grave threat. Under the influence of the Great Tautological Fallacy, one does not stop to think about the fact that, in this situation, North Korea could only be developing this weaponry as an attempt to *deter* an attack from the United States—for North Korea's leaders know that if they *initiated* an attack, they would face massive, overwhelming retaliation—and from the point of view of the imperial rulers of the United States, such a possibility of *deterrence* is precisely the problem, because it could in some measure limit the ability of the U.S. to dominate and dictate.

Here is another example: Recently, Chelsea Manning, a former soldier, who took great risk and spent years in prison for exposing, among other things, war crimes by the U.S. military in Iraq, was extended an invitation to be a lecturer in an academic program at Harvard University. But then, when some government officials and others, including Mike Pompeo, objected and threatened to pull out of the program, Harvard

disinvited Manning. Well, who is Mike Pompeo? He is the head of the CIA—an “intelligence” arm of the U.S. government which, without exaggeration, is an instrument of murder on a mass scale. Going back to the 1950s, and through succeeding decades, the CIA has worked through right-wing butchers, in countries such as Iran, Guatemala, Chile, Indonesia, and many others, to pull off coups that have removed popular governments from power and replaced them with murderous reactionary dictatorships. More than a million people have been slaughtered as a result of these actions by the CIA. But, through the lens of the Great Tautological Fallacy, the head of the CIA is a respected figure, and his denunciations of Chelsea Manning can cause Manning to be ousted from the program to which she was invited at Harvard.

Of great help in casting off the Great Tautological Fallacy is the “American Crime” series that appears regularly on revcom.us—where you can get a beginning sense of the scope and the depth of the atrocities that have been carried out, here and all over the world, by the rulers of this country, from the beginning and down to today.

But from childhood we are indoctrinated with the notion that America is a shining light of freedom, and the President of the United States is “the leader of the free world.” Well, when has this been true? Was it true during all the years of *slavery*? Or during the long years of Jim Crow segregation after the Civil War, when thousands of Black people were lynched while leering mobs of white racists celebrated, and Black people as a whole were subjected to constant terror? Is this a shining light of freedom *now*, when Black people have to take to the streets demanding “Stop Killing Us!” because the police kill a thousand people every year, many of them unarmed, especially Black people, Latinos, and Native Americans? When millions of women are battered and huge numbers are raped every year in this country, is this a shining light to the world? And what *is* this “free world?” Does it include the countries where the U.S. has backed and armed military juntas and other oppressive dictatorships, with their bloodthirsty death squads terrorizing the people, over the last 100 years and more, throughout Latin America and many other parts of the world? Does it include *today* countries such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Turkey—all “allies” of the

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U.S. and all ruled by brutally repressive governments? Or what about the Philippines, where the government has carried out the cold-blooded murder of more than 10,000 people within the last year, and the head of state, Duterte, openly boasts of this? Does the “free world” include Israel, a nuclear-armed state that has occupied Palestinian land, in flagrant violation of UN resolutions, for 50 years, and forcibly maintains over a million Palestinian people in Gaza in what amounts to an open-air prison, living barely above survival level, and subject to repeated bombardment by Israeli armed forces, which in 2014, with full support from the U.S. government (headed then by Obama), killed over 2000 people in Gaza, the overwhelming majority civilians, hundreds of them *children*? Is *all this* the “free world” of which the U.S. is the leader? Once you remove the blinders of the Great Tautological Fallacy, it can be seen that the “free world” simply means those parts of the world that are under the domination of, or are “friendly” to, the United States, no matter how monstrous their ruling classes may be, while the “non-free world” is made up of those who remain outside of, and especially those who pose opposition or obstacles to, the domination of the U.S. empire.

The U.S. government wages war in Africa and Asia, as well as the Middle East, claiming it is fighting to defend civilization against the brutal and murderous Islamic fundamentalist jihadists. But the imperialists of the U.S. are certainly no less brutal and murderous, and the “civilization” they boast of is literally built on the blood and bones of people all over the world. And why is this Islamic fundamentalism such a force now? Fundamentally because of the workings of capitalist imperialism itself. Besides the overall role of imperialism in creating more favorable soil for these Islamic fundamentalists, actions of the U.S. imperialists have further fed their growth.

In the 1980s the U.S. actually *armed and built up* Osama bin Laden and other Islamic fundamentalists to strike at the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

In 2003, in violation of international law, the U.S. invaded Iraq to overthrow the head of government there, Saddam Hussein. This invasion was carried out under the cover of *lies* that Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction. This invasion, and the occupation of Iraq by American forces that followed, caused hundreds of thousands of deaths, set off bloody conflicts among the Iraqi people and created more fertile ground for Islamic fundamentalist forces.

And the same thing happened in Libya. Under the presidency of Barack Obama, and with the insistent urging of then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the U.S. intervened in a conflict within Libya on the side of forces opposed to the long-time ruler Muammar

Qaddafi. With the fall of Qaddafi—which was brought about mainly as a result of massive bombing of his forces by the U.S. and its allies—the rivalries and conflicts within Libya were intensified, and Islamic fundamentalist forces gained strength.

Or take the case of Iran. In 1953 the CIA engineered a coup that overthrew a popular government that was moving to nationalize the oil of the country, so that it could be used for the development of *its* economy, instead of being controlled and plundered by the U.S. and Britain. This coup brought the Shah of Iran to power, and the people of Iran suffered decades of torment and torture at the hands of the Shah and his secret police. And, here again, these actions of the U.S. created more favorable ground for the forces of Islamic fundamentalism, which ultimately seized power through the revolution that overthrew the Shah in 1979.

These are only a few examples of the American crimes that have been committed, and the kinds of consequences that have followed from these crimes, in countries all over the world. And all this underlines the crucial importance of casting off the blinders of the Great Tautological Fallacy and breaking with American chauvinism. We need to think about humanity, first and above all.

During the 1960s, a whole generation (or a large and defining part of that generation) *broke* with American chauvinism, cast off the Great Tautological Fallacy and, at the cost of real sacrifice, dared to stand up against the atrocities committed, here and throughout the world, by the rulers of this country, and fight for a better world. Unfortunately, all too many (though not all!) of that generation have become disoriented and have allowed themselves to become, as the French say, “*récupéré*”—that is, they have come back under the wing of the ruling class, in particular its “liberal” representatives in the Democratic Party, and have far too much accepted things on the terms of a system they once, very rightly, recognized as viciously criminal. But now, when the workings of this system have brought this fascist regime to power, there is, more than ever, a profound and urgent need for people, of all generations, to finally and thoroughly break with American chauvinism, and act in the interests of humanity.

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