Werner Bohleber

Ideality and Destructiveness – Toward a Psychodynamic of Religious Fundamentalism[1]

1. Introduction

Prior to September 11, religion was largely regarded as a remnant of pre-modern thinking or a marginal phenomenon relegated to the sphere of individual concerns. And for a long time, the spread of religious fundamentalism and its increasing impact on all the religions of the world aroused little interest, at least in Europe. Only after 9/11 have we become more inclined to engage with fundamentalism, its phenomena, and its messages. Once again we are faced with the question what kind of psychological links exist between religious certainty and hatred, as well as between the fantasy of a narcissistic "ideal condition," and murderous violence. This development came as a surprise not only to the public but also to academic religious studies. Intensive reflection and research on these connections has now set in, with the focus of attention on fundamentalist movements in the three monotheistic religions. Before I enlarge on this topic, I should first like to refer to a debate of longer standing on the question of whether the monotheistic claim to exclusiveness engenders violence out of itself.

2. Monotheism and Religious Violence

At a recent conference, the American sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt suggested that in the highly charged and volatile atmosphere of present-day global society, in which multiple modernities compete with one another, the belief in an exclusive god has the effect of a combustion agent constantly fanning the flames of conflict[2]. In his investigations on the Aton religion, the figure of Moses, and Jewish monotheism, the Egyptologist Jan Assmann (1998; 2003) has been particularly active in foregrounding the links between the exclusive claims of monotheism and violence. At its heart, monotheism not only revolves around the belief in One God. After all, polytheism was also notable for the widespread belief that all the different deities could ultimately be traced back to one god. The specific difference in monotheism is in fact the distinction between the true god, on the one hand, and false gods and idols on the other. One precept connected with this was the prohibition of images. Assmann calls this the "Mosaic distinction." By contrast, polytheism is cosmotheism: the divine is inherent in

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[2] Conference of the Max-Weber-Kolleg in Erfurt. Report in DIE ZEIT No. 29, 2008.

the cosmos and cannot be separated off from the world. This, however, is precisely what monotheism does. It not only sets God Himself apart from the world, the human individual is also extricated from his/her symbiotic relationship with the world and exhorted to enter into a partnership with the extramundane One God, thus becoming an autonomous individual with accountability to God. Rightful action and justice thus become theological categories; this is the advent of ethics in religion. For Assmann this is the great civilizatory achievement of monotheism, in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. But he also discerns another darker side of that same phenomenon: it ushered a new species of hatred and violence into the world, the hatred of the old gods - now relegated to the status of idols - and the rites associated with them, and the abomination of heathens and heretics. The reaction to this was the hatred of those marginalized by the Mosaic Distinction and of all others declared heathen. Effectively, Assmann sees monotheism not merely as iconoclasm but as theoclasm. It not only destroys the rival gods, it goes further. As the history of the western mind indicates, it ultimately sets itself up against the One God Himself. Unlike Freud, Assmann identifies the trauma of monotheism not in the dual patricide, first of the primal father and then of Moses, but in theoclastic violence itself, initially directed at the heathen deities, finally at God Himself. The consequence of "progress in the realm of spirituality" is not only negative theology but deicide. Both the "Mosaic distinction" and Freud's "progress in the realm of spirituality" refer not to the achievement of an historical condition but to an "intellectual stance" and a "regulatory idea that in the last resort can never be institutionalized" (2003, 52). There have repeatedly been relapses in the course of history in which elements of the ousted and repressed cosmotheistic religions have been reinstated, only to trigger a monotheistic counter-movement. For all the differences in form and situation, it is to this historical lineage and its dynamics that Assmann assigns modern fundamentalisms as a further form of these monotheistic counter-movements, which can be interpreted as responses to the modernization, secularization, and westernization of the world.

This is not the place to enlarge on the theological engagement with Assmann's theory of an inherent link between monotheism and violence. Nor do I intend to examine the extent to which the idea of Christian universalism contradicts Assmann's position.

Monotheism was undoubtedly the source for the idea of universal human unity, insisting as it did that all individuals are equal in the eyes of God. Together with this idea the notion of a virtual community emerged. The fact that this universal idea

repeatedly failed to assert itself in the face of particularisms and power interests is essentially associated with a specific psychological dynamic associated with the notion of such virtual communities. I should now like to enlarge on this point.

Religious violence is grounded not only in the theoclasm of monotheism. It also takes a different form, related to the first, but fuelled psychologically from different sources. What I am referring to are the religious conceptions of community and group cohesion ("Vergemeinschaftung"). At its core, religion is not a private matter. It implies a community of believers committed to their faith, the holy scriptures and the ethical commandments set down in them. These believers uphold their faith through the religious rites that they perform together. On the one hand, religious community is virtual, e.g. the Church of Jesus Christ or the Ummah of the Moslems, on the other it manifests itself in real communities or congregations. In this tension between virtual and real community the inclusion/exclusion problem poses itself with much greater trenchancy than in the monotheistic idea, and modern fundamentalist religious movements take it a stage further. This is what I want to focus on the following, my main concern being to elucidate the unconscious fantasies behind the conscious notions involved, fantasies that can make it easier to understand the conjunction of ideas of ideal harmony and unity with progressively destructive radicalism and violence.

In his major study on violence and tolerance in Christianity, church historian Arnold Angenendt (2007) indicates that the most dangerous problem besetting all universalist movements, and especially the religions of the world, evolves when they proclaim their allegiance to universalism but at the same time pin this idea to one nation or one people as its exclusive proponent, as the "chosen people" bringing salvation for all others. Here, Angenendt suggests, the universalist idea reverts to that of a gentile tribal religion. The conviction of being authorized by God as a Christian collective, i.e. as His church, generates a feeling of superiority and an aggressive impulse to engulf others, both in religious and political terms. In the course of history this danger has turned into reality often enough. Upholding the idea of universality is so difficult precisely because it requires acknowledging and respecting the otherness of others. The problem we are addressing here is how a religious message and the specific form of group bonding and cohesion ("Vergemeinschaftung") that it implies stands in a causal relationship with violence. This phenomenon has been studied in a different context, with reference to nationalist ideology in its various guises. It transpires that the insights gained there are also helpful in the analysis of fundamentalist movements. I shall return to this later.

3. Essentials of Fundamentalist Thinking – Group Bonding and Violence

Fundamentalist movements have evolved not only in the three monotheistic religions but in all the major religions of the world. In addition, a number of fundamentalist currents have conjoined with nationalist ideologies to form religious variants of an ethno-nationalist nature. Present-day research in the social sciences (Armstrong 2000; Marty u. Appleby 1991; Riesebrodt 1990) proceeds on the assumption that there are certain characteristics and structures common to all groups of a fundamentalist religious persuasion. Almond, Appleby& Sivan define fundamentalism as follows: " 'Fundamentalism', in this usage, refers to a discernible pattern of religious militancy by which self-styled 'true believers' attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors"(2003, 17). The authors employ the concept of "cultural enclave" coined by the sociologist Mary Douglas in their attempts to provide a theoretical and systematic description of the characteristics of fundamentalist bonding and to set them off from those displayed by other related movements.

The following is a brief summary of the most important properties involved.

1. Fundamentalist movements take shape as a defense against the processes and consequences of secularization, modernization, and liberalization that have penetrated the major religious communities and are perceived as symptoms of decline or decay. The basic motive is not so much hatred of modernity as the fear that their religious convictions and fundamental values might be discarded and threatened in their very existence. Fundamentalism is the militant attempt to reverse these developments. The striving for rock-solid personal and communal identity draws its militancy from a heightened sense of immediate danger. Fundamentalism thrives in periods of crisis, whether actual or imagined. Subjectively, this crisis is not experienced as a social or political emergency but as a crisis of identity threatening to bring about the obliteration of the respective religion or its dissolution in a syncretistic culture. Crises are understood against the background of God's salvation plan giving meaning to decline and decay and holding out prospects of the imminent end of an era and a turn for the better. Apocalyptic thinking is a property of almost all fundamentalist movements.
2. Those fundamentalist movements that do not retreat from the world but resolve to intervene actively in the course it is taking aim at replacing existing societal and

political structures with an all-encompassing system derived from religious principles and providing regulation for all spheres of life - politics, society, the economy, and culture. All institutions must be subject to divine law. Thus fundamentalism invariably has a totalitarian impetus.

3. The central traditions of the religion involved are selectively appropriated and functionalized for explicit political purposes. Fundamentalists combat all forms of historical awareness interfering with the absolute validity of their holy scriptures. They are against any form of hermeneutic thinking. The holy scriptures literally come from God and are hence infallible. The religious identity rooted in them has a quasi-ontological grounding and is impervious to historical and social change.
4. Fundamentalists draw a strict line of demarcation between believers and non-believers. This divide protects the group from contamination and adulteration and guarantees group purity. The contradictions of the world and the ambivalence of psychical reality are dissolved. The world outside is sinful, doomed, and impure. The world inside is redeemed and pure. Conversion rites make this boundary a critical frontier. The affective power of strict societal and moral rules of behavior makes for uniformity and conformity. Membership is voluntary, and a fraternity ethic and the principle of equality for all members reign within the enclave. Hierarchies are kept as flat as possible. The ultimate authority is invested in the religious scriptures that contain an answer for all questions that might conceivably arise. The scriptures have to be interpreted, though, and this is where some charismatic leader normally has the last word. The internal homogeneity of the group and equality in purity preclude all ambivalence or inner opposition. Any hint of that is immediately branded as betrayal. The offending member is harried or excised from the community. This results in splittings that cost a lot of energy but serve a salutary purpose by preserving the equality of the members and group cohesion.

These properties define fundamentalism as “strong religion” (Almond et al. 2003) characterized by purity, where purity is equated with uniformity of belief and practice. Fundamentalists have nothing but contempt for the compromises of the religious establishment with secular powers. Inherent in this fundamentalist dynamic centering on purity and conformity is an extremist form of intolerance and latent violence, which does not however necessarily manifest itself as such.

I should like to cast further light on these connections by probing the deep structure of fundamentalist mentalities. I want to begin with apocalyptic thinking. All forms of fundamentalism are more or less apocalyptic in their complexion. It is particularly salient in the Protestant variety, less so in Sunnite fundamentalism. Some researchers even see apocalyptic thinking as the central feature of fundamentalist thinking in the three monotheistic religions.[3] After the decline of religion in the wake of the Enlightenment, the apocalyptic phantasm in the Christian/Jewish tradition took on a secularized form in the visions of ultimate disaster and the expectations of salvation to be found in the ideologies of progress and the totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century. With the return of religion as we are experiencing it today, religious apocalyptic thinking has also regained attraction and credence.

4. Fundamentalism and apocalyptic thinking

Apocalyptic thinking rears its head in communities that see themselves as threatened in their very existence and interpret this threat in terms of the history of salvation. The crisis is transformed into a signal for the imminent final battle; the status quo collapses is doomed to demise and a new, harmonious condition supervenes, redeemed from all uncertainty, insecurity and persecution. Crucial to this thinking is the uncompromising division into Good and Bad. Trimondi und Trimondi (2006) even speak of an apocalyptic matrix, a pattern like a code identifiable in the world religions. The content of this matrix is the end of the world and its renewal. It is a dogma of two aeons, on the one hand the aeon of the existing world that must be destroyed, on the other the aeon of the longed-for millennium of peace. In a final battle, Evil, which has taken ever greater possession of the world, must be destroyed so that the harmonious and peaceable final condition can come into its own. The descriptions of the apocalypse are fraught with visions of vengeance, hatred and cruel punishment fantasies. At the same time we find a longing for a paradisiacal condition in which, after the destruction of Evil, all vengeance and hatred will come to an end. It is this propinquity between ferociously vindictive

[3] Ostow (1996) suggests that in clinical terms apocalyptic thinking derives from suicidal thinking that is initially fended-off and directed at others but ultimately reverts to its self-destructive nature. He anchors this apocalyptic frame of mind in primary-process thinking and deficient affect regulation, a dualist perception of the world in categories of good and evil. Strozier (2002, 2) states: “Fundamentalism ... has a decidedly apocalyptic character..it is a remarkable myth of violence, revenge, and renewal“. Trimondi &Trimondi (2006) describe end-of-the-world messianism in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic fundamentalism. All three are geared to an apocalyptic matrix.

destruction fantasies and an ideal/narcissistic condition that calls for explanation.[4] For this purpose I have chosen American Protestant fundamentalism, in which apocalyptic thinking is widespread. According to a survey by Time/CNN, 59% of all US Americans are convinced that we are living in an age when the events described in the Revelation of St. John the Divine are actually coming about. 25% believe that September 11 is prophesied in the Bible (cited by Trimondi & Trimondi 2006, p. 9).

In the 1990s, Charles Strozier (2002) conducted psychoanalytically oriented biographical interviews with Protestant fundamentalists in the USA. The central feature of the resulting narratives is their division into before and after. Religious conversion ("seeing the light") is described as the decisive event in all these people's lives. It usually occurred in late adolescence or early adulthood, leading to this division of their lives into before and after, reflected in the image of a divided self. In many cases, severe and protracted personal crises or traumas preceded the event, and these are described as a state of psycho-mental deadness followed by rebirth through faith. Conversion has the status of an overwhelmingly authentic experience, rebirth that of a dramatic act of self-creation. The framework for this reconstruction of the biographical facts is provided by the structures of meaning supplied by fundamentalist dogma into which the individual experiences are incorporated. With their own personal life-histories the converts plunge into a redemptive drama of destruction and rescue. The reborn self brings salvation, the new self is eternal and will eventually rest in peace with God. The past is bad and worthless and is split off. Longing for transformation generates a dynamic of its own and is geared to the apocalyptic drama of the end of the world. And the end of the world is nigh. When it begins, the enraptured faithful will be elevated to Heaven, where with Jesus they will populate the kingdom of God in an ultimate state of peace and harmony in the paradise above the clouds. On earth a time of great tribulation will break out, apocalyptic wars will culminate in the destruction of the unbelievers and cleanse the earth of filth and sin. In the corresponding literature, extensive purification and destruction fantasies are fuelled by scenes of massive, bloodthirsty, and almost sadistic cruelty. The fundamentalist narratives collected by Strozier are striking for the

[4] Academic research distinguishes two forms of apocalyptic thinking. Quietism passively tolerates the trials and tribulations of the present in anticipation of the end of the world and the arrival of apocalyptic redemption. Activism, by contrast, feels called upon to intervene in this historical process so as to accelerate the transition to the redemption of the world. Mühlmann (1964, cited in Kippenberg 2008) emphasizes that the tendency toward violence is also inherent in the apocalyptic thinking of the quietist persuasion. Here too, the negation of the world takes the form of pent-up aggression. In a crisis it can trigger a corresponding course of action and turn into "terror."

relentlessness and the lack of compassion with which they mercilessly describe the destruction of the unbelievers in this ultimate drama. In psychoanalytic terms, the unbelievers represent the narrators' rotten and sinful former selves that they have projectively rooted out and wish to see destroyed once and for all in this apocalyptic Armageddon. In addition, this splitting-off and these projective processes are ideologically sacralized by representing the "hero" of the narrative as chosen, while the unbelieving others are rejected by God. Apocalyptic thinking thus becomes the vehicle for the narrator's split-off destructiveness, coupled with the fantasy of an ideal, harmonious millennialist constellation to which the believer will be admitted. The preoccupation with purification fantasies is driven by the idea that evil and badness can be ultimately destroyed. This doctrinaire and apocalyptic fantasy world unmasks many fundamentalists' panic fear of being exterminated by the secularists as split-off destruction fantasies of their own that they have projected onto the secular environment.

The radical, harsh nature of fundamentalist religion can serve to fend off passive and libidinous needs. It provides external objects that anxieties, affects, and weak, contemptible parts of the self can be projected onto with a view to hounding them down and destroying them. The ultimate outcome of such religious-fundamentalist socialization processes is the rejection of the more tolerant, compassionate, conciliatory doctrines of the respective religion and the cultivation of a religion of anger, enmity, and vengeance in their stead (Armstrong 2000). These basic psychological structures derived from a Christian fundamentalist view of the world and the self are also to be found, *mutatis mutandis*, in the world of Islamic fundamentalism that I shall turn to next.

5. The Mental World of Islamic Fundamentalism and Its Deep Structures

Fundamentalism can only be investigated on an interdisciplinary basis. A psychoanalytic perspective requires previous historical and sociological analysis to indicate where it can be brought to bear on the subject. Accordingly, I should first like to summarize a number of historical and sociological analyses. Following the failure of the social and political reforms essayed in the Arab nations after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, fundamentalist currents increasingly garnered support, notably the Muslim brotherhood that had been established in Egypt around 1920.[5] This fundamentalism conceived of itself as a form of political theology and as a "third way," an alternative to

[5] See Lewis (1994; 2003); M.Qutb (1964); Serauky (2000); Armstrong (2000); Schäfer (2008).

Western capitalism and Eastern communism. It has become one of the main strands in the Muslim world today. Its followers pillory the adoption of western lifestyles and ways of thinking as a serious crisis for Islam, a new barbarism, and a relapse to a pre-Islamic age. Their goal is to restore the link between religion and politics, to do away with secular regimes, and to return to a unified religious-political world view. They advocate a reversion to their own model and idealize a recourse to the beginnings of a supposedly idyllic and unspoiled era of Muslim community in 7th-century Medina. It would however be erroneous to regard this as traditionalism. Sayyid Qutb, one of the most important thinkers behind this radical movement, was a religious revolutionary (Qutb 2001; Bergesen 2008). For him the Oneness of God is the sole and supreme principle of true monotheism. In his eyes the axiom "There is no deity except God" means that the true Muslim owes obedience to no one and nothing except God, so that submission to a political power or other authority is out of the question. Rules and laws can only come from God Himself, as set down in the Quran. Accordingly, Islam is not just a matter of faith but also a social movement. Qutb urges a return to the religious and political system of the first Muslims. They were the true and pure Muslims because they derived the guidelines for politics, business, economics and all aspects of their actions from the Quran. Thus the aim is also to work toward radical social change in order to create an ideal world in which the authority of God alone reigns over human hearts and consciences as over all matters of social and political life. Everything must be purified for God so that all obey Him alone and no other human can rule over them. This, for Qutb, is true freedom. But it also means destroying all secular systems that stand in the way of true Islam. Accordingly, the jihad is inevitable. Standing up for God's cause requires not only sermons and advocacy, but also military resources. To establish the sovereignty of God, purification must begin at home, in the Islamic countries, and then be extended all over the world.

Olivier Roy (2004), one of the leading international experts on Islam, regards this strategy for engendering a political form of Islam and reconnecting religion and politics in an Islamic state and a genuinely Islamic society as a failure, not only because of the authoritarian regimes in the Muslim countries but also because of the irreversible westernization and modernization of Muslim societies. Islam, says Roy, is deterritorializing itself and also extricating itself from the links with specific cultures. One cause of this is globalization, which has led to the formation of Islamic minorities in western countries. Roy identifies an advance of post-Islamism and neo-

fundamentalism deriving its motive power from Salafism and Saudi-Arabian Wahhabism. This, he says, has erroneously been interpreted as the response of a traditional culture to the threats it feels menaced by, but is in fact the most obvious token of a process of deculturation and the dislocation of the individual by modernity. Now the emphasis is no longer on the restoration of a social and religious order but on the individual and individual faith. The point at issue is no longer religion embedded in a particular culture but the religiosity of the individual. Religion and politics are seen as separate spheres. The creation of a purely Islamic religion is the goal, a religion freed of all western and secular elements. This genuine religion must be put into practice, purifying the self, sacralizing everyday life, and strictly observing all religious rules and commandments. The Ummah as the community of all Muslim believers is also deterritorialized and no longer restricted to geographical areas. Thus it becomes a homogeneous community of equals without attachment to a natural cultural milieu. As such, it mutates into an abstract, virtual community of believers and is shaped much more strongly by imaginary elements than the traditional version. The neo-fundamentalist radicals who have pledged themselves to the jihad no longer aim at creating an Islamic nation. They see themselves as involved in an international revolution and dream of one day defeating the West and its corrupt civilization and unifying all humans under the rule of Islam.

I should now like to investigate how such a narrow and primitive view of the world as fundamentalism and neo-fundamentalism can become so psychologically appealing to modern, educated Muslims. My aim is to identify the unconscious fantasies that come into play here. My concern is not restricted to making the appeal of such fundamentalist ideologies more transparent. I also set out to point up the tendency of radicalization inherent in them. Methodologically and conceptually, I gear this endeavor to the concept of ubiquitous unconscious fantasies (see Bendkower 1991). These are fantasies shared by all people to some degree. They are ubiquitous in that they revolve around the fundamental facts of life, the connection of bodily needs to mental and psychic development, especially psychosexual maturity, care-taking by, and dependence on the mother, sibling rivalry, the primal scene, and the Oedipus complex. These fantasies are derivatives of the unconscious, but they find their way into the conscious realm and materialize in reality and social life. In this externalization process they, on the one hand, adhere to and shape the perception and formation of societal events, institutions, and cultural value systems. On the other, they are also pressed into service from the

outside, that is, by societal agents shaping and channeling them through objective structures such as institutions, social conventions, and linguistic traditions.

In an earlier study (1997) I use the example of German nationalism and anti-Semitism to examine the emotions, affects, and associated unconscious phantasms activated in the mind when imagining the nation. A comparison of the ideational worlds of radical German nationalism after 1918 with Islamist fundamentalism reveals some amazing similarities. One might challenge the validity of this comparison by arguing that western-style nationalism did not achieve the same degree of phantasmatic potential in Islamic nations, where older and more deeply rooted religious loyalties held sway. But this objection fails to take account of the fact that nationalism has often been an heir to religion and, especially in its extreme and totalitarian forms, has taken on the character of a political religion (Bärsch 1998). With all due caution in the light of the differences involved, it still strikes me as valuable to look to the level of deep psychic structures in comparing the ideational worlds of nationalism and politico-religious Islam, which considers the Ummah to be a community of all Muslims and the sole Islamic nation. I have found support for this comparison in the work of Benedict Anderson (1988), who assumes the existence of a subterranean connection when he defines the nation as an "imagined community" based on the cultural systems of "kinship" and "religion."

The following unconscious ideational complexes have proved significant in the analysis of radical nationalism and will serve as a heuristic basis from which to examine the deep structures of religious-political visions in Islamist fundamentalism:

– care-taking fantasies and sibling rivalry,
– purity and the ideational conception of the other,
– visions of group unity and fantasies of fusion.

In the first fantasy system, involving unconscious care-taking fantasies and sibling rivalry, the alien Other is perceived as an intruder who enters a sphere taken to be one's own rightful property, displacing the native inhabitant, robbing him of his possessions (in the unconscious this means: the possession of the primary object) and ensconcing himself as a parasite and freeloader. Unconsciously, this alien is the sibling rival who disrupts the narcissistically idealized union with the collective mother figure. In Islamism, however, this seems to be the least conspicuous fantasy system. The available evidence shows that it does not pack the same phantasmatic power as one finds in German anti-Semitism, where Jews were thought of as gluttonous vermin. One example

from Islamism will suffice to illustrate the point. In Bin Laden's declaration exhorting all Muslims to participate in the holy war against the Americans and their allies, he refers to the latter as crusaders descending on the Arab peninsula like locusts to devour its riches (cited by Kippenberg 2008, 164)

Purity and the Vision of the Other

As has become apparent, this fantasy system is prevalent in fundamentalist thinking. Compared to the projection of forbidden instinctual impulses onto the Other, the connection between visions of purity and group identity are more complex. As Freud indicated (1921), members of a group phase out individual differences in their narcissistic identification with each other. They assure themselves of their ties and their identity by being like all other group members. Difference and otherness thus emerge as something impure. As Mary Douglas has shown (1966), dirt has long been defined in a cultural-historical sense as something that is in the wrong place. Accordingly, dirt is something that cannot be countenanced if a symbolic system is to continue to exist. Uncertainty, insecurity, and ambivalence are intolerable. Such impurities must be eradicated for a homogenous, symbolically consistent universe to exist.

Ritual purity plays a significant role in Islam, so it comes as no surprise that fantasies of purity have extraordinary significance for self-identity in Islamism. A major Islamic political newspaper has this to say about the incursion of western ideas and ways of life: "Islam is like fresh, clear spring water, unbelievers are like water dredged up from the bottom of a suburban sewer. If even a drop of that filth enters the clear water, its clarity will be dimmed. Likewise, it takes only a drop of the filth of disbelief to contaminate Islam in the West" (cited by Raban 2002, 32). Sayyid Qutb, one of the intellectual authorities of Islamism, attributes this defilement of purity to the Jews: "The Jews free sensual desires from their constraints and destroy the moral basis upon which belief is based. They do this so that belief is sullied by the same filth that they so freely spread around the world" (Nettler 1986, 104)[6]. There are numerous other examples of such beliefs. Alongside pollution, images of poisoning also play a significant role. The female body is charged with a particularly strong power to pollute, seduce, and destroy. It also serves as a metaphor for the situation of a society that sees itself threatened by seductive, evil powers (Riesebrodt 2000, 121).

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[6] I would like to thank Matthias Küntzel for calling my attention to this and giving me access to the partial English documentation of Qutb's essay in Nettler's (1986) study.

Here I would like to enlarge upon one further point: the perception of the alien other is reciprocally connected to the perception of oneself. As René Spitz describes it (1965), the child's stranger anxiety is not a consequence of the strangeness of this person, but rather a reaction to the perception that the face of the stranger is not the same as the memory of the mother's face. In this way, the perception of the stranger leads the child back to the mother and heightens its attachment to her, always assuming that the child feels secure in the mother-child relationship. Subsequently the child can enter into contact without anxiety and get to know the stranger. By contrast, the pathological form of this relationship seeks to blot out the stranger and to reassure oneself by means of narcissistic mirroring in the mother. If a fantasy of homogeneity dominates at group level, mirroring and self-reassurance operate in connection with the group members who are like oneself. Ambivalence is unavoidable, however, and leads to an aggressive charge stimulated by the differences within the group, which then have to be obliterated and projected outward. Such a world of narcissistic mirroring and purity results in massive, persecutory aggression toward those who are different and thus pose a threat to internal cohesion. This narcissism cannot tolerate the coexistence of anything different or deviant and has a tendency to become progressively more radical. Purity can only be achieved via exclusion. In this way, membership of an idealized, pure community and persecutory violence are closely connected and mutually dependent. Ostow (1996) speaks in this context of a "pogrom mentality" (1996), while Adorno refers to "psychic totalitarianism" (1950).

Visions of Unity and Fantasies of Fusion

Current psychoanalytic research on groups has shown that regression in a group or mass goes well beyond the Oedipal level Freud described, extending to other active and profoundly narcissistic identifications (Anzieu, 1975; Bion, 1961; Jaques,1981; Kreeger, 1975; Money-Kyrle, 1951). When members regressively fuse to form a group, that group turns into an illusionary substitute for the lost object, the mother in infancy. The group fantasy substitutes a communal ego-ideal for that of the individual and brings about manic elation. If it comes to power and merges with fantasies of superiority, the reality testing of the individuals involved and the demands of their own conscience are set at naught, while the sense of self is enormously heightened by the fusion with the national or collective sense of self. The question "Who am I?" is replaced by "To whom do I belong?" For these people there exists, on the one hand, a world of great symbiotic

unity, and on the other, split off from the first, a world of rivalry, competition, and plurality.

The Islamist conception of the Ummah as a community of all Muslims is one of the most vivid examples of this fusionary and unitarian brand of thinking. In the eyes of Muslims, humanity consists of collectivities. Bassam Tibi (1993) stated that Islam does acknowledge individuation, but only partially. The designation of the human being as a free individual as it has developed in the western tradition is largely absent in Islam, though changes are taking place at present in the wake of the migration of Muslims to western societies. A Muslim belongs to the Ummah as the community of all Muslims, a membership that defines him and, like some irrevocable tribal affiliation, is something he can never shake off (ibd., S. 42). Thus the Ummah figures as a homogeneous society without division or social stratifications. The pilgrimage to Mecca is idealized as a union with the Ummah that overcomes the self-referentiality of the individual. An Iranian philosopher describes the sevenfold circling of the Ka'abah as follows: "You are sustained by the wave of enthusiasm and the attraction of the community; you are no longer. The community is all …Now you have become part of Creation. You are in the orbit of this solar system, you revolve around God and gradually you stop feeling yourself " (Armstrong 2000, 360). The community of the Ummah is, however, by no means homogeneous. It is full of division, argument, and discord. Unity is a fantasy vision that acquires more and more power over people's minds as destructive tendencies and hostile impulses are projected onto ethnic and religious minorities in the world of Islam or onto the unbelievers who have conspired against it. This engenders a phantasm of a pure and unified Muslim community. As part of such a collective, one cannot see the threatening, alien other as an independent individual, but solely as an enemy agent seeking to destroy the homogeneity one is part of. Relations with the outside world are perceived in a manichaean way. The imaginary Ummah stands on the one side, the demonized world of the enemies on the other. Discord, problems, and errors are not one's own doing but the result of the evil and satanic machinations of the West and the perceived victimization at the hands of the Jews. A Muslim who thinks otherwise can be easily branded a traitor. Such conspiratorial thinking is widespread in the Arab world. This plot is considered to be part of a long-standing scheme that began with the crusades, brought about the dissolution of the Caliphate and the separation of religion and state, and seeks to destroy Islamic religion and culture. As Bassam Tibi has demonstrated, these conspiracy theories employ a radical rhetoric that "no longer serves

to communicate or share knowledge; its sole function is to psychologically and rhetorically bolster one's own unrealistic perception against an outside world that stands in contradiction to it" (Tibi 1993, 43).

In this way, Islamic fundamentalism becomes a closed, religiously totalitarian system, governed by imaginary conceptions that feed on unconscious phantasms. An imaginary community is idealized in order to shield it against reality. Harmony and peace, the final state one longs for, require the abolition and destruction of rotten western civilization. As we know, ideality and terror are indeed interrelated.

6. Conclusion

My intention has been to indicate the inherent connections between forms of religious group constitution and cohesion, on the one hand, and violence on the other. These connections are forged by unconscious fantasy systems activated by religious ideas of a fundamentalist nature. I have tried to show how these inherent connections between narcissistic notions of purity, unity, and equality resort to massive violence to invoke the fantasy of a pre-ambivalent narcissistic ideal condition. The alien Other thus takes on the guise of the infidel as an intruder and troublemaker, an ascription necessary both for projection and persecution with a view to maintaining the phantasmatic ideal condition. In the last resort, this is a denial of the indefeasibility of ambivalence. Longing for such a pre-ambivalent narcissistic ideal condition is likely to be heightened in times of crisis and to assert itself powerfully in groups. The danger here is that such ideological notions and fantasies may activate a capacity for aggression that can generate immense destructive potential. Yet the path from here to terrorism is by no means straight. Such a consummation requires further individual motives and additional indoctrination.

But purity can never be positively defined out of itself. It always requires a counter-image, that of the not-so-pure. Purification phantasms have a tendency to become increasingly radical. This and the cumulative paranoid charge they display may lead to the employment of increasingly massive exclusionary or destructive violence. As we know, revolutions end by devouring their own children. This is one way that things may turn out. The other way derives from the fact that the world can never be completely engulfed by such a totalitarian fundamentalist system, however radically the community in question may sequester itself. The Other and alternative views can never be

completely disempowered in this way. Accordingly, the psychologically fundamentalist purification process can never come to an end. Nor can it rule out the eventuality of personal reflection and criticism, both of them sources of reconsideration and compromise.

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