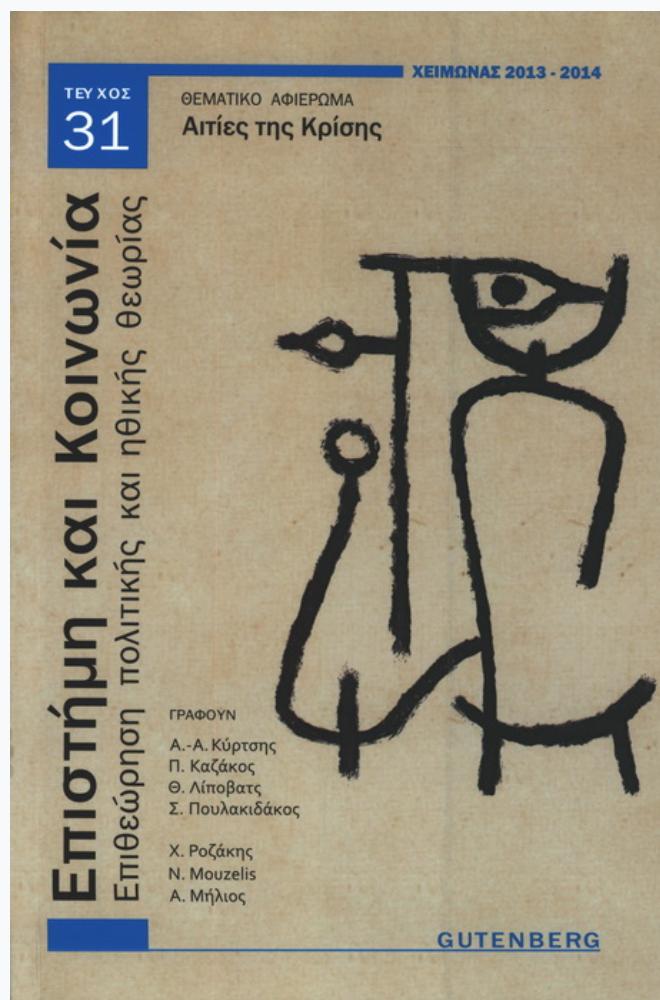


## Επιστήμη και Κοινωνία: Επιθεώρηση Πολιτικής και Ηθικής Θεωρίας

Τόμ. 31 (2014)

Αιτίες της Κρίσης



### Modernity. The Fundamentalist Dimension

*Nicos Mouzelis*

doi: [10.12681/sas.10299](https://doi.org/10.12681/sas.10299)

Copyright © 2016, Nicos Mouzelis



Άδεια χρήσης [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

### Βιβλιογραφική αναφορά:

Mouzelis, N. (2016). Modernity. The Fundamentalist Dimension. *Επιστήμη και Κοινωνία: Επιθεώρηση Πολιτικής και Ηθικής Θεωρίας*, 31, 165–184. <https://doi.org/10.12681/sas.10299>

*Nicos Mouzelis\**

MODERNITY.  
THE FUNDAMENTALIST DIMENSION

---

The basic argument in this paper is that fundamentalism is modern not only or primarily in terms of the material and organizational technologies that it uses: it is also modern in terms of its basic sociostructural features, features which have an elective affinity with the unique characteristics of modernity. Choosing Islamic fundamentalism as an example, I will also try to see how the sociostructural level of the phenomenon relates, not only to the cultural but also to the psychodynamic/psychoanalytic level.

*1. On the specificity of the fundamentalist phenomenon*

I THINK that what distinguishes fundamentalism from pre-modern authoritarian religious movements or regimes is not so much the cultural/ideological features which are usually referred to in order to establish its features; such as the attempt to return to an idealized 'golden' past, the literal interpretation of sacred texts, the creation and demonization of an external enemy which enhances the religious community, the distinction between the

---

\* Emeritus Professor of Sociology, London School of Economics <mouzelis@hol.gr>.

believers' pure way of life and the unbelievers' 'contaminated' one etc.<sup>1</sup> Although such attributes characterize fundamentalism, they are not unique to it. Most of them are to be found in pre-modern religious authoritarianisms, from antiquity onwards. Therefore they do not establish its specificity. What makes fundamentalism quintessentially modern are its sociostructural features.

If, for example, we consider fundamentalism's authoritarian and often violent orientations (and I refer here to both physical and symbolic violence), it differs from religious oppression in a pre-modern, segmentally organized setting. In the latter case, low individuation means that traditional subjects experience religious discipline and restrictive rules in a qualitatively different way than in a modern social formation whose social structure is characterized by top-down differentiation and widespread individualization. To be more specific, it is one thing to impose the sharia in a traditional, non-differentiated community and quite another to impose its rules on modern, highly individualized citizens who have a greater need for autonomy and self-realization.

## *2. Fundamentalism: the cultural dimension*

In cultural terms, religious fundamentalism is a reaction to modernism —or rather to certain of its aspects; such as widespread secularization, religious relativism, libertarian sexual norms, the legitimization of homosexuality, feminism etc. This reaction is linked to a project aiming at a return to 'fundamentals'. In Islamic fundamentalism for instance, the focus is on a return to a past fraternal community (the *Ummah*), the strict observation of the sharia, the opposition to western cultural and geopolitical imperialism etc. Given the great variety of Islamic traditions, one can always find features which differ from one tradition to another.<sup>2</sup> For instance, in the shia tradition the emphasis is less

---

1. For an exploration of such features, see Marty & Appleby 1994.

2. For differences between various fundamentalist traditions, see Bruce 1988.

on an idealized past and more on a future golden age when the hidden 12th *Imam* will appear again (Sachedina 1994: 410). Therefore, in this case we have a messianic redemption similar to Christ's second coming.

In all cases, the return to a past or future golden age is highly selective (Eisenstadt 1999). Only certain cultural features of the tradition are selected in order to mobilize believers against a demonized foe who is responsible for all social ills. For instance, Khomeini appropriated and radicalized certain features of the original shia Islam (which was quietistic) in order to mobilize the believers against the Pahlavi regime. More generally, he 'modernised' certain aspects of the religious tradition in order to make them compatible with the nation state. Another point worth mentioning is that Islamic fundamentalism is exclusivist —in the sense that other religious faiths are not tolerated (jihadists aim at the Islamisation of the world by more or less violent means). On the other hand, it is 'inclusionist' in the sense that religion should penetrate/dominate all non religious institutional spheres —from education and recreation to politics and science. The ultimate end, as in totalitarian regimes,<sup>3</sup> is the total transformation of the societal and personality systems.

There is also the dogma of the Koran's inerrancy which characterizes Christian fundamentalism as well. But careful selection of a sacred text's features which are useful for popular mobilization distinguishes strict scriptural literalism from the Islamic fundamentalist interpretation of sacred texts. The contradiction between selectivity and inerrancy is usually solved by the distinction between more and less fundamental aspects of the Koran. There is also the notion of 'dynamic interpretation': given that Islam entails political struggle, one needs to interpret

---

3. For certain scholars, Jacobinism, as well as totalitarian regimes, communism and racism, are considered as fundamentalist in the secular/political rather than religious sense (Eisenstadt 1999). In this text, fundamentalism refers exclusively to the religious dimension. When the concept is used in its broader sense, I think that it loses part of its analytical, heuristic utility.

the fundamental Koranic principles in the light of the ongoing war against the infidels. For Sayyid Qutb, for instance, an activist interpretation of the Koran is necessary if people are to understand its true meaning.<sup>4</sup>

### *3. Fundamentalism: The sociostructural dimension*

When conceptualised in *sociostructural* rather than cultural terms, modernity refers to the type of social organization which became dominant in the West after the Industrial Revolution in England and the revolution of 1789 in France. It entails three basic features, which distinguishes it from all pre-modern social formations:

- The decline of segmental localism and the inclusion of the population into the national centre/nation state.
- The top-down differentiation of institutional spheres.
- Widespread individualization.

#### *A. Mobilisation/inclusion*

In ideal typical terms, the decline of segmental localism meant the transformation of the traditional non differentiated local community into a less self-contained social whole open to the direct influence of broader social forces. It meant in other terms the inclusion of the whole population into the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1991) of the nation state, into its wider economic, political and cultural arenas. This *inclusionary* process led to the transfer of material and symbolic resources from the periphery to the national centre. From an actors' perspective, it led to the concentration of not only the means of production, but also the means of domination/violence, as well as the means of cultural influence into the hands of national rather than local/regional elites. It is via such mobilising, 'bringing-in' pro-

---

4. See on this Calvert 2010 and Sivan 1985, Qutb 2000.

cesses that the modern state apparatus penetrated the periphery in a manner which was unthinkable in all pre-modern social formations, however despotic.

Deep state penetration and the inclusionary process can take both *autonomous* and *heteronomous* forms. In the former case civic, political, socioeconomic and cultural rights spread gradually ‘downwards’, this resulting into a strong civil society which operated as a buffer to state authoritarianism (the typical case is 19th and 20th century Britain). In the heteronomous case, people were brought into the centralized administrative, military, cultural and economic mechanisms of the nation state but without the granting of rights (the case of 19th century Prussia).<sup>5</sup>

On the basis of the above definition, one can view a fundamentalist regime as a form of heteronomous inclusion into the national, politico-religious centre. As to a fundamentalist movement, one can view it in a related manner: as an attempt at gaining, through massive mobilisation, state power (or influence) in order to impose in authoritarian fashion, a set of ‘fundamental’ religious principles.<sup>6</sup>

If we take as an example the Iranian theocratic regime, we can easily identify processes drawing believers into the national centre. This entails a shift of material and symbolic resources from the periphery to the centre; or to put it in *actors’ terms*, it entails the concentration of the ‘means of salvation’ from local to national religious elites. Moreover, from a macro-historical perspective, in pre-modern Iran, as in most traditional societies, one observes a marked divide between popular/folk religiosity at the periphery and ‘high Islam’ at the centre. The former was closely linked to the local culture of the traditional community. It was characterized by illiteracy, the prevalence of oral traditions, beliefs in local saints as intermediaries between believers and

5. For the distinction between autonomous and heteronomous inclusionary processes, see Mouzelis 2008: 145-163.

6. Traditional Islamic movements like the Wahabite which aimed at the Islamisation of Arab society are called “proto-fundamentalist” by Eisenstadt (1999: 33-5).

God, superstitious/magical orientations etc. On the other hand, high Islam was based on sacred texts, disconnected from localist traditions and 'prejudices', as well as on religious specialists who codified and interpreted such texts. This divide was attenuated as administrative and material technologies of the national, politico-religious elites penetrated the periphery.<sup>7</sup>

In the Iranian case, during the pre-Khomeini period, the shah's attempt at rapid but misdirected<sup>8</sup> modernisation (both in the agricultural and industrial sectors) led to rapid urbanization (Bharier 1971, Graham 1979) and the subsequent weakening of the traditional, non differentiated, village community (Sachedina 1994: 418).<sup>9</sup> These processes created a large underclass of urban,<sup>10</sup> deracinated, peripheralised poor who were easily mobilised by anti-shah forces. Therefore, both during the pre-Khomeini and the Khomeini period, we witness clearly modernity's process of mobilisation and inclusion into the broader economic, political, religious and cultural arenas of the nation-state. This inclusionary process was heteronomous rather than autonomous —in the sense that people were 'brought-in' without the granting of political rights. Indeed at present the Iranian fundamentalist regime is sustained by such bodies as 'the Guardians of the revolution', as well as by militias, the most important of which is the paramilitary, ideologically driven *Basij* organization. The latter played a key role in controlling dissidents and in systematically suppressing with more or less violent means<sup>11</sup> any opposi-

---

7. For the chasm between popular and high Islam, see Gellner 1969, 1981. See also Sharot 2001: 3-19 and 202-210.

8. For the mismanagement of the Iranian oil boom, see Graham 1979: 32-52 and 77-130.

9. For the process of urbanization and its social impact, see Bharier 1971 and Graham 1979.

10. One of the factors which explain why a Khomeini type revolution did not occur in Iraq has to do with the relative resilience of the traditional village community (Sachedina 1994: 438ff).

11. Violent means included arbitrary arrests, executions and property confiscations (Bakhsh 1984: 155).

tion to the regime. At present the Basij organization is engaged in such activities as internal security, law enforcement, organizing religious ceremonies, suppressing dissident gatherings, moral policing etc. It has branches in most towns and peripheral areas and is often linked to local mosques. It is by this type of mechanisms that the Iranian people are mobilised and brought into the politico-religious centre (Bakhsh 1984, Bernard & Zalmay 1984, Arjomand 1988).

We have of course similar processes in several Islamic countries (e.g. Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria etc.) which, after a period of nationalist socialist regimes were followed by conservative autocracies. In the latter cases, fundamentalist parties constituted the main quasi-legal organized opposition.<sup>12</sup> It is not therefore surprising that fundamentalist organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood played a crucial role in the Arab Spring movements in the Middle East and northern Africa (Rubin 2010). Needless to say, with rapid globalization the inclusionary process expands from the nation state to the so called 'global village' level —as people are brought into the global centre via deterritorialized networks, networks which recruit and bring into the transnational sphere believers ready to fight against western infidels.

### *B. Top-down differentiation*

Moving from an actors' to a more systemic perspective, the second unique feature of modernity is the differentiation of national society into analytically distinct institutional spheres, each one, at least potentially, portraying its own values, logic and historical trajectory. It is true, of course, that pre-modern, complex social formations were also differentiated along economic, political and cultural lines. But in such cases the differentiation process was limited at the top. The societal base was typically organized along non differentiated segmental lines (Marx 1964).

---

12. See on this point Halliday 1994.

Once a society is fully (i.e. both horizontally and vertically) differentiated, following Parsons, there is a problem of integration: of how to coordinate, to bring together the differentiated institutional subsystems so that increased “adaptive capacity” is achieved. For the father of modern sociological theory, modern societies tend to achieve a balance between institutional subsystems (economic, political, social, cultural) via quasi-automatic, systemic mechanisms (Parsons 1971: 27, 1977). *Contra* Parsons, I think that under modern conditions, the integration of differentiated institutional spheres is not automatic, nor always *balancing* —in the sense of always respecting the autonomy of each sphere. Often integration/coordination is achieved in a *levelling* manner, by a dominant institution (political or religious) destroying the autonomous logic of all other social spheres. In other terms, social integration can take both monologic and polylogic forms (Mouzelis 2008: 49-54).

The differentiation of institutional spheres entails, of course, the differentiation of roles and a role player’s identities. The multiplication of a subject’s identities also requires integrative efforts on his/her part. This condition generates intense anxiety which renders difficult the balanced integration of an individual’s multiple and fluid identities. Therefore, as in the case of institutional integration, the integration of identities can take both a balancing and levelling form. In the latter case, one of the subject’s identities dominates all other identities undermining their relative autonomy and specific logic. This brings about a rigid stability, reduces anxiety, but inhibits the type of creativity that late modern conditions make possible. It may therefore lead to extreme forms of fanaticism.

Levelling identity integration characterizes the fundamentalist case. Fundamentalist regimes oppose secularization and, in the case of Islam, aim at the “Islamisation” of the entire society. For instance, in the Iranian case, Khomeini’s *cultural revolution* Islamised the universities by the dismissal of thousands of teachers. The same was true in the armed forces; officers considered ‘westernised’ were dismissed (Arjomand 1988). In the case

of fundamentalist movements trying to take over the state, overall Islamisation is one of their main objectives. For example, radical politico-religious movements, both in the Middle East and in Africa, want to impose the *sharia* and, more generally, the overall traditional religious logic in all social spheres. To the extent that this is achieved, we do not have institutional and role *dedifferentiation* —in the sense that there is no return to segmental forms of social organization. The separation of roles remains, but roles lose their autonomous logic. It is important therefore, in order to avoid theoretical confusion, to replace the usual distinction between differentiation/dedifferentiation by the threefold one proposed here: *non differentiation* (segmental organization), *formal differentiation* (levelling integration of identities/institutions) and *substantive differentiation* (balancing integration). Given that levelling, monologic integration is imposed on highly individualized subjects, i.e. subjects with marked self-realization needs, as already mentioned, its repressive impact is qualitatively different from that experienced in pre-modern social formations. This brings us to an examination of the third unique feature of modernity, that of widespread individualization.

### C. *Widespread individualization*

The third sociostructural feature of modernity refers to the growth of reflexivity and the overall enhancement of individualization.<sup>43</sup> According to Giddens, in pre-modern contexts traditional values and norms provided clear guidelines on how to conduct one's life, on how to relate to friends and foes, to relatives and strangers. In other terms, traditional codes were creating a stable normative context limiting considerably the choices that a subject had. In early modernity, collective ideologies (focusing on nation, class, party etc.) played a similar role. They created a post-traditional context which provided guidance and meaning to everyday existence (Giddens 1994).

---

13. For the concept of individualization, see Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2003.

In late globalised modernity however both traditional and early modern certainties tend to disappear. On whether to marry or not, on how many children to have, what life style to adopt, whether to believe in God or not –in all these and many other areas, the subject is obliged/forced to choose without the help of an already given facilitating framework. Instead, one has to create it oneself. In other words, one has to create ‘one’s own biography’ –or as Ulrich Beck has put it, one has to create ‘a life of one’s own’. One can argue of course that the non existence of a stable framework and the enhanced reflexivity and individualization that it entails can be found in pre-modern situations, particularly among cultural elites. What is unique in late modernity however is that the type of reflexivity which detraditionalization entails spreads from the elite to the non elite level. Individualization is no longer limited to philosophers and artists; it is to be found among people in all walks of life (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2003).

It could also be argued of course that the fundamentalist’s monologic orientations, his/her fanaticism can be found in pre-modern contexts. However, traditional fanaticism is qualitatively different from the fundamentalist’s zealotism encountered in late modernity. The difference relates to the top-down differentiation and widespread individualization of the late modern era. These sociostructural features entail the necessity of replacing the already given, facilitating traditional framework by a ‘self-made’ one; creating thus a fanaticism related to *the specific anxiety that late modern conditions produce*. In simpler terms, the fanaticism of a religiously oriented traditional peasant is different from that of a late modern deracinated, highly individuated, urban unemployed believer.

Another specific fundamentalist characteristic which is related to modernity’s unique sociostructural features is the vision of an overall, total transformation of society and personality. Such a grandiose vision could be imagined by pre-modern utopias, but could not be seriously attempted in a traditional social formation characterized by a chasm between social differentiation

at the top and non differentiation at the social base. Segmental organization renders very difficult the type of mobilisation that overall, societal transformation entails. The idea of an overall, total societal transformation, as far as the possibility of its realization is concerned, is specifically modern. To the extent that modernity undermines traditional localisms (economic, political, cultural) and brings people into the national centre, the notion of an overall total change of society and the subject emerges both as project and as realistic possibility. Maududi, a famous scholar whose thought had a great influence on the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle east, insists on the necessity of total transformation of a believer's way of life: 'A person cannot be a true Muslim if he fulfils Islamic obligations in his personal life but neglects Islamic teachings in his political and economic behaviour'.<sup>14</sup>

#### *4. Fundamentalism: The psychodynamic dimension*

Moving finally to a more psychodynamic/psychoanalytic dimension, one should raise the question of the type of subject (psychologically speaking) which, under favourable conditions, opts for a fundamentalist mode of existence. As far as our example of Islamic fundamentalism is concerned, by favourable conditions I mean well known socioeconomic and politico-religious features such as: large scale unemployment, urban poverty, peripheralisation of the educated middle class youth, existence of religious schools which are against globalization and a modernist culture, aggressive post-colonial nationalism etc. To put it differently, given 'fundamentalogenic'/sociostructural pressures as the ones mentioned above, what type of subject is likely to yield to such pressures? Why do certain subjects react in a 'fundamentalist' manner whereas others do not? Among major psychoanalytic approaches, those of Freud, Melanie Klein and Jacques La-

---

14. Quoted in Ahmad 1995: 487.

can have been used by more recent psychoanalytically oriented theorists in order to explain the conscious and unconscious processes which lead a subject to the acceptance of radical/extremist fundamentalist orientations and practices.

### *A. The Freudian perspective*

Concerning the Freudian perspective for instance, Ruth Stein (2010) starts with Freud's theory of the *primaeva*l horde and its revolt against a domineering father. The murder of the father by his rebellious sons entails both liberation and remorse —these two elements leading to the creation of civilization. Ruth Stein reverses the Freudian narrative. In the case of the jihadist type of fundamentalism, the son identifies with the father and turns his back to the mother, and to the feminine in general. He wants to please the father in a total, unconditional manner. According to Stein, an extreme interpretation of the jihad notion is that an infidel has three options: to be Islamised, to be subjugated economically and politically, or to be killed. Since this is Allah's will, the jihadist, by killing infidels follows a divine order. Moreover, in the case of the suicide bomber, by killing himself/herself and becoming a martyr, s/he shows in the most concrete way his/her unconditional love for the father/God. In psychoanalytic terms, this means regressive identification with the father leading, in its extreme form, to total self-sacrifice. For the jihadist, this is a passage from the anxieties that late modernity generates to a close reunion with the father/God. It is also a straightforward response to the humiliation and suffering that western colonialism and post-colonialism/neo-imperialism has inflicted and continues to inflict on the Islamic people.

According to Stein, it is not objective conditions such as abject poverty, social peripheralisation, extreme forms of exploitation etc. which lead to radical/jihadist fundamentalism. It is rather *the inner logic* of an extremist ideology which generates psychodynamic mechanisms leading the subject to resolve the oedipal complex in a regressive manner, in a manner which leads,

not to the killing of the father, but rather to killing for the 'love of the father'.<sup>45</sup>

Stein's analysis is a clear example of a tendency in psychoanalytically oriented theories to explain fundamentalism (as well as similar phenomena such as racism, chauvinistic nationalism, anti-Semitism etc.) by focusing almost exclusively on psychodynamic processes; ignoring 'objective' conditions, or at best, considering them as given. There is therefore no serious attempt to link in a *theoretically congruent manner* the psychodynamic with the social. This leads to reductionism, to a methodologically 'jumping of levels', to the absorption of the social by the psychoanalytic. It is not therefore surprising that the author of *For the Love of God* argues that sociostructural, objective conditions such as poverty and social peripheralisation, contrary to the theories of Fanon and Said, cannot explain radical fundamentalism, since all over the world there are situations where extreme poverty and peripheralisation do not lead to the emergence of fundamentalism in general and to jihadism in particular. This will not do, if sociostructural conditions cannot in themselves explain radical fundamentalism, neither can the logic of the jihadist discourse and its relation to the way the subject handles the oedipal situation provide a satisfying explanation.

The way to avoid reductive explanations is to articulate in a non *ad hoc* manner psychoanalytic processes with the unique sociostructural features of late modernity. For instance, the spread of fundamentalism is difficult in situations where extremely poor people are segmentally organised. Even in an Islamic country where the fundamentalist narrative prevails in urban centres, the still rural, traditional communities are more or less immune to fundamentalogenic pressures. Fundamentalism, as already mentioned in 3A above, entails massive mobilisation and inclusion into the broader national arenas of the nation state. It is such processes which undermine segmental localism and shift orientations from the periphery to the national centre. When

---

15. This basic argument is fully developed in Stein's (2010) introduction.

these processes have not yet penetrated the segmentally organised, non differentiated social base, fundamentalism cannot take roots. Let us take Iran as an example. Before the shah's 'white revolution', which entailed rapid economic development, radical fundamentalism existed as an ideology but did not have a serious impact on the rural population. As already mentioned, it is the shah's grandiose plans for overall rapid modernisation of Iranian society that created conditions which undermined the non-differentiated traditional community and made possible the penetration of the state into the periphery. It is such conditions which led to the mobilisation against the shah's regime that Khomeini and his followers achieved in the 70's (Bharier 1971, Graham 1979). If all the above sociostructural conditions are bracketed or are completely ignored, a psychoanalytic explanation 'hangs in the air', so to speak. It cannot explain why the fundamentalist logic takes root under certain conditions and has no serious impact in other social spaces. To put it in a more general way, since fundamentalism is a specifically modern phenomenon, you cannot explain it without taking seriously into account modernity's unique features —i.e. massive mobilisation and inclusion into the national centre, top-down differentiation and broad individualization.

### *B. The Kleinian perspective*

Moving from Freud to Melanie Klein, her theory of the processes which lead to *splitting and projection* is also used in order to explain extreme nationalism, racism and other radical ideologies entailing similar to fundamentalism features. According to the Kleinian perspective, in his/her early development (the schizoid-paranoid phase), the infant experiences internalised objects, particularly the maternal breast as being good and bad. The aggressive part of the primitive ego is projected to the 'bad' breast, whereas the benign ego is projected to the 'good' one. This splitting is considerably attenuated in a subsequent phase (the depressive phase) as the subject starts feeling both her/his ego

and the other as integrated and as possessing both good and bad objects. When this integration is not achieved, the splitting between good and bad elements is accentuated and the latter are projected to the other who is imagined as an enemy, as a demonised other.<sup>16</sup>

In the Kleinian case as well, explanation of racism or fundamentalism as *collective phenomena* by mere reference to psychodynamic processes is not enough. To move in a non reductive manner from the psychodynamic to the sociostructural, one should try to deal with the following basic issue: Objective sociostructural conditions such as poverty, religious ideologies and organizations, western cultural imperialism etc. have to be taken into account in order to explain why splitting and projection processes are oriented to western 'infidels' rather than to other groups (e.g. tribal enemies). Given this, one has to show how psychodynamic processes articulate with *specific 'objective'* sociostructural conditions. For instance, in urban poverty or anti-modernism which is the more important dimension? In other terms, it is not enough to produce a long list of plausible, relevant factors. One has to see which is the most relevant, how such factor relates with another and how the overall configuration of elements *articulates* with psychodynamic processes. This, of course, requires *contextualisation*.<sup>17</sup> When this exacting task is not per-

---

16. Moreover, the other is not only demonised but, through a process of *projective identification* (Clarke & Bird 1999), starts acquiring the features projected upon her/him. In the case of racism, the dominant subject considers the dominated other as dangerous and as inferior - possessing thus the negative characteristics that the former cannot see and cannot bear within himself/herself (Elliot 1996, Wolfenstein 1997, Bracher 1997). In the case of fundamentalism, we have a double demonization. The Islamic fundamentalist demonizes the western other and the latter demonizes Muslims in general.

17. Contextualisation is also necessary if one takes into account that subjects may adopt fundamentalist ideas and practices without portraying psychodynamic pathologies of the type that psychoanalysis spells out. In such cases one should raise the question: under what conditions are psychoanalytically oriented explanations relevant and under which are they less so?

formed, when social conditions, if mentioned at all, take the form of a 'list' of disconnected factors, then reductionism cannot be avoided.

### C. *The Lacanian perspective*

Another important approach to the issue of violence, fundamentalist or not, focuses on the notion of the Lacanian *jouissance*. The infant's entrance into the sphere of language and the symbolic leads to the irreversible loss of the type of full *jouissance* that s/he enjoyed before the imposition of the 'law of the father'. The latter creates, via the 'symbolic castration' the division between the conscious and the unconscious, alienation from the self and the other and a lack which can never be permanently sutured (Lacan 1977). From the above perspective, under objective conditions favouring fundamentalist tendencies, the subject may attempt to recapture the lost full *jouissance* of the pre-symbolic period by striving for a return to an idealised past, traditional community (e.g. the Islamic *Ummah*) within which perfect harmony, fraternal solidarity and ethical purity prevailed. According to fundamentalist ideology, it is the western subject, the imperialist other who has destroyed the idealised, traditional community –s/he has stolen from the believers full *jouissance*. A way therefore to recapture it is via massive anti-imperialist, anti-western mobilisation, it is by resisting and attacking the western 'Satan'.

Another way of expressing in Lacanian terms something similar is to use the notions of identity and identification.<sup>18</sup> The subject tries to fill her/his lack via a series of identifications which can never lead to a stable identity. Identities are always fragile, fluid, ever changing. In such a situation, prevailing authoritarian ideologies can attract those who have a desperate need for a stable anchoring, for a permanent suturing of the de-

---

18. On the way Lacan uses the concepts of identity and identification and their relevance for the analysis of politics, see Stavrakakis 1999.

sire for a stable identity. In a more general way, both the desire for a lost full jouissance and for a stable identity express the craving for a ‘fullness’ which can never be achieved. The Lacanian-oriented theorists Stavrakakis & Chrysoloras (2006) use both the concepts of jouissance and identification in an attempt to explain Greek chauvinistic nationalism during the last two decades. According to Stavrakakis, the Lacanian perspective provides a non reductive way of linking the psychodynamic with the social. The former focuses on the divided subject’s lack and her/his desire for a return to a lost fullness, whereas the latter leads us to the study of the construction of identities via the analysis of ideologies. Something similar is implied by Slavoj Zizek who, when dealing with issues of violence (2009), argues that one should study the subject on two levels: The psychoanalytic level which entails concepts such as those of jouissance, lack, suture etc.; and the discursive (‘symptomal’) level which focuses on textual analysis, the construction of ideologies etc.

This type of theoretically worked out articulation between the psychoanalytic jouissance and the social/cultural ideologies is a useful step forward. It is different than the ‘list of factors’ approach which I mentioned in the previous section. But a more systematic and detailed contextualisation is still needed. A contextualisation which leads to the exploration of how the articulation between the psychodynamic and the social is achieved —by specific collective actors or interest groups, specific institutional arrangements, specific historical trajectories. In other terms, the social cannot be limited to the study of ideological discourses and the construction of identities.

To conclude this last section, psychoanalytic approaches to fundamentalism explore, more or less successfully, the psychodynamic processes which make a certain type of subject to adopt fundamentalist ideologies and to join fundamentalist movements. However, such approaches cannot explain in themselves fundamentalism as a social, collective phenomenon. In order to do this in a non reductive manner, one should show how the psychodynamic articulates with the sociostructural. An effective

articulation between the two levels presupposes serious contextualisation. It presupposes an in-depth analysis of how psychodynamic processes have an elective affinity with sociostructural ones, or how exactly the former strengthen or weaken the dynamics of the latter.

### *General conclusion*

The paper, by focusing on Islamic fundamentalism, has argued that what distinguishes fundamentalism as a modern phenomenon is not only the use of modern technologies (material and organizational), but also and primarily the social structure of fundamentalist regimes or social movements. More specifically, our analysis showed the isomorphy or the elective affinity between modernity's unique sociostructural features (mobilisation/inclusion into the national centre, top-down differentiation and widespread individualization) and fundamentalism's unique sociostructural features. It is only in this way that fundamentalism as a *modern* phenomenon can be distinguished from pre-modern theocratic regimes and authoritarian religious movements. In order to show the centrality of the unique sociostructural features of modernity for the exploration of fundamentalism, I have examined the phenomenon on three levels: the cultural, the sociostructural and the psychodynamic.

### *References*

Ahmad, A.A. (1975). *History of Islamic Sicily*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.

Arjomand, S.A. (1988). *The Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bakhsh, S. (1984). *The Region of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution*. New York: Basic Books.

Beck, U. & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2003). *Individualization*. London: Sage.

Bernard, C. & Zalmay, K. (1984). *The Government of God: Iran's Islamic Republic*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bharier, J. (1971). *Economic Development in Iran, 1900-1970*. London: Oxford University Press.

Bracher, M. (1997). 'Editor's Column: Psychoanalysis and Racism', *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 2, 2: 4-11.

Bruce, S. (1988). *Fundamentalism*. Cambridge: Polity.

Calvert, J. (2010). *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Clarke, S. & Bird, J. (1999). 'Racism, Hatred and Discrimination Through the Lens of Projective Identification', *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 4, 2: 158-161.

Eisenstadt, S.N. (1999). *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimensions of Modernity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Elliot, P. (1996). 'Working Through Racism: Confronting the Strangely Familiar', *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 1, 1: 63-72.

Gellner, E. (1969). *Saints of the Atlas*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Gellner, E. (1981). *Muslim Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Giddens, A. (1994). 'Living in a Post-Traditional Society', in U. Beck, A. Giddens & S. Lash (eds), *Reflexive modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Graham, R. (1979). *Iran: The Illusion of Power*. London: Croom Helm.

Halliday, F. (1994). 'The politics of Islamic fundamentalism: Iran, Tunisia and the Challenge to the Secular State', in A.S. Ahmed & H. Donnan (eds), *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.

Klein, M. (1946). 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms', *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 27: 99-110.

Lacan, J. (1977). *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. London: The Hogarth Press.

Marty, M.E. & Appleby, R.S. (eds) (1994). *Fundamentalisms Observed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Marx, K. (1964 [1859]). *Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Mouzelis, N. (2008). *Modern and Postmodern Social Theorising: Bridging the Divide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Qutb, S. (2000). *Social Justice in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust.

Parsons, T. (1971). *The System of Modern Societies*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Parsons, T. (1977). *The Evolution of Societies*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Rubin, B. (2010). *The Muslim Brotherhood: The Organization and Policies of a Global Islamist Movement*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sachedina, A.A. (1994). 'Activist Shi'ism in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon', in M.E. Marty & R.S. Appleby (eds). *Fundamentalisms Observed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sharot, S. (2001). *A Comparative Sociology of World Religions: Virtuosos, Priests, and Popular Religion*. New York: New York University Press.

Sivan, E. (1985). *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Stavrakakis, Y. (1999). *Lacan and the Political*. London and New York. Routledge.

Stavrakakis, Y. & Chrysoloras, N. (2006). '(I can't get no) Enjoyment: Lacanian Theory and the Analysis of Nationalism', *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*, 11, 2: 144-163.

Stein, R. (2010). *For Love of the Father: A Psychoanalytic Study of Religious Terrorism*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Wolfenstein, E.V. (1997). 'Hating the Other in the Self', *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 2, 1.

Zizek, S. (2009). *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. London: Profile Books.