Understanding Muslim Identity

Rethinking Fundamentalism

Gabriele Marranci

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Also by Gabriele Marranci

ANTHROPOLOGY OF ISLAM
JIHAD BEYOND ISLAM

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Gabriele Marranci
University of Western Sydney, Australia

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To my parents, Ambra Rainò and Carlo Alberto Marranci

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1
Introduction

'Another book on Islamic fundamentalism?'. I can hear the question echoing among friends, colleagues and readers. Since 2001, more than 100 books and 5,600 articles have been published on Islamic fundamentalism. Broadening the research to agnate labels – such as Islamism (about 200 books and 243 articles), political Islam (345 books and 4,670 articles) and Islamic extremism (only 16 books and 1610 articles)[1] – we can appreciate the amount of scholarly publication pressed into the past seven years. The reasons behind such abundance are multiple. Surely, after September 11 the demand for books and academic articles on religious fundamentalism increased, reinforcing a pre-existing market focused on the Middle East. Two military campaigns (in Afghanistan and Iraq) under the banner of 'the war on terror', as well as terrorist attacks in different parts of Europe and in non-Western countries such as Bali and Saudi Arabia, have further increased the number of publications, both academic and popular, to an unprecedented level. Said (1978, 1981) and Said and Viswanathan (2001) may have even suggested that Western writers and publishers exploited the morbid Western orientalistic curiosity about the violent Oriental man combining the divine with the political, and the political with holy violence.

Nonetheless, money and latent or manifest orientalistic aims, though they may have an important part, are not the only reasons, or the main reasons, behind such a high level of academic – and sometimes pseudo-academic – publications. Since the 1960s (see, for instance, Hiskett 1962, Berger 1964), and particularly after the 1979 Iranian revolution, the study of political, sometimes radical, extreme or violent, actions of some Muslim groups – more rarely of individuals – has offered a fertile, both theoretically and empirically, vivid discussion. As you may expect, disagreements and diatribes mark any academic discussion; but in this

case, the very labels used to describe the 'phenomenon' remain highly contentious. Nonetheless, in the past ten years, we can observe that academic discussion about what has been labelled as 'fundamentalism' – and Islamic fundamentalism in particular – has enjoyed a great degree of homogeneity (see Chapter 2, and more specifically Chapter 3, in this book). Among various reasons for this, we can acknowledge that Appleby's monumental work *The Fundamentalism Project* (1991–5) has made a significant contribution. Appleby's main argument emphasises that all religious fundamentalisms possess certain characteristics as part of a 'family resemblance'. Appleby's volumes are interdisciplinary, with contributors offering analysis from perspectives such as political science, history, religious studies, sociology, psychology and anthropology, just to mention a few. Despite this diversity in disciplines and approaches, the conclusions of the project suggest that all 'fundamentalisms' are the consequence of conservative religious groups and leaders who reject modernism and secularism, which are seen as 'sons' and 'daughters' of the Enlightenment, in a desperate attempt to preserve traditional ways of life and religious beliefs through *scripturalism*.

In the first two chapters of the present book, we shall observe that the antithesis between what have been described as the products of Enlightenment – such as secularism, modernism, democracy and liberal freedoms – and the products of religious tradition – such as support for theocratic models of society and human life – does not represent a neutral analysis of the respective positions. Rather, certain academic analyses show an etic struggle between representation and condemnation; between science, as a quest, and politics, as a plan for action; between endorsement and rejection; between essentialism and relativism; between accusation and absolution; between ideology and Utopia.

Despite the few attempts to explain it from, for instance, psychological (for example Hoffman 1985, Hood et al. 2005) and anthropological (for example Gellner 1981, 1992, Antoun 2001, Nagata 2001) viewpoints, Islamic fundamentalism has been analysed and understood mainly through 'Culture Talk' (Mamdani 2004). In extreme forms of 'Culture Talk' analysis, not only do the holy texts, through its symbols, provide the blueprint behind the actions of Islamic movements and individuals, but it also dictates them. In other words, the 'fundamentalist' becomes the embodied tradition (Bruce 2000). We can say that, from a 'Culture Talk' viewpoint, culture shapes a person's identity as a bottle shapes the water it contains.[2] In our case, the bottle was often described as the sacred text or a religious tradition from which the ideology and worldviews of fundamentalists (all of them!) derive.[3]

To understand this phenomenon as a cultural and symbolic discourse is surely a powerful, and apparently convincing, way of explaining it. Yet this kind of approach has raised legitimate questions when not open criticism. Mamdani is surely among the most critical. In his renowned book *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim* (2004), he has observed, 'Culture Talk assumes that every culture has a tangible essence that defines it, and it then explains politics as a consequence of the essence. Culture Talk after 9/11, for example, qualified and explained the practice of "terrorism" as "Islamic". "Islamic terrorism" is thus offered as both description and explanation of the events of 9/11' (2004: 18). Mamdani has pointed out how the practice of 'Culture Talk' has divided the world between moderns and pre-moderns, with the latter being only able to conduit rather than make culture. He has particularly criticised the essentialist approach that much of 'Culture Talk' has shown towards Muslims and Islam in the aftermath of September 11. According to him, the 'Culture Talk' reasoning argues that Islam and Muslims 'made' culture at beginning of their history, but in the contemporary world they merely conform to culture.[4] Mamdani, therefore, has concluded,

> According to some, our [Muslim] culture seems to have no history, no politics, and no debates, so that *all* Muslims are just plain bad. According to others, there is a history, a politics, even debates, and there *are* good Muslims and bad Muslims. In both versions, history seems to have petrified into a lifeless custom of an antique people who inhabit antique lands. Or could it be that culture here stands for habit, for some kind of instinctive activity with rules that are inscribed in early founding texts, usually religious, and mummified in early artefacts?
>
> (2004: 18, italics in the original)

Mamdani has rightly expressed his concerns about the political and social consequences of understanding Muslims, and their religion, as merely a product of culture because it reduces religion not just to politics, but to a political category. This process, in the best of the cases, facilitates a Manichean sociological and political division between good and bad Muslims.

Mamdani has no problem in telling us why such a division, which is a soft version of the more radical stance of 'Islam is the problem', has been emphasised in the aftermath of September 11. He has argued that this reasoning has helped to justify the belief in a clash between modern and pre-modern people, or, in other words, civilised versus

civilisable, which was very much a part of the history of colonialism; Mamdani has so observed that 'this history stigmatizes those shut out of modernity as antimodern because they resist being shut out' (2004: 19). He has further argued for the epistemological fallacy of 'Culture Talk'. He has rejected the idea that political behaviours and ideologies can derive solely from cultural (religious or traditional) habits and customs, and rhetorically asked, 'could it be that a person who takes his or her religion literally is a potential terrorist? And that someone who thinks of a religious text as metaphorical or figurative is better suited to civic life and the tolerance it calls for? How, one may ask, does the literal reading of sacred texts translate into hijacking, murder and terrorism?' (2004: 20). Mamdani has stated that what we witness today and we call terrorism is born not from religious extremist views, but from a 'modern political movement at the service of a modern power' (2004: 62).

Nonetheless, Mamdani's final conclusions do not explain why, if 'fundamentalism' or 'Islamic extremism' is the expression of a modern political movement, serving the Machiavellian needs of 'modern power', people who are not interested in politics are, however, strongly attracted to what scholars have defined as fundamentalists' ideas and ideologies. Mamdani (2004), like, for instance, Piscatori (1983), Esposito (1991, 1999), Nazih (1991), Hafez (2003) and more recently Adamson (2005) and Devji (2005), has not noticed that, similarly to those authors who relied upon 'Culture Talk', they have described 'Islamic fundamentalism', and other Islamic-isms, as a 'real thing'. They have reduced the phenomenon to a utilitarian political talk, manipulative and uniform in its religious rhetoric. Religion, they tell us, does not really matter (Tibi 1998, Ruthven 2004, Milton-Edwards 2005); or if it matters, it is because 'evil' opportunistic Muslims (Halliday 1994, Choueri 2002, Kepel 2002) have hijacked it. When studying those phenomena that today are being identified as 'Islamic fundamentalism', or 'Islamic radicalism', scholars seem forced towards two analytical deadlocks: on the one hand, the phenomena can be interpreted as the product of culture, or the misreading – or even the correct reading, as Bruce (2000) would argue – of the holy text. On the other, it can be interpreted as a Machiavellian use of religion for power, political opportunism within a larger power struggle between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic views of society. However, should we really settle for choosing the lesser of the two evils?

As I discuss in the next two chapters of this book, some other scholars have tried to avoid the trap of both 'Culture Talk' and political essentialism. They suggest that the phenomenon is deeply rooted in the dynamics of social identity. Of course, culture matters and religion too,

but they are not the essential ingredients. The final answer, Herriot has recently argued (2007), could be found in the 'us versus them' attitude that underlies the conflict between religious values and secularism. Identity (role identity) theory, directly or indirectly, has shaped the discussion of 'fundamentalism'. Indeed, social identity theory simplifies the explanations of group conflict into an uncomplicated, often transformed into a simplistic, dualistic dynamic. Much of what has been said in social science about Islamic fundamentalism (and the other Islamic-isms) has been based upon manifest or latent forms – and sometimes drastically simplified versions – of it. Starting from the mutual interdependence between society and the personal self (Strauss 1959, Blumer 1969), which Goffman would systematically theorise in his masterpiece *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), McCall and Simmons (1978) have developed what they have called 'role-identity theory'. The core theory argues that 'the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as *occupant of a particular position*' (1978: 65, emphasis added) within society, forms what we call identity. From this viewpoint, personal identities are the product of society and identities cannot exist beyond the social role.

McCall and Simmons' theory, however, left a question open that required an answer to avoid that thesis remaining extremely vague. Role-identity theory indissolubly links the individual to the social group. However, the same individual needs the social group to express his or her own individuality; this is clearly a tautological position. Stryker (Stryker and Serpe 1994) noticed it and tried to correct the tautology by arguing that because societies are complex and ruled by difference, though organised, in the same way the human self must be equally complex and ruled by differences, though organised. People, according to Stryker, have complex and differentiated selves that are expressed through different identities according to the social context in which people find themselves (Stryker and Serpe 1994). Individuals, according to him, select their personal identities to satisfy their personal interests, so that among the different identities that individuals can form, the one that in a certain context better fulfils his or her interests would be the most likely to be activated. Hence, 'interest' is what prevents people rejecting the identity that the social context has imposed upon their personal self. Instead of Stryker resolving a weakness of role-identity theory, he ended in an even worse tautology. Indeed, somebody may ask the fatidic question: who controls whom here? Is it the individual that, through his identity selection, based on his interest, controls the social group or actually the opposite – the social group in

which the individual takes part controls him because it controls his desires? Stryker has no answer. He resorted to the postulation of a continuum in which self, society and personal identity should shape each other in an endless process.

Tajfel's 'social-identity theory' has attempted to resolve such a tautology. Tajfel has observed two important facts: first, that self-esteem, as James (1890) had suggested, has a paramount relevance for identity formation; second, that people categorise social and non-social stimuli in order to self-identify with others and to form 'in-groups', which differentiate themselves from 'out-groups'. Differentiation allows groups to form a group identity (for example in-group A feels itself to be A because it is not part of the out-group B). Tajfel has therefore suggested that personal self-esteem can only be achieved through in-group membership (Tajfel 1979). In other words, personal identities depend upon the social identity of the in-group, and the self-esteem of each member of the group depends upon the self-esteem of the others involved within such an in-group.

If now we observe, as we shall do in the next two chapters, the available theories, and more often theorems, of 'fundamentalism' (and particularly Islamic fundamentalism), we can easily recognise the influence that Tajfel's understanding of social identity – and individual identity as the result of social group dynamics – has had upon them. The 'family resemblance' that defines fundamentalism has an epicentre: Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic radicalism, Islamic extremism, political Islamism and Islamism are the result of a defensive, or for some scholars aggressive, rejection of modernism and the consequent secularism. They reject, in other words, the essence of what the scholar understands as modern civilisation (see Chapter 6 in this book). Here is where 'Culture Talk' meets 'social identity' theory. Indeed, many of the theories we shall discuss see 'fundamentalists' – in reality, as Varisco (2007) has argued an epithet for radical, fanatical and extremist Muslims – as individuals who wish to enhance their self-esteem. To achieve this, they undertake a process of depersonalisation in order to become part of a group, in this case the fundamentalist group, which provides prototypes through the stereotype of the other, which in this instance is the modern and secular, in other words the West. This would explain, according to some of the theories we shall review, why fundamentalist groups decide to adopt the most anti-modern tool available: a strong belief in an inerrant and divine scripture (Hood et al. 2005).

As I have mentioned, I agree with Mamdani and others that the phenomenon labelled as 'Islamic fundamentalism' has strong political

connotations and that activists aim for social change. Yet I also think that people become involved in those activities for reasons beyond politics. Nonetheless, the way in which social identity theory has been applied to Islamic fundamentalism has, in my opinion, confused rather than clarified the dynamics behind it. Surely social identity theory may appeal in this case because it reflects a certain common sense; but in reality it reduces the individual to a cultural–social object and the group to a cultural tool of social conformity. I recognise that society and culture have an important function; but they cannot constitute the whole explanation of human actions and behaviours (see Marranci 2008b). Social identity theory, despite its supporters having provided adjustments to its original version, is flawed by tautology: individuals form their identity through groups, which however are formed by the very individuals to whom groups should provide the identity needed to join the group in first instance. In other words, your identity is not exactly yours; yet the identity of the group is derived from yours! Without any sarcasm, we may say that social identity theory has yet to answer the 'chicken and the egg' riddle.

As an anthropologist, I have met individuals (my friends and respondents) in the flesh, and as Rapport has argued (Rapport 2003), for them individuality was a physical and psychological reality, whereas 'society' and 'groups' were the abstraction (Marranci 2006, 2008b). While spending time with them, living with them, speaking to them and following their lives, I could clearly see that their selves, their identities and feelings did not conform to the above pictures of passive cultural processes. While answering the question of what religious fundamentalism might be, social scientists – like their colleagues in the agnate disciplines of religious studies and political sciences – by over focusing on society and culture, have left behind an essential third: nature.

However, before we move towards this point, it is extremely relevant to address another 'hot potato': terminology.

When the term 'fundamentalism' became like a car

My feeling is that academics protest too much about language. If in our ordinary lives we manage to deal with the complex meanings of terms such as 'car', I do not see why we should not be able to find words that allow us to say something useful about a range of religious political movements.

(Bruce 2000: 13)

Although I can see how my grandfather while attempting, as usual, to repair his old Fiat 500 did find in his ordinary life the term 'car' to carry a meaningful complexity, the above attempt to justify the term 'fundamentalism' wins both a trophy for its originality and a 'wooden spoon' for its misleading simplicity. Steve Bruce here is doing nothing more than dismissing as irrelevant the heated academic discussion about the term 'fundamentalism'. Yet the debate around the use of this fourteen-letter word has implications not only for an understanding of the phenomenon, but also for the ethical and political features involved. Ruthven has noticed, '"Fundamentalism", according to its critics, is just a dirty fourteen-letter word. It is a term of abuse levelled by liberals and Enlightenment rationalists against any group, religious or otherwise, which dares to challenge the "absolutism" of the post-Enlightenment outlook it professes to oppose' (Ruthven 2004: 6–7). Indeed, some scholars have argued that it cannot be extended beyond evangelical Christian movements or even, in a very restrictive view, beyond its historical use (Varisco 2007). Others, who privilege a strict emic position, consider any etic analytical imposition of the 'F-word' (Ruthven 2004) to non-Christian movements as ethnocentrism (cf. Appleby 2000: 79–83). In the case 'Islamic fundamentalism', it is not so much the accusation of 'ethnocentrism' that resonates but rather that of a more or less latent 'Orientalism' (Said 1978).

Varisco has noticed that 'fundamentalism' has a clear Christian legacy, which makes it unsuitable to explain Muslim movements. Then, he has also observed, '"Fundamentalism" as a term should be of interest to scholars who study the phenomenon not only because of what it is said to represent, but also because it is "our" term – a word coined almost a century ago within American Protestantism' (2007: 209). Finally, he has suggested that alternatives, such as Islamism, have gained more popularity than 'fundamentalism', 'which is now commonly bracketed to the dubious terminological limbo of quotation marks' (2007: 211). Nonetheless, Varisco has recognised that 'Islamism' in reality adds 'insult to injury by implying that Islam itself is readily transformable into an extremist religion'. He provides a vivid example of such 'insult' by asking his readers to 'imagine the neologic shock among historians of Christianity if someone suggested we replace Fundamentalism with "Christianism", even while retaining it as a capital idea' (2007: 211). Varisco has therefore concluded that the term 'fundamentalism' is not so different from other terms, such as orientalism, which today fail to denote what they might have before. Varisco also agrees with Muslim scholars, such as El Guindi (1999) and Ahmed (1999).

Both anthropologists, the former rejects the term because it is 'an imposed notion deriving mainly from Western Christianity that is conceptually inappropriate, ethnographically inaccurate, and ethnocentric' (El Guindi 1999: xiv); the latter has suggested that the term 'fundamentalism', though useful in the context of Christianity because emic, becomes meaningless if applied to Islam because 'by definition every Muslim believes in the fundamentals of Islam' (Ahmed 1999: 9).

Nonetheless, some influential scholars have defended the practice of extending the term 'fundamentalism' to non-Christian religious movements. Lawrence (1990), a prominent student of religion, has strongly criticised the above stands as nonsensical. He has named 'originists' those scholars who reduce the function of the term 'fundamentalism' to its origin – the twentieth-century traditionalist American Protestants; by contrast, he has defined 'nominalists' those who believe that the term fundamentalism should be used only emically instead of etically. Lawrence has deconstructed both the arguments through a hyperbolic reasoning. Against the 'originists', he has observed, '[…] by the same argument, one may not speak of nationalism in the Middle East since most Arabs and many Iranians reject the European experience as an authentic antecedent mediating their own entrance into the twentieth century as nation states.' On the other hand, about the nominalists he has argued, 'by that "logic" the only humanists are those who claim to be humanists; there are no teachers but those who teach in classrooms, clowns only are found in circuses' (Lawrence 1990: 92). Lawrence's support of the term derives from his conviction that fundamentalism can only be studied and understood within a comparative perspective. Description is essential to the process and, according to him, fundamentalism (as an umbrella category) makes more sense than other terms when the similarities among the different movements are clustered together. Lawrence has concluded, 'The labelling "fundamentalism" helps us to see what these groups have in common' (1990: 230).

Almond et al. (2003: 16) have ultimately agreed with Lawrence and used the term 'fundamentalism' because '[…] many, if not all, of the disparate religious movements studied for this volume do share certain resemblances that come from belonging to a particular time in world history.' Nonetheless, they have shown a stronger awareness than Lawrence about the limits that this label may carry. Almond et al. (2003) have acknowledged that the term 'fundamentalism', when applied to any other than the original Christian movement that adopted it, could mislead some to project that form of fundamentalism and its characteristics, such as scriptural inerrancy, to other non-Christian movements.

They also have recognised that the unclear boundaries and the lack of agreement on fundamentalism's definition can induce some to equate fundamentalism to terrorism and violent extremisms. Thus, Almond et al. (2003) have argued that mainstream religious people, in particular from the three Abrahamic religions, may resent the term because many imply that the 'true believers' are actually the 'fundamentalists', whereas most believers consider them as radicals and deviants. Finally, these authors have highlighted how the use of the label may encourage non-specialists, in particular those working within the mass media, to dangerous and erroneous generalisations.

Almond et al. (2003), however, have rejected, as Lawrence did, that the term 'fundamentalism' has an ethnocentric and 'imperialistic' connotation. And despite the listed risks, they have defended its use. They have also highlighted the issue of the limited use of fundamentalism to denote non-religious movements and ideologies, such as communism, fascism and, for instance, certain forms of secularism itself. Indeed, critics of the term 'fundamentalism' have suggested that the resistance to extend the label to similar non-religious phenomena is an act of hypocrisy, or even an overt agenda of the main secular establishment to discredit anti-secular, religious, antagonist movements. Almond as well as Ruthven refute these criticisms by arguing that secular and political movements are 'pseudo-religious' in their character, because secular nationalist ideologies do not guarantee eternal reward to their followers, indirectly suggesting that it is the quality of the 'reward' for the personal sacrifice that defines fundamentalism itself. In other words, if the reward is not aimed at eternal divine enjoyment, but rather at historical remembrance, we cannot identify the ideology as fundamentalism. Hence, according to many scholars, fundamentalism can only be an expression of religious beliefs.

Other scholars, such as Ruthven (2004), have adopted a pragmatic approach to the 'labelling affair'. Ruthven, after reminding his readers about the genesis of the term 'fundamentalism', and recognising that 'the term may be less than wholly satisfactory', has decided that 'rather than quibbling about the usefulness of "fundamentalism" as an analytic term', he would try to explore its ambiguities 'to unpack some of its meanings' (2004: 9). He, as the other scholars cited above, has argued that they exhibit a 'family resemblance' – though at least admitting that fundamentalist movements are not all the same. Ruthven has argued that the family resemblance can justify those studies that try to 'unpack' the phenomenon and offer a universal framework for its understanding. In this case, the issue of the label becomes secondary, or

better instrumental, to the primary effort to categorise and describe the phenomenon itself as a real entity, and thus an essence.

Most scholars, when either criticising the use of the term 'fundamentalism' or justifying it, have shown a clear understanding of the issues surrounding its labelling. An exception, as we have seen at the beginning of this section, is Bruce, who has criticised not the use of the word but rather the scholarly effort in debating it and, overwhelmed by an irresistible commonsensical radicalism, has equated the complexity of the word 'fundamentalism' to that of 'car'. Nonetheless, there are two other reasons for which Bruce has supported the term 'fundamentalism'. The first argues that 'fundamentalism' as a term has such a widely accepted use within the public domain (for example the mass media), that it is here to stay. Then he has told us – finally abandoning the commonsensical domain – that he fully agrees with Marty's[5] position stating that various forms of fundamentalism have so many common features that it 'justif[ies] pressing on it' (2000: 13).

What went wrong?

In the attempt to summarise the different positions about the use of 'fundamentalism', as well as other Islamic-isms, we may wonder whether Bruce may have been right in classifying the semiotic efforts as a diatribe among scholars used to protesting much about language. Contrary to what Bruce may imply, language in academia matters; often it provides the conceptualisation for future political analysis and actions. We can agree or disagree with Bourdieu's post-modernism, but we have to recognise, as he did, that labelling is not just a neutral process of classification that social scientists perform, but an act of power, often politically connoted, towards the studied minorities and 'others'. This means that we, as scholars, and in particular social scientists, cannot just accept a label only because it is widespread in its everyday use. This would mean to reject social science's ability of providing analytical tools in favour of popular shorthand. Many of the criticisms advanced towards the use of 'fundamentalism' as an analytic term are certainly correct in their fight against its essentialist misuse.

There has never been an agreement on each of these terminologies, and very much as in the case of other analytical categories (for example identity and self) authors have used it depending upon circumstances or personal preferences, and out of necessity. I am not surprised that the 'taxonomy' of this 'phenomenon' remains one of the most debatable and unresolved issues. The question is, why? I think that both the scholarly

effort to provide a universal definition[6] or, by contrast, surrendering to the popular – often populist – use[7] may be the answer. Hence, the main question that we need to ask is not whether 'fundamentalism' is a useful conceptual tool or not; but rather whether we are studying 'a thing' or actually a process that may resemble a 'thing' (that is, a cultural object) because we have labelled it so. In other words, it has become a form of cognitive map, which with few visible points (that is, the family resemblance) may provide the illusion of an entire picture. To explain this illusion, I often use in my classroom a simple experiment. Try to follow these instructions:

> Take a piece of paper and make a dot and follow it with another dot parallel to the first at about a centimetre's distance. Now identify the centre between the two and draw a perpendicular line of about one centimetre. Then, half a centimetre below the perpendicular line, draw an upward small semicircle.

If you are looking at the piece of paper, you may think that my instructions aimed to create the 'smiley face' you can see in front of you. Yet I never asked you to draw a smiley face. Indeed, I asked you to follow a process, a kind of Kandinsky abstract dots and lines performance. What you are observing is not a real, purposely drawn, smiling face. Rather it is, and it remains until you label it by transforming the dots, line and semicircle into a 'thing' (or, if you want, a 'symbol'), an ensemble of unrelated lines and dots. Nonetheless, now that you have the dots and the lines in the right position, it is impossible for you to avoid seeing 'the thing', in this case the smiling face rather than the single elements or the spaces between them. To do so, you require a certain effort, because you are trapped into seeing what actually your brain, for evolutionary reasons, wants you to see, and the label we have imposed forces you even to name it. Indeed, I could have even asked you to draw only the two dots and the semicircle, and still the face would be there; a ghost of your cognitive illusion.

I wonder whether this diatribe on the label 'fundamentalism' may derive from the same human compulsion to categorise – so that lines, semicircles, dots and the empty space connecting them, are forced into a hardly avoidable generalisation. Despite the fact that I understand the reason, and the process, for which we still academically use the Islamicism terms (such as Islamic fundamentalism, Islamic extremism, Islamic radicalism, and so on), I strongly reject that we should accept them uncritically and joyfully exercise our academic privilege of labelling

movements, groups or single individuals with them (Bourdieu 1982). I also have the impression that the authors who have used, often in inter-changeable ways, Islamic-ism labels have fallen into a sort of Batesonian mistake of logical types.[8]

Hence, I argue that the characteristic of the 'family resemblance', which most authors have enthusiastically endorsed, is rather the more salient mistake affecting the social, political, and unfortunately in some cases anthropological (cf. Antoun 2001), study of this complex series of phenomena. Let me provide you with a simple analogy to the argument of 'family resemblances'. The fact that bacterial meningitis has a 'family resemblance' with ordinary influenza because of their symptoms, such as high fever, vomiting, severe muscle pain and photophobia, does not mean that they share the same category: indeed, one, the most perni-cious form of meningitis, is caused by a bacterial infection (for instance *Haemophilus influenzae*) whereas ordinary influenza is caused by a virus (often of the Orthomyxoviridae family). In other words, authors sup-porting the idea that the 'family resemblance' explains in itself, and makes 'fundamentalism' a real 'object' of study, possessing universal characteristics, have actually classified the name (that is, fundamen-talism) with the thing named (in this case the elements forming the 'family resemblance'). The confusion of the two categories and their hierarchy has thus affected most analyses.

However, behind both the terminology and certain academic analyses there are some, more or less overt, 'political' agendas. Islamic-ism labels, as we have seen, are not 'real things' and remain far from being universal in their synecdochal uses. They do not provide taxonomies, as some authors seem to suggest, but rather they ascribe. I am not surprised, therefore, that in the past 20 years of scholarly debate over the alleged relationship between signifier and signified among the various Islamic-isms, many authors have ended in treating them as real 'things' that are part of a single, identifiable phenomenon, for which reasons and causes had to be identified, solutions provided and then the phenomenon itself eradicated. 'Eradicated?', some may ask. 'Eradicated', because we cannot say that the academic study of these Islamic-isms has been exempt from powerful two-way political dynamics. On the one hand, these studies have received, consciously or unconsciously, agendas from the 'political episteme'; on the other, these studies have provided the same 'political episteme' with 'the grey matter' through which those agendas were transformed into policies, or, after September 11, even wars.

I have suggested that what has been called fundamentalism is not a 'real thing'. Rather, it is the result of particular processes, many of

which, this book argues, have been overlooked in the past 20 years of academic discussion. That the different phenomena labelled under the various Islamic-isms have been studied mainly either from political or culturalist hermeneutical viewpoints explains this essentialist, and rather homogeneous, understanding of them as a conflict between what we may see as two *modi vivendi*: on the one hand, from a popular 'Western' perspective, the superior, because modern, secular cognition of social life; and on the other, the inferior, because pre-modern, religious cognition of social life. There are clear *omissis* in these simplified versions of the social identity theory. First, where is the human being? We have to reconsider the phenomenon, starting from the individual. This means, among the other aspects, to take into consideration the relationships between the environment[9] and the individual, as well as the formation of identity and self. Only when we have a certain idea of the processes involved in such relationships can we ask how an individual forms an idea of Islam, which brings them to form groups, and on what basis. Emotions, the most overlooked aspect of studies on both Islamic and other forms of 'fundamentalism', are essential to understanding the phenomenon beyond the label, which I reject, and provide a new, process-focused explanation of it.

Emotions, self and identity: Ecce Homo!

It is essential for understanding what follows (particularly Chapters 4, 5 and 6) that I briefly discuss my conclusions about human emotions, self and identity. For identity, I shall only summarise the essential points of the theory that I have developed in *Jihad beyond Islam* (2006). Yet for emotions, and in particular 'empathy', we need to discuss Milton's (2007) and Damasio's views (2004) more in detail. Hence, allow me to start from emotions.

Learning through ecological emotions

The role that emotions play in religious practices and performances has been well documented within all fields of academic research since the eighteenth century (Emmons and Paloutzian 2003: 384–90), such as religious studies, sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis and anthropology (Hamilton 1994). Indeed, as Fuller has noticed,

There is no such thing as emotion-free religiosity; our brains and nervous systems are wired in such a way that we always bring vital needs and interests to our evaluation of, and response to, the

> surrounding environment. […] it is not a question of *whether* emotions influence our religious thinking, but rather a matter of *which* emotions most strongly mobilize the subprograms that collectively constitute our perception and cognition.
>
> (2007: 45; emphasis in the original)

Yet 'emotion', likewise 'identity' and 'self', is one of those words that needs to be clarified in usage (Plutchik 2003: 62–7, Fuller 2007: 32) because many others are used in both everyday as well as scientific language (for example, moods, feelings). Therefore, what do we mean when we say that 'fear' is an emotion? Surely, all of us have had more than one instance in which we have experienced something akin to what we commonly refer to as 'fear'. Yet we will observe that beyond the actual bodily changes such as tachycardia, sweating and hyper-attention, to describe fear in words is not a simple matter.

Western scholars[10] have observed that emotions possess at least two meanings: one affecting the body, and the other belonging to the social and cultural domain. In the discussion of emotions, the polarisation between constructionists and biological determinists was apparently inevitable. The former would argue that emotions are just bodily reactions to which, however, we provide a meaning according to the context, whereas the latter would argue that, though they recognise that the biological contributes to the alchemy of cultural construction, emotions remain in the domain of ideas. To avoid such a device, other scholars have attempted to provide a social explanation of emotions. They have suggested that emotions are mainly a social phenomenon, and because human beings are able to communicate and interact among themselves, emotions provide valuable feedback (Wentworth and Yardley 1994). Hence, Parkinson has suggested, 'Emotion as an idea is socially and culturally manufactured, as also is emotion as a reality […] The idea is that emotion is private and internal; the reality is that it is intrinsically interpersonal and communicative or performative' (Parkinson 1995: 25).

Kay Milton, though, may agree with Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990) that social discourse constitutes and shapes emotions, emphasising that people can perceive emotions from non-social objects. Consequently, Milton has argued that emotions 'in order to operate in and be shaped by social situations, […] must have a presocial origin' (2007: 63). Furthermore, she has suggested that a sole focus on the social context of emotions certainly does not confute or provide a different model between the biological reductionism and culturalism; rather, while

leaving the former unchallenged, it reinforces the latter. Is there any other solution for a correct understanding of emotion which avoids the two unrealistic essentialisms (that is, emotions are mere biological products versus emotions are culturally and socially constructed)? Her innovative alternative solution, which I fully support, is that emotions are 'ecological', 'rather than social phenomena, in that they are mechanisms through which an individual human being is connected to and learns from their environment' (Milton and Svašek 2005: 35). In doing so, though, Kay Milton does not reject the empirical, and commonsensical evidence that social interactions provoke emotions; rather, she is pointing to the fact the we should not stop our observation and understanding of emotions at the social.

To develop her new approach to emotions, Milton has drawn upon William James's understanding of emotions (1890) as comprising two stages, the physical response (that is, the actual physiological changes), and the subjective experience of it (the feelings produced by the changes). As Milton has explained (2007: 64) James, and more recently Damasio (1999), has suggested that the physical responses precede the feelings that follow, because they are the cause rather than the effect. Damasio referred to emotion, as James does, as the organism's reaction to external or internal stimuli, and he has referred to feelings as *mental representations* of the body-state; they are the *private experience of emotions*, inaccessible to observation, and consequently to other fellow humans. Damasio has observed that emotions pertain to the bodily domain, whereas feelings pertain to the mind. Consequently, we first have emotions and then the feelings that are caused by them. Although emotions do not become part of our mind, because they are only reactions to external stimuli, feelings become a consistent part of the mind as the lasting memory of emotions. In other words, happiness, sadness, joy, love and other more complex 'sentiments' are not (as common sense understands them) emotions but rather, in Damasio's terms, feelings. Milton has argued that this is neither a biologically determined model of emotions (the environment, which includes also the social surroundings, matters) nor a social one (the feelings are mental representations of the body-state) but rather an 'ecological' one. Indeed, she has concluded that an ecological approach to emotion 'locates it in the relationship between an individual and their environment, *whatever* that environment may consist of; it does not privilege the social environment over the nonsocial' (2007: 67).

An ecological approach to emotions has greater consequences because it affects, as we shall see, how we may understand concepts such as

identity and self. Yet another essential aspect that the new model forces us to reconsider is learning. As we shall observe in Chapters 5 and 6, learning and emotions are an essential part of how I explain what has been labelled as 'Islamic fundamentalism'. Milton, starting from what we have discussed so far, has also suggested that emotions are part of 'a general learning capacity that enables us to learn from any particular part of our environment, human or nonhuman' (2007: 67). Learning is how we form knowledge, but knowledge comes from different sources, social and non-social, which in any case are external to the organism. The human being needs to receive information from the environment. Some may argue that the individual can learn from social interaction, and receive information through such interaction. Yet, as Milton has rightly observed, without being able, in the first instance, to select information independently, through the dynamic of emotions and feelings, 'how would we learn from social interaction itself? How would we receive information from our fellow human beings, if we were unable to receive it from our environment in general?' (Milton and Svaŝek 2005: 32). Therefore, we can see that what we have defined as 'ecological emotions' are deeply involved in our process of learning. However, they also influence the way in which we learn and make sense of our environment, and, as we shall see, ourselves.

Consciousness, identity and self

Culturalist theories of identities have been strongly predominant within the social sciences, in particular within anthropology (see Marranci 2008b). After the 1960s and 1970s, an increasing amount of research and scholarly work has referred to a crisis of identity (Hetherington 1998: 21ff.), alienation of identity and identity resistance. Today we find that identities, within a post-modern celebration of them, may be hyphenated, multiple and fluid.[11] As I have observed before (Marranci 2006), the influence that social constructivism has had on anthropology has promoted anthropological analyses of identity and self (often discussed as if they were interchangeable terms) as inconsistent entities. So inconsistent, 'fleeting, fragmentary, and buffeted', to use Holland's words, that 'from the extreme ephemeralist position, daily life, especially in the post-modern era, is a movement from self to self' (Holland 1997: 170).

So, Sökefeld has observed that in anthropology, culture has been seen 'not as something ephemeral but [...] as a "power" constituted by a system of shared meaning that is effective in shaping social reality' (1999: 427). This, according to him, has prevented some anthropologists recognising the existence of a *stable and individualistic self*. Indeed,

many anthropologists have accepted the idea that self and identity are as unstable and fluid as the cultures that allegedly create them. Sökefeld has suggested that a solution could be achieved by conceiving of 'the self (used here as generic term including "individual", "individuality", "person", etc.) as [a] relatively stable point' (1999: 427). Yet, if in sociology the understanding of 'individual' and 'individuality' has been sacrificed to the needs of explaining society as the interaction of groups, in anthropology identity has been essentialised into the form of a cultural object, ever changing and adapting to the social–cultural context. The results, as we have seen above, are theories, like social identity theory, which often end in tautologies of difficult solution. The study of fundamentalism and the other Islamic-isms has been highly affected by both these essentialisms. Hetherington, however, has noticed,

> To speak of identity at all in non-essentialist terms, while not impossible, is somewhat problematic. If it is not a quality that derives from our human being or from fixed social structures and relations, then it can only 'exist' in a space between, in relation to something else, across an uncertain gap between identity and non-identity and in the recognition of that gap. This can take the simple 'us and them' form, defining identity in relation to its (often marginal and oppressed) 'other' […] or between positions of identity and non-identity with an identity. In this case identity is performed through bricolage.
>
> (1998: 25)

Again, the solution seems a confusing melange of symbols and cultural objects in a sort of minestrone of the self. I wonder how many of us, including the above-mentioned writer, feel we are a 'bricolage' when we say 'I'.

What we have discussed about ecological emotions can help us to avoid the 'difficult' essentialism that Hetherington has recognised. However, it can also resolve that 'fleeting, fragmentary, and buffeted' representation of human identity which brought Welsch to say, 'to be healthy today is truly only possible in the form of schizophrenia – if not polyphrenia' (1990: 171). Indeed, at this point, I can argue that what we call 'self' and 'identity' may not be (as most social scientific theories claim) the sole product of social interaction, though social interaction could provoke changes in them. Yet it is important to recognise that 'self' and 'identity' are not the same. If the self (which we could better refer to as the 'autobiographical self') is a real entity in our neuro-cognitive system, identity is not. Indeed, Damasio (1999: 225) has suggested that

identity 'is a delicately shaped machinery of our imagination [which] stakes the probabilities of selection toward the same, historically continuous self.'

In my theory of identity, which I have developed in *Jihad beyond Islam*, I have explained that identity is a process with two functions. On the one hand, it allows human beings to make sense of their autobiographical self; on the other, it allows them to express the autobiographical self through symbols. These symbols communicate the personal feelings that, otherwise, could not be externally communicated. Hence, I have concluded that it is *what we feel to be* that determines our personal identity. So the statement 'I am Muslim' of a hypothetical Mr Hussein is nothing other than the *symbolic communication* of his emotional commitment through which he experiences his autobiographical self. In other words, Mr Hussein has an autobiographical self of which he makes sense through that delicately shaped machinery of his imagination called identity, and which he communicates with the symbolic expression 'I am Muslim'. Finally, Mr Hussein is what he feels to be, regardless of how others, engaged in countless public discourses around the use of cultural markers, might perceive him.

Now we can observe that human beings live in a sort of tautological circuit: (1) the environment produces stimuli; (2) which produce emotions (the bodily reactions); (3) which human beings perceive and rationalise as feelings; (4) which affect their autobiographical self; (5) which is experienced through the delicately shaped machinery of their imagination (identities); (6) which is affected by the feelings induced by the emotions. What I have described until now is a circuit of causalities based on information both internal and external to the individual; in other words, an ecological system of identity. This system aims at maintaining equilibrium between the individual's internal milieu and their external environments. Psychological as well as psychoanalytic studies tell us that equilibrium between self and identity is essential for a healthy life. Yet this tautological equilibrium could be disrupted by changes in the surrounding environment, which Bateson has called *schismogenesis* (see Chapter 5); a form of progressive escalation.

By affecting the relationship between the elements of the circuit, in this case the relationship between environment, identity and autobiographical-self, schismogenesis has the power to break down the system, producing a deep crisis. I will suggest in the following chapters that schismogenetic processes that affect the relationship between the autobiographical self and identity are often the result of a 'circle of panic'. Bhabha (1994: 200) has suggested that circles of panic are caused by

'the indeterminate circulation of meaning as rumour or conspiracy, with its perverse, physical affects of panic'. As we have seen, emotions provoke feelings that then lead to action; the circle of panic leads to a self-correcting mechanism, so that the person can again experience his or her autobiographical self as meaningful. This self-correcting mechanism is what I call an *act of identity*. Because it is derived from strong emotional reactions to the schismogenetic events, acts of identity tend to be extreme in their essence. Although they are most often expressed through rhetoric, sometimes the rhetoric can become desperate action.

Emotional Islam?

Perhaps my readers may understand why I have decided to add another book to the many available on this long-debated topic. I believe that within the social sciences, political sciences and religious studies, the word 'Islamic fundamentalism' has actually dictated the agenda for understanding a phenomenon that is not, as we have started discussing, a 'thing': a unitary, recognisable, cultural object or psychological process. In Chapters 2 and 3, we shall observe how scholars from the different disciplines have mainly applied culturalist and social inter-actionist models to obtain a clear and readable 'map'. So powerful is such discourse that even an anthropologist (Antoun 2001), despite the experience of fieldwork, has missed the individualities, the emotions, the identities and the relationships between individuals, environment and learning, which mediate between the 'the feeling of being' and 'the feeling of being part of'. In Chapter 2, Lawrence (1990), who offered the first attempt at explaining the rhetoric (and often violent actions) of people and groups claiming the authority of their lifestyle through God, has, however, imposed a framework in which the sacred text becomes a Durkheimian totem. Yet Lawrence, and after him Marty and Appleby's colossal work (1991–5), ends in forming his argument through *comparative reductionism*, in which extremely diverse cultures, divided even among themselves, are compared and contrasted. The aim is to obtain a 'macro-picture', an easy 'object' to test against parameters of a Western, or rather, 'enlightened', civilisation. Without probably noticing, the authors discussed in Chapter 2 often present modernism, secularism and liberalism through the fallacy of a *Eurocentric historical evolutionarism*.

In Chapter 3, we shall observe that, particularly after September 11, the label fundamentalism is accompanied by others, such as Islamic terrorism, Islamic extremism and Islamic radicalism, which I have shorthanded as

'Islamic-isms'. Although some scholars have used Islamic fundamentalism as merely one among many examples, most have taken care to inform the reader that among the fundamentalisms, the Islamic one is the most pernicious. The scholarly debate on the role of religion, and the sacred text, in the formation of Islamic fundamentalism, or other Islamic-isms, has shown three main different positions: Islam, as religion, is more prone to violence and fundamentalism (Bruce 2000); fundamentalists are Muslims with political aims who manipulate Islam for their own ideological purposes (Esposito 2002, Hafez 2003, Milton-Edwards 2005); and finally, the representation of Islamic fundamentalism as a historical process was started by charismatic Islamic ideologues (such as Mawdudi, Al-Banna and Qutb). More recently, some scholars, such as Wiktorowicz (2005), have attempted to restart from the individual and have provided an interesting analysis and theory of why people, from different ethnic, national, economic and Islamic backgrounds, decide to join extremist movements.

Again, some of the theories offered do not end in what Mamdani has called 'Culture Talk', or in radical forms of identity theory, but rather in new forms of essentialism, though, this time, anti-orientalist. These scholars have argued that Muslim activists of extreme movements are just manipulating Islam. They made a clear distinction between what is Islam (as an abstract theological category) and the behaviour of Muslims, some of whom may contradict the expected – by the scholars, of course – orthodoxy. Yet this argument, although noble in its intent to contrast orientalistic views of Islam, is also very weak because it forces the domain of social scientific research to embrace particular stands of Islamic theology fully, condemning others as 'evil' or blandly 'fake'. This argument, therefore, is fallacious because it may answer the infamous question 'what went wrong with Islam' in a positive way, but fails to analyse the dynamics through which the 'bad Muslims' become 'bad Muslims' by simply informing us that they are so because they are 'bad'. These authors have forgotten that we, as social scientists, psychologists and political scientists, cannot decide the 'correct' form of Islam, especially because there is no single authority recognised in Islam; and it is not our place to claim that Islamic fundamentalists are impostors, because, as we have seen above, Muslims feel Muslim despite how people may see them (Marranci 2006: 10). Paraphrasing the analyses of fundamentalisms, we can say that all the theories discussed show a 'family resemblance'. What scholars tend to disagree about is more the weight that each element characterising fundamentalism may have in it rather than the reason for the existence of the phenomenon itself.

We shall see, when in Chapter 3 I discuss the case of *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, that other analysis of the phenomenon may be possible. One recent example is Wiktorowicz's work on a group derived from *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, *Al-Muhajiroun* (2005). He has offered one of the few and most interesting studies exploring the reasons behind the decision of some Muslims in the West to join radical Islamic movements. Rare in the studies of Islamic-isms, his book is the result of in depth research he conducted in 2002 – methodologically rooted in anthropological participant observation – on Omar Bakri Mohammed's radical group. Unsurprisingly, because of the extended fieldwork, Wiktorowicz avoids the fallacies that have affected the previous studies. Starting from the individual, he has advanced the idea that those who join extremist groups experience a sort of 'cognitive opening' that challenges their previous beliefs and prepares them for new ideas. It is from these cognitive openings, Wiktorowicz would suggest, that radical ideas of Islam find their way into the lives of young Muslims. Wiktorowicz's argument is a good one, but it still leaves many questions unanswered, because for the purpose of his book, he did not need to answer them.

We can understand 'cognitive opening' as the product of a 'moral emotion' (that is, in Damasio's terminology, moral feeling), which Fuller (2006, 2007) calls 'wonder'. Indeed, starting from Chapter 4, I shall offer my reading of what, by rejecting the different Islamic-ism labels, I prefer to call Emotional Islam'. Why Emotional Islam? Islam can be perceived or experienced as 'emotional' in many ways by both Muslims and non-Muslims. For instance, Muslims may cry while asking for forgiveness during Ramadan, as I have seen many times; or non-Muslims may feel uncomfortable with some aspects of Islam, or even fear Islam itself.[12] Yet it is not in this sense that I am using here the term 'Emotional Islam'. Rather, I use it in relation to the theories of emotions, identity and self described above. As we shall see in Chapters 4 and 5, although, as in the case of Qutb, certain Islamic language may be used, it is the result of the dynamics of environment, autobiographical self, emotions and identity that really matters. Here Islam is emotional because it developed, as in some of the ethnographic examples I have provided, through such dynamics.

Hence, in Chapter 4, I shall discuss how the idea of justice and dignity are charged, through the emotional process, with new values, which, though expressed in terms of religious rhetoric, are the expression of the relationship between identity, feelings and the environment, real or imagined, where the individual situates himself or herself. The idea of justice, which defines what it means to be a human being, becomes

through such a process an ethos of justice. In certain circumstances, affected by schismogenesis, the ethos of justice can shift to an ideology of justice. In Chapter 5, I shall observe how this 'ideology of justice' is linked to another ideology derived from an emotional understanding of one of the pillars of Islam, the 'ideology of tawhid'. Muslims declare *tawhid* in the *Shahada* (declaration of faith), affirming the oneness of God. Islamic theologians and philosophers have written an ocean's worth of ink about tawhid. However, the tawhid we will discuss in this chapter has only a resemblance to the theological one, as its essence is emotional and linked to individuals' 'acts of identity'. As in the case of the concepts of justice and dignity, tawhid is reduced to a rhetorical device used to express a narrative of rebellion and a discourse of charisma, provoked, in some cases, by feelings of shame and anger. In this chapter, I shall explain how the individual formation of emotional Islam becomes part of the group or movement. Scholars have explained the relationship between the activists and the group through the power derived from the charismatic figure of the leader. Instead, I shall suggest a different model.

Following Hetherington's study (1998), I will advocate the re-establishment of the centrality of feelings and emotions in the process of identification and community formation. Hetherington, re-enhancing Schmalenbach's definition of Bund (communion), has suggested that charisma, in certain groups, tends to be defused instead of being, as other scholars have suggested following Weber, concentrated within an individual. Charisma is rather a collective ideologisation of certain emotions (feelings in Damasio's terminology). Although some people can become influential within this space, which Hetherington refers to as Bund, they do not become objects of adoration. Within the Bund, a set of beliefs induce feelings of enthusiasm, and this process tends to 'generalise the condition of charisma', so that charisma is not within one person or place, but tends to be diffused within the Bund (1998: 93). I shall suggest that Hetherington's Bund describes very well how individuals who experience Islam as an emotional process may become then part of a group in which the leader is more the 'official' speaker than the ideologue per se, or the charismatic figure inducing religious reverence.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I shall argue that groups and movements that are the product of the processes we have called 'Emotional Islam' are not struggling against European Enlightenment values, or modernist lifestyles because of their adherence, and deference to an anachronistic scripturalism – as the authors we will review in the first two

chapters have strongly suggested. Rejecting the abstract idea of a clash of civilisations, I have instead suggested that there is a clash of ethos and values in the form of an epistemological relationship: the 'civilised' and the 'civilisable'. Therefore, what matters is how to be human, not what it means to be human. Of course, in this dynamic it is easy to see how the schismogenic process affects groups in a complementary competition for a hegemonic definition of how to be human. Although the argument can be used for other processes of emotional religion, in this chapter I will focus on those Muslims who have developed such a rhetoric and worldview. At the centre of this cybernetic relationship between the 'civilised' and 'civilisable' there is the idea of teaching others how to be human, the 'civilizing' act. This act, which in some cases may lead to violent actions, is a process to re-establish a sense of dignity – based upon an ethos of justice – of being human.

Notes

1. This is not a proper survey because I have used the 'advanced research' options of Google Books and Google Scholar to obtain the numbers. Yet it remains a good indication of the amazing amount of publication on the topic over the last seven years!
2. For more discussion on the idea of identity and self as a mainly cultural or universal phenomenon, read Holland (1997).
3. See, for instance, Geertz (1968), Gellner (1981), Lawrence (1990), Tibi (1998), Bruce (2000), Antoun (2001), Choueri (2002) and Lewis (2003).
4. See for example Bernard Lewis's argument (2003), and Huntington (1996) as well as Pipes (2003).
5. Bruce is referring to the US church historian Martin Marty who, with other members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, has organised the publication of five thematic volumes (Marty and Appleby 1991–5), which remain one of the most exhaustive references in the study of fundamentalism.
6. Among many we can mention, Lawrence (1990), Marty and Appleby's Fundamentalism Project (1991–5), Tibi (1998), Antoun (2001) and Choueri (2002).
7. Among the others see, for instance, Bruce (2000) and Ruthven (2004).
8. For instance, mistakes analogous to the error of classifying the name with the thing named (see Bateson 2002: 106–19).
9. I use throughout this book the term 'environment' to indicate the social, cultural and natural surroundings in which we move during our everyday life (see also Milton 2002, 2007 and Milton and Svašek 2005).
10. How emotions are understood and explained changes dramatically among different traditions and cultures.

11. For an example of the authors who have discussed identities from a post-modern perspective, see Foucault (1977), Hall (1990, 1992, 1996) Rutherford (1990), Bhabha (1994), Sarup (1996) and Werbner and Modood (1997).
12. Think about this hypothetical situation. In an airport, people hear a loud 'Allahu Akbar!'. Although some of my non-Muslim friends have kindly admitted that in such circumstances they would fear for their lives because of being induced to believe that a terrorist attack may be imminent, some of my Muslim friends have noted that the first thing they would think of would be, for instance, that a Muslim brother may have caught the plane for which he was late.

2
Fundamentalism Debated

In the introduction, we have observed that scholars have been unable to agree whether 'fundamentalism' is a useful analytical term or rather a dangerous generalisation. I have suggested that much of the diatribe on the term 'fundamentalism' arises because scholars have mainly debated it as a 'real thing': in other words an entity affecting, conditioning and inducing specific behaviours in individuals and, in particular, groups. Similarly, during the past 20 years, the debate on fundamentalism has mainly focused on *what* produces the phenomenon 'fundamentalism' rather than *why* people develop certain patterns of ideas and practices that have been often labelled as 'fundamentalism'. This attempt to answer mainly the 'what' question, while leaving the 'why' aside, has produced a rather *taxonomic understanding* of 'fundamentalism'.

Authors, from different disciplines, have attempted to map and generalise, and thereby theorise, 'fundamentalism' as, again, a phenomenon with specific universal characteristics; the most prominent of which is the religious essence of 'it'. Indeed, for most of the authors, real fundamentalism can only be religious; Ruthven explains, 'fundamentalism is religion materialized, the word made flesh, as it were, with the flesh rendered all too often, into shattered body parts by the forces of holy rage' (2004: 190). Although not all scholars who have debated fundamentalism would agree with Ruthven's transubstantiation metaphor, they would agree that religion is the main engine of fundamentalism. How have these scholars reached their conclusions about *what* fundamentalism is and what may provoke it?

In this chapter, I shall offer a short overview of how religious fundamentalism has been studied and discussed. The available studies on fundamentalism show a kind of 'family resemblance' in how authors

have conceptualised fundamentalism. Fundamentalism, these authors shall say, is the result of particular dynamics between certain elements that are common to all fundamentalisms: such as acceptance of inerrant scripturalism; rejection of Enlightenment, secularism, modernity and modernism, difference; formation of and support for conservative ideologies, patriarchisms and enclaves. If I had to use a musical metaphor, I would say that the academic debate on religious fundamentalism is in the style of 'theme and variation', the variation being how the authors construct the above elements in relation to one another. Some works on fundamentalism published during the 1990s, such as Gellner (1992), Lawrence (1990), and Marty and Appleby's fundamentalism project (1991–5) have become so prominent that they strongly influence more recent works (see, for instance, Antoun 2001, Harr and Busutil 2002). However, as we shall discuss in the conclusion, these works start from what I can define as a Western-centric hypothesis and end in providing a very Western-centric theorem, in which fundamentalism becomes clearly the oddity, the backward and anti-civilisation force.

Theories and theorems of fundamentalism: An overview

Most scholars studying fundamentalism have, although to different degrees, suggested that 'the scripture' (i.e. the holy or canonical texts) is a crucial element in fundamentalism.[1] Lawrence has indeed argued (1990: 25),

> […] Scripture [is] a crucial, defining element. Remove scripture, and you no longer have fundamentalism but some other, nonreligious, social movement. Intimately linked to the authority of scripture is the penchant of fundamentalists for particular selections of scripture: all scripture is invoked, but not all is cited with equal relevance to the actual outlook of particular fundamentalist cadres.

Although Lawrence has added that there are other elements, such as the loyalty to a mythical past and the reliance on charismatic leaders, the scripture remains the main element for religious ideology: 'Religious ideology', Lawrence has argued, 'is textually based before it is contextually elaborated and enacted'. As we shall see in the next section, the selection is not random according to, for example, Marty and Appleby because 'Fundamentalists consistently retrieve and stress those teachings or practices from the past that clearly do not "fit" in the "enlightened" and "sophisticated" modern society' (1992: 22).

Antoun, an anthropologist, has defined this particular relation of fundamentalists with their religious texts as scripturalism. He (2001: 2) has defined scripturalism as the 'justification and reference of all important beliefs and acts to a sacred scripture held to be inerrant'. Yet he has then suggested that it is not literalism, or even inerrancy, that mainly characterises fundamentalists' attitude towards the sacred texts, but rather 'the emotional and inspirational qualities of scriptures' (2001: 37). Antoun has explained that scripturalism provides the security and certainty through the authority of the text, which gives fundamentalists the force to proceed in their ideological stands. Indeed, through the sacred text, even negative realities can be turned into positive events that are inspirational for the 'truth' believer.

Ruthven (2004) seems to agree that fundamentalists do not strictly adhere to either inerrancy or literalism. Indeed, he has pointed out that although strict literalism may lead to the analytic deconstruction of the sacred text, inerrancy of the scripture cannot be restricted to the fundamentalists. 'Since the vast majority of believing Muslims are Koranic inerrantists,' Ruthven has argued, 'Islamic fundamentalism cannot really be defined in terms of Koranic inerrancy' (2004: 83). The reason for this is simple: fundamentalism, as a term of classification, would lose its meaning and function. Ruthven has instead argued that fundamentalists have a common 'hermeneutic style' to which he has referred as 'factualist' or 'historicist' (cf. 2004: 84), because they read their sacred texts for practical actions. In other words, what the fundamentalists, according to Ruthven, look for in the sacred text is the 'fact', the statement that can guide their own lives as true believers. He has argued, therefore, that the collapsing of myth (i.e. the sacred text) into history (i.e. real life) 'is one of the most prominent of the "family resemblances" by which different members of the fundamentalist tribe [*sic*] may be identified' (Ruthven 2004: 90). Although Ruthven has acknowledged the relevance that scripturalism has in the understanding of fundamentalism, he does not, as Lawrence and Antoun do, reduce fundamentalism to scripturalism. In other words, the fundamentalists, according to Ruthven, do not derive their ideology from the text itself.

By contrast, Hood et al. (2005), though from a psychological perspective, have strongly supported Lawrence's analytical stance, and invited others to 'look at the texts that fundamentalists hold dear and describe how the text molds the belief, the commitments, and even the character of those who adhere to its words' (2005: 21). The authors have suggested that the student of fundamentalism has to take seriously what fundamentalists take as axiomatic: that text reveals an objective truth.

Yet the student of fundamentalism, Hood et al. have argued, approaches the scripture with a very different scope 'to understand why so many fundamentalists refuse to leave what, according to modern and post-modern thought, is at best a quaint and outmoded way of understanding what words are about' (2005: 22). Hence, the main tool to conduct a psychological analysis of fundamentalism is what they have called the *intratextual model*, which, without referring to any belief content, attempts to provide an understanding of the 'structure and the process of fundamentalist thought' (2005: 22). The main principal of intratextuality is that the text itself determines how it ought to be interpreted. Hood et al. have suggested a form of tautology in which intratextuality is the only criterion through which a text can be defined sacred; and, of course, only a sacred text can provide the ultimate truth: thus, 'reading the Bible in terms of the principle of intratextuality will both determine that the Bible is the Word of God (a sacred text) and indicate what truths are to be held absolute' (2005: 22).

The intratextuality model can explain, therefore, why fundamentalists see the sacred texts as the ultimate guide. Furthermore, being the fundamentalist trapped in such a hermeneutic tautology, they can use it to form a clear in-group and out-group. It is the intratextuality that allows a sacred text to achieve authority over the believer. Everything, Hood et al. have argued, should be reduced to the text. If the principle of intratextuality characterises fundamentalism, the opposite model, *intertextuality*, characterises modernity. As we shall see in the following sections, modernity, which most of the authors discussed here acknowledge as a product of the Enlightenment, is what fundamentalists are supposed to fight against. In the case of intertextuality, no single text can claim authority, or can be read tautologically, because, when the evidence allows it, all of them are perceived to hold relative truths. Therefore, Hood et al. have concluded (2005: 183),

> The sacred text [...] is in itself sufficient for the fundamentalists as source of life's meaning and purpose. The textual narrative provides fundamentalists with a worldview that allows comprehensibility and manageability to an otherwise fragmented existence [...] Textual authority, for fundamentalists, provides moral certainty and stability. Thus we have suggested that from a psychological perspective, there are legitimate reasons why a person might choose to be a fundamentalist.

The text becomes the central element of the process that, according to Hood et al. induces a fundamentalist way of thinking. Do Hood et al.

argue that there exists a *fundamentalist mind*? It seems so. Indeed, intra-textuality is not just a modality of approaching the text; it is something more from what we can understand by reading the *Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism*. Hood et al. have affirmed 'our model simply asserts that intratextuality is a *form of cognition controlled by a sacred text*' (2005: 185, emphasis added).

Most studies, from different disciplinary approaches, seem to have highlighted a direct relationship between what has been called funda-mentalism and the sacred text. The scripture becomes essential for the development of fundamentalism. On the one hand, some authors have suggested that the sacred text informs the fundamentalist's behaviour because it provides the 'ideology'. On the other hand, some authors have argued for the centrality of the text in fundamentalist discourse because fundamentalists themselves use it as a shield against criticism and to reinforce their beliefs and identity. Finally, still others have suggested that the scripture provides a form of cognition, common to all fundamentalists, as for example Hood et al. have done. In fact, all the analyses that have focused on the sacred text as one of the main explanations of fundamentalism have also presented such a charac-teristic as a universal element of fundamentalism. History of the text, its origin, its actual content, as well as how individuals or groups of fundamentalists have used it, remains, when it is mentioned, a second-ary aspect. I think that, directly or indirectly (as with Antoun 2001), Geertz's theory of culture and religion have strongly influenced, if not inspired, the discussed analysis of the role that the text has within fun-damentalism. Lawrence, like Gellner (1981, 1992) and Geertz (1968), has focused upon the implementation of the sacred text as the essence of fundamentalism. Yet for Geertz and Gellner it is not just the text in itself that justifies the existence of fundamentalism, but also the ten-sion that exists within the cultural paradigm among science, revelation and common sense.

Bruce has agreed with Lawrence about the centrality of the text in the formation and development of fundamentalism, but he has also added three essential social political elements, which I shall discuss in the next section. These are interconnected and interdependent: resistance to social change and modernisation; research for cultural and political hegemony; and utopian, rather than ideological, visions. Therefore, Bruce can conclude, '[fundamentalists] respond to problems created by modernization by advocating society-wide obedience to some authen-tic and inerrant text or tradition and by asking the political power to impose the revitalized tradition' (2000: 94).

Fundamentalism has attracted so much attention not just because of its alleged ideological textualism or cognitive textual-induced behaviourism, but also because of the main suggestion that it is incompatible with, and hence challenges and endangers, our (Western) way of life. In a majority of recent studies,[2] fundamentalism has been presented as a reactionary 'oppositional' force to the Enlightenment, modernisation (or modernism), secularism, rationalism as well as women in general. Therefore, Lawrence has argued that studying fundamentalism is nothing other than actually assessing the Enlightenment 'as at once the precursor and the foil of all fundamentalist thought' (1990: 8). Authors have attempted to provide their readers with an account of the main characteristics of fundamentalism, or what Appleby (2003: 198), has defined as 'the fundamentals of fundamentalism'. Authors emphasise different aspects of these 'fundamentals'; yet the alleged rejection by fundamentalists of Enlightenment values remains central to all of the arguments. In other words, the question of what fundamentalism might be is often answered by replying to another question: which are the enemies of fundamentalism? In this section, I shall present a review of the most recent studies that have offered a general discussion of fundamentalism. As I shall explain later, the analysis of how contemporary scholars have discussed fundamentalism and its characteristics, ending often in merging the two, tells us more about how scholars have understood, or imagined and reconstructed, 'Western civilisation' and Western liberalism.

Lawrence (1990), in the seminal work *Defenders of God*, has situated fundamentalism right at the centre of modernity. He has suggested that we cannot speak of pre-modern fundamentalists because the pre-modern era lacked those economical and social characteristics, such as radical individualism and material conditions, that are fertile ground for the rise of fundamentalist ideology. Fundamentalists, Lawrence has argued, 'are at once the consequence of modernity and the antithesis of modernism' (1990: 2). To understand this point, we have to take into consideration the difference between modernity and modernism on which Lawrence's argument is based. Modernity, from this viewpoint, is the result of the 'emergence of a new index of human life' (1990: 26), which is the product of increasing rationalisation and global changes since the beginning of the eighteenth century. By contrast, speaking of modernism, Lawrence has argued, 'at its utopian extreme, it enthrones one economic strategy, consumer-oriented capitalism, as the surest means to technological progress that will also eliminate social unrest and physical discomfort' (1990: 2). Hence, fundamentalists, whom for

Lawrence embrace the scripture as a main characteristic, are a product of modernity but inevitably an enemy of modernism: 'the catalyst for fundamentalist loyalty is hatred of the modernist value agenda' (Lawrence 1990: 6). Because the 'modernist value agenda' derived from Enlightenment values, according to Lawrence, as secularism did, 'the single, most consistent denominator is opposition to all those individuals or institutions that advocate Enlightenment values and wave the banner of secularism and modernism' (ibid.).

Lawrence, after individuating the main enemy of fundamentalism and positioned fundamentalism with modernity, has tried to explain the way in which we can assess it. He has argued that fundamentalism cannot be understood successfully if considered a theology, philosophy or even a product of economical and social deprivation or historical factors. Rather, he has argued, it is an ideology of protest: 'all fundamentalists are ideologues protesting the modernist hegemony in the High Tech Era' (1990: 83). Yet the ideology is, according to him, religious in its essence. The main difference, Lawrence has suggested, between political and religious ideology is that political ideology is mainly concerned with meaning and less with truth, whereas religious ideology, such as fundamentalism, pays attention to both.

Lawrence has also argued that, as in the Wittgensteinian theory of family resemblance (*Familienähnlichkeit*),[3] fundamentalism presents specific traits linked to its specific ideology, which makes it distinctive from its main enemy, modernists, but also non-fundamentalist coreligionists. The idea that different fundamentalisms are a sort of *Familienähnlichkeit* will perhaps prove to be very popular among the most influential students of fundamentalism. However, as we shall see, there is no agreement about the cluster of traits and their relevance within specific fundamentalisms. For Lawrence there are at least five traits that are extremely relevant. First, fundamentalists wish to remain a minority and portray themselves as a minority vanguard possessing the truth. Secondly, fundamentalists 'are oppositional. They do not merely disagree with their enemies, they confront them' (Lawrence 1990: 100). Here the opposition is against those who hold Enlightenment and secular values. Thirdly, religious fundamentalists are secondary-level male elites whose authority is derived from the scripture. Yet because the scripture should be interpreted, they should be charismatic leaders, and so, Lawrence has concluded, they should be male. Fourthly, fundamentalists develop a specific technical vocabulary that aims to reinforce the in-group and isolate it from any other out-groups, which, of course, fundamentalists see as potential, or real, enemies. Finally, Lawrence has

reminded, 'fundamentalism has historical antecedents, but no ideological precursors' (ibid.). Indeed, he has strongly argued that because fundamentalist ideology is an oppositional reaction to modernism, it should be understood and studied as a product of modernity.

In the conclusion of the first volume of their *Fundamentalism Project*, Marty and Appleby (1991: 814–43) provide an overview, as Lawrence has done, of the main characteristics of fundamentalism that define its 'family resemblance'. Yet they have disagreed with Lawrence's view that fundamentalism is just a religious ideology. By contrast, they have argued, 'fundamentalisms resist, at least in principle, the reduction of religion to ideology alone and attempt to provide a thoroughgoing and integrated system' (1991: 815). Indeed, they have suggested that fundamentalism provides 'an irreducible basis for communal and personal identity' (1991: 817), which is based on a secure and immutable source: holy scriptures. For this reason, fundamentalists cannot accept Enlightenment values and the derived modernism, which reject revelation as being independent from human agency and mind: 'were fundamentalists to concede these points – which they do not – religious identity would lose its transcendent, erosion-free source; and the ethos and behaviours which proceed from that identity would seem suddenly susceptible to tests of relative adequacy and to "foreign" criteria of evaluation' (Marty and Appleby 1991: 818). Fundamentalists, they have argued, redefine also their space and time by framing it through a mythological reading of the past: the golden age towards which the truth believers have to aim. According to them, fundamentalists develop, therefore, a dualistic, Manichean vision of the world in which evil and good struggle. Unsurprisingly, the fundamentalists' enemies are mythologised too.

Marty and Appleby have also suggested that fundamentalists and fundamentalist groups arise in times of crisis, even if they may be only perceived and not real. They have argued that because fundamentalism derives from a search for a stable and unchangeable social and personal identity, fundamentalists try to substitute existing political, social and cultural structures with a religiously based comprehensive system (for example, systems based on Sharia, the Bible and Jewish Halakha). For this reason, Marty and Appleby have suggested that fundamentalists do not just reject modernity in favour of tradition, but use both selectively. Fundamentalists can use the most sophisticated technologies to achieve their aims, and at the same time they 'do not simply reaffirm the old doctrines; they subtly lift them from their original context, embellish and institutionalize them, and employ them as

ideological weapons against a hostile world' (Marty and Appleby 1991: 826, emphasis in the text).

Marty and Appleby, like Lawrence, have observed that in most cases the fundamentalist leader can only be a charismatic male able to use his charisma to reinforce the communal identity. Yet they, in contrast to Lawrence and other scholars, have recognised an important element that is often underestimated in the study of fundamentalism: the impact of colonialism and post-colonial administration. The two authors have highlighted that the failure of both colonial and democratic regimes has actually reinforced the popularity of fundamentalist movements that often offer social and cultural alternatives to weak, often corrupt, secular or nationalist political visions. In conclusion, in 1991 Marty and Appleby have defined fundamentalism as,[4]

> a tendency, a habit of mind found within religious communities and paradigmatically embodied in certain representative individuals and movements, which manifests itself as a strategy, or set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as people or group. Feeling this identity to be at risk in the contemporary era, they fortify it by a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs and practices from a sacred past. These retrieved 'fundamentals' are refined, modified and sanctioned in a spirit of shrewd pragmatism: they are to serve as a bulwark against the encroachment of outsiders who threaten to draw the believers into a syncretistic, areligious, or irreligious cultural milieu.
>
> (1991: 835)

This definition is extremely successful among students of fundamentalism and today remains the most quoted. Fundamentalism, in other words, is seen as part of an unspecified conservative identity process supported by a reformist approach to scripture which, rejecting mainstream doctrines, struggles with social changes both within and outside of the religious domain.

Williams (1994), though accepting Marty and Appleby's above definition, has added another analytical dimension to the understanding of fundamentalism. He has suggested that fundamentalist groups should be understood as 'social movements' challenging the dominant institutional order and imposing alternative, often cultural, domains. He has proposed that fundamentalist 'social movements' develop fundamentalist ideologies for two main purposes. Internally, through their ideology, they attempt to maintain a certain unity within the group,

whereas externally the ideology helps to recruit new members. The main characteristic of fundamentalist groups as 'social movements' is that they present themselves as struggling against an injustice that is unspecified, yet culturally based on secularism. Partaking in this injustice is not just the secular society or the secular state, but also the institutionalised religion: 'many forms of fundamentalism have used a space between the subjective experience of religious truth and institutional credentials to gain autonomy from established religious organizations. In turn, it is important to note how movements then use religion's attendant cultural power in battles with secular and ecclesiastic organizational structures' (Williams 1994: 795). Indeed, Williams has finally argued that fundamentalism may be better understood as a rebellion against 'ecclesiastical authority (and authorities)' than 'a protest against modern secular culture' (Williams 1994: 806).

Riesebrodt (2000) has more recently proposed a distinction between two main species of fundamentalism: legalistic-literalist and charismatic,

> 'Legalistic-literalist' fundamentalism is centred on the regulation of everyday-life by religious-ethical principles or ritual obligations. It is represented by the religious scholar and the moralistic preacher. To this, 'charismatic' fundamentalism additionally emphasizes the extraordinary experience of divine gifts and miracles. It represents a more emotional and enthusiastic religiosity embodied by the living saint and miracle worker. 'Legalistic-literalist' and 'charismatic' fundamentalism are sometimes integrated into one movement, sometimes they are separated. 'Legalistic-literalist' fundamentalism is connected usually with the ideal way of life of urban middle-classes, and 'charismatic' fundamentalism with the ecstatic and magical needs of urban lower classes and rural population.
>
> (2000: 272)

It is not difficult to recognise in Riesebrodt's distinction the classic division of Islam into little and great traditions (see Marranci 2008b). The 'legalistic-literalist' version is, of course, the main form active today. He then argues that Weber's typology of religious attitudes towards the world, which Weber has argued can be between approval and rejection or between control, adaptation and withdrawal, can help to understand the typologies of fundamentalism. Riesebrodt, in agreement with Lawrence, suggests that contemporary fundamentalism should be explained within the context of modernity, because 'Fundamentalism arises from the tensions between tradition and modernity, and it incorporates aspects

of both. The innovation is twofold: ideological and social' (Riesebrodt 2000: 276). He finally concludes that fundamentalism is able to attract many young second generations – who have grown up in households characterised by a secular approach to life and society – because of the reinforcement of personal identity and communal sense of belonging that it can offer, in contrast to the isolation and disorientation often offered by contemporary secular societies.

If Riesebrodt has located fundamentalism within social and cultural dynamics, Bruce (2000) has instead suggested that fundamentalism is mainly a naturally disruptive – as according to him religion has always been (2000: 1) – religious product. If Lawrence and other scholars have strongly argued that fundamentalism is a modern phenomenon or at least a product of modernity, Bruce has claimed that only some forms of fundamentalism are modern, like protestant Christian fundamentalism, whereas others, such as Islamic fundamentalism, are pre-modern and rooted in an obscurantist rejection of the Enlightenment. Fundamentalists, Bruce has explained, have recognised modernity as the 'Great Satan' because modernity is the product of a particular relationship between science and secularisation, where 'religion is challenged less by specific scientific discoveries than by the underlying logic of science (indeed, of rationality)' (Bruce 2000: 25). The reason is simple: the logic of science, Bruce has argued, undermines the inerrant truth of the holy text. Because the truth can only be found in the holy text, which fundamentalists understand as a totalitarian epistemology, Bruce has suggested that the main characteristics of fundamentalist thought, such as misogyny and rejection of Western human rights, are self-explanatory as part of a religious ideology. Therefore, because fundamentalism is not just the result of a misuse of religious theologies and interpretations of them, but rather a product of religion, Bruce concludes that, 'religions differ in their potential for fundamentalist movements' (ibid.: 95). Does this mean that religious beliefs cause people to act in certain ways? Bruce, by criticising Halliday's view (1994: 96) that religion has been used to justify any kind of political and sociological action, has observed,

> I cannot accept that, as matter of principle, we should suppose religion to be without consequences. It would be bizarre if something that took up so much of so many people's wealth and time, and that so dominated so many cultures, did not matter: that it merely served as a cafeteria of convenient legitimations for any sort of behaviour.

If it is the case that religion matters, then it should also be the case that differences in religions matter.

(Bruce 2000: 103)

Yet if this is the case, should we speak of a fundamentalist mind controlled by the elements of religion? Bruce has rejected the idea, advanced by some scholars, that fundamentalists are affected by an authoritarian personality or suffer from false consciousness, or any other explanation that concludes that they are a rather odd bunch of people thinking in an odd, or pathological, way. Bruce, instead, has argued that fundamentalists are perfectly coherent within their religious traditions; actually they are the only ones, because they are traditionally religious people, providing 'a rational response […] to social, political and economic changes that downgrade and constrain the role of religion in the public world' (2000: 117).

Antoun (2001), starting from an anthropological perspective, though strongly influenced by the works of Lawrence, and Marty and Appleby, has offered us a quite different, if not opposite, viewpoint on fundamentalism. He has defined fundamentalism as 'a cognitive and affective orientation to the modern world focusing on protest and change. The fundamentalist's protest and outrage is against the ideology of modernism […] [its] protest is also against the secular nation-state, which it regards as instrumental in pushing religion to margins' (2001: 153–4). Antoun, likewise Marty and Appleby, has suggested that fundamentalist groups share some similar themes: the effort to remain pure in a morally polluted world; the quest for authenticity in a world marked by relativity; the need for certainty in a continually changing world; a reaction to the incoherence that the local has today in a globalised world; selective modernisation and carefully controlled acculturation in a world marked by a totalising secularisation; and the hope for a resurrection of a mythical past in an anti-traditional present.

More recently, Ruthven (2004), espousing the now classic understanding of fundamentalism as characterised by 'family resemblance', has argued that the main feature and reason for the rise of fundamentalism is not just religious traditionalism but actually what he has termed 'the scandal of difference' (2004: 35). Difference and pluralism, according to him, is the main characteristic of the 'modern world'. Fundamentalists, by contrast, can only survive in a monocultural environment dictated and controlled by their own scriptures. Modernity, as a product of the Enlightenment, provides choices and freedoms that can easily end denying the totalism of

the fundamentalists' religious vision, so 'fundamentalism is one response to the crisis of faith brought about by awareness of differences' (Ruthven 2004: 48). The fear of difference can bring fundamentalists to extreme actions of violence in the attempt to deny, or limit it.

Weinberg and Pedahzur (2004) have attempted to offer a discussion of links between religious fundamentalism and political extremism, particularly when violent. They have argued that the collapse and failure during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of totalitarian movements and political religions have actually been the *condition sine qua non* for the very existence of violent fundamentalism. As they note, 'In other words, if we view the matter over the long run, the recent rise of religious fundamentalism in the Middle East, Latin America and South Asia, among other places, has occurred at a time when the millennial hopes placed in the secular political religions had been lost' (2004: 3). Although they have then ended in following Marty and Appleby's argument on fundamentalism, they have also interlinked it with Lipset and Raab's analysis of political extremism (1970). Hence, Weinberg and Pedahzur have argued that not only does fundamentalism have a Manichean view of the world, but, as argued by Lipset and Raab for political extremism, 'the truth itself is not complicated […] Extremists then wish to shut down the marketplace of ideas we associate with the politics of democracy' (2004: 7).

Weinberg and Pedahzur have, in a certain sense, connected fundamentalism to the tragic history of Western nationalism. Some scholars have also attempted to answer the question whether nationalism can be a form of religious fundamentalism or if religious fundamentalism and nationalism may be two different sides of the same coin (see, for instance, O'Brien 1988). Indeed, there is no lack of references in, for instance, the Torah about religious, divinely sanctioned, claims to particular lands or territories (Antoun 2001: 46–50). At the same time, there is no lack either of fundamentalist movements, for example in the USA, South Africa, Northern Ireland and Israel, taking holy books seriously when claiming contested territories (Akenson 1992). Yet other authors, such as Lawrence (1990), have argued that fundamentalism and nationalism are not just incompatible, rather they are archenemies: 'Nationalism preceded fundamentalism. It is also likely to survive it. They are incommensurate opposites: contradictories rather than contraries, both cannot occupy the same ideological space' (1990: 83). The reason for this total mutual exclusion can be found in the fact that both nationalists and religionists can only, according to Lawrence, show loyalty to one entity: the nation or God. Of course, for the nationalists the

nation is also God, but for the religionists, God cannot be the nation. However, are nationalism and patriotism the same thing? Lawrence has rejected Gellner's attempt to suggest so, and has rather argued that patriotism misses an obsession over a territorial sovereignty.

Ruthven, by contrast, has seen the relationship between nationalism and fundamentalism as more complicated than just mutual exclusion: 'it would be wrong, however, to see nationalism as being uniformly anti-religious and secular. Everywhere nationalisms have been perme- ated by religious symbols, especially in places where the core identities that come to constitute nationhood had been buttressed by religious differences' (2004: 135). In the history of twentieth century Europe, particularly within the dynamics that brought Nazism and fascism to power, many religious elements and even proto-religious ritual can been observed, as, for instance, Eatwell (2004) has highlighted. Indeed, Jurgensmeyer (1993) has proposed that fundamentalism may be a vari- ant, or complement, of nationalism. He has pointed out that nation- alism, as well as religion, share similar elements, such as doctrines, ideologies, rituals and social organisation that serve the function of providing a social organisation based on a powerful framework of moral order, and which can justify as well as legitimise both martyrdom and violence (cf. Jurgensmeyer 1993: 15).

Almond et al. (2003) have instead argued that, though nationalism and religious fundamentalism may share some similarities, as Jurgensmeyer has suggested, there are also some essential differences. One of the most important differences is the role that religion plays in the discourse of martyrdom. Nationalism can offer to people sacrificing their lives the celebration of their memory through public rituals and ceremony. Yet religion offers something different to the martyr: the promise of an eternal, and better, life. Religion, and its radical expression, fundamen- talism, offers a kind of exchange between the mundane corrupt life and the eternal, perfect, afterlife. People offer their lives as a sacrifice to the idea of nation, whereas religious people offer their lives to religion to access a better, personal, afterlife. If nationalism can require a sacrifice that is based mainly on the concept of ideological social altruism, reli- gion, particularly its extreme forms, invites the believer to consider an advantageous, ethical and moral, if not holy, exchange. Hence, Almond et al. have argued, nationalism and fundamentalism, though they can appear similar in their structures, show not only different ontology but also, and in particular, eschatology.

If scholars have debated about the relation between nationalism and fundamentalism, they have, in most cases, agreed on the misogynist

instances of fundamentalist groups or in the attempt of fundamentalists to control women. Students of fundamentalism have often shared Lawrence's viewpoint (1990) that fundamentalist leaders are mainly charismatic secondary-educated elite males.[5] Therefore, Riesebrodt (1993) has suggested that fundamentalism is a patriarchal protest movement aiming to defend patriarchal values in a changing world. For this reason, fundamentalists, according to some authors (see previous note), use a rhetoric aimed at the control of women's sexuality. Fundamentalists, scholars have suggested, perceive female sexuality as a danger to social stability and morality; also fundamentalist leaders aim to relegate women to the role of housewives and childbearers. Hardacre (1993) has clearly described the impact that fundamentalist rhetoric and actions have on women and their family. It is clear that, according to these scholars, women cannot become the charismatic leaders of fundamentalist groups.

This has prompted Ruthven (2004: 113) to ask why women, who suffer a clear disadvantage in gender equality from the fundamentalist patriarchal ideology, become members or supporters of fundamentalist groups. He has suggested some possible reasons. First, feminist theologians have tried to provide readings of the fundamentalist's holy texts that challenge the oppressive patriarchal views of the role of women. Some of them have used the same patriarchal system to empower themselves within the house and the in-group. Yet Ruthven, as Hardacre (1993), felt that this cannot be a sufficient reason to explain the increasing attraction that women have for fundamentalist religious groups. He has advised that, though it may sound simplistic, we should not undermine the draw that women may experience towards charismatic male leaders, who often project a very well-studied image of masculinity. Hardacre (1993), however, has rather suggested that economic aspects can be considered the most relevant in women's decision to support fundamentalist ideologies. She has observed that, even in the USA, women can achieve a better economic status when supported solely by their own husband than when reaching emancipation and facing the almost inevitable reality of being less well paid than a man.

In other words, Hardacre has suggested that in response to unfortunate – yet nonetheless real – economic dynamics, even within industrialised society, women can opt for ideologies that glorify the traditional figure of the mother and caring spouse. In Muslim countries, Hardacre has observed that anti-Western sentiments have increasingly reinforced such female pragmatism towards women's roles within society and home. Other scholars have focused on how some particular cultural aspects

of religious fundamentalist discourse can be actually used to negotiate or achieve independence or powers within the community that would otherwise be inaccessible to women. One example is the use of the hijab (the Muslim headscarf) by second- and third-generation Muslims living in Western countries. The hijab allows these, often young, women to claim essentialist Islamic identities and reject the 'traditional' ways of life of their, for instance, own parents (Hardacre 1993). Despite the fact that men will always control the leadership within the fundamentalist organisations, Brasher (1998) has argued that women can have a strong voice and exercise a considerable power both by influencing their husbands and brothers, as well as through their role of mothers.

Ruthven (2004) has also highlighted that fundamentalists are not only concerned with the role of women, but also the concept of masculinity and the inevitable link with heterosexuality. All religious fundamentalist groups reject homosexuality as a Western disease or a satanic perversion. In both cases, Ruthven has suggested that fundamentalist focus upon the centrality of family has been 'overtaken by a neurotic obsession with sexual behaviour' (2004: 121). He has explained such an obsession in psychological terms by observing, 'it seems obvious that self-repression and fear of one's own "inner demons" or sexual impulses have much to do with it' (2004: 122, see also Brasher 1998).

Psychology has been used not only to explain, or attempt to explain, fundamentalists' attitudes towards gender relations, and particularly the oppression of women. Some scholars have provided psychological analysis of fundamentalist behaviours or tried to define fundamentalism through psychological theories (Hood et al. 2005).[6] Herriot (2007) has argued that social identity theory[7] can provide the best understanding of fundamentalism as a phenomenon. Herriot has strictly followed Marty and Appleby's definition of fundamentalism, as well as Lawrence's viewpoint that fundamentalism has antagonist beliefs, values and norms respect those shared within the cultures influenced and shaped by the experience of the Enlightenment. The main argument of social identity theory is that social identities, forged by the antagonistic relations between in-group and out-group, become integrated into the self,

> since the self has directive function, it follows that social identity can be used to direct behaviour. Individuals then behave as group members. Their actions are those of, for example, a radical Muslim or a born-again Christian. They are no longer those of Mohammed Atta or Howard Ahmanson as unique individuals with personal identities,

but rather of those same persons as members of categories to which they perceive themselves to belong.

<div align="right">(Herriot 2007: 30)</div>

In other words, as members of certain categories (which do not need to be actual physical groups) that reject others, people lose their individual sense of self and act in accordance with the definition of identity provided by the category to which they belong. Of course, as Herriot has reminded, according to social identity theory, there is a process of depersonalisation which is favoured through the so-called 'meta-contrast principle': social identity is particularly salient when both the similarity within one's own category and the difference with a specific out-group are maximised.

Social identity theory, Herriot has argued, explains why certain individuals can decide to join, for instance, fundamentalist groups, even if their decision can be seen as counterproductive for their status or security. Social identity theory holds that people join groups and internalise the group's category(s) for two main reasons: the human need for self-esteem and the human need for certainty. Fundamentalist groups and ideology provide members with a clear and defined set of beliefs, values and norms, deduced from texts that are perceived to be inerrant because of their divine origin. This of course provides a strong sense of certainty for the fundamentalists. At the same time, Herriot has noticed, fundamentalists are not interested in mundane status: they instead want to be the first in the eyes of God. The respect of the fundamentalist norms and rules, as well as the firm belief in the superiority of their own beliefs, values and norms against the corruption of the secular world, provide fundamentalists with a strong and fulfilling sense of self-esteem. Herriot has therefore concluded,

Thus the central feature of fundamentalisms, their struggle against secularism, underpins the application of SID [social identity theory] in the attempt to understand them from a psychological perspective. For it is the starkness of the distinction between the in-group and the out-group which results in extreme social identities. These include prototypes of the fundamentalist groups and stereotypes of their enemies which are the reverse image of each other. Fundamentalisms depend totally on the existence of their enemy. The enemy may be almost entirely a construction of their own imagination: the stereotype may be derived directly from the prototype. Hence the power of the fundamentalist leaders to determine prototypes and

their associated stereotypes is crucial, for without an enemy the movement has no reason to exist, and they lose power.

(Herriot 2007: 106–7)

Finally, Herriot has observed that the social identity of fundamentalists is one of the most powerful. Indeed if the primary reason for human motivation, as suggested by social identity theory, is the maintenance and enhancement of the self, fundamentalists find themselves in a tautological circle of prototypes and stereotypes that maximise the process of identification with the group and its categories. Thus, Herriot has noted, non-fundamentalists, if they understand clearly the processes involved in fundamentalism as clarified by social identity theory, should not be so surprised that fundamentalist adherents are ready to sacrifice their own lives for the fundamentalist cause.

Fundamental fallacies in studying 'fundamentalism'

I have limited the selection of the theories discussed to the most recent and quoted academic studies on fundamentalism in an attempt to observe how the different disciplines, from religious studies to psychology, have debated and explained it. Although the different disciplines and fields of research have provided a variegated understanding of the phenomenon called fundamentalism, we have observed that there is, in most cases, a certain consensus on what fundamentalism might be and how it is expressed within the different religious traditions. Paraphrasing the analyses of fundamentalism itself, we can say that all the theories discussed show a 'family resemblance'. What scholars do tend to disagree about among themselves has more to do with the weight that each element characterising fundamentalism may have in it rather than the reason for the existence of the phenomenon itself.

At this stage, we can summarise the fundamentals of fundamentalism and have a clear picture of how scholars have understood 'the thing'. Fundamentalism exists because modernism exists. Modernism is the result of a historical process that started with the Enlightenment. By-products of the Enlightenment are secularisation and pluralisation, both of which are essential to modernism. The Enlightenment and its consequences (especially secularism and modernism) have eroded the ancient world of religion and its social and political power. Secularism, in particular, has marginalised religious power as well as access to power for believers. Hence, fundamentalism is a counter-reaction to the essence of Enlightenment values. From this viewpoint, we can

clearly see that fundamentalism could not have developed without the Enlightenment. Yet without scripturalism, fundamentalism would have lacked its essence: the ultimate truth. Fundamentalists, according to the discussed definitions, perceive themselves as the lone defenders of this ultimate, divinely revealed truth. They isolate themselves to avoid secularisation, and through charismatic male leadership, seek to organise a militant retake of societies from secular deviance. Trapped in a Manichean dichotomy of truth and falsehood, good and evil, fundamentalists, through the revealed scripture, wait for and work towards the creation of the divine perfect society.

In other words, fundamentalism has been presented and discussed mainly as social organisation and group identity. The main social theory behind most of these studies, though only in the case of Herriot (2007) explicitly acknowledged, is the so-called social identity theory. Even when, as in Lawrence (1990) or Hood et al. (2005), the sacred text is only the ideological element upon which the prototype is formed and the stereotype discerned, the dynamic of in-group versus out-group stands at the heart of theories of fundamentalism. Social identity theory has the advantage/disadvantage of producing a clear dualistic process of social dynamics. As we shall see, I believe that the reason behind the attempt to present fundamentalism as inscribed in such a dualism is not just a simple analytical mistake but rather part of a social political ideology. Similarly, the fact that most Western scholars have reduced what they have called fundamentalism to a strictly modern religious phenomenon has more to do with how they conceive and imagine Western society than hard ethnographic evidence. Indeed, recently some scholars have challenged the privileged view that argues fundamentalism is only a religious phenomenon. Nagata (2001), who is an anthropologist, has critically accepted the term fundamentalism, but strongly rejected the exclusive religious connotation of it. Rather, she has suggested that, 'Putting on the hat of the creative comparativist, it is suggested that we abandon the assumption that fundamentalism must ultimately be religious-based, [and rather consider] that it may be sighted in domains such as ultranationalisms, extreme or genocidal ethnic chauvinisms, certain political ideologies, in obsessive quests for linguistic and cultural purity or authenticity' (2001: 493). Nonetheless, Nagata's viewpoint remains minor within the debate. Indeed, fundamentalism exists because, according to these scholars, the Enlightenment, and consequently modern thought (i.e. modernism) as well as its main product, secularism, have achieved a hegemonic position within contemporary societies.

Fundamentalists are at the same time a product of modernism as well as its main enemy. Scholars have argued that the reason behind fundamentalists' rejection of the Enlightenment and modernism is 'fear'. The fear is supposedly that the social changes provoked by both Enlightenment thought and modern styles of living may disrupt religious attempts to socially impose, or live according to, the divinely revealed message provided in their religious holy texts. In the theories discussed, fundamentalism is a religious social phenomenon, characterised by a deviance from the acceptable way of living in the contemporary (Western/Westernised?) world. As we have seen, some students of fundamentalism focus on the text as the main inspiration for the ideology of fundamentalists (Lawrence 1990); others instead focus on dynamics that enclave social groups in an impossible battle aimed at maintaining secure and unchallenged anachronistic identities (Marty and Appleby 1991–5, Herriot 2007). Others, such as the sociologist Bruce (2000), see fundamentalists as the real coherent religious believers, the only ones who correctly respect their inerrant texts and are not ready to compromise; or, as Ruthven has suggested (2004), they cannot accept the dominant Western liberal philosophy of tolerance, relativism and human rights. Nonetheless, it is my contention that the reason for the 'family resemblance' in the study of fundamentalism has other reasons, among which the most relevant is the process of 'imagining civilisations'. If we observe critically the studies I have presented in this chapter, we can notice that in reality these analyses tell us more about how Western authors conceive Western liberalism than what that mysterious phenomenon they have labelled 'fundamentalism' might be.

Most scholars from different academic fields have described fundamentalism as if it were a real, cultural, social political entity possessing certain universal characteristics. Of course, all the authors discussed acknowledge that fundamentalism features, much like the mythic hydra, different colours and multiple heads. Nonetheless, Marty and Appleby (1991, 1993b) and others[8] have emphasised that fundamentalisms, despite their variegate origins and reasons, show 'family resemblances' or common traits. Actually, it is through this 'family resemblance' that scholars are able to define what otherwise would be so heterogeneous that it could only remain an indefinable variable. Yet, such effort to reach an easy-to-handle and universalistic definition of fundamentalism has led to a questionable, if not dangerous, monism. I think that the reason behind such a monistic view could be found in the methodology that some scholars have used in discussing fundamentalism and which is affected by what I call 'comparative reductionism and Eurocentric historical evolutionarism'.

For this reason, I consider it useful here to review briefly the main analytic tools used in studying fundamentalism. In general, scholars have conducted the study of 'fundamentalism' through what they have defined as comparative methodology. Lawrence, who has strongly advocated a comparative approach to fundamentalism, has argued that to study it 'one *must* engage in comparative analysis. *Comparison alone* reveals what is common, and also what is unique, in each fundamentalist cadre' (1990: 6, emphasis added). However, it is important to stress that the 'comparative' methodology that Lawrence and others have advocated is not the comparative methodology that anthropologists have developed and used in their studies of societies and cultures (Marranci 2008b). In most cases, the comparison that has dissected fundamentalism has had more to do with armchair-gathered, secondary-sourced data than in-depth research based on participant observation. Instead of observing variations and using them for understanding, the comparative method used in studies of fundamentalism appears systematic, aimed at categorisation and being reductive in essence, so that a phenomenon (in this case fundamentalism) is not just explained but fixed within a framework of characteristics (that is, it is stereotyped). In this kind of comparative analysis, people dissolve, their voices are silenced, their differences and ideas alienated; what matters is not the human being, but the 'cultural thing'. Hence, I suggest that the comparative methodology through which fundamentalism has in many cases been studied is rather a cultural comparative reductionism. This reduction to minimum common terms has allowed some scholars to identify what increasingly seems to be a kind of 'cultural genome of fundamentalism'.

Yet before discussing this, I will highlight another characteristic of certain analyses of 'fundamentalism': 'Eurocentric historical evolutionarism'. Indeed, to compare the different fundamentalist movements, scholars have to distinguish them from what has been recognised as the mainstream version of the religion. This means to identify some features that are unique to the fundamentalist traditions. Because in cultural comparative reductionism the main elements of relevance for analysis are essentially based on culture, historical events and social political actions; European history, or better, some of its events that have been elevated to the state of civilisational milestone, are perceived to stand between progressive and regressive cultural civilisational forces. In the study of fundamentalism, three milestones of European history have been used as criteria to identify fundamentalist movements, or fundamentalists. The main milestone, from which the others, modernism and secularism,

also derive, is the European, French-born, Enlightenment. Therefore, Lawrence, when advocating what I have defined as cultural comparative reductionism, has suggested, '[...] one must demonstrate, rather than merely catalogue, which forces converge under which circumstances to shape various fundamentalist groups. The single, most consistent denominator is opposition to all those individuals or institutions that advocate Enlightenment values and wave the banner of secularism and modernism' (1990: 6). Lawrence's stand has found fertile ground. Scholars from other disciplines, such as sociology (see, for example, Bruce 2000), anthropology (see, for example, Geertz 1968, Gellner 1981, 1992, Antoun 2001) and political sciences (see, for example, Marty and Appleby 1991–5, Almond et al. 2003, Ruthven 2004, Weinberg and Pedahzur 2004, Milton-Edwards 2005) have agreed with the claim that the opposition to Enlightenment values, and its derivates, is the consistent denominator of all religious fundamentalisms, in whatever culture, place, context, history or society we may find them. Therefore, Almond et al. have framed contemporary fundamentalism within a historical attempt to 'rebuff' Enlightenment values,

> This is not the first time that Enlightenment expectations have been rebuffed by history. The ideas leading up to the rationalism of the French Revolution were succeeded by the clerico-conservative and authoritarian ideologies of the end of the eighteenth and the first part of nineteenth centuries [...] What we call fundamentalism is the third rebuff that history has administrated to 'modernization' and secularization since the eighteenth century [...] What is remarkable about the third rebuff is that it is being administrated after the great scientific revolutions of the twentieth century.
>
> (2003: 5)

The reason I have named this use of European cultural history as 'Eurocentric historical evolutionarism' may be clear to the reader. The above authors are discussing fundamentalism as a universal element, and their discourse is not even limited to Christian movements or European Jewish sects that could have experienced the historical passages and dynamics which, for simplification, we call Enlightenment. In their blind Eurocentric historical evolutionarism, the Enlightenment becomes a focal point of a historical development. History here is manifestly or latently presented as unilinear and progressive, rooted in European historical events and their consequences. Enlightenment becomes essentialised into a sort of civilisational 'Big Bang'.

Yet history is not a label, history is a process and dynamic. And what we call Enlightenment, secularism or even modernism are labels used to summarise philosophical and political ideas and ideologies that were built through many passages and have never been unitary. Enlightenment in Spain and Italy or Greece had a very different development and is still understood in different ways than in the French, English or American contexts. What the above authors call fundamentalism is, as they admit, a heterogeneous phenomenon, which existed (if we have to see it as a 'thing') in different regions of the world in different times of the 'modern era', within variegate religious traditions, with disparate theologies, scriptures and ideologies. If we think about these elements, and if I am right in suggesting that the label 'fundamentalism' derives from mistakenly seeing a smiley face where there are only dots, a line and a little semicircle, we can start to consider that fundamental mistakes have affected the study of fundamentalism. The main fallacy is the cultural essentialist approach to the phenomenon called 'fundamentalism', followed by the social deterministic view of it, which has reduced the discussion on fundamentalism to political and social movements alienating the reality of the individual and groups, as ensembles of individuals.

Indeed, most studies focusing on fundamentalism have done so in the attempt to offer a key for a political and/or cultural, sometimes even a psychological, understanding of it. Scholars have discussed this 'phenomenon' as an exception, a deviance, a causation for which a special causative should have been found, and it has been found in the regressive rejection of Enlightenment and its derivates. This explains the diatribe on the label. What we can name, we can face, change, cure and resolve, and perhaps even destroy. In this book, I am less concerned with the issue of labelling, or the political necessity of categorising for action, and more with removing the stereotypes surrounding this 'phenomenon', which in my opinion have affected its study and understanding. The reasons for which the Enlightenment, oxymoronically presented as both the origin of and salvation from fundamentalism, has reached such a prominent position within the scholarly discussion – so much so as to reduce the chance that other challenging interpretations could have been offered – may be found in the strict adherence of many scholars to what Gellner (1992), in his intellectual honesty, has called 'enlightenment secular fundamentalism'.

Essentially anti-relativist, enlightenment secular fundamentalism, as Gellner has said, 'repudiates any substantive revelations. It repudiates that substantive absolutisation so characteristic of some post-Axial

world religions which attribute an extra-mundane and trans-cultural standing and authority to given substantive affirmations and value' (1992: 80). Yet enlightenment secular fundamentalism does not stop here; it affirms a cognitive superiority, strongly rooted within European cultural history, over any other form of knowledge. The 'others' can adopt it, modify it and reach success, or reject it and end in the darkness of anachronistic Middle Ages. Clearly, Gellner has presented enlightenment secular fundamentalism not just as a proper epistemology, a personal belief or even a successful methodology, but actually as an ideology. Whoever fails to be an enlightenment secular fundamentalist, Gellner has told us, can only be a religious fundamentalist or, much worse, a relativist.

I have the impression that much of the study of fundamentalism has been conducted, consciously or unconsciously, through the ideological lens of Gellnerian enlightenment secular fundamentalism. As any other ideological essentialism, it would not be a problem if it represented only personal beliefs, but it can easily falsify a serious attempt to understand human phenomena. Gellner (1992) has provided a convincing and strong criticism of relativism, but he has only been able to substitute it with another form of 'ism', which finally has the same origin in cultural essentialism. Whereas in the case of relativism, cultural essentialism derives from the relativist universal features expressed through multiform epistemological realities, in enlightenment secular fundamentalism it derives from an epistemological, believed to be superior, monism, rooted in an imagined idealisation of European eighteenth century rationalism and scientific culture.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have presented the main scholarly views on fundamentalism. I have observed that fundamentalism has been mainly discussed, in most cases latently, through the framework of social identity theories. On the one side are groups of people who have rejected, to preserve their own social religious identities, the modern secular approach to life. On the other, mainstream modern societies, which, rooted in the secular Enlightenment, have embarked upon social changes that limit, or have reduced, the influence of the inerrant holy scripture and religion to the private domain. Of course, social identity theory, with its simplified in-group versus out-group dynamics of identity formation and the de-personalisation process in favour of a prototyped identity formed through the stereotype of the 'other', appears to fit perfectly

the family resemblances of fundamentalism that various authors seem to have recognised.

However, after reviewing a series of influential works on fundamentalism, I have concluded that the family resemblances of fundamentalism mentioned in these studies can be due more to the way in which fundamentalism has been discussed and explained than to universal and linear cultural characteristics of the phenomenon. It is not difficult to notice that what I have defined as Eurocentric historical evolutionarism, and in particular cultural comparative reductionism, have a strong impact on the scholarly understanding of fundamentalism.

As we shall see in the following chapters, this is even more the case when 'Islamic fundamentalism' has been studied. Indeed, in the 'comparative' analysis that the authors discussed in this chapter have often provided to illustrate their theories, Islam has been represented in many instances as the jewel of the fundamentalist crown.

Notes

1. See, for instance, among the many others, Boone (1989), Bruce (2000), Crapanzano (2000) and Harding (2000).
2. See, for instance, Lawrence (1990), Marty and Appleby (1991–5), Bruce (2000), Antoun (2001), Harr and Busutil (2002), Almond et al. (2003), Ruthven (2004), Weinberg and Pedahzur (2004) and Herriot (2007).
3. Wittgenstein developed the idea of *Familienähnlichkeit* (family resemblance) to explain how we think about the meaning of certain words. Lawrence has referred to *Familienähnlichkeit* to explain how fundamentalism, though characterised by differences and features of each religious tradition, conforms to a cluster of traits common to all existing religious fundamentalisms, because in reality they derive from the same religious, textually driven, ideology.
4. See also Appleby (2003).
5. See also Howland (1999), Moghadan (1992), Riesebrodt (1993), Hardacre (1993) and Ruthven (2004: Ch. 4).
6. See also Hood (1983).
7. For more refer to Tajfel (1978), Turner (1982) and for criticism of social identity theories, Marranci (2006: Ch. 3).
8. See, for example, among many, Lawrence (1990), Bruce (2000), Antoun (2001), Ruthven (2004) and Herriot (2007).

3
Reading Islamic Fundamentalism: Theories, Theorems and Kernels of Truth

In the previous chapter, I discussed fundamentalism in general. This chapter focuses on what scholars have defined as Islamic fundamentalism, political Islam, Islamic extremism and Islamic radicalism. Authors have provided different answers to the main question: why do we have an increase of Islamic radicalism, which also has included extreme forms of violence? Before September 11, some scholars focused their research and analysis on the 1979 Iranian revolution, the impact that it had on Islamic countries and the relationship with the West, in particular the USA;[1] others studied charismatic Islamic ideologues such as Mawlana Abul Ala Mawdudi, Hassan Al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb[2] and their attempts to fight a Western-inspired nationalism in order to implement a new political order based on Islam. Vast is the literature that has tried to explain specific Islamic political or extreme movements,[3] particularly with the start of the so-called *second intifada* (see Mishal and Sela 2000). Yet in the aftermath of September 11, and the consequent war on terror, the attention has shifted from traditional extreme Islamic groups to bin-Laden's Al-Qaeda and Western-based organisations such as the former Al-Muhajiroun (Devji 2005, Wiktorowicz 2005). Studies of fundamentalism, both pre- and post-September 11 (yet see, for example, Antoun 2001, Wiktorowicz 2001, 2004, 2005, Herriot 2007), tend to discuss the group and its social political impact, rather than the individual, with the exception of the charismatic leader or the founder of the movement.

These elements have produced similarity among the different understandings of Islamic movements, seen in most cases as counter-hegemonic groups opposing secularisation. However, they have left fundamental questions unanswered, such as the reasons for which some Muslims decide to join a particular Islamic extremist movement even

though this implies a high level of risk (see Wiktorowicz 2005). We know even about those Muslims, numbering more than the actual members of extremist movements, who support specific radical organisations or Islamic fundamentalism in general. This is partly unsurprising, when we consider, as I have suggested in the previous chapter, that latently or manifestly, many scholars have understood fundamentalism through very simplified versions of 'social identity theory' – in which what matter are the charismatic leaders who facilitate the process of depersonalisation, the prototypes offered to the individual by the different movements, the stereotypes that the movements project on the out-group, and finally the out-group itself (that is, the enemy).

After September 11, the comparative element reduces in favour of a discussion of Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' theory (1996), either to discredit it or to support it. If Islamic fundamentalism, before September 11, was one case study among the others in order to develop universal theories of religious fundamentalism, since September 11 it has become *the fundamentalism*, and has often been blurred with another phenomenon: terrorism. Yet it is not only scholars who are interested in the new development; the public has shown an unprecedented interest in the topic. This has produced an increase in journalistic and populist publications of little scholarly value (see, for instance, Spencer 2005, 2007), but with an undeniable popular appeal, because of their simplistic views about Islam and Muslims and their textual essentialist approach. Unfortunately, because of their target audience and lack of academic standard, these books are not often reviewed and discussed among scholars, and remain unchallenged in their main assumption that Islamic extremism is a product of Islam as religion and its main religious text, the Qur'an, which is often compared to Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (1933). Yet the emphasis on the role that the main Islamic holy text plays in the formation of extreme political ideas, particularly in the form of strict structuralism, is certainly not an innovation of this populist, right-wing literature that aims to capitalise upon the September 11 tragedy.

Much before the event that has definitely marked the end of the post-Cold War era and started the era of the war on terror, the anthropologist Gellner suggested an extremely essentialised view of Islam, seen as a social blueprint. Indeed, Gellner's central argument concerning Islam argued that *Islam cannot change*. Far from being the religion of living Muslims with opinions, ideas, feelings and identities, Gellnerian Islam is an essence that remains constant in its model. So much so that Hammoudi (1980), for instance, has suggested that Gellner, by 'brushing aside all history', has just imposed his convenient

social–political model of Islam onto a Muslim reality that is instead extremely complex (see also Varisco 2005, Marranci 2008b). Surely, in some of the works that I shall review below, the Gellnerian influence is particularly evident.

Before the events of September 11, most scholars discussed and analysed Islamic fundamentalism as part of a comparative study of religious fundamentalism, as Lawrence has strongly advocated (1990). Within this comparative discussion, however, we can recognise a certain similarity in how different authors have addressed the topic. The discussion on Islamic fundamentalism would, for instance, start from the 1979 Shi'a Iranian revolution, proceed to discuss the Sunni Islamic ideologues, their anti-pan-Arabism and the anti-Western stand of Islamic fundamentalism, and often end with a survey of either specific national cases of fundamentalism (for example the Pakistani, the Egyptian, the Indonesian and so on) or specific groups and ideologies (for example Muslim Brotherhood, Jam'at, Hamas and Hezbollah). In these pre-September 11 publications and articles, the case of Islamic fundamentalism in the West was rarely discussed.

Islamic fundamentalism explained: The legacy of Geertz and Gellner

Lawrence (1990) has discussed Islamic fundamentalism in the wider framework of a theory of fundamentalism. Hence, according to him, Islamic fundamentalism needs to be properly delimited as an analytic category to be useful within the overall analysis of the religious phenomenon called fundamentalism. First, he has suggested that the ruling elite cannot be regarded as fundamentalist, because fundamentalism is a protest and an opposition toward any form of power that is not guided by a divine scripture. Lawrence has indeed argued that 'being at the center of power rather than on the margins, this excludes themselves from that vital quality of fundamentalists: to oppose the prevailing ethos rather than to embody it; to advocate change rather than to maintain the status quo' (1990: 191). By contrast, other authors, such as Tibi (1998), have regarded rulers, such as Saddam Hussein and his call for jihad, as examples of Islamic fundamentalism. However, Lawrence has suggested that Islamic fundamentalism is anti-nationalistic because fundamentalists recognise the non-Muslim origin of nationalism. Muslim nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism, furthermore, are in competition because of, as Lawrence (1990: 200) has suggested, 'the holistic challenge of nationalism to the holistic claims of Islam'.

Therefore, Lawrence has argued that Islamic fundamentalism, which has its apogee in the surprising Iranian revolution, has its roots in the failure of Muslim nationalism, which was unable to manage the decolonisation process properly. If, Lawrence has hypothesised, the transition had been successful and Muslim nationalism developed along the Western line of democratic politics, Islamic fundamentalism would never have existed or, in the worst case, it would be marginal in both its political and social influence. Yet the anti-nationalism of Islamic fundamentalism, he has suggested, is not homogenous. Although the Sunni fundamentalists completely reject the idea of nation and nationalism as foreign to Islam, the Shi'a fundamentalists attempt to modify nationalism so that it can fit their theocratic and ideological concept of the state. Therefore Lawrence does not suggest that the social political dynamics in which the different fundamentalisms develop have no impact on the different forms of fundamentalism in the Islamic world, because, as he has pointed out, there is no 'single reaction characteristic of all Muslims'. Nonetheless, he has also argued that in the case of Islamic fundamentalism,

> The parameters of possibility are framed by *two* poles: first, mediation of the Book within tradition and, second, the level and degree of colonization. In every instance, the importance of political statutes for Muslim identity and the hegemony of modern state apparatuses have meant that the battle between modernism and fundamentalism in Islam is joined in the public order, above all in the capital city.
> (Lawrence 1990: 225, emphasis added)

Notwithstanding that Lawrence has not mentioned Gellner's *Muslim Society* (1981), and that Gellner has not mentioned colonialism, Lawrence's limited 'parameters of possibility' seem to be no less optimistic than some of Gellner's conclusions about Muslim society.

Gellner has suggested that Islam, being a markedly secularisation-resistant religion, is also the most vigorously fundamentalist. According to Gellner, Islam, as religion, shows some ideological historical elements conducive towards fundamentalism. First, Islam is a scriptural faith that claims to be the perfect and final one. Secondly, there is no room for new prophets, because Muslims consider Muhammad the seal of prophecy. Thirdly, Islam has no clergy, and, therefore, no religious differentiation is possible. Finally, Islam does not need to differentiate between church and state because Islam 'began as a religion of rapidly successful conquerors who soon *were* state' (Gellner 1981: 100, author's emphasis). Yet the most

important aspect of all is the 'trans-ethnic' and 'trans-social' characteristic of Islam, because, Gellner has argued, it does not 'equate faith with the beliefs of any community or society […] But the trans-social truth which can sit in judgment on the social is a Book' (1981: 101) so that no political authority can claim it. It is in this centrality of the 'Book' as ultimate authority and in the division and tension between what Gellner has defined as high Islam (urbanised and based on scripturalism) and low Islam (based on kinship and the charismatic power of the saint)[4] that the fight for puritanism has led to the development of a religion, Islam, resistant to secularisation. Gellner, coherent to his model, has stated that Muslims 'could have democracy, or secularism, but not both' (1981: 60). In other words, if Muslim societies have democracy they would inevitably see secularism eroded in favour of an increasingly Sharia-based state. Only a dictatorship can impose a secular model of society, because it can manipulate and control, and so limit, the role and influence of Islam within society.

The idea that the history of Islam, or Islam as religion, can explain Islamic fundamentalism is certainly not limited to Gellner. Although we can safely say that Gellner was the pioneer of such essentialisation of Islam, as well as the godfather of what I have called comparative reductionism and Eurocentric historical evolutionarism (Varisco 2005, Marranci 2008b), other scholars have offered similar views. Arjomand (1995), for instance, has provided the reader with an analysis of Islamic fundamentalism that starts from the earlier history of Islam and then focuses on the main 1930s and 1940s revivalist ideologues, such as Mawdudi, and finally on the most famous (before bin-Laden) Islamist of all: Sayyid Qutb. In addition, Arjomand, as Lawrence or Gellner, has linked the rise of Islamic fundamentalism to the failure of Muslim nationalism, in particular in Nasserian Egypt. He has provided a lineage of fundamentalism as a sort of historical kinship. Like many other political scientists, he has understood Islamic fundamentalism as a linear historical process of alienation and frustration against secular ideologies.

Therefore, Arjomand has suggested that the current violent jihadist groups are a product of the unsuccessful attempt, by the most radical faction of the Muslim Brotherhood, to start a revolution in Egypt through the assassination of president Sadat in 1981 (see also Kepel 2002). Radical fundamentalists, among whom the spiritual guide of bin-Laden, al-Zawahiri, interpreted the lack of reaction by the Egyptian population as clear evidence that Qutb's theory of *jahiliyyah* (for more compare with Khatab 2006a, b) was right and that Muslims were unable

to respect the call for jihad, were thus politically and socially similar to those people who lived in the dark ages of pre-Islamic history (that is, *jahiliyyah*). Consequently, Muslims, and not just corrupt politicians, would also become the target of Islamic fundamentalist rage, as the civil war in Algeria from 1992–7 (Kepel 2002) and the atrocious actions of the GAI (Armed Islamic Group) have demonstrated. Arjomand (1995), likewise, has explained Islamic fundamentalism as mainly a political phenomenon with a clear genealogy and kinship, though he has acknowledged Lawrence's views that the ideology beyond the fundamentalists' worldview is derived from religious ideology. So, we can observe that in these analyses there is a strong emphasis on a 'genealogy' of fundamentalists who answer to the names of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Sayyid Abdul Ala Al-Mawdudi, Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Ruhollah Khomeini, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin-Laden, and who, despite the deep historical, regional and political differences, are presented as coherent ideologues of a project: Islamic radicalism. As I shall explain in the conclusion of this chapter, I think that this constructed genealogy of fundamentalism has obscured more than elucidated the reason for the phenomenon.

Nonetheless, even more recent works (see, for instance, Tibi 1998) have still explained fundamentalism as nothing other than a 'politicization of religion' (Tibi 1998: 31) against Western values and Western modernism. Tibi, as the authors discussed above, has argued for the exceptionality of Islamic fundamentalism over other fundamentalisms because it,

> employs religious *symbols* and fills them with new meaning. In this venue, symbols are a good deal less than *belief*, in being abused as a vehicle for the articulation of sociopolitical, economic and cultural claims. We cannot, however, equate the global ideology of religious fundamentalism with such secular ideologies as communism, nationalism and liberalism. Religious appeals override all other appeals, and religious ties are unlike political commitments. Religion as a cultural system gives meaning as no ideology can. Religious fundamentalism, by politicizing religion, is thus an ideology of a special caliber.
>
> (1998: 24, emphasis in original)

Tibi has understood Islamic fundamentalism as a special form of political ideology, stronger and more dangerous than others because it is based on the *manipulation* of powerful religious symbols. He, as a Muslim, has indeed rejected Islamic fundamentalism as both the falsification

of a 'real' Islam and as an obstacle to Muslim society in embracing the Enlightened, universal and civilisational Western values – particularly secularism and democracy. He seems to adopt both a Geertzian understanding of religion as a powerful and controlling system of symbols (Geertz 1973), and Gellner's stand that Islamic fundamentalism is a comprehensive system which, however, because it is based on scripturalism, differs from other forms of political fundamentalism such as Soviet Marxism (Gellner 1995).

Islamic fundamentalism: When religion matters

The sociologist Steve Bruce could not agree more with Tibi's suggestion that Islamic fundamentalism uses religious symbols as part of its ideology and for this reason is of a 'special caliber'. Yet Bruce has gone much further in his claim: he has sociologically described Islam as the most fundamentalist of all religions, so that if he has affirmed that 'Religion has always been a disruptive force' (Bruce 2000: 1), Islam is surely the most disruptive of all. Indeed, according to Bruce, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, religion matters. Religion is the cause of fundamentalism itself, and so fundamentalisms differ among themselves. Bruce has suggested that Islam has a totalitarian view of culture and life, in which the domain of religion and the domain of the world cannot be divided without compromising one's beliefs. What Bruce is suggesting, in contrast to Tibi, is that Islamic fundamentalists are not political opportunists manipulating Islam as religion, but coherent believers, not ready to compromise with the modern contemporary liberal reality that seeks to relegate faith to the private sphere (cf. Bruce 2000: 95–123).

Bruce, though a sociologist, has followed political scientists in describing Islamic fundamentalism as the result of a particular ideological genealogy of leaders and movements, with one exceptional difference: his genealogy starts from the history of Islam itself (Bruce 2000: 40–65)! His strong views on the ideological religious origin of Islamic fundamentalism, and the innate incompatibility between Islam, as a system of religious symbols, and modernity – because 'for Islam, religion is a matter of obeying the Holy Law. As what God requires is obedience to the Law, then its imposition is not just acceptable but necessary' (Bruce 2000: 107) – is such that he has ended in presenting an even stronger version of both Eurocentric historical evolutionarism as well as cultural comparative reductionism than Gellner. Indeed, he at least tried, though in my opinion incorrectly (Marranci 2008b), to present Islam as characterised by two main traditions, the little and the great.

Furthermore, Bruce has falsely linked Muslims' personal faith to their theological knowledge by failing to observe that many worshippers have no theological knowledge beyond the practical aspects of their prayers and festivities. Certainly, some Muslims may start to develop strong emotional and identity-derived understandings of their own religion. However, it is too great a leap to conclude that, because they are Muslims who take seriously their understanding of Islam, they reject modernity (see also Marranci 2006, 2007). We shall see that Bruce is not the only one to make such a mistake. The main reason is that these scholars have never lived with, and often never even spoken to, Muslims from different countries and communities. As the cynic philosopher Diogenes, who spent time going around Athens with a lantern in his hand during full daylight looking for a 'man', some scholars studying fundamentalism have spent their time looking for that particular symbolic element(s) of Islam that can turn the ordinary man into a bloodthirsty, uncivilised fanatic.

Islamic fundamentalism: Between alienation and sexual frustration?

Other scholars, however, have used their lanterns to cast light on the hidden folds of the fundamentalist psyche. Indeed, if Bruce, together with most sociologists and political scientists, has rejected the idea that fundamentalists are people affected by an abnormal way of thinking about the world, other scholars (particularly within the field of psychology and feminist tradition) have suggested that this is precisely the case. Often alienation, compulsory disorders, inferiority complexes leading to a sense of superiority, self-esteem issues and authoritarianism have been discussed as the inner reasons why people to turn towards Islamic fundamentalism (cf. Dekmejian 1985). Hoffman (1985) has provided a 'social psychological profile' of fundamentalists. He has noticed that most leaders and founders of Islamic movements have received a secular Western education. Yet they were also, during their formative years and often in rural settings, exposed to traditional Islamic teachings. Hoffman has argued that this dichotomy between the juvenile experience of Islam as part of a cultural heritage and the partial, and often unsuccessful, exposure to Western culture, leads them to discover 'that an Islam they never really doubted can be affirmed in the context of modern civilization, that their cultural identity is Muslim regardless of how far they advance in the study of western sciences' (1985: 223).

Hoffman seems to suggest that the main reason for turning to Islamic fundamentalism can be found in a bipartite process consisting of first a failed conversion to Western atheism, or strong secularism, and then a reversion to a new form of Islamic cultural identity. She has concluded that Islamic fundamentalism in Islamic societies, reclaiming traditional moral, economic and political values, has a strong appeal because the introduction of Western modernisation has been experienced through the political failure of Arab nationalism; thus young people have suffered alienation. Hoffman has also discussed, following an established feminist tradition (Mernissi 1975, Sabah 1984, Mir-Hosseini 2003), the reason why sexuality is so prominent within Islamic fundamentalist discourse. She has accepted Mernissi's view that Islamic fundamentalist misogyny is derived from the frustration provoked by the traditional Muslim society, which prevents the fundamentalist from accepting his own sexuality, despite the alleged 'sex-positive' Islamic norms.

This frustration is, according to many feminists, expressed through the oppression of and aggression towards women, seen as the main cause, or even culprit, of the impure sexual desire. It is certainly undeniable that we can recognise in many of the Western feminist understandings of Islamic fundamentalism a strong Freudian influence (cf. Mernissi 1975, Sabah 1984). Yet as it easy to observe, women are part of Islamic fundamentalist movements. Is this not a contradiction? Hoffman, still following traditional Western feminist arguments, has suggested that these women, who would never reach a leadership role comparable to that which the male charismatic leader possesses, decide to adhere to Islamic fundamentalist movements to escape the traditional social role impose upon them. Islamic movements, though rejecting gender equality, recognise the fundamental role that Muslim women have in the education of the future generation and in protecting the moral values of the Islamic society (Hassan Seyed Binti Zaleha 2003).

Although I agree that psychological factors play a role in the formation of strong religious views and radicalisation, studies based on psychological profiling of Islamic fundamentalists and fundamentalist groups end in over-generalising. They produce a stereotyped taxonomy of assumed collective, trans-cultural and trans-sectarian 'pathologies'. Again, they describe rather than explain what Islamic fundamentalism might be.

Recently Hood et al. (2005) have attempted to provide a psychological understanding of fundamentalism, including Islamic fundamentalism, which avoids the above-mentioned issues. To do so, they have embraced, however, many of the traditional culturalist views on fundamentalism,

including the relevance of, in Gellnerian terms, the 'Book'. The result is an inconclusive mix of psychological and hermeneutical 'Geertzianish' analysis which adds nothing to previous understandings of Islamic fundamentalism (see, for instance, Lawrence 1990, Marty and Appleby 1991–5), and rather ends in deepening their, already discussed, weaknesses (see Chapter 2 in this book).

An anthropologist, an Islamic fundamentalist and Islam again

Scholars studying Islamic fundamentalism have discussed it mainly from a macro-perspective, in which texts, social forces, cultural symbols and functions become the essence of the phenomenon itself. Very few studies have been based on actual interaction with ordinary members of Islamic fundamentalist movements, supporters and groups. Even fewer have been the anthropologists who have conducted fieldwork on, including participant observation of, this phenomenon. Those whom commentators define as fundamentalists often perceive themselves as just believers; those who define themselves as extremist, radical or even fundamentalist may not like the intrusion of an anthropologist into their everyday lives. Yet there is a further reason for the lack of anthropological studies of what has been defined as Islamic fundamentalism (or as we shall discuss later, political Islam or Islamic extremism): the lack of a clear idea of what the anthropology of Islam might be (for more, see Marranci 2008b). Surely, after September 11, there has been an increase of research. However, it has not specifically addressed the theme of Islamic fundamentalism, but rather terrorism, extremism and violence.

For this reason, I would have welcomed Antoun's (2001) work on fundamentalism analysed from an anthropological perspective. He has discussed Islamic fundamentalism as part of the traditional comparative style (Lawrence 1990). I have discussed Antoun's theoretical framework in the previous chapter. Here, I will focus on his understanding of Islamic fundamentalism. He has based his chapter 'The Prophet's Way: Conversations with a Muslim Fundamentalist' (2001: 133–51) on a 1986 fieldwork in the Jordanian village of Kufr al-Ma and the conversation with a Jordanian Muslim he has called Omar. Antoun has identified Omar as a 'fundamentalist' – even before the actual ethnography has been offered to the reader. We are then introduced to a conversation that the anthropologist Antoun and Omar, the fundamentalist, exchanged while reaching a mosque. By reading the conversation itself, one may have the clear impression that Omar, more than being a radical person, was actually

showing off. Yet, quite surprisingly for an experienced anthropologist, Antoun has taken the conversation as the main evidence, together with his host's dress style, of Omar's fundamentalist character.

Antoun has been invited to visit a mosque called 'the western mosque', where he noticed, 'the proliferation of bearded men and the Saudi Arabian skullcaps, though many men didn't have such dress or appearances […] I also noticed or smelled perfumed beards and faces and one dyed beard' (2001: 140). He has then provided a very detailed description of the order of events that took place in the mosque. If I compare Antoun's description of those events with my experiences of both Western and non-Western mosques, I can observe standardisation that was not, and is not, so unusual in mosques around the world. Of course, much of this style has been imported from Saudi Arabia and Salafi understandings of the Prophet's tradition. Other aspects, however, are an ordinary part of Sunni rituals (like ablution, supplications and sermons), which can be witnessed in any Sunni mosque. Antoun has then narrated how after sleeping at the mosque, he had another conversation during breakfast with Omar and his co-religionist. Again, if an anthropologist familiar with Sunni practices and discourses were to read Antoun's reported conversation, nothing would invite the reader to the conclusion that either the mosque or the conversations had 'fundamentalist' characteristics.

Has Antoun misread his own fieldwork? Or rather, has he discussed 'fundamentalism' from a solely emic perspective, as the 'believers who respect the fundamental aspects of Islam'? If this might be the case, however, this ethnographic chapter would contradict the overall theoretical framework of Antoun's book, which is strongly rooted in Lawrence's view of fundamentalism as a scripturalist ideology. Furthermore, the ethnographic account ignores the political reality of Jordan and the strategy that pious Muslims could use to avoid possible political repression or police surveillance. Indeed, Antoun has reported in his book that a few days before his visit to the mosque, the US army had bombed Libya. Antoun, with a tone of surprise, has observed that despite the fact that he was an American, his fellow 'fundamentalist' travellers not only did not mention the attack, but neither did they try to discuss popular political topics in Jordan, such as the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians (cf. 2001: 145). What is yet more surprising than his hosts' silence is Antoun's analysis of it,

The absence, itself, emphasizes the dominant fundamentalist worldview, which focuses on the importance of the next world,

the struggle between good and evil in this one, and the role of martyrdom. The absence of such a contemporary political discourse also emphasizes that the threat to the worldwide Muslim community (*umma*) was construed to be less that of colonialism and neocolonialism in their overt political and military forms, but rather colonialism and neocolonialism in their more insidious cultural form. This view demonstrates in turn the complexity of the fundamentalist tradition – which in its different modes and movements and at different times – that can be political or apolitical, confrontational or avoiding confrontation, separationist or integrationist with respect to particular domains of culture, and concerned with orthopraxy in this world and at the same time with one's fate in the hereafter.

<div style="text-align: right">(2001: 148, author's emphasis).</div>

There are clear problems with Antoun's conclusions. Yet before discussing them, we need to go back briefly to Antoun's ethnography. He, for instance, has not carefully considered the several reasons for which his Muslim hosts may have avoided mentioning these, surely stressful, events. Antoun could have possibly met the members of a *da' wa* movement, who may be more interested in trying to save his, and with his their own, souls than debating the aforementioned events. Or his fellow travellers knew that Antoun was an American, and for reasons of hospitality, because he was clearly considered a guest, avoided raising such controversial topics. Finally, as I have mentioned above, Antoun's ethnography seems totally oblivious of the fear that devout and pious Muslims have of the Jordanian government. Many anecdotes, particularly during the 1980s, used to circulate in Jordan about the disappearance, and even torture, of overly politically active Muslims.

Antoun has mentioned in his conclusion that his hosts' discussion about 'salvation and the afterlife, the struggle between good and evil and their ideas on 'activism, martyrdom, scripturalism (in particular the Quran and Traditions of the Prophet), and orthopraxy' (2001: 146) have disclosed to him the 'fundamentalist' nature of the travellers; so did 'the written discourse in the mosque […] dominated both by wall-hangings naming God and Muhammad and by Qur'anic verses referring to Mary and one of God's righteous men, Zakariya' (2001: 147). As I mentioned before, if we isolate Antoun's chapter from the rest of his book, we might say that he has merely used the term 'fundamentalism' to refer to his respondents' perception of following the 'path of the Prophet'; hence a neutral emic view. Yet it is clear that this is not exactly Antoun's intention, because in his overall book he has tried to define fundamentalism

as a real 'thing', having universal, specific characteristics as described for instance by Marty and Appleby's definition. In Antoun's ethnographically based chapter, fundamentalism appears to be everything and nothing, perhaps so much so that, if ordinary Muslims practising what has been considered mainstream Islam were to read his account of the mosque visit, they would certainly consider mainstream Islam to be what Antoun has defined and labelled as fundamentalism.

In the best case, Antoun has failed to highlight the differences between what he defines as non-fundamentalist and fundamentalist Islam. In the worst case, he has concluded that Islam, as practiced by most Muslims, is in itself fundamentalist. Although only Antoun can provide the definitive answer, it is safe to say that his discussion of fundamentalism, and in particular Islamic fundamentalism, confuses more than it clarifies.

When religion matters less and politics matter more

As we have discussed in the Introduction, the diatribe over the label 'Islamic fundamentalism' has brought some scholars to adopt alternative terminologies. One of the most popular of these, particularly after September 11, has been 'political Islam'. As the label tends to highlight, what is emphasised here is less the religious and ritualistic aspects of the phenomenon than the political spectrum[5]. Therefore, Islam and its main texts are not the real sources from which Islamic fundamentalists derive ideologies; rather, they are used as recruiting tools and provide a moral shield to fundamentalists' actions. Esposito (1999, 2002) has suggested that some activists manipulate Islam as a political tool to change their societies or oppose 'imperialism' because, '[Islam], like Judaism and Christianity, rejects terrorism' (2002: ix), while 'many in the Muslim world, like their counterparts in the West, opt for easy anti-imperialist slogans and demonization. At its worst, both sides have engaged in a process of "mutual satanization."' (1992: 172). Like other authors who have opted for the label 'political Islam' (see also Akbar 2002, Piscatori 1983, 1991), Esposito seems to suggest that Muslim extremists are unable to interpret their religion correctly, because their interpretation is corrupted by the irresistible temptation that human beings have to manipulate religion for the sake of political and nationalistic goals. In other words, for Esposito (but also, among others, Piscatori) fundamentalist interpretations of Islam represent the supremacy of Machiavellian political, over the more noble religious, values.

Hafez, in his book *Why Muslims Rebel* (2003) has also emphasised the Islamic fundamentalist manipulation of religious values. Yet, although

Esposito seems to adduce such manipulation to a general phenomenon within the relationship between religious and secular political interests, Hafez has suggested that the specific political oppression of Muslims causes their rebellions. After rejecting socio-economic and psychological explanations, Hafez has argued:

> Muslims rebel because of an ill-fated combination of institutional exclusion, on the one hand, and on the other, reactive and indiscriminate repression that threatens the organizational resources and personal lives of Islamists. Exclusionary and repressive political environments force Islamists to undergo a near *universal process of radicalization*, which has been witnessed by so many rebellious movements. This process involves the rise of exclusive mobilization structures to ensure against internal defections and external repression, and the diffusion of antisystem ideological frames to justify radical change and motivate collective violence.
>
> (2003: 22, emphasis added)

Hafez, although providing an interesting analysis of the repressive and exclusionist factors that can lead to rebellion and extremism, does not answer the question of why these 'rebels' have decided to transform Islam into a specific and unique political ideology of rebellion.

Political scientists have concluded that, because political Islam is nothing more, nothing less than Muslim rebellion, it can be resolved through political means. Hence, Adamson (2005) in a sophisticated and complex analytical article has strongly suggested that political Islam is 'neither a product of cultural resurgence, a civilizational clash, nor changes in the principles motivating individuals. Rather it is a product of different matrices of opportunity structures that, to date, have operated in very different "lifeworlds" in world politics' (2005: 565). If this is the case, the current confrontation between political Islam and the Western secular system is the result of something like 'matrices of opportunity structures'. Adamson has argued that the solution is to 'ensure that normative contestation between norm entrepreneurs in these different lifeworlds can take the form of argumentation and debate within the common framework of an emerging international public sphere as opposed to resulting in a normative contestation carried out by other means [i.e. violence]' (2005: 565).

Some authors, however, strongly believe that actually political Islam and the consequent violent extremism is a matter of principles motivating individuals. Noorani (2002) has argued, 'the so-called Islamic

fundamentalist is an *impostor*. He has misused a noble faith as a political weapon. Of course, Islam does have a political vision; but it is far removed from the Islam which very many Muslims and most non-Muslims imagine it to be' (Noorani 2002: ix, author's emphasis). In his book, Noorani seems to speak of Islam as a living entity, with its own consciousness and self-authoritative voice against which the Islamically tone deaf Muslim (the impostor) may be easily spotted. In other words, Noorani has not suggested that political Islam is the ideological manipulation of Islam, as for instance Esposito has done, but rather that these are Muslims without Islam. Like Esposito, his argument reminds us that most Muslims love peace and that terrorist actions shock them no less than us. However, Noorani in his discussion does not tell us why a few of these Muslims wish to immolate themselves by their religious idea of jihad (for an anthropological discussion of jihad see Marranci 2006).

Islam, violence and terrorism: Looking for the right (or wrong) answer

In the aftermath of September 11 and the war on terror, commentators and scholars who previously discussed Islamic fundamentalism have increasingly focused on the relationship between Islam and violence. Unfortunately, as the Western general audience became eager to know more about Islam, Muslims and the reasons behind terrorism, essentialist popular and populist magazine articles and literature mushroomed on the shelves of bookshops, news-stands and Amazon.com, all promising the final answer as well as the final truth about Islam. This popular literature, lacking both scholarly value and scholarly safeguards, yet scholarly in appearance (cf. Spencer 2005, 2007, Pipes 2003, Ye'or 2002, 2005), proved to be a lucrative business for publishers, authors and political commentators; indeed, 'experts' on Islam, and particularly on terrorism, multiplied to an unprecedented number. These authors, and unfortunately some academics (such as Hunter 1988, Huntington 1996, Lewis 2003) have based their arguments on a monolithic understanding of Islam. Islam, according to these authors, has prevented Muslims enjoying modernisation and left Muslims in the dark era of the Middle Ages. Thus, to understand tragic events such as September 11, March 11 and the July 7 attacks, there is a need to go back to medieval interpretations and to thinkers such as Ibn Taymiyya.[6]

These extreme essentialist viewpoints have facilitated odd arguments, such as the claim that Muslims are conducting jihad because they wish to transform non-Muslims into Dhimmi[7] (cf. Ye'or 2005). Although

certain extremist leaders, such as Osama bin-Laden, have used expressions that came from the 'dark ages' of the Crusaders and Islamic chevaliers, it would be extremely naïve to believe that behind such Islamic retro-chic styles there could exist medieval minds. We know very well that the context enforces new meanings on ancient expressions. Bin-Laden and his acolytes adorn themselves with a mystic aura of the past, but they speak to the present, to contemporary Muslims, and not to Ottoman ghosts. Authors such as Bat Ye'or, Pipes, Lewis and Huntington prefer to believe in the extremists' masquerade rather than investigate what is behind it. The reasons for this acceptance have less to do with the weakness of their studies and more with their political standpoints.

Other scholars, who have focused on terrorism, though avoiding the extreme essentialism discussed above, have still preferred to link theological characteristics of Islam, as a religion, to fundamentalist violence. For instance, Ben-Dor and Pedahzur (2004) have argued that the reasons for which Islamic fundamentalism is unique among all fundamentalisms rest within Islam itself, and which they describe as '[its] activist makeup and totalistic character […], its ability to penetrate inter-state boundaries, and the total adherence of believers to specific behavioural tenets leading both to and from a strong orientation to things collective' (2004: 72). Yet they have also accepted Rapoport's (2001) view that Islamic fundamentalist violence should be seen as a historical continuum. From the chapter it is easy to observe that the two authors have a simplistic understanding of Islam, which views Islam as a merely normative religion controlling all aspects of the believers' lives. Again, Muslims are described as subjected to some sort of 'system of symbols' which defines them, their identity and behaviour (cf. Geertz 1973).

Milton-Edwards (2005) has disagreed with those authors who have declared Islam to be the most radical and fundamentalist of religions, or viewed Islamic violence (e.g. terrorism) as an exceptional case, different from other social political forms of violence, such as nationalism and ethno-inspired terrorism. According to Milton-Edwards, these misleading views are the result of both oversimplifications and an underestimation of the role that the West has played in the history of the Middle East and the global economy. Milton-Edwards suggests that behind the identification of Islam as 'the faith of failure, backwardness and despotic tendency […] identified as the chief culprit of global ills' (2005: 118) there is actually a particular conceptualisation of secularism (see also Asad 2003) as a 'much touted nemesis of Islam in

the twenty-first century. According to this discourse, the only key that will open the door to prosperity, happiness and security is secularism and fundamentalism represents the dark alternative' (Milton-Edwards 2005: 129).

By contrast, Milton-Edwards has explained, Muslims, particularly in the Middle East, have experienced 'secularism' as firstly a colonial force, and secondly as part of that disastrous failure that Pan-Arabism, and Arab Nationalism, was for Middle Eastern Muslims. Secularism did not gift the Arabs and Muslims with freedom, economic development and democracy, but rather with oppression, economic dependence upon the West, and cruel dictators supported by Western secular and democratic countries. Milton-Edwards has thus concluded that where the fundamentalist leaders threaten the West is:

> in their ability to expose the clear double-standards that appear to operate between Western pronouncements on freedom, justice and democracy and the actions of Western states in their dealings with the Muslim world. Muslim leaders instead are powerful social agents for change in civil society, often among a citizenry that has been abandoned by the state and left to its own devices when it comes to basic human demands for food, shelter and water.
>
> (2005: 134)

Milton-Edwards has found the explanation for the most recent wave of Islamic global violence within such social political dynamics both of the historical Western failure in first colonising and then de-colonising the Middle East, as well as the Western political and economical interference with the natural political development of Middle Eastern countries.

As we have observed in this chapter, authors have increasingly used the terms 'Islamic terrorism', 'Islamic violence' and 'jihad' to explain the violent resurgence of 1960s and 1970s Islamic fundamentalism. Yet for other authors, such as Devji (2005), jihadism and Islamic fundamentalism are not the same. Hence, Devji has stated,

> Unlike fundamentalism, the jihad is not concerned with political parties, revolutions or the founding of ideological states. For someone like Ayman Al-Zawahiri, who comes from a fundamentalist background in the Muslim Brotherhood, struggles in particular countries are important for two reasons: because, like the Taliban's Afghanistan, they provide a base for jihad more generally, as well as for rousing Muslims internationally. In other words the particular

sites of these struggles are themselves unimportant, their territories being subordinated to a larger and even metaphysical struggle for which they have become merely instrumental.

(2005: 27)

Devji has noted that the main characteristic of 'jihad', if compared with traditional fundamentalism, is an extreme globalism in which local aspects are seen as instrumental, otherwise irrelevant, variables of an interconnected universal history that brings together the destiny of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Devji has argued that this jihadi perception of a unitary vision of the world, in which autonomy of the individual cannot be recognised, can only clash with the view of fundamentalists and traditional clerics, who reject such a globalised view of Islam in which the single differences among, for instance, schools of thought are played down in favour of an a-clerical doctrine of jihad. Devji can therefore conclude, 'jihad destroys traditional forms and genealogies of Islamic authority, recycling their fragments in democratic ways', since it dismembers 'the juridical authority that had for centuries been located in a clerical class known as *ulama*' (2005: 112).

Devji has interpreted what he has called 'jihad', in contrast with traditional fundamentalism, as a revolutionary violent movement which not only attempts to impose a new world order (2005: 135ff.) but also to reform Islam by rejecting the traditional Islamic authorities, which are seen as sectarian and manipulated by local pseudo-Muslim governments. In his book, Devji concludes that this, though violent and disorganised, jihad may be the real revolution for Islam and comparable to the reformation within Christianity. Indeed, Al-Qaeda is a global movement without a real centre, yet it has 'democratised' Islam because it destroyed, through bin-Laden's global jihad, the sectarianism existing among Muslims. The same violent nature of this jihad, Devji has suggested, is too virulent to survive and after the experience of jihad as irrational global violence ends, the only irremediable effects will be on Islam, now free from tradition and individualised within a globalised world.

As we may observe in this chapter, most studies on Islamic fundamentalism, or political Islam, radical Islam, terrorism and jihad have focused on specific cases in the Middle East, Arab or Muslim worlds in general, as well as on an abstract theoretical discussion of the relationship between Islam and the West. However, criminal acts such as the 2004 train bombings in Madrid, the July 7 (2005) suicide–mass-murdering[8] operations on London transport and the failed attacks again on London transport on July 22, 2005 have attracted the attention of European scholars,

who increasingly have concentrated their research and writing on the topic of Islamic extremism in the Old Continent (see, for instance, Reuvan 2002, Kepel 1997, Wiktorowicz 2005, Abbas 2005, 2007, Marranci 2006).

From Rushdie to 7 July: Explaining Islamic extremism in the UK

Before September 11, much of the UK and European scholarly debate over Islamic extremism had focused on the so-called 'Rushdie Affair' and British Muslims' reaction to his book *The Satanic Verses* (Asad 1990, Kepel 1997, Werbner 2002), and the consequent tensions between British Muslims and wider British mainstream society. It is interesting to notice that both the political and scholarly debate about British Muslim communities has not changed very much since that first incident. The debate continues to focus upon the integration of young Muslims and the reasons behind their alienation. Some particular Islamic movements based, or formerly based, in the UK have been accused of 'radicalising' young Muslims and glorifying terrorism.

One of the most controversial, yet officially non-violent, Islamic movements in the UK is *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (HT),[9] an international Islamic party banned in most Muslim and European countries, but, until recently, tolerated in the UK. Yet, Tony Blair's government attempted to outlaw it after the July 7 incident; an attempt that has, so far, failed because of a lack of evidence that HT is involved in any form of political violence within the UK. Taqiuddin al-Nabhani founded HT in the 1950s as a transnational Islamic political party aimed at ending sectarian divisions among Muslims and creating support for a pan-Muslim movement that could successfully re-establish the Caliphate. Nabhani envisaged an Islamic party that, through accurate interpretation of Islamic sources, could adopt a modern political organisation, and so compete with other ideologies, such as capitalism and communism, and in particular Arab nationalism.

HT, rooted in the ideology that Islamic society is self-sufficient and has all the elements to organise a modern state, rejects Western concepts such as democracy and human rights. It is undeniable that in its political programme HT has been highly influenced by Marxist–Leninism. This is so much the case that Nabhani has even described the revolutionary process in terms of three similar stages: the formation of an intellectual elite; indoctrination of the Muslim masses; and revolutionary action to take control of the existing governments. The party, which has branches in more than 40 countries, is centralised within a pyramidal structure.

Although membership is carefully controlled and access monitored, HT has, particularly in the UK, a wide number of sympathisers who are not officially affiliated to the party.

Hamid (2006) has described how HT in Britain went through three different stages. The first members arrived from the Middle East in the early 1980s, often as refugees from political persecution in their own countries. The proselytisation began with small study groups attended mainly by professionals and university students of South Asian origin. The exiled Syrian cleric Omar Bakri Mohammed, whom HT ultimately would expel, led the UK movement. Under his leadership, in 1993 HT became famous for its extremist views and radical positions, which were often offensive in their outrageous rhetoric against gays, Jews and other religions. In 1996, the media exposure that Omar Bakri had achieved with his radical sermons worried HT's international leadership, which saw Bakri's vitriolic style as an innovation within the very centralised party structure. Bakri had to resign, and after leaving HT founded the more radical *Al-Muhajiroun* (Wiktorowicz 2005). With the departure of Bakri as leader, HT has spent recent years trying to rebuild its image as an Islamic party possessing strong views, but open to civilised debate. During this phase, it has been successful in attracting members working for mass-media organisations, universities and public bodies. HT actively develops various platforms (some of which are not immediately referable to HT itself) to promote its ideology.

Hamid (2006) has recently attempted to explain why young British Muslims decide to join HT. He has acknowledged that the reasons are varied, but often linked to the issue of Muslim identity in contemporary Britain. Young Muslims in Britain, he has observed, do not have many means of expressing their political ideas within an Islamic framework. Particularly after the last war in Iraq, mainstream politics has alienated these young people, some of whom have found the strong Islamic identity, and the rejection of Western values in favour of an Islamic political vision, of HT extremely appealing. Hamid has also observed that other young British Muslims have joined HT because of the increase in Islamophobia within the UK. Furthermore, HT offers a unique opportunity for political and ideological participation within a protected environment in which other members have the same ideological structure. Finally, the fact that HT does not adhere to any Islamic school of thought and rejects Islamic sectarianism, which is often common among first-generation Muslims in the UK, are other aspects that attract young people towards this Islamic movement instead of more

traditionally religious ones such as the Tablighi-Jamaat. Indeed, Hamid has observed,

> HT's resort to emotional sloganeering appeals to youthful angst and young people who need to be told what to do. Many ex-members agree about how their psychological attraction to HT's message was a result of their personal insecurities, having felt empowered after feeling powerless, and how it provided a religious pretext for venting anger at older people (who represented authority) masked as religious disagreement.
>
> (2006: 152)

The group has a clear generational appeal. With most mosques in the UK still controlled by elders and businessmen mainly of the South Asian community, HT seems to offer to young South Asians, often frustrated and disaffected, the opportunity to let their voices (angered by the experience of injustice and discrimination) be heard not only within the Muslim community, but particularly within UK society.

Hamid has asked whether HT is a real or imagined threat. Although he has observed (however, see also Baran 2005) that HT has rejected reformism in favour of a revolutionary Islamic ideology, its threat to Western democracy, and in particular that of Britain, has been over-estimated. Thus, even if HT 'has admittedly applauded the violence of liberation groups, maintaining that Muslims have a right to defend occupied territories [....] its role at best is one of influencing public opinion, or agitation' (2006: 154). HT, though a radical political movement, is certainly not the monster that the mass media have depicted, as my also research confirms. Yet this does not mean, as we shall discuss in the following chapters, that around HT there are not forming some very emotional, less disciplined and structured, platforms and 'tribes', which see in the jihad a means for initiating an Armageddon-like final confrontation with a Western culture understood mainly as a crusading anti-Islamic, and even satanic, force.

Wiktorowicz (2005) has offered one of the few, and most interesting, studies exploring the reasons behind the decision of some Muslims in the West to join radical Islamic movements. His book is the result of in-depth research he conducted in 2002, methodologically rooted in anthropological observation of participants, on Omar Bakri Mohammed's radical group Al-Muhajiroun. Wiktorowicz, in his analysis, has rejected the most common interpretations (most of which

we have previously discussed), which have explained the attraction for groups such as Al-Muhajiroun through rejection of modernism, economic crises, grievance-based reasons, scripturalism and psychological factors. Indeed, he argues that many of these analytic explanations are so general that they show 'critical shortcomings',

> First, although strain and discontent are ubiquitous and Islamic groups exist in most Muslim countries, the extent of their presence varies tremendously. In fact, many countries with severe stress, and crisis [...] exhibit low levels of Islamic movement mobilization. [...] Second, [general explanations] cannot explain why some aggrieved individuals choose to join Islamic groups while others do not. [...] Third, the sociopsychological framework does not explain differential patterns of joining *among* Islamic movements. Why, for example, do individuals with similar experiences, levels of distress, and grievances opt to join different movements?
>
> (Wiktorowicz 2005: 12, author's emphasis)

Wiktorowicz (2005) has highlighted how recent studies of Islamic radicalism have attempted to reject the representation of Islamic fundamentalists as simply zealots who are textually inspired, or psychologically, economically and politically alienated people, and instead adopted a rational actor model.[10] Nonetheless, he has observed that these studies tend to focus 'on the groups as units of analysis'. He has therefore asked some relevant questions, 'what about the individuals who actually engage in activism on behalf of the group? Why do individuals in these groups voluntarily engage in personally risky actions?'(2005: 13–14). Wiktorowicz is right to point out that little has been known about the individuals' motivation that has driven them to join Islamic radical movements and involve themselves in risky actions and politics.

Wiktorowicz, through his ethnographic study, has answered those questions in an innovative way that combines cognitive studies with social movement theories. Although I shall discuss Wiktorowicz's theory in depth during the following chapters, we can summarise his main points. Wiktorowicz (2005) has argued that individuals who join extremist groups experience a sort of 'cognitive opening' that challenges their previous beliefs and prepares them for new ideas. He has suggested that the cognitive opening can be the result of different experiences, such as discrimination, economic crisis and political oppression (2005: 85ff.). Islamic movements, through their proselytisation and propaganda activity may also facilitate cognitive opening in people

who are looking for answers or have questions deriving from everyday issues. He has then argued that some of the people who experience a cognitive opening try to resolve it through religious seeking. In many cases, these individuals are exposed to the propaganda of extremist Islamic groups because of social networks and personal relationships with their members.

This process, according to Wiktorowicz, may develop into a new one in which the individual, convinced of the rhetoric of the extremist movement, becomes part of it and accepts the indoctrination, thus becoming part of its social network. Now, Wiktorowicz has rightly observed that Islamic extremist groups have to develop strategies to compete among themselves because of the fluidity of Islam as religion (that is, there is no centralised church and organisation). For this reason, Islamic extremist groups have to convince the interested, cognitively opened, individual that they possess the only correct interpretation of Islam and, consequently, the only political solution to contemporary issues. The individual is then exposed to a 'culturalization' process, in which the doctrine of the movement is absorbed through lessons or other activities. This indoctrination, according to Wiktorowicz, aims to shift the individual's understanding of self-interest towards risky activism (2005: 167ff). Therefore, Wiktorowicz has concluded, when the individuals become fully convinced that salvation is their main self-interest, more important than any other aspect of their life,

> the movement offers its ideology as a heuristic device or strategy for conforming to God's will and guaranteeing salvation. In this ideological template, high-risk activism, such as support for violence, is a necessary condition for fulfilling divine commands. For individuals who accept the ideology, risky activism conforms to the logic of self interest and inspires participation regardless of the corporeal consequences in this life.
>
> (2005: 6)

He has surely provided an interesting analysis and theory of why people, from different ethnic, national, economic and Islamic backgrounds, decide to join extremist movements. Certainly, as we shall explore in the following chapters, his analysis has left many other questions unanswered. Nonetheless, he has been among the first scholars to avoid, in his reading of extremism, both Eurocentric historical evolutionarism and cultural comparative reductionism, which have affected many studies of fundamentalism from the 1970s onwards, as well as the

pathologisation of certain psychological studies of radicalism. He has further avoided the simplistic understanding of group dynamics and identity provided by studies of Islamic extremisms that are based upon simplified versions of social identity theory, and the social–political and economic essentialised explanation of certain analysis of political Islam. Yet the most important aspect of his work is the link between ethnography and analysis, which has allowed Wiktorowicz to discuss, in contrast with Antoun (2001) for example, Islamic radicalism beyond theological aspects of Islam.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed how prominent scholars, both before and after September 11, have tried to explain what they have labelled Islamic fundamentalism, political Islam, Islamic extremism, Islamic radicalism and jihadism. There are some clear differences between the studies authored before and after September 11. In those before September 11, particularly published between the end of the 1980s and the mid-1990s, scholars have mainly discussed Islamic fundamentalism as one species, though the most pernicious among the Abrahamic religions. For this reason, the discussion of Islamic fundamentalism has been often framed within a wider comparative approach to fundamentalism seen as characterised by family resemblances. Typical of these studies is the representation of Islamic fundamentalism as a historical process, started by charismatic Islamic ideologues (such as Mawdudi, Al-Banna, Qutb), and culminating in the 1979 Iranian revolution (see, for instance, Lawrence 1990). Islam surely matters in these studies. Indeed, the Qur'an as a holy scripture provides, according to these academic works, the basis for the formation of a scripturalist ideology, from which those ideologues derived their political inspiration and actions. Hence, Islamic fundamentalism, according to this perspective is, as any other fundamentalism, an anti-Enlightenment force that rejects modernism and its main value of secularism in favour of a strict adherence to the scripture and in defence of an anti-relativistic, unique and superior truth.

I have argued that some of these analyses have suffered from both comparative reductionism and Eurocentric historical evolutionarism in which denotative, rather than connotative, characteristics are described as essential paradigms of Islamic fundamentalism, in a linear genealogy of ideologues and ideologies that originated in different places, within different Islamic traditions and during different geopolitical contentions.

In other words, although Islamists such as Mawdudi, Al-Banna and Qutb share some similarities, it would be extremely simplistic to advocate that environment, political realities and personal experiences did not have an impact on their views because they derived them from interpretations of the same text, the Qur'an. Another extremely flawed aspect of certain explanations of Islamic fundamentalism derived from what I have called Eurocentric historical evolutionarism. Most of the scholars who have discussed Islamic fundamentalism before September 11 have explained it in terms of a rejection of 'rational' Enlightenment values in favour of an 'irrational', hence fanatic, scripturalism. Of course, part of the struggle is the resistance of Islamic fundamentalists to the correlated products of Enlightenment, modernism and secularism. Although at first this may appear a very clear and successful explanation, it has serious faults. Not only do these authors essentialise the European experience of Enlightenment, but they also present it as a universal, and universally acceptable, phenomenon. Enlightenment, even within the European context, has never been a single event or way of thinking. The history of Enlightenment in France was very different from the history of Enlightenment in, for example, England. Furthermore, as we have discussed in the previous chapter, some historians even doubt that we can present Enlightenment as a single, clear historical fact, but that rather we need to consider it as a process. Yet do Islamic fundamentalists really struggle, either metaphorically or with weapons, to resist modernism and secularism? Rather, is resistance to these 'universal values' a mere side effect of a more complex picture? I am concerned that interpretation of Islamic fundamentalism strongly based on Eurocentric historical evolutionarism can actually hide, instead of disclose, the reasons behind the existence of Islamic fundamentalism as a 'human', rather than 'cultural', phenomenon.

During the 1990s, scholars in the field of political science have analysed Islamic movements as a mainly political reaction to the Middle East crisis. Some scholars, such as Esposito (1999, 2002), Piscatori (1991), Hafez (2003) and Noorani (2002), have argued that Islamists have manipulated, as other fundamentalists, Islam to their political aims. In other words, Islamic fundamentalism is nothing other than an inauthentic interpretation of Islam. Although these authors have reacted against the misrepresentation of Islam as a religious system, they have ended in the opposite form of essentialism by claiming that there is a correct and incorrect form of Islam. Yet, as I have argued in *Jihad beyond Islam* (2006), we cannot decide upon a 'correct' form of Islam because there is no single authority recognised in it. Also, we cannot claim that

Islamic fundamentalists are impostors, as Noorani for instance as done, because, I have argued, Muslims feel Muslim regardless of how other people may see them (2006: 10).

In the aftermath of September 11 and the subsequent war on terror, most of the scholarly, but as we have seen in this chapter also popular, interest has focused on Islamic terrorism, often referred to as jihadism. Some of this scholarship suffers from extreme forms of essentialism, so much so that some authors have understood contemporary Islamists and their fight through the reading of mediaeval theologian Ibn Taymiyya. Islamic fundamentalists are here not merely seen as resisting modernisation and modernism, but actually as relics of the past wishing to impose a mediaeval theocratic system not only in Islamic countries but also in the West. Other scholars, such as Milton-Edwards (2005), have instead argued that Islamic violence is not different from any other form of political violence, such as nationalism and ethnic-inspired violence. Furthermore, these scholars have rightly criticised previous studies of Islamic fundamentalism, or political Islam, because they have underestimated the role and impact of the colonial experience on Muslim culture and politics and have mythologised secularism as the only option for embracing modernity (see Gellner's particular approach to modernity and Islam and his extremely pessimistic conclusions).

Although I agree with, for instance, Milton-Edwards' (2005) critique and suggestion about the role of Western colonisation in the formation of political Islam, I am concerned about the Middle East focus of her work, as well as that of other scholars. The history of and conflict in the Middle East have a central role in Islamic fundamentalist discourse, but we cannot limit what has been called Islamic fundamentalism, political Islam, Islamic radicalism and jihadism to the Middle East or the consequences of Middle Eastern conflicts. It is important to understand the phenomenon in terms of its global, and not just local, impact. This is something that, as we have discussed, Devji (2005) surely has done. After the terrorist acts committed in Europe in the name of Islam, scholars from different disciplines have started to study in more detail the home-grown Islamic radical movements and their members. The relevance of understanding why individuals decide to join organisations that may require risky activities is certainly extremely important. Wiktorowicz (2005) has offered not only one of the few ethnographic accounts of Western-based Islamic extremist movements, but also a theoretical explanation of the reason why Muslims may find these groups attractive.

In the following chapters I shall start to discuss, starting from my own ethnographic accounts, how identity and emotions play a fundamental role in a phenomenon that scholars have referred to by many names and yet each time implied that it was a unitary 'thing' possessing within itself defined characteristics. By contrast, it is my contention that what has been called 'Islamic fundamentalism' is not a 'thing' in itself, but rather a particular process linked to two essential human aspects, identity and identification.

Notes:

1. See, for instance, Lawrence (1990), Tibi (1998), Bruce (2000), Antoun (2001), Kepel (1997), Choueri (2002), Lewis (2003).
2. See, for instance, Dekmejian (1985), Arjomand (1995), Hoffman (1985), Khatab (2006a, b).
3. See, for instance, Nazih (1991), Hunter (1988), Kepel (1997, 2002), Akbar (2002), Hafez (2003), Milton-Edwards (2005).
4. See also Geertz (1968). For more and a critique of this classification of Islam, see Marranci (2006, 2008b).
5. For a full discussion of the term 'political Islam' as well as Islamism, see Haddad et al. (1991), Esposito (1991) and Nazih (1991).
6. Ibn Taymiyya (1263–328) was the most important figure in the future Hanbali school of Islamic thought. His texts and conservative religious philosophy is at the centre of the Wahhabi school, which is the official school of Islamic thought in Saudi Arabia. I suggest that the reader who is interested in more details about the relationship between the Saudi family and Wahhabism read Chapter 5 in Kepel (2004).
7. This is a medieval legal concept applicable to non-Muslims who lived under Islamic rule.
8. Although I know that readers may be more used to the term 'suicide bombing', I prefer to label such acts as suicide–mass-murdering, because the intent is not just the act of bombing, but rather the act of mass murdering in the name of political aims and personal spiritual rewards.
9. For an in-depth discussion of the organisation, you can read Farouki (1996) and Baran (2004, 2005).
10. See, for instance, Anderson (1997), El-Said (1995) and Wiktorowicz (2001, 2004).

4
The Ethos of Justice: Emotions, Feelings and Dystopia

In the Introduction to this book, I have argued that we need to rethink the role that human emotions, identity and learning have in what has been labelled as 'fundamentalism' and 'religious extremism'. Indeed, in the previous two chapters, we have observed that authors have privileged culturalist views often based on hermeneutic or social identity theories. The main works on Islamic fundamentalism and extremism have tried to explain the phenomenon by emphasising the role of the group, the charismatic leader, the ideologue, the text and the rejection of the secular as political creed. The individual, the active subject, has disappeared, dwarfed by the overall powerful picture of a cultural determinism in which the member adapts to the group, which in turn adapts to the sacred scripture, in a chain of natural causation. In these works, culture forges the individual, instead of the individual mastering and making culture. Most of the studies that we have discussed have presented case studies to support their theories, but, with very few exceptions (cf. Wiktorowicz 2005), none derived from specific focused fieldwork; authors focused mainly on secondary sources as well as information provided by the mass media. Surely, in such circumstances, the independent, individual member and the sympathiser towards what have been called fundamentalist movements could not have been studied and discussed.

One may ask why it is so important to concentrate our efforts to understand the single Muslim member or individual involved in Islamic political radical groups or movements. We have to recognise that the minimum unit in the complex discourse of Islamic extremism and radicalism is the individual, the single member. Movements and groups are started by single individuals, as are the branches that may develop later. We can see, as I will discuss in the next chapter, that groups, and

communities, are formed by one individual + one individual + one individual, and so forth. This is a simple reality, but social scientists have often ended up focusing on the plus (that is, the social and cultural collagens) or the final sum (i.e. the overall group or community), thereby overlooking the main element of such an addition, the individual. Indeed, Rapport has noticed,

> to my mind this also accords with a general social-scientific tendency to regard the individual actor as put upon rather than 'putting on'. I find much here in the critique of displacement which accords with social-scientific analysis of individual behaviour in social-cultural millieux *per se:* 'because' motives are widely inferred while 'in order to' motives barely figure. Questions such as how individuals deal with life, how they make meaning in the midst of everyday life and change, suffering and good fortune, become questions largely of social determination.
>
> (2003: 52)

By contrast, Rapport has suggested the centrality of individuality as far as social action is concerned, because 'it is the individual – in individual energy, creativity, will – that the force of the social and cultural lies' (2003: 6; see also 1997: 2, and Hornborg 2003: 98). This viewpoint is extremely relevant to an anthropological study of Islamic radicalism. Likewise are Milton's observations on emotions and individuality:

> First, the individual is the only entity in human society capable of experiencing emotions and having feelings, the only seat of consciousness, and therefore the only entity capable of learning. So, if we are interested in how human beings come to understand the world around them, we have to focus first on individuals, because societies and cultures as whole entities do not learn – individuals do.
>
> Second, the individual is the only entity sufficiently discrete to have an environment […] I suggest that entities like 'society', 'culture' and 'population' are too abstract to be surrounded by anything with which a substantive relationship is possible.
>
> (Milton 2007: 71)

Milton has recognised that such an individualistic approach, in a discipline like anthropology that has a long-standing tradition of privileging the social and cultural context rather than the individual as an active subject, may be controversial. However, Milton has argued, as we have

seen in the Introduction to this book, that the relationship between the individual and its surroundings is 'essentially emotional' (2007: 71).

Milton's observations are extremely important if we wish to understand why ordinary Muslims may join radical religious groups or support, without official membership, the radical ideology (see also Marranci 2006, 2007). Indeed most Muslims who have some form of 'radical' understanding of Islam do not partake in any organised radical or fundamentalist organisation. So, theories that have solely focused on the movements may have (and in my opinion certainly have) missed the overall picture, and consequently provided a flawed explanation of the phenomenon. Finally, we cannot understand the internal dynamics of radical Islamic groups without the necessary understanding of the personal motivations of those taking part in such, often risky, activities (cf. Wiktorowicz 2005). Emotions, feelings and the impact of the environment, understood as surroundings and hence including the social, can succeed in explaining what mainly cultural constructivist and social determinist theories have, in my opinion, failed to.

This chapter, both ethnographically and theoretically, will concentrate on the reasons why some Muslims may support radical ideas or interpretations of their religion, or the reason why they may decide to commit themselves fully to the cause of a particular fundamentalist group, or even organise one. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the few authors who has paid attention to the individual is Wiktorowicz, who has suggested that activists may decide to join an extremist Islamic group after experiencing a 'cognitive opening' resulting from a crisis that may have shaken their certainties. In some cases, the 'cognitive opening' results in people seeking new answers to their questions and doubts. Because for some people religion can begin to take on a new meaning because of a crisis, a 'cognitive opening' can push them to explore their religion beyond the usual mainstream forms. He has also observed that 'One common movement tactic for fostering a cognitive opening is the use of "moral shock"' (Wiktorowicz 2005: 21). I tend to agree with Wiktorowicz about the 'cognitive opening'[1] because I have observed it also during my fieldwork. At the same time, when he refers to 'crises' we should not think solely about dramatic and shocking events, such as traumas. More often than not, the activists decided to join a specific Islamic fundamentalist or extremist group because of disillusions, frustrations and, increasingly, dystopia (Crook 2000).

Young Muslims in particular show an extremely pessimistic view of society, both among Muslims living in majority-Muslim countries (such as the Middle East, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia) and those living

as minorities (such as in Europe and the USA). Although there are eco-nomical and social political factors that contribute to this general disaf-fection, the main reason may be found in the failure of ideology since the end of the twentieth century (Bell 1960, Zhao 1993). The sense of disorientation in a world increasingly global – but still strongly influ-enced by the local (Robertson 1995) – has facilitated young Muslims' focus on moral values and concepts such as 'dignity'. Because they often find themselves on the margins of their societies, they attempt to redefine their sense of identity in an effort to provide themselves with a positive representation of their autobiographical self. The young Muslims find themselves projected into parallel dimensions in which ethical and moral, as well as political, values may become cacophonic, almost schizophrenic (Marranci 2006: 97–115).

In this cacophony of ideas, emotions and the continuous frustration of new generations (in the Islamic countries because of corruption and oppression, in the West because of being often seen as second-class citizens), a particular concept seems linked to that 'cognitive opening' which Wiktorowicz has observed. Indeed, during my research I have observed how the concept, or idea, of justice as well as the concept of dignity is achieving an increasingly emotional value among Muslims, particularly in the aftermath of September 11 and the events during the never-ending war on terror.

In the rest of this chapter, I offer some examples of this frustration and its relationship to both the idea of justice and dignity. I then offer a different understanding of both the idea of justice and dignity as not only political and philosophical concepts, but as 'feelings'. Starting from these observations, I will focus on one of the most cited examples of fundamentalists within academic literature, Sayyid Qutb, and, through my ethnographic experiences, provide an anthropological rethinking of this, often misunderstood, character.

'I saw the truth, then I discovered hell'

As part of my research on former and current Muslims in prison, I met Ziad, a 27-year-old British-born Muslim of Pakistani heritage. When we met, Ziad dressed in a markedly Islamic way, spoke softly and was clearly opinionated, including about his own religion, Islam. Yet the Ziad I met during my research is a very different person from Ziad the drug addict, Ziad the pusher and Ziad the womaniser, whom I would have met seven years before. 'I have been arrested more than once, and I have experience of both young offenders' institutions as well as

adult prisons', he tells me with an expression of repentance. Then he continues his narration, 'I would still be there if I had not found Islam again. Although everybody called me a Muslim because I was born into a Muslim family and my father was a respected man, in reality I had left the right path since the age of ten'. Like many of my other respondents during this research (see Marranci, forthcoming 2009), the young Ziad found it difficult to attend the boring evening schools at the local mosque, where he was forced to learn to recite the Qur'an by heart under the instruction of a teacher who could not speak very much English, but knew how to use his hands to 'drum' Ziad's young head if he were to utter the wrong nasalisation or confuse a Qur'anic verse.

Ziad hated the mosque and could not really communicate with his own parents, whose attachment to a mysterious culture and incomprehensible religion seemed alien to him compared with the pop music, sports and fun he was having with both his few non-Pakistani and his many Pakistani friends. Nonetheless, some of his friends were '*gora*',[2] and Ziad recalls 'I suffered racism of all kinds. I have been attacked, offended and humiliated by white British people since a very young age. It seemed at that time that I was born just to be beaten up, offended and rejected.' Bad company and rejection, as well as generational gaps pushed Ziad to be fully integrated into the life of his deprived neighbourhood. Ziad tried to find gratification and respect through material things, such as cars, success with girls and 'sweetening friends up' with gifts. Thus, Ziad needed money 'and this meant to sell drugs and often I ended up taking them as well'. He felt less guilty when selling drugs to non-Muslims and non-Pakistanis, 'I don't know if it was a form of revenge for all the racism that I had to take, or actually if I felt a kind of shame to sell stuff to Pakis and brothers'. In any case, Ziad, during the last prison sentence he served, decided to change his life.

Ziad did not know very much about Islam, and at that time prisons did not have an official Muslim chaplain. He learnt by reading the Qur'an and the available books in the prison library as well as with the help of fellow Muslim prisoners. He left prison, but his anger with the world seemed to reappear, as he explained:

> I had changed, completely changed; I prayed five times per day, respected Ramadan, dressed and kept my beard, according to the Sunnah of rasulu'llah. I went to the local mosque, though people there still saw me as Ziad the pusher. I felt very upset with what I saw around me. I could see that the mistakes that have corrupted me, and were now corrupting other young lads, were the product

of this British society and also the responsibility of our fathers who came here just looking for money without thinking of our future. We were the victims of a satanic system that corrupts you from inside, that eats your identity. This was the problem and still is. I was upset because I saw the truth and now I was able to see the real hell that was around me.

Ziad became disaffected with the 'cultural' aspects of his mainly Pakistani mosque. Memories of the hours spent learning the Holy Book, under the threat of punishment, remained a vivid part of his memory. He felt betrayed and his identity seemed not to fit any available organisation or social structure until he met Abu Izzadeen,[3] one of the leaders of the radical movement *Al Ghurabaa*, which means 'the strangers' in reference to a Hadith.[4]

He found the radical group formed around the cleric congenial to his identity, to his experience of rejection and resistance, and to his autobiographical memory. Ziad has therefore explained,

I still do not know very much about Islam, but I know what I can see, and today I see Muslims being killed everywhere in the world; innocent sisters and brothers attacked, tortured and humiliated. I see Islam attacked and with it my identity, my entire effort to change. I know the truth about this western society. No mistake, I have been part of it, and so I know it. I know how it can corrupt and how I was corrupted. I have learned to see things as they are. There is good and there is evil. There is no in-between other than on the path of the Shaytan. We need to resist, reject, and change since we do not want to lose ourselves, reject Islam or change our identities.

Ziad explained during the time we spent together how he feels to be part of a final struggle, jihad (see Marranci 2006). Yet he pointed out that this is not a political jihad: rather, the main jihad is to remain himself, the same Ziad whom he formed during the painful years he went through. Ziad defines himself as a fundamentalist, a radical and an extremist. Of course, the definitions and labels, though the signifier appears to be the same, have very different significances, 'I'm a fundamentalist because I respect the real foundations of Islam, which the majority of Muslims in this country have given up. I'm a radical because I can only decide between the path of Allah and the path of Shaytan. I'm an extremist because I reject assimilation and refuse to betray myself, my identity, and my dīn [religion].'

During the time I spent with Ziad and the interviews that I had with him, I could clearly see that he did not join the Islamic extremist group and follow its leader because of being convinced by theological evidence. Ziad joined the group because it fitted his own identity and helped him to make sense not only of the environment in which he used to live and his life experience, but also his autobiographical self. Ziad, despite his pious style, can actually quote few verses from the Qur'an as well as a certain number of Hadiths, whose source he often does not remember. Certainly Ziad knows the ideology and rhetoric of the group, as he has learnt the language and the symbols. Yet Ziad, who has formed strong links with the other members, can now feel part of a shared experience of emotions and beliefs, 'We often cry together because of the state of Islam and Muslims today. We feel anger together because we are one ummah, and we are the right one, the one who will march towards the final justice.' Sharing is surely one of the most important aspects of being part of the group, but what the members are sharing is more than rhetoric, ideology or interpretations, as we shall see later in this chapter.

'I am looking for justice'

Rija is a 35-year-old Palestinian Muslim woman. She arrived in the UK as a student, then married a British-born Lebanese man, and currently lives in London. She has experienced Palestinian refugee camps, and also lived in Jordan, before reaching the UK. Her father and brother were members of Hamas and took part in both the first and second Intifada, where her father was killed during a battle with the Israeli army. Rija strongly supports Hamas and its vision for a free Islamic Palestinian state. Since UK MP and government minister Jack Straw's comments on the veil,[5] she has started to wear one. We started our conversations from this visible change in her dress code. After explaining that she never wore the niqab before, Rija stated, 'I was very upset about what Mr Straw said. He denied my freedom in two clear ways: first, as an adult woman who can decide to dress as she pleases and secondly as a Muslim, since he suggests that Muslim dress can be threatening to British society.' I was not surprised when she linked this experience to the Palestinian cause she strongly campaigns for, 'Muslim women are like my land, everybody feels the right to tell us how we should live, which government we must have and how we should accept oppression since it is actually liberation and democracy.'

When I began to know her better, it became clear that many of her views about Islam and Palestine were the result of the difficulties, and consequent emotions, she experienced there before reaching the UK. Yet once in the UK, her memory soon incorporated a split between guilt for not being there and anger about the increasing disinterest of the UK public in Palestinian suffering, 'The War on Terror has been unsuccessful I would say; it has just made the lives of everybody, except the politician, more insecure and difficult. Yet it is the Palestinians who pay the highest price. We have simply been left there. People see us as terrorists and there is lots of discrimination.'

Rija supports all Hamas actions, including suicides. Yet she is very critical of bin-Laden's views. She thinks that the only solution for Muslims is a Caliphate, but that this will never be possible without a free and Islamic Palestine. I asked Rija, as I have asked all my respondents, about how she defines herself. She replied: 'I am Muslim, and an angry one, if you want, because I look for justice. I don't just hope for it, I want it. People call me a fundamentalist and an extremist only because I think that real justice can only be achieved through the right path of Islam.'

I have realised that, for Rija, the concept of justice and dignity have paramount value beyond the abstract conceptualisation. Both appeared to be embedded in Rija's own understanding of her identity as a Muslim. The more I discussed with her about Islam, the more I could appreciate how her memories and sense of self, what I have called autobiographical self (see Marranci 2006), have fostered the link between her identity and the 'idea of justice' as part of her human dignity. She has a very good knowledge of the Qur'an, and she was able to report the sources of the Hadiths she quoted. Indeed, Qur'anic suras as well as the Prophet's sayings and actions interspersed her narrative. These references increased when she justified her support for Islamic groups such as Islamic Jihad and Hamas in Palestine, or Hizb ut-Tahir in the UK, of which, however, she denied having membership. Nonetheless, these Qur'anic verses and hadiths seemed to embellish the narrative, which was made up of memories, reactions to the environment and global issues, such as the war in Iraq or even global warming, rather than drive it. Indeed, following her life, I could see how the Qur'anic verses she selected, the *du'a* (supplications) she preferred and hadiths she repeated were the framework rather than the picture; they provided the context, and not the essence, through which Rija understood herself and the world.

For her, justice was never an aseptic, purely ethical or retributory matter. Rija's idea of justice was permeated with emotional elements; justice coincided with dignity and eternal, universal values:

> I think that today we live in a state of total injustice. I mean, there is no justice because people have lost themselves. Human justice is without guarantee; today it is X and tomorrow it is Z, depending on who is your leader, master or judge. Human rights are not real rights, they are concessions since humans can change them if they like; they can just one day decide to re-write them or just cancel them altogether. Human rights should provide dignity to all humans, but the reality is different, they change. They are not universal; they have been presented as universal and used actually as an excuse to deny humanity to those who may prefer to have divine human rights. You see, I think that only Allah is just and His justice is the only real one. Rights and dignity can only come from him, his love and perfection. We are Allah's slaves. This is a universal justice and one with values, one which is eternal and stable.

Of course, Rija, when speaking of divine law, was referring to what is often called Sharia law,[6] though she had observed that no such law had been implemented since the death of Prophet Muhammad and the Righteous Caliphs.[7] For Rija, the struggle for the freedom of Palestine becomes also a symbol of the struggle (that is, jihad) of the Muslim ummah to achieve dignity and justice. Yet, she has a clear idea of why Muslims are so unsuccessful in this struggle. According to her, they have adopted the wrong methodology and are corrupted. 'Muslims today', she said, 'want justice and freedom, but they do not follow the right path of Sharia. They speak about it, but actually they do not act according to it. More and more, they are behaving like non-Muslims. They have lost real Islam and they even have new idols, such as money, power, interests and corruption, and hedonistic lifestyles'.

Rija is surely frustrated with both Muslims and the 'Western world'. In her words we can observe both how the idea of justice and dignity are not only culturally influenced, but emotionally influenced as well. Both are part of how Rija makes sense of her autobiographical self. Rija supports Islamic radical organisations because they seem to resolve the emotional impact of the dystopia through which she grasps the contemporary world around her.

'Is your thirst for justice in your heart?
Islam is your water'

I joined the group of young Muslims who were speaking outside the mosque after the Friday prayer. The argument of the khutba had focused on the status of Muslims living in the UK and in Western countries. The imam, after reminding the congregation that they were living in *dar al-amn* (that is, house of security) and not, as for instance bin-Laden had suggested, in *dar al-harb* (the house of war), called upon all Muslims to respect Allah's will and consequently to respect the laws of their host country. Looking at the faces of the congregation's members, I had the impression that the call had impressed few, left many cold, disappointed some and upset a considerable minority. I was not in a radical mosque, however. Nonetheless, the expression *dar al-amn* may have sounded hypocritical to most of the congregation because of recent anti-terrorist operations. On the 2 June 2006, after what the anti-terrorist unit of London Metropolitan Police described as 'specific intelligence', a house in Forest Gate, east London, was raided, the family arrested and, during the operation, one of two brothers, 23-year-old Mohammed Abdul Kahar Kalam, was shot by an armed officer. The 'specific intelligence' as well as the alleged months of surveillance, resulted in a damaging fiasco for both the Metropolitan Police and security officers, because the two brothers had to be released without charges, and they were granted an apology.[8] This, of course, aggravated the local Muslim community (Thornton and Mason 2007, Abbas 2007), which felt persecuted and threatened by the possibility that other 'specific intelligence' could see other Muslim families experiencing a similar horror. The imam's *dar al-amn* sounded very distant from the everyday experience of suspicion and fear that many of the congregation had to endure after that traumatic event.

   The group of five young Muslims did not pay attention to my presence and continued their discussion. As I knew them, I expected that all five could have found the imam's khutba somewhat indigestible. Hasib and Malik, both aged 26 and of Arab descent, had started to follow lessons offered by the Islamic party Hizb ut-Tahir (Farouki 1996), and they wished to become full members. The other three young people, Ahmad, Awad and Ayoob, all in their early twenties and of Pakistani descent, were interested less in organised movements, but they expressed full support for the 'resistance' in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hasib and Malik, in harmony with the official position of Hizb ut-Tahir, reject the idea that the khalifate can be established through violence. Rather, they

believe that Muslims need to be educated and united. Ahmad, Awad and Ayoob, by contrast, believe, as they repeated often, that 'Muslims rebel against injustice and defend their rights, and jihad against occupation and humiliation'. Despite the differences in the trust placed in organised Islamic political movements and the use of violence, all of them saw the khalifate as the solution for a happy ummah. As usual during my research, I tried to use the khutba that we had just heard to start the debate. We moved to the coffee shop within the mosque and seated ourselves to continue the conversation.

I wished to understand the importance of the idea of the khalifate for them.

Hasib: The khalifate is the only solution; it will guarantee the necessary protection for Muslims and the real possibility of conducting a Muslim life. Who believes that the West can respect Muslims and their faith because of democracy and human rights is just a fool.

Malik: Yeah, they only respect money and selfishness; how can you trust a society that dumps its own parents in nursing homes, or leaves them alone so that they die and sometimes nobody even finds them for months! *Astagfurallah*!

Ayoob: The problem is not only this. It is that they do not have real justice. They think that a couple of people paid to sit in a room and decide what the rest of us have to do today, and are not to do tomorrow, is the most advanced form of conducting a country. I mean, this law is human and will end as human bones end. The khalifate is based on the eternal law of Allah, and Allah is the highest judge and justice in itself. But kafiroon [infidels] want to do whatever they wish.

Ahmad: They were supposed to be Christian, so people of the Book, but actually they are not. They do not follow even their own religion. They have no justice but just corruption of the soul and, you see, this is affecting the Muslims in this country.

Me: In which way?

Awad: It is obvious, man! Don't you watch the TV? Don't you use your eyes!? Just look around and see the women and see how they dress and all of that. Muslims here accept everything, because the generation of my father, you see, they were ready to accept everything in exchange for money. They came here not because of their *dīn* [faith] but to have money and become better than the rest of their own family.

Malik: See, Gabriele, the issue here is about values, dignity, and justice. You cannot have dignity without values, but you cannot have values without having honour, and you cannot see your honour respected without justice. Today we are without justice. Muslims do not have an Islamic state, so they do not have honour. They just live for the material things. You should want justice: it is not a simple word, it is part of how you are as a person. In Islam, justice – social justice – is the most important thing. Allah has taught us how to achieve the perfect justice. Yet without the khalifate there is no hope.

The conversation went on, as did my observations of Hasib, Malik, Ahmad, Awad and Ayoob. The more I knew about them, the more I could understand about the different positions of support for the khalifate, and in the case of Ahmad, Awad and Ayoob, the support for violent actions. Although Hasib and Malik had not such a difficult life in their own country, the UK, Ahmad, Awad and Ayoob have suffered, since childhood, discrimination and often racism because of the colour of their skin, and particularly after September 11, their religion. What for Hasib and Malik was a matter of education and indoctrination of Muslims to achieve the khalifate, and so the perfectly just political entity, for Ahmad, Awad and Ayoob was a matter of dignity and respect (that is, to impose it) so that Muslims can have justice and then finally the khalifate. The support for violent actions, in this case, was neither simple revenge, nor revolution, but fully emotional and linked to the hope that certain actions can simultaneously rouse the Muslims and convince, or impose upon, non-Muslims to respect Islam out of fear. In all the interviews that I had, the Qur'an, yet more often hadiths, was quoted. However, the selection was again the result of their 'experience', memories and feelings. Awad one time told me, 'Is your thirst for justice in your heart? Islam is your water.'

The idea of justice, between feelings and emotions

The ethnographic examples that I have offered above show the relevance that the concept of justice has in the discourse of Muslims who support radical views of Islam. The idea of justice has accompanied humanity since the dawn of human societies. Far from being a self-defined concept, the idea of what justice may be and how it may be achieved has originated ever-evolving debates within societies and cultures.[9] As Masters has noticed,

in the Western tradition, the sense of justice has been viewed in a multitude of ways. Sometimes philosophic theory or religious doctrine teaches that justice is an absolutely binding or histori-cally determined standard, sometimes it is viewed as a convention or custom based entirely on the way a human community 'names' some things as just and others unjust. But in some cases, as with Plato, the 'natural law' traditions of Grotius or Puffendorf, and Rousseau, the sense of justice is ultimately based on nature.

(1991: 299)

In the case of Islam, seen as a religion, the concept of justice, as well as dignity, has its origin in two main features: the Qur'an, as the ultimate and universal divinely revealed message; and the Sunna, a compilation of the actions and sayings of Muhammad, God's messenger. As Rosen has rightly suggested, the Qur'an and the Sunna provide a framework, more than a code, so that 'a person who is just […] engages in acts that are framed by an awareness, born of the pursuit of reason over passion, of the harm that may be done to the community of believers by acting otherwise' (Rosen 1992: 154). Rosen has observed in his research that the idea of justice is widely spread among Muslims, so that 'the Muslim concept of justice is thus one of those domains in which a host of social, political and ethical ideas come into uneasy coalescence' (Rosen 1989: 74). He also has argued that this idea and conceptualisation of justice is different from how American societies may perceive justice.

Notwithstanding the centrality of the Shari'a, it is important to acknowledge that ordinary Muslims can form their concept of justice and dignity based on other factors. One the one hand, they can decide to follow certain groups and their interpretation of Islamic law; on the other, they can decide to form an independent idea of what justice may be. As in other aspects of human life, emotions and feelings (see Marranci 2006, 2007, 2008b, Milton 2007) have surely an impact on how Muslims form their concept of justice. That emotional processes can affect the conceptualisation of justice is certainly not a novel idea. Solomon has argued, 'emotions are essential to our sense of justice, and this includes such negative emotions as vengeance as well as such positive emotions as sympathy and compassion. […] Understanding the emotions that go into our sense of justice, learning how these are culti-vated and giving them new respect, rather than further developing the already voluminous arguments for and against this or that intellectual construction of justice, seems to be essential' (1989: 372); and definitely it is, as my fieldwork has demonstrated.

There is no doubt that September 11 and the subsequent war on terror have caused an incredible emotional impact on Muslim populations, in both Western and Muslim countries (for more, see Marranci 2008a). Governments are reacting to global threats through special legislation aiming to target terrorist activity as well as rethinking minority policies. One of the main discussions is about multiculturalism (Turner 2007). Turner has suggested that in the post-September 11 era, governments have been forced to reconsider the role that multiculturalism has in the social cohesion of nation states in the process of what he has defined as an attempt to 'manage Muslims', and Muslim communities have reacted through the process of 'enclaving' (Turner 2007: 125). Indeed there is no doubt that Muslims (Abbas 2007, Marranci 2006, 2007, 2008a) feel increasingly targeted by the new legislation and possibly subjected to unjust policies because of being perceived as the 'enemy within'.

From previous research that I have conducted (Marranci 2006, 2007) as well as the available literature, there is evidence that the recent anti-terror legislation imposed within the European Union (Fekete 2003 and Welch 2003) and the USA (Mathur 2006) have shaken Muslims' confidence in the Western concept of justice. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005: 491) have observed, 'forms of indignation may be regarded as emotional expressions of a meta-ethical anchorage, and concern infringements that are believed, at least implicitly, to affect people's possibilities of realizing their humanity.' Similarly, Solomon has also correctly noted, 'emotions ascribe responsibility, which is utterly essential to our sense of justice. We do not first ascribe responsibility and then respond emotionally. The emotion itself ascribes responsibility; it immediately recognizes (or simply presumes) that a harm or hurt has a cause. [...] Injustice, in other words, is not just getting the short end; it also requires that someone be to blame' (1990: 255). In this chapter, we shall see that the dynamic of emotions, which Solomon has described, are essential to the understanding of the concept of justice among radical Muslims.

Nonetheless, there is another element that we should consider: many Muslims, and not only in the so-called West, tend to be suspicious and untrusting of the Western concept of human justice. Indeed, they perceive it as unstable and lacking in universal ethical values. Again, as part of the emotional process described above, fairness becomes an essential element of the idea of justice among some Muslims who have experienced, or perceive to have experienced, discrimination and injustice; thus, they reject any form of human justice. Unsurprisingly, my respondents have strongly linked their views on justice not only to

Islamic, more or less orthodox, discourses, but also particularly to the idea of dignity.

The concept of dignity has an important place in Islamic ethics as well as Islamic political rhetoric. Yet Islamic scholars have emphasised that the right to dignity is not a result of human legislation or conventions, but rather Qur'anic injunctions (Khadduri 1946), and Islamic revivalists such as Mawdudi have emphasised the relevance that 'dignity' has for Muslims (see Mawdudi 1976). Therefore, the exiled leader of the Tunisian Ennahda Party, Rachid Ghannouchi, has claimed 'Islam has come back to restore dignity to its followers, to liberate them from despotism, to regain the *Ummah*'s usurped legitimacy, to restrict the powers of the state and to establish and reinforce the power of the people, the power of civil society' (quoted in Tamimi 2001: 179, emphasis in original). Most Muslim scholars understand dignity not just as an individualistic component; rather, the individual can only achieve dignity as a member of the ummah and by surrendering to Allah's will. In other words, human dignity exists not in isolation, but only as part of Allah's plan for humanity. Dignity, from this perspective, has an eschatological goal and it is part of the idea of brotherhood within the ummah.

As an anthropologist, my best chance to understand in detail how my respondents have formed their idea of dignity, beyond the theological domain of the scholars, was to ask them, and ask for examples in their everyday lives. The first relevant observation that I was able to make was that they understood 'dignity' not just as an entity, a single concept, but as the 'product', that is the sum, of other values. Usman, a 27-year-old Muslim of Gujarati heritage and the imam of a local mosque in Leeds, summarised these 'values' that form 'human dignity' as such,

> You have to understand that something such as dignity is not actually one thing; it is more than one thing. The main thing that you need to have in order to achieve dignity is *izzah* [esteem] since without it you cannot respect others, but if others do not acknowledge it to you, you cannot have dignity. A man without izzah is really without many hopes. Also you can see that izzah has two ways of working, one is personal and the group and community decide the other. This is even more the case for the second important thing; *karamah* [honour]. Karamah is essential to 'dignity' and it is similar to izzah, but with a difference. From the Qur'an is clear that all humanity can have karamah, but only Muslims may have izzah. Karamah is the seed, but the fruit is izzah, which is given by Allah, as we can read in surah an-Nisa. You have to understand also that izzah is not

something that is inner, but something that can be seen through people's actions and beliefs. There is no contradiction for Muslims to be slaves of Allah and at the same time have dignity, since it is the very essence of the human to reach the divine and, despite having free will, to accept to bow before Allah as sura al-Hajj [al-Hajj 22:18] tells us.

This conceptualisation of human dignity differs substantially from the traditional Kantian view.

In fact, Kant, according to what has been known as Kant's second categorical imperative, has argued that humans as persons – that is, possessing moral practical reason – should treat themselves and others never simply as a means, but always as an end (Kant 1964). Dignity for Kant, in other words, is an absolute inner worth. It is through this worth, that is, *Menschenwürde*, that s/he can derive respect from all the other existing rational beings, since s/he can compare him- or herself to others, and evaluate him- or herself against other human beings on the basis of rational equality. Therefore humans, according to Kant, are autonomous moral agents, and it is through this autonomy that human dignity is achieved (Korner 1990, O'Neill 1989).

Despite what we may expect, the concept of dignity has not attracted much debate or scholarly research beyond the field of ethics and medicine. Gaylin has rightly observed,

Certain concepts – like certain books with cachet – are prominently 'displayed' and discussed in intellectual abodes, while remaining essentially unexamined and unexplored. Human dignity is one such concept. 'Respect for human dignity', 'the right to dignity', 'treatment with dignity', and even 'death with dignity', all are catch phrases circulating in the current world of ideas. Yet the literature of dignity is a sparse one indeed.

(Gaylin 1984)

Even more sparse and thin is the literature on how we form our concept of dignity and why it is so widespread among cultures, though with different meanings attached to it. Notwithstanding the philosophical differences between the main 'Western' Kantian understanding of dignity and the one that Usman has offered to me, there is an element in the idea of dignity that is universal and deeply part of our being human. When I asked my respondents about how they feel when they think that their dignity has been offended or humiliated, their answer shows

clear emotional factors. For instance, some would describe how they felt anger, disgust and frustration and how these feelings were often embodied in bodily reactions, such as a quickening heartbeat, sweating, stomach 'butterflies', and so on. I suppose that some of you, as readers, may have experienced these as emotions and feelings (following here Damasio's distinction that we discussed in the Introduction) when others may have roughshod your dignity.

Some authors have suggested that 'dignity' is not just a philosophical or rational concept, but that it may have an emotional basis (see Badcott 2003). Badcott has observed that what we call dignity depends on either extrinsic or intrinsic properties. Although, he has noticed, 'social dignity', that is the status and position of a person in the rest of the community, is 'extrinsically acquired', *Menschenwürde*, or what actually we tend to consider as the main form of human dignity, is inherent to the fact of being human (2003: 123). Now, 'dignity' cannot be perceived or expressed other than within the dynamics of relations. Badcott can, therefore, suggest,

> Social dignity concerns our social relationships and Menschenwürde relates to our affinity with other human beings, as members of the human species. Both incorporate notions of mutual trust and obligation, of self-esteem and self-respect that reflect the psychological feelings that constitute our emotional dignity, factors vitally important to the well-being of those individuals able to appreciate and act on them.

> (2003: 126)

Emotional dignity, thus, is not the result of just cultural or biological factors, and as in the case of emotions, the distinction between cultural and biological as well as psychological may be misleading (Milton 2007). Learning has also a fundamental role in how people form, or better experience, emotional dignity.

Badcott has rightly suggested that some innate feelings (as we know, derived from the interaction of people with their environment which triggers emotions and then feelings) are filtered – we may say 'educated' – through the historical experience and, I would add, personal memories form the autobiographical-self. Of course the relationships between the experience of the environment, the emotions provoked, the context and the recollection of our selective memory, produce bias which changes the links between the emotional experience of dignity and other 'ideas'

such as honour, patriotism, altruism, justice, compassion and mercy (Wilson 1999: 279–82). Therefore, Badcott has concluded,

> Further, we might suggest that conscience and emotional dignity are vital components of a sense of self, and importantly, awareness of self (self-regard) opens the door to awareness of others as others (other regard). And the relationships between self and others constitute the arena for all social intercourse including expressions of concern and respect […] In other words, conscience and notions of dignity are not products of human societies, but conditional to their very existence.
>
> (2003: 125)

Therefore, 'dignity' and 'justice' are not merely philosophical concepts, legalistic terms or the offspring of political discourse. Although these aspects of 'dignity' and 'justice' are relevant within societies and are often linked – in the case of Western countries – to the overall nineteenth-century idea of equality and resource distribution (Masters 1991, Rawls 1971), what matters for our understanding of Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism is exactly emotional dignity – yet I prefer to use the term 'feelings of dignity' (see the Introduction to this book) – and what we may respectively call 'emotional justice' – which again I shall call 'feelings of justice'.

Both of these 'feelings' are, as we have seen, related and co-related in such a way that actions that denigrate and de-legitimatise one's feeling of dignity provoke and solicit feelings of justice. And when one's feelings of justice have been denied, one's feelings of dignity become relevant. Thus, it is not difficult to notice how certain adverse situations, in which a person's feelings of dignity or justice have been affected, may result in a cognitive opening.

The case of Sayyid Qutb

Sayyid Qutb has often been indicated as the ideologue of the most radical trends of Islamic fundamentalism, and particularly in the aftermath of September 11, the 'godfather' of Islamic terrorism.[10] The reason for which, in the aftermath of the terrorist attack, the name of Qutb, which previously was nearly unknown to the European and American audience, became popular can be found in the idea of Qutb's ideological kinship with al-Qaeda. Indeed, Dr Ayman Zawahiri has been often

presented as bin-Laden's mentor. Zawahiri, who was soon recognised as the brain of al-Qaeda, is certainly not a new face of Islamic extremism. A former member of the Egyptian *Ikhwaan* (Muslim Brotherhood), of which Qutb was an important member and main ideologue, Zawahiri met Qutb and, as Zawahiri has described in his own writings (Mansfield 2006), Qutb's ideas and final martyrdom had a great impact on him. Zawahiri, like Qutb, would suffer imprisonment and horrible torture in Egyptian prisons before being released to join the Arab mujahidin of bin-Laden in Afghanistan (Esposito 2002: 18–20).

Forty-two years since his death by hanging, Qutb's ideas still inspire or appeal to political Islam, as well as extreme Islamic movements, around the world. Yet his views of the world, as divided into twofold Manichean dimensions, with the *jahili* (pre-Islamic ignorance)[11] society and people on the one hand, and on the other the 'real' Muslims, followers of the real Islamic tradition who seek the implementation of the Shari'a, can be observed among Muslims who have neither read his work nor ever heard his name. Esposito has suggested that Qutb functioned as a sort of historical catalyst and great propagator of existing radical interpretations of the relations between Islam, as a religion and practice of life, and the non-Islamic world, 'Sayyid Qutb (1906–66) built upon and radicalized the ideas of al-Banna and Mawdudi. Qutb created an ideological legacy that incorporated all the major historical forms of jihad, from the reforms of Muhammad to the extremes of the Kharijites and the Assassins' (Esposito 2002: 50).

How did Sayyid Qutb form such ideas, and thus ideology? If we applied some of the theories that we have discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, we should conclude that he started from the scripture (Lawrence 1990, Hood et al. 2005) because he wished to reject modernism and secularism (Lawrence 1990, Marty and Appleby 1992); thus, his argument derived from theology (Bruce 2000). Others (Hafez 2003) may suggest that Qutb's ideology is the result of the political oppression existing in Egypt under the presidents Nasser and Sadat, so that Qutb's religious rhetoric ends in being a necessary manipulation. Finally, scholars such as Herriot (2007) who apply social identity theories might suggest that Sayyid Qutb, as a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, would have behaved as a group member, so that Qutb's ideas and actions are not actually his, but rather an expression of the in-group formed as a response to the out-group (that is, the argument of Islam versus *jahiliyya*). Scripturalism, in all of them, would remain the main source of Qutb's ideology (Choueri 1990: 93–119, Haddad 1983a, b, Akhavi 1997*)*.

Certainly, the Qur'an has privileged positions within Qutb's discourse and ideology. Yet Sayyid Qutb has used it and its verses as a context rather than actually deriving his ideology from them; so much so that even a scholar such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi has criticised his approach to the Qur'an as extremely selective and unsophisticated, if not misleading (Musallam 2005: 178–80). The impression, while reading Qutb's works such as *Social Justice in Islam* (1970) and the most famous *Milestones* (2005), is that he juxtaposes particular verses to his way of thinking and viewing the world. Several in-depth studies have been devoted to the ideas, terminology and ideology of Qutb both in the form of extended articles (Musallam 1993, Akhavi 1997, Shepard 1997, 2003 and Khatab 2002) and recently in specific monographs (Musallam 2005, Khatab 2006a, b) which explore the formation of his ideology. I suggest, however, that to understand Qutb, we need to look at his life and his environment. Below I summarise the main aspects of it (for a detailed account see Haim 1982, Akhavi 1995, Musallam 2005).

Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Hussayn Shadhili was born in 1906 in the village of Musha, in upper Egypt. His father, Qutb Ibrahim, a farmer, was an important member of the village, who, however, would face some financial difficulties that were never resolved until his death. Fatimah, Sayyid's mother, came also from a well-established family within the village. Yet even her family were facing a slow but untreatable decline. Sayyid Qutb grew up with the awareness of being the 'hope' of his family, which privileged him over his brothers and sisters (Musallam 2005: 30–5). Sayyid's education, both in the 'madrassah' and subsequently in Cairo, was very successful and his skills in Arabic were soon noted. Eventually, from 1929 to 1933, he attended Diir al-'Uliim, a school that balanced Islamic tradition and Western secular traditions (Musallam 2005: 35–6, Shepard 1997: 197). In his autobiographical novel *A Child from the Village,* it is described how he became fully absorbed in the study of a variety of materials, such as 'poetry, novels, and play, translated from Western literature. He had to study modern psychology, including the theory of the unconscious, psychoanalysis and behavioural psychology, biology, Darwinism, chemistry, Einstein and the theory of relativity, the structure of the universe, the analysis of atom and its relation to radiation, as well as modern scientific and philosophical theories in various field of knowledge' (Musallam 2005: 36). Qutb started to be recognised as an 'intellectual' and he worked with the Ministry of Education. During the 1930s, after his poetry production, he focused on literary

criticism. Shepard has observed, 'During this period his ideological position might be described as nationalist and secularist; while not rejecting Islam as a religion he was not interested in applying it to all areas of life' (1997: 197).

During his residence in Cairo, where his mother and brother joined him after the death of his father, Qutb started to express frustration and unhappiness in his poetic work. The political and social crisis of the Egyptian society, where 'the great expectations that had accompanied the revolution of 1919 were soon transformed into violent conflicts and harsh conspiracies in Cairo in which all values and ethics were lacking and nothing remained except the feeling of loss, frustration and disappointment' (Musallam 2005: 41), started to affect the young Qutb, who now had to take care of his family. This frustration with the social political life of a chaotic Egypt would deeply influence Qutb. During the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, he started to be more interested in Egyptian politics and the idea of social justice, as well as the study of the Qur'an. His articles on the Qur'an and its inimitability (*i'az*) were published in prominent journals such as the scientific monthly review *al-Muqtataf*. Musallam has suggested, 'Qutb's interest in the Qur'an in 1939, albeit for literary purposes only, can be seen as the first major sign of the change that was to take place in his intellectual orientation and the beginning of his search for an Islamic Ideology' (2005: 56). Qutb passed through different political experiences, including pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism. He also demonstrated his anti-Western (in particular anti French, British and American) sentiments in articles he published as well as his participation, in 1947, in the Convention of the Arab Maghrib. Still, in 1947 he started, with another eight intellectuals, a new journal *Al Fikr al-Jadid* (New Thought), which according to Heyworth-Dunne (1950) attracted the attention of the Muslim Brotherhood, who then tried to convince Qutb to join the organisation, an offer that he refused. Nonetheless, Qutb's political editorial experience continued until 1948 when the Palestinian war and the introduction of martial law in Egypt forced him to halt the publication. Yet during this experience and the increasingly pessimistic views Qutb was forming about Egyptian society, he devoted his literary effort to his famous book *al-'adalah al-ijtima 'iyyah fi al-islam* (*Social Justice in Islam*, Qutb 2000).

The authorities very soon became suspicious, after reading Qutb's dedication, that he was secretly a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and tried to prevent the publication of the book. It was finally

published the year after (1949) while Qutb was in the USA. The dedication read,

> To the youngsters whom I see in my fantasy coming to restore this religion anew like when it first began … fighting for the cause of Allah by killing and by getting killed, believing in the bottom of their hearts that the glory belongs to Allah, to his Prophet and to the believers … To those youngsters who I do not doubt for a moment will be revived by the strong spirit of Islam from past generations to future generations in the very near future.
>
> (quoted in Musallam 1993: 61)

The change in Qutb's rhetoric is surprising. Religion is prominent as the eschatological mission. It is not difficult to see here the Qutb of *Milestones*; the charismatic leader calling the ummah to the 'restoration' of the corrupted *Islam*. Justice, the only real justice, the one that Allah has offered, becomes the main theme of the book and of Qutb's future works. Only through becoming a slave of Allah can the human being achieve real dignity, because dignity, in Qutb's terms, means freedom from social oppression and freedom from hierarchical powers. No human being can be subjected to another, because humankind can only be subjected to God. The language is based on strong feelings, as usual in Qutb's writings (cf. Musallam 1993, Shepard 1997).

Just after finishing *al-'adalah al-ijtima 'iyyah fi al-islam*, Qutb was sent to the USA to study its educational system. The American experience would deeply mark Qutb as a person and as an ideologue, but not in a positive way. As Musallam (2005: 114) has described,

> from Denver, Qutb writes that during his first year in the 'workshop' of 'the New World' […] he did not see, except in rare moments, a human face with a look that radiated the meaning of humanity. Instead, Qutb writes, he found harried crowds (jumu' rakidah) resembling an excited herd (qati' ha'ij) that knew only lust and money. He describes love (al-hubb) in America as merely a body that lusts after another body, or hungry animal aspirations, or even the flirtation (al-ghazal) that normally precedes 'the final step'. He adds that nature had bestowed on America many blessings, including natural and human beauty, but no one understood or felt this beauty except as animals and beasts.

Qutb's view of the USA can only be described as dystopic, strongly affected by emotional components aimed at reinforcing a sense of superiority derived from his feeling of being Muslim. While Qutb was visiting the USA, Hassan al-Banna, the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, was assassinated in February in Cairo. Qutb witnessed the Americans, who called the Brotherhood and its leaders 'terrorists', rejoice at news of the assassination. Qutb, thus, took his decision to become part of the organisation, which then would recognise him as one of its most important voices. In 1950, feeling depressed about both the immoral condition of the USA and the political persecution of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Qutb decided to travel back to Cairo, where he pursued his independent career as an Islamic intellectual. Increasingly involved in difficult political games of the Egyptian regime, in 1954 Qutb was arrested for the first time. For most of the rest of his life he was confined to prison, where he witnessed and endured torture, and saw his fellow Brothers killed and horribly persecuted for their political views.

It is during this captivity that Sayyid Qutb would continue to write and update previous works. Among them, he started to plan *ma'alim fi al-tariq* (*Milestones*, Qutb 2005), which he successfully published between 1964 and 1966, while he was enjoying a brief period of freedom. However, it was a freedom that *Milestones* itself would bring to a tragic end. In this book, what was Qutb's Manichean vision of the world became fully developed, with ordinary Muslims being included in the category *'yihili* (barbaric, part of *jahiliyya*) other than if they demonstrated being fully the slaves of Allah. This total surrender to Allah's law (that is, Sharia) does not exclude the leader of the nation, who cannot be considered above the divine law (see Qutb's conceptualisation of *hakimiyyah*, cf. Khatab 2006b). To obtain this, Qutb says, the ummah needs an elite, a vanguard, which detaching from the *jahili* society, emotionally rather than physically (*'uzla shu'uriyya*) can then lead the society towards the real dignity of being a human being. This dignity can only exist if justice is implemented, and justice can only exist if Allah's law is respected. Qutb was re-arrested, despite his very precarious health condition and, after a trial, sentenced to death by hanging. The main witness for his prosecution was not a person, but rather a book: *ma'alim fi al-tariq*.

Qutb appears to have passed through different phases in his life. Most scholars who have analysed his life have done so through his works and political activities. Yet following Qutb's life through his literacy can overshadow some important aspects. For instance Crooke (2007), in his review of Musallam's book, has noticed that Musallam has paid some attention to Qutb's traumatic experience of prison, the

torture he endured and the impact that it had on his views, whereas other commentators and scholars have only briefly mentioned it.[12] Crooke, rightly, feels that the horrific experience[13] of screams, blood, deep depression, nightmares becoming real (such as Qutb's fear of dogs, which were used to torture prisoners) should be emphasised, if not studied more. Therefore Crooke (2007: 464) observes,

> Musallam touches on it only briefly, but one can imagine the psychological impact of a decade in gaol for a man like Qutb. A man of neat almost stiff appearance; a participant in literary circles, a poet and a bachelor faced the horrors of the mistreatment and torture that was common in Egyptian prisons. We are told of but one incident in 1957 when 21 Muslim Brothers were arbitrarily killed for refusing to report for their daily hard labor of rock breaking. Qutb, we are told, was horrified by the barbarism of the gaolers to other human beings. We can imagine how this incident and the routine of torture impacted on a man of sensibilities. He was sickened and revolted by this violent mindless assault on ideas. It is no wonder that he decided that intellectual suasion had no place in the horror of an Egyptian system that crushed dissent and which erased all humanity. Qutb decided to pull down the 'Temple pillars'. He became a revolutionary.

Notwithstanding the dire experience of torture and prison, there are also other elements in Qutb's life that facilitated his cognitive opening and the relationship between his autobiographical-self, his identity and his strong feeling of justice and feeling of dignity. One the one hand, the mythologisation of his childhood, religious education and his village, which surely contrasted with the experience of American city life; on the other, the political and social Egyptian environment, which at that time (but also today) was marked by extreme injustices, despotism, corruption and status differences. Qutb was looking for dignity, and so justice, not just with his mind, but also with his heart and feelings. The Qur'an, which for a long time he studied as a form of, though divine, art, became the best framework through which to express them.

Conclusion

As we have seen from the ethnographic examples in this chapter, some of the respondents have shown a very similar worldview and understanding of both justice and dignity to Sayyid Qutb. The respondents quoted and discussed here were not the only ones to show such a

Manichean vision of society (see also Marranci 2006, 2007). Not all of them knew Qutb's rhetoric and ideology. We may assume, as many students of fundamentalism have done, that the similarities between Qutb's ideas and my respondents can be found in the sacred text, as for instance Hood et al. (2005) have suggested with their model of intratextuality. Or we may assume, as for instance Bruce (2000), that Qutb and my quoted respondents are not the exception but the norm because they are the real believers, the ones who bring their strong faith to its *logical* consequences. Or again, we may assume, as Marty and Appleby (1991: 814–43) and among many others including Ruthven (2004), that Qutb and my quoted respondents think as they do because they share some main characteristics that are part of the fundamentalist *Familienähnlichkeit*. Yet one question remains unanswered in all of these (likewise in many already discussed) theories of fundamentalism and radicalism: why? Why do they read, if they actually read, the sacred texts in such a way? Why, if they are the 'real' believers that Bruce suggests, so many other believers, who fully respect their own religion, do not show such *forma mentis*? It is clear that these theories have serious issues, being mainly proposed for explaining the behaviour of groups, instead of individuals, because the individual is expected to merge, with his or her self and identity, within it; as oversimplified social identity theory may argue. In this chapter, I have argued that we have to start (yet certainly not to finish) with the individual. Without clear dynamics that involve the individual in the risky decision making of partaking in radical groups and activities, we will never be able to answer the many 'whys' that have been left behind. Certainly, I am not the only anthropologist who has argued for this need to go back to the individual first; and in this chapter, I have followed the convincing arguments of others in the field who have pioneered such an approach (cf. Rapport 1997, 2003, Hornborg 2003, Milton 2007).

In this chapter we have observed how, at least among my respondents in this study, the concepts of justice and dignity become a point of juncture between their political and religious arguments. It is my contention that what I have defined as the feelings of justice and dignity play a fundamental role in how my respondents, and the historical case of Qutb, have formed their eschatological viewpoints (what scholars have called fundamentalism). Naturally, there are other elements, as we have seen, that we should take into consideration, such as the formation of each individual's autobiographical memory, identity and the impact of the social, political and general environment. Yet the particular combinations of these elements and the emotions that they provoke, as well as

their impact on the long-term autobiographical self, may explain why certain individuals decide to express their strong feelings of justice and dignity through religious rhetoric to make sense of their own eschatological expectations.

In Islamic radicalism – such as that expressed by my respondents and many years before them by Qutb – this dynamic has brought them to distinguish between two coexisting forms of justice. The first, they consider a human product that is expressed through laws and derived from agreed social, political and cultural values of secular societies. The second is based upon God's revelations, which have been provided to all 'People of the Book', and of which the Qur'an is the most perfect and unadulterated form. This brings some Muslims to perceive the two forms of justice as fundamentally incompatible. As one of my respondents, Nura, a 27-year-old Indian Muslim migrant living in Glasgow, observed, 'While Western justice transforms people into slaves of their societies, Islamic justice transform human beings into Allah's slaves; this is exactly what the word Muslim means.' Most Muslims whom I have interviewed associated the secular juridical system with *jahiliyyah*, the pre-Islamic lifestyle. Although often they do not directly use Qutb's terminology, their views are very much those expressed by the Egyptian ideologue. Another aspect of this conceptualisation of justice and dignity is the idea that Muslims cannot merely witness evil and wrongdoing. Rather, they have to correct it as part of their being fully human (that is, part of their own feeling of dignity). In other words, though expressed also this time in a-theological terms, we can recognise something similar to the so-called doctrine of 'forbidding wrong' (cf. Cook 2003).

I suggest that when we look at these elements together, we may observe that some Muslims form what I have called an 'Islamic ethos of justice' (Marranci 2007). It is important to notice that not all Muslims who have formed such an Islamic ethos of justice will develop radical views. Yet in certain circumstances, some of which I have discussed above, the rather moral Islamic ethos of justice, when affected by strong forms of dystopia that exalt the personal feeling of justice and dignity, can turn into what I have defined as an 'Islamic ideology of justice'. In the young British Muslims I have studied in this research (but see Marranci 2006 for cases in Ireland and France), their increasingly dystopic views of the West, as an imagined category, lead them to see it as a-just rather than unjust. Indeed, some of my respondents have pointed out that on the one hand, 'the West' is often presented as a Christian place and entity, but in reality it has socially

and politically lost its Christian values, leaving the door open to what some of them have defined as 'secular anarchism'. On the other hand, Muslims, many of whom argue that there is a decadence of the moral values of the West, feel that they have no democratic options to forbid wrong and to direct the West towards the real 'justice and dignity'. Yet at the same time, in the West, Muslims have not even the option of 'managing' their own community, because of the Western aversion towards Islam and in particular Sharia.

The events of September 11, and the subsequent war on terror, have increased the sense of dystopia among many young (but increasingly also older and first-generation) Muslims. There is no doubt that the so-called war on terror that has been launched since 11 September has two main concocted tragedies: the high cost of human life, and the high cost for our democratic values and understanding of social and political lives (Goldstone 2005, Leone and Anrig 2003). They are connected issues, because the erosion of the latter is the inherent cause of the former. If the war on terror has been successful in something, it has been in creating, particularly among the Muslim population, a very strong sense of dystopia towards the West, and the need to strengthen their feeling of justice and dignity as part of an Islamic Utopia. To have a dystopia you need firstly to possess a Utopia, and it is only through Utopia that ideologies may form. Indeed, Mannheim (1960) has argued that ideology could not be understood without considering the role that Utopia has in it. According to him, ideology and Utopia are two sides of the same coin, because they share what he has called reality-transcendence (1960: 236). Geoghegan (2004: 123) has further observed that ideologies and Utopias share this condition of transcendence in that they are both 'incongruent' with social reality. They differ, however, in their mode of incongruence, in that 'ideologies are antiquated modes of belief, products of an earlier, surpassed reality, whilst utopias are in advance of the current reality; ideologies are therefore transcendent by virtue of their orientation to the past, whilst utopias are transcendent by virtue of their orientation to the future.' Bonnett has also observed:

> Religious texts are, perhaps by definition, inclined to utopianism. Religion offers a transcendental code of morality and salvation that make it a fertile territory for that brand of militant enthusiasm associated with utopianism. Nevertheless, religious extremism has an important additional relationship to the utopian project.

For rather than placing utopianism at the level of mystical aspiration, it demands the subordination of earthly life to a very particular, narrowly conceived blueprint of the perfect society.

(2004: 153–4)

This reality-transcendence was definitely affecting the ideology of justice that some of my respondents had developed. Yet their ideology of justice also had a strong impact on their perception of their environment. Indeed, because they perceived the 'West' as lacking a valid ethos of justice (because of *jahiliyyah*), they perceived themselves and their fellow Muslims as constantly living in a morally threatening environment from which they must protect their identities. As Werbner (2002) has noticed, the shield protecting them from the Western 'a-justice' is nothing else than Islam itself. We can now observe that some of my Muslim respondents perceive their surroundings as marked by *jahiliyyah*, which contrasts with their ethos of justice. In the attempt to preserve their commitment to Islam (and Sharia), they form an ideology of justice, which is affected by utopianism that clashes with another popular Western reality-transcendent element, secularism. Indeed, Asad has said:

I am arguing that 'the secular' should not be thought of as the space in which *real* human life gradually emancipates itself from the controlling power of 'religion' and thus achieves the latter's relocation. It is this assumption that allows us to think of religion as 'infecting' the secular domain or as replicating within it the structure of theological concepts. The concept of the secular today is part of a doctrine called secularism. Secularism doesn't simply insist that religious practice and belief be confined to a space where they cannot threaten political stability or the liberties of the 'free-thinking' citizens. Secularism builds on a particular conception of the world ('natural' and 'social') and of the problems generated by that world.

(2003: 181, author's emphasis)

In conclusion, we can observe that even the opposition to 'secularism' and the 'Enlightenment', which has been indicated as the main cause of 'fundamentalism' and principle element of the 'family resemblance', has its real cause in much more complex human processes which see emotions, feelings and identities involved.

Notes

1. For an interesting discussion of the relevance that cognitive theories may have in the understanding of religion, see Whitehouse (2001, 2004).
2. Literally meaning 'ghost', *gora* is used to indicate White people, and, though it may depend upon the context, it has a depreciative connotation no less than the British 'Paki'.
3. On 8 February 2007, Abu Izzadeen was arrested and charged with inciting terrorism.
4. For information on the group, see Mukhopadhyay (2007).
5. On 6 October 2006, Jack Straw, the MP for Blackburn and later Secretary of State for Justice, writing an article in the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph* stated that the Muslim 'veil' (with which he actually meant the face-covering *niqab*) 'was bound to make better, positive relations between the two communities more difficult'. He also affirmed that if a 'veiled' woman were to attend his office he would have asked her to remove it. Blackburn has a strong Muslim presence, and the comments produced harsh criticism from the UK and international Muslim communities and their leaders.
6. Sharia law is derived from the Qur'an and the hadiths as well as a complex juridical process. For an introduction, I suggest reading Dien (2005).
7. Among the Sunni this expression is used to refer to the first four caliphs in the history of the Islamic empire. They were Abu Bakr (632–34 CE), Umar ibn al-Khattab, also known as Umar I (634–44 CE), Uthman ibn Affan (644–56 CE) and Ali ibn Abi Talib (656–61 CE).
8. The mistake had negative effects on the relationship between the local Muslim community and the police. It also became a symbol for many of my respondents of how Muslims may be victims not only of terrorist attacks but also what they defined as 'state terrorism'.
9. For a Western perspective of the debate, see, for instance, Masters (1991).
10. See, for instance, Aubrey (2004), Hiro (2002) and even the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (2004).
11. The term *jahiliyya* can be found four times in the Qur'an (Qu 33: 33; Qu 48: 26; Qu 5: 50; Qu 3: 154) but it never has the simple meaning of 'ignorance'. The term leaves room for interpretation, and during the beginning of the twentieth century, some Islamic thinkers, who wished to revive Islam as a political system, adopted the term to mark the difference between an Islamic-based society and a non-Islamic one (see, among the most influential, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida). Yet the most relevant exponents of such an ideology can be found on the Indian subcontinent with Abul Ala Mawdudi and Abul Hasan Nadwi. Qutb, however, differs from his predecessors in that he applied the term *jahiliyya* to people who call themselves Muslims. Hence, like other Qutbian concepts, such as *hakimiyyah* (divine governance) and *'uzla shu'uriyya* (emotional separation), *jahiliyya* was not innovative per se, but it was for its new context.
12. Indeed, to my knowledge, there is not one psychological study or even a clear reconstruction of Qutb's prison experience.
13. It is not difficult to imagine that Qutb's experience of Egyptian political prison could have been very similar to that of many contemporary Iraqis in Abu Ghraib.

5
Tawhid, Charisma and the Bund

In the previous chapter, I discussed how some Muslims, starting from an ethos of justice and dignity, may, in the right circumstances and contexts, develop what I have defined as an 'ideology of justice'. In this chapter, I observe how this 'ideology of justice' is linked to another ideology derived, this time, from one of the pillars of Islam, the 'ideology of tawhid'. Muslims declare *tawhid* in the Shahada (declaration of faith), affirming the oneness of God. Islamic theologians and philosophers have written an ocean's worth of ink about tawhid. However, the tawhid I discuss in this chapter has only a resemblance to the theological one; its essence is emotional and linked to individuals' 'acts of identity'. As in the concepts of justice and dignity, tawhid is reduced to a rhetorical device that is used to express a narrative of rebellion and a discourse of charisma.

The ideology of tawhid

I met Afzal in a room that the chaplaincy of an English high-security prison had made available. I sat in a kind of armchair waiting for the prison officer to bring Afzal from his cell to the room for our interview. I had previously visited the rest of the prison and I could in my imagination see the several heavy metal barred doors being opened and closed behind him. Afzal had been charged, at the time I met him, with being involved in terrorist activities and being part of terrorist organisations linked to al-Qaeda. I know, from what I have read in the newspapers, that he knew and followed Abu Hamza (Wiktorowicz 2005). Afzal was not the first Muslim prisoner sentenced or charged under the 2001 Terrorist Act whom I had met during my four-year research. Yet the descriptions that the prison officers and Afzal's fellow prisoners had made of him increased my curiosity about him. The prison officers saw

him as a troublemaker, but with a very soft and kind attitude, eager even to help resolve tensions among the inmates. He, however, may then reject an order or other forms of authority. Afzal's fellow Muslim prisoners described him as a spiritual person, charismatic and a 'real Muslim'. There was no doubt that Afzal had his followers.

The door opened, and an officer introduced Afzal with a smile saying, 'Hey Doc, here's your guy. Let us know when you have finished; would you like a coffee or a tea?' Even before I could speak, Afzal, smiling back, added 'Some biscuits as well, officer. I am sure that the Doc here may appreciate them; I surely do'. Afzal, a kind of smiley giant of Arab origin, with a white cap and traditional white Arab dress (*dishdashah*) sat opposite me, bent forward with clasped hands and asked me some questions about my research. After a while, the conversation turned towards a discussion about religion and life. As others, he emphasised the importance of justice and dignity, and he showed great interest in the Chechen conflict,[1] which he demonstrated to know about in quite impressive detail. Afzal used the Chechen and Palestinian resistance as examples of legitimate struggle (that is, jihad) against oppression. The conversation would likely not differ all that much were I to conduct it with a political or 'Stop the War' activist. This was true until he equated his presence in prison with the act of 'resisting' injustice in the name of Islam, as the mujahidin were doing in different parts of the world. Afzal openly condemned any act of killing innocent civilians. Yet he explained that he was, in a certain sense, a kind of *shahid* (martyr), because he was sacrificing the best years of his life in the name of Allah and justice.

When I tried to understand both why we was 'resisting' and what, he changed from his static position and started to gesticulate, showing a clear level of emotional involvement and excitement. 'We resist against falsehood, against the hypocrisy of all those people who call themselves Muslims. We wish to call brothers and sisters to the truth,' he stated. 'The "truth" would sound like a very simple and familiar one to any Muslim. It is the truth that we have to repeat all the time in our lives, and strive for. It is…' He jumped onto his feet and then, pointing his index finger to the ceiling of the room, in full voice declared, '*lā ilāha illā-llāh*'[2], *lā ilāha illā-llāh', lā ilāha illā-llāh', lā ilāha illā-llāh!*' Afzal repeated the last words, slowing down and with great emphasis. Then, he sat again in the same posture in which our conversation began, reached for his cup and took a biscuit. Before I could ask any questions, he continued,

You see, this is the truth, and this has a particular meaning that is stronger than any army [is]. Although Doc, it is not me that has to

tell you this – I know that you know what that sentence means, but it means more than just what it says. It tells you that you have only one God, Allah, over anything else. It makes you free: free from any other human servitude, from any other human authority. You are a slave, but the slave of Allah and not of the state, of the society, of the prison or of the Governor of this prison. Nobody can give you orders because you have to obey only God. So, I am free because *lā ilāha illā-llāh'* and Muslims are free because *lā ilāha illā-llāh'* and they can do everything to me but I remain free because *lā ilāha illā-llāh'*. So in the case of Palestine or any other place, Muslims are free if they respect tawhid, *lā ilāha illā-llāh'*. Now this means that there is only one justice, Allah's justice and his justice is *lā ilāha illā-llāh'*. This is my weapon, this is our weapon, this is what makes you and me brothers and the others kafirun.

Afzal's behaviour towards the officers became immediately clear to me. He would accept to help to stop a fight among fellow prisoners because this is acceptable within Islam, but he would not accept any order, even the one to enter his own cell, because the officer has no power over him, only Allah has.

   Thus, Afzal was not recognising any other law than what he considered to be Allah's law and justice. As with others among my respondents in this research, justice with the capital 'J' cannot be delivered by anybody other than Allah. At this point I wished to know in which way Afzal saw Muslims who, for example, decided to take part in the political life of the UK or any other country. His answer was clear and in a certain way expected, 'They are kafirs and of the worst species, since they should know better and fear Allah.' Clearly, Muslims who engage with the democratic processes accept a compromise which, in the views of those like Afzal, betray tawhid because the Muslim has to subject himself or herself to a human authority which, in turn, is not subjected to Allah's will. Thus, any legislation, act or decision, or even social order, which may derive from such a human arrangement, will be a byproduct of a rebellion against God and God's authority.

   During my interviews with Afzal and other Muslim prisoners who shared Afzal's views, I tried to understand the main elements behind such reasoning. In other words, do they derive from a particular reading of the sacred texts? Or perhaps, are they the result of studying a particular radical Islamic theology such as the one offered by the medieval scholar ibn Taymiyah?[3] Or do they mimic rhetoric and arguments that they pick up from what today seems to be a shared pool knowledge

made of websites, reported stories from the mass media, and regurgitated, simplified facts from pseudo-academic literature that is aimed at 'revealing' the secrets of terrorist organisations? In the case of my respondents, we may have found that these elements have surely played some role in their understanding of Islam as an ideology of tawhid. Yet there was something more than just personal forms of *ijtihad* (personal interpretation of the scripture), mirroring attractive arguments, or parroting arguments derived more from the latest Channel 4 documentary than from acquaintance with Salafi or Wahhabi thinkers.

Wiktorowicz (2005) and other students of radical movements (for instance Sageman 2004) have observed the centrality of tawhid among these movements and their members. Wiktorowicz, therefore, has noticed 'many Islamic fundamentalist movements, including al-Muhajiroun, emphasize the centrality of *tawhid*' (2005: 170, italics in the text). He then explains how most of these groups, and their members, break tawhid into 'two categories'. The first category, called *tawhid rubuiyya*, emphasises that the Lord (that is, *rabb*) can only be one. The second category, called *tawhid al-ilah*, emphasises that it is only Allah who can be worshiped. Wiktorowicz explains how this brings the group to see many of the activities of other Muslims who engage with society, or Western political life, as affected by *shirk* (that is, associating things with God), which is the opposite of tawhid. Other scholars (Al-Matroudi 2006) have pointed out the historical links with such theological interpretations and again suggested that they are part of a more general 'family resemblance' of Islamic fundamentalism (see also Sageman 2004).

In 2005 during my research in London, I became acquainted with two former members of the self-disbanded al-Muhajiroun; Mahir, a 28-year-old of Algerian origin, and Issam, a 23-year-old of Pakistani origin. During one of our conversations, I asked what attracted them to Bakri's organisation and ideas. They believed that Bakri was a good scholar of Islam, who was ready to avoid the compromises that most 'imams' were ready to make for political gain, so during one of our conversations Issam and Mahir observed,

> *Mahir*: I have to say that what Bakri did was clarifying, no – better I provide the right words for what I actually felt before. How can I say … well, we can say that I believed that Muslims need to express the frustration that we have inside because of what is happening to us here and in the rest of the UK. I felt that Islam had the answer that Allah is what we needed to bring here in our lives; I mean, in all

aspects of it, economically, socially, and of course politically. I knew that I could go back to Algeria, where I still have some family, and fight for the right cause. You know what I mean. But I thought that I need to know more, since I had just these things inside me but they were without form: they were like ghosts going around my mind and soul. I read the Qur'an many times and the Hadiths, but everything seemed confused; yet there was something in me that said, 'Issam it is time that you look even in China'[4]. I met a bro who told me how Omar [Bakri] had the right Islamic answers …

Issam: Yes he had a lot of time and did not shy away from answering any question that he was asked. He was so clear and made things very simple in beautiful ways. His lectures were very powerful from this viewpoint …

Mahir: Yeah … you are right, I mean, I had all these things in my mind and they became clear because now I knew what they were, I mean … I mean he gave me the words, the verses [of the Qur'an] and the narrations [hadiths] which made sense with what I knew even before.

Issam: Look, if you want to summarise what is essential for Islam, it is that there is only one God, Subhana Wa Ta'ala [an appellative for Allah] and you cannot associated anything with God; from there you start and lots of things come … lots of things, including an understanding of who is Muslim and who is not.

Clerics, such as Omar Bakri Muhammad (Wiktorowicz 2005, Connor 2005), use their knowledge to develop their rhetoric and convince their followers that, as scholars of Islam, they retain the perfect and unique key to salvation through Islam.

As Wiktorowicz has shown (2005: 135ff.) credibility is essential for competing in the – today, thanks to the Internet (Bunt 2000) larger than ever – market of Islamic preachers. Yet as in any other market, that of the radical clerics works because of the principle of supply and demand: there must be an audience looking for a certain kind of product, which in this case is ideology. From my research (Marranci 2006, 2007), I have concluded that an over-focus on the powerful 'charisma' of the radical leader can end in overlooking the dynamics of what I call the 'market of emotional Islam'. In other words, the potential followers of, for instance, Omar Bakri were seeking not Omar, the skilled, respected and knowledgeable – hence credible – Islamic scholar

(as actually Wiktorowicz seems to suggest), but rather a match to their expectations: to that blurred mix of feelings and moods, powerful enough to be persuasive and long-lasting enough to justify motivations and actions (or urgency of actions). The fact is that before meeting somebody like Omar, they did not know how to conceptualise them or how to clothe them with an aura of authority.[5] Omar Bakri offers that theological 'clothing' which helps the follower to match his expectation with the perception of being on the right path of Islam. Therefore, Omar Bakri, or whoever is available in the volatile and ever-changing market of 'emotional Islam', is instrumental rather than essential.

Fear, schismogenesis and emotional Islam

Thus, what is essential in providing such understanding of tawhid, which, as in the case of Afzal and many others, even the reference to Muhammed, as *rasulu allah*, is left behind. First, we have noticed in the previous chapter that some Muslims, because of the context and environment in which they find, or found, themselves, form what I have called feelings of justice and dignity. Both of these feelings go beyond the conceptualisation of justice and dignity as social, political and philosophical to form, in most cases an ethos, which in the right circumstances can become a strong ideology through to which make sense not only of the world around oneself, but also of one's auto-biographical self. Indeed, the environment in which today Muslims live is certainly marked by what Bateson has defined as *schismogenesis* (2002). Bateson, during his study of the Iatmul tribe (1936), observed that 'various relations among groups and among various types of kin were characterised by interchanges of behaviour such as that the more A exhibited a given behaviour, the more B was likely to exhibit the same behaviour' (2002: 98); in other words, we can observe a 'positive gain', which Bateson has termed s*ymmetrical changes*. However, Bateson has also highlighted another pattern of behaviour within the Iatmul tribe, in which the behaviour of B, although being different from that of A, was *complementary* to it.

   Bateson, to facilitate our understanding of the Iatmul tribe's social cultural dynamics, has provided some examples of both patterns from our own culture, and suggested that although *symmetrical changes* are like armament races, athletic emulation and boxing matches, *complementary* ones are like dominance–submission relationships, such as sadism–masochism, or spectatorship–exhibitionism. Bateson has described how both the changes tend to escalate progressively, and it

is this dynamic of escalation that he has called *schismogenesis*. Bateson has then observed,

> A factor which is necessary for schismogenesis has already been mentioned, but it assumes a special importance in these psychological contexts. I said (p. 176) that if the behaviour of A 'is *culturally labelled as* an assertive pattern while B is expected to reply to this with what is *culturally regarded as* submission' we may expect schismogenesis to occur. The ethological aspect of the behaviour is fundamental for schismogenesis, and we have to consider not so much the content of the behaviour as the emotional emphasis with which it is endowed in its cultural setting.
>
> <div align="right">(1936: 183, author's emphasis)</div>

As we shall see, the 'emotional emphasis' will become a very important aspect in our understanding of the dynamics through which certain Muslims, and consequently certain Islamic movements, developed an 'emotional Islam' based on an ideology of tawhid. Yet schismogenesis, Bateson has emphasised, is not a '[…] process which goes inevitably forward, but rather [is] a process of change which is in some cases either controlled or continually counteracted by inverse processes' (1936: 190), otherwise the system can collapse. Bateson, borrowing the term from chemistry, has defined such continual counteraction as 'dynamic equilibrium', and emotions (that is, emotions, and then feelings in Damasio's terminology) have a fundamental role in it.

As we have discussed in the Introduction, scholars, also in anthropology and religious studies, have emphasised the relevance that emotions have in our everyday life, behaviours and worldview, including religious phenomena, at both the individual and group level (Fuller 2006, 2007). For instance, recent research in religious studies (Glucklich 2001), a field in which constructivism and cultural determinism has a prominent voice, has observed the relevance of 'biological fact' in the embodiment of religious experiences. Whitehouse (2004), still starting from emotions seen as arousal, has developed the so-called theory of *modes of religiosity*. The theory claims that religious movements have their origin in two (or combinations of the two) modes of experiencing religiosity. On the one hand, there is the *doctrinal mode* that produces explicit and standardised beliefs expressed through repetitive sermonising rituals and shows wide dissemination of the tradition. This, of course, Whitehouse has argued, facilitates the institutionalisation and the formation of authorities as guardians of orthodoxy, 'in sum, the doctrinal mode of

religiosity consists of a suit of mutually reinforcing features. When these features coalesce, they tend to be very robust historically and may last for centuries or even millennia. At the root of all this a set of cognitive causes deriving from the ways in which frequently repeated activities and beliefs are handled in human memory' (2004: 70). On the other hand, the *imagistic mode*, in which emotional imagery are evoked in special, and often shocking, rituals that trigger, through the emotional impact, personalised experiences and interpretations which are conducive to the formation of small communities of participants (2004: 70ff.). The imagistic mode is often linked to rituals, actions and performances that evoke fear and revulsion.

Fear is one of the most powerful emotions experienced by living beings (Campanella 2006), and is one of the most important reactions to internal and external hostile, or so perceived, environments both of individuals and communities (Plutchik 2003). Fuller has rightly observed, 'Fear thus mobilizes our physiology and cognition in indefatigable ways. It causes a shift in our perception and tension, redirecting our information-gathering programs to detect the casual agency responsible for the perceived threat in the environment. Fear alters our goals and motivation weightings, making safety a far higher priority than the pursuit of satisfactions that do not bear upon immediate survival. It redirects memory to retrieve similar threatening patterns or successful escape strategies from our past' (2007: 32). Fear, as emotion, affects how we focus on our priorities, so that Izard et al. (2000, but see also Izard 1977) have highlighted how it tends to produce a sort of 'tunnel vision'. The effect is not only psychological but also cultural, because people can 'fear' not just for their own lives, but also for losing their social, political and cultural positions. Hence, the perceived threats can be of different orders, but the feeling of fear remains the same powerful mechanism of behavioural, both physical and psychological, control.

In his article, Fuller (2007) demonstrates how apocalyptic thought is influenced by fear, as an emotion. He has provided examples that show how 'emotional episodes of fear mobilize specific kinds of theological commitments' and observed, 'fear is surely not the only emotion present in those who hold strongly to apocalyptic systems […] [but] it seems fair to conclude that fear and anxiety play a more prominent role in apocalypticism than they do in many other forms of religiosity' (2007: 36–7). Indeed, emotions, as we have discussed in the Introduction, cannot be studied or observed in isolation, and elements such as environment, in its fully general meaning, should be taken into consideration. Nonetheless, there is another aspect of emotions that is relevant in our

understanding of radical views of Islam: emotions call emotions. Izard has observed, 'the *perception* of threat or danger activates the fear. By contrast, the *feeling* of fear activates the shame. The consolidation of the pattern automatizes the activation' (Izard et al. 2000: 27, author's emphasis). Then, psychologists (such as Beck et al. 1985, and in particular Tangney et al. 1992, 1996), have also observed that shame frequently pairs with anger. Hence, there is a certain system among the combinations of fear–shame and shame–anger as well as anger–fear.

My research (see also Marranci 2006), as well as the few other anthropological[6] studies providing participant observation accounts, has offered clear evidence of the widespread existence, among Islamic movements and their members, of the above described dyadic dynamic of emotions. There is a general feeling among some Muslims, both living in the West and Muslim-majority countries, that Islam, as religion and as part of being Muslim, is under attack, both in physical (see the cases of Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and Chechnya among others) as well as cultural and political dimensions. If we read again Afzal's comments, as well as my other respondents in this study, the relationship between fear–shame and shame–anger is evident; likewise in the process of the formation of the ideology of justice. How can it be ignored that much of Qutb's worldviews and utopic ideology of Islam were inspired by the experience of humiliation, prison and torture?

During my interviews focusing on the particular radical understanding of tawhid, my respondents have clearly shown their fear, anger and shame about what they called 'the condition of Islam'. So, for instance, Haytham, a 26-year-old Moroccan living in Leeds, who still supports Bakri and follows his Internet lectures (Awan 2007), has observed:

> You see Islam attacked everywhere. They [non-Muslims] respect nothing, not even Jesus,[7] and are you surprised that they do not respect Muhammad? They say that the Qur'an itself is demonic[8] or equivalent to Hitler's Mein Kampf. Muslims have to defend Islam. I felt anger when I saw the pictures [of the Danish cartoons], but also shame because this is happening at all … it is the Muslims, the ummah, who let this happen. People think that Islam is there just because Muslims are there. But we must fear Allah, the Only One. We must fear to lose our *dīn* [faith] to the corruption of *dunia* [the things of the world or also secularism]. I fear to lose myself since there are many temptations, but there is no Islamic state, today. There is no hope for salvation here; you have to struggle against your temptations and have a clear heart that Allah can read and see.

> You can only hope in *al-rahman*[9] and His forgiveness or face the *athaabal qubr* [the punishment of the grave].[10] So, you have to do all your best to reach *al-jannat* [paradise], and the best thing to do is to defend Islam and not be a shame to the real ummah, the one that says that there is only One God and He is Allah, and does not commit *shirk*.

As I have explained in my theory of identity, 'certain circumstances could trap people in schismogenic processes that could 'break down' the delicately shaped machinery of our imagination called identity' (Marranci 2006: 50). Often the most common elements that may develop schismogenic processes within a person (so in the relationship between the autobiographical self and identity) derives from what Bhabha has defined as a 'circle of panic', which is characterised by 'the indeterminate circulation of meaning as rumour or conspiracy, with its perverse, psychic affects of panic' (1994: 200). Today that 'circle of panic' is affecting both Muslims and non-Muslims in a very dangerous process of division and resentment. Although different Muslim communities, and different Muslims, may react in many varied ways, the emotions derived from the current permanent conflictive aura – often marked by a demonisation of Islam and the monolithic representation of the West as a cruel Satan – traps some Muslims (and also some non-Muslims) in schismogenic processes. Usually, the Batesonian 'dynamic equilibrium' is achieved with what I have defined as an 'act of identity'.

There are no doubts that the ideology of tawhid, together with the ideology of justice, plays a fundamental role in what I have called emotional Islam. In this section, we have explored the relationship between the impact of emotions, such as fear, shame and anger, on the formation of this ideology. I have suggested that schismogenic processes, facilitated by fears and a sense of shame, bring some Muslims to act through their apocalyptic eschatology, in which their own salvation depends upon a change in their environment or at least in the emotional commitment to resist what they fear the most: compromising their own identity, their own 'feeling to be Muslim' (Marranci 2006).

From tawhid to the Bund

In the first two chapters of this book, we have noticed how scholars have discussed Islamic fundamentalism, radicalism and extremism as the result of particular common elements, such as an acceptance of inerrant scripturalism; rejection of Enlightenment, secularism, the

modern and modernism, difference; formation of and support for conservative ideologies, patriarchisms and enclaves, and authority expressed through strong charismatic leadership. Marty and Appleby (1991) have emphasised how the leader of the Islamic group can only be a charismatic male, through which the group can reinforce and channel their communal identity (see also Lawrence 1990, Howland 1999, Ruthven 2004). Other scholars, such as Riesebrodt (2000), have even proposed a distinction between two main species of fundamentalisms: legalistic–literalist, where authority derives from sacred texts; and charismatic, where authority is centred on a leader who embodies the essence of the religion. As I have argued before, such differentiation between the two 'fundamentalisms' is influenced by the classic social scientific division of Islam into little and great traditions (for a critique see Marranci 2008b). Yet Max Weber's work on charisma is certainly the most quoted and referenced where leadership and authority within Islamic fundamentalist and radical movements are studied.

Weber's interest in charisma is documented in his many works, but *Herrschaftssoziologie*, which is part of the famous *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1976) remains, rightly, the most quoted. His theory of charisma has influenced many other studies focusing on leadership, charisma and authority.[11] The term 'charisma' has also become particularly common, so much so that as Riesebrodt (2000) has highlighted, it may have become banal. Indeed, it is so widely spread that Turner has sarcastically noticed, '"Charisma" is the name of a line of yachts, the stage name of a female movie star (Charisma Carpenter), the name of a German modelling agency, a Colorado on-line game developer, an Antiguan web-hosting company, a British record company, a Swiss rock band, a southern California company that designs floats for parades, and an exotic car rental establishment in Yorkshire, among many other uses' (Turner 2003). Despite this general use and the wide social scientific interest in the topic, Riesebrodt (2000) has argued that the concept itself has never been thoroughly explained, bringing some scholars (see Hatscher 2000) to consider it useless and empty. Nonetheless, students of Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism have mainly based their understanding of the dynamics between activists and leaders in Islamic movements through it. Yet should we really refer to Weber to understand such a dynamic, particularly involving the concept of authority and obedience? As we shall see, I wish to suggest a different approach; to do so I need to discuss some aspects of Weber's theory, without, however, going too deeply into detail for the sake of economy of space.

Weber has discussed charisma as part of his discussion on authority, in which he has recognised only 'three pure types of legitimate domination' (1968: 215), which he has defined as the 'the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons' (1968: 212). The three pure types of domination that Weber has indicated are: legal, traditional and charismatic. The first form is based upon a system of rule that is applied to all the population through an administrative and juridical system. The leaders are appointed or elected through clear legal producers. Power, in other words, is limited and controlled bureaucratically. The second form is based on the power of kinship and tradition, so that legitimacy through inheritance is how power is controlled. Finally, charismatic domination is based on the particular qualities of a recognised leader. These qualities may derive from magical, spiritual and divine sources. People follow the leader and become adepts ready to perform his instructions because of 'devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him' (1968: 212). Weber, however, has noticed that, because irrational elements are at the root of charismatic domination, any charismatic leadership will shift to a rational (that is, legal) or traditional authority.

The charismatic leader, according to Weber, is *spezifisch außeralltäglich*, 'specifically extraordinary' (1976: 140) because he has to perform miracles or show magical attributes, which the followers (*Anhnäger*) have to acknowledge. Indeed, the followers look for the evidence that God has chosen the leader and is answering his or her requests by gifting the leader with extraordinary powers. It is this process that binds followers to their charismatic leader rather than particular arguments or ideologies. The process, in other words, is irrational; I would say emotional (Bradley and Roberts 1988, Conger 1988, Eisenstadt 1995). Weber has argued that the charismatic leader answers to *Gesinnungsethik* (ethics of faith) rather than *Verantwortungssethik* (ethics of responsibility). Turner (1999: 128 and 181) has explained,

> By [*Gesinnungsethik*] is meant the leading principle in the conduct of men who act only by faith, either submitting their success entirely to the will of God or, if their actions do not succeed, blaming their fellow-men; [*Verantwortungssethik*] designates the leading principle in the conduct of those who feel themselves responsible also for all the foreseeable consequences of their deeds. These two principles are always at war, whatever value is pursued [...] Adherence to *Gesinnungsethik* readily degenerates into utopianism, to wishful

thinking which refuses to face depth of tragedy and conflict which is inherent in the world.

Unsurprisingly, Weber has told us that the charismatic leader does not live on politics but actually for it, and for this reason he does not need a political program because he can achieve support for his ideas through devotion. However, Weber has emphasised that the charismatic leader will maintain his leadership as long as his followers can see him as the 'das ewig Neue', the eternally new (Weber 1988: 481) and successful. For this reason, Weber has a very pessimistic view of charismatic leadership and has noticed, 'all charisma, however, in every hour of its existence finds itself on this road, from a passionate life in which there is no place for the economic to slow suffocation under the weight of material interests, and with every hour of its existence it moves further along it […]' (Weber and Runciman 1978: 235).

Not all sociologists or anthropologists have found Weber's argument on charisma convincing (see, for instance, Turner 2003, 1999 and 1974). Geertz, after observing that, as many other key ideas in Weber's sociology, his understanding of charisma remains unclear because it lacks a clear referent, asks 'does it denote a cultural phenomenon or a psychological one? […] it is not clear whether charisma is the status, the excitement, or some ambiguous fusion of the two' (1983: 121). Geertz has also emphasised how Weber has presented different themes within his analysis of charisma, but all of them 'are more stated than developed' (1983: 122). Despite such evident weakness, most literature about Islamic fundamentalism, extremisms and radicalism (what we have called 'emotional Islam'), has focused on charisma or, as an integral part, the leader's authority over the group (cf. Lawrence 1990, Silvan 1995, Bruce 2000, Almond et al. 2003) in Weberian terms. For instance Silvan, who has described Islamic fundamentalist groups as 'enclaves', has claimed,

In no area is the modern nature of the enclave more evident than with regard to authority, fashioned as it is in quite a novel way. Authority is usually vested there in a small number of individuals (preferably one, at least for each local community of the enclave). Scholarship and formal training may play a role in the selection of the leader(s), but the crucial factor is charisma: that special heavenly grace (in Arabic *baraka*; in Hebrew *hesed elohi*) that sets one man (virtually never is it a woman) apart from the rest of the enclave.

(1995: 50–1)

According to Silvan, not only is the formation of enclaves linked to the presence of a leader(s) who embodies authority, but also this authority is achieved through 'special heavenly grace', similarly to how Weber has connected charisma to the *außeralltäglich* of the leader. In other words, Silvan has told us that the members of Islamic groups are nothing else than *Anhnäger*, followers attracted by the leader's perceived supernatural power.

Geertz, by contrast, has defined charisma as a sign of power, a centre from which the charismatic person surrounds himself and associates with in order to be recognised as charismatic. Of course, Geertz has argued that the 'centre' is neither geographical nor mathematical, but rather, 'the point or points in a society where its leading ideas come together with its leading institutions to create an arena in which the events that most vitally affect its members' lives take place […] it [charisma] is a sign […] of being near the heart of things' (1983: 122). Geertz does not see charisma, as Weber does, as a product of irrationality, but rather as a particular metaphysical location of high symbolic values; the charismatic leader, in other words, is a kind of 'innate' strategist able to find himself in the right centre of that 'arena'. The paradox, Geertz has told us, is that the centre is often located in the periphery of organised power and authority – Geertz uses the example of the charismatic Sufis to illustrate this point. Both the ideas of charismas are founded upon an individual with special characteristics, but Hetherington has, rightly according to me, noticed, 'too much work on charisma in the past has focused on the charismatic leader and not upon the elective conditions that are the source of the charismatic community' (1998: 93). We shall see below, that in the case of emotional Islam, charismatic communities play a fundamental role.

Although these two models of charisma have been often used in the discussion of fundamentalism and the relevant role that the 'leader' has in spreading the movement's ideology and in recruiting activists, during my research I started to build up a very different picture of the dynamics of charisma within what I have preferred to call emotional Islam. We have seen that Silvan, starting from Weber, discusses the charismatic leader as 'heavenly grace', yet my respondents described the leader in very pragmatic terms, and charisma as being a consequence of what they call a 'strong *iman*'. Mahir, who was an activist of Al-Muhajiroun, noticed,

> We respect our leaders, as Muslims we have to. Yet the leader has to show that he has a strong *iman*, which means to reject all *shirk*

and profess with all his heart and actions tawhid. You do not follow somebody because he speaks well or even has good knowledge: it is the behaviour that matters most. I have not seen many leaders around. I have seen people with a lot of interest, but they are not really interested in serving Allah. This is the point, bro. You see, serving Allah, the leader is the tool, not the source. He is nothing, he is a slave of Allah like me, but the difference is that the leader, or at least what I can consider a leader, should be a better slave than me; an example. This means that he should be ready to die for Islam because he won't compromise with dunia [things of the world]. Of course, in this way, he achieves *baraka*; but it is not the other way around. Bro, listen […] we are no Hindu, Sufis here. We are Muslims and we do not need, unlike Christians, people who make miracles. Only Allah can grant them, but you have to ask, you have to perform du'a, and ask for *tawbah*.

Mahir was not the first among my respondents and friends to emphasise the relevance of a 'strong' iman[12] as one of the main characteristics of leadership. Furthermore, members of radical groups based in the UK tend to reject the idea that the leader is charismatic because of, for instance, *baraka*, because of the association that the word has with Sufi practices and narrative (Werbner 2003), which they see as *bid'ah* (innovation, and so heresy). The leader is charismatic in the sense that he provides the 'good example' in the total submission to Allah and acceptance of tawhid. Weber's theory of charisma seems inadequate to explain the phenomenon, at least within Sunni Islam (see also Turner 1974).

   Yet while discussing the topic with my respondents, the concept of charisma was linked not to a person but to a collective: the ummah. Although both Weber and Geertz have discussed charisma more from an individualist perspective, other scholars have suggested that charisma, instead of being embodied by a person, may be the result of a group dynamic. Social identity theory has surely played a prominent role in the development of these theories. Sutton and Vertigans's *Resurgent Islam: A Sociological Approach* has applied the idea of group charisma to the analysis of Islamic fundamentalism (2005). The authors have said that they borrowed the concept of 'group charisma' from Jáuregui's study (1999), which used it in an analysis of British and Spanish attitudes to a closer European union.[13] The theory suggests that established groups form a sense of superiority, which unites the group through the idea of 'minority of the best', and this generates group charisma (2005: 143). Therefore, they have suggested that 'interpretations of Islam as a way

of life […] are legitimized by history and contemporary experiences and communal consciousness based around the *ummah* are the sources of "group charisma". The outcome is that the establisher's definitions and resultant negative self-image fail to transform identities in a secular direction' (Sutton and Vertigans 2005: 154). They then conclude that the recent global terrorist attacks have 'all played a part in reinforcing the role of "common history" within the radical's "group charisma"; even though it is different groups that are committing the attacks they are contributing to a generic praxist charisma' (200: 165).

It is not difficult to recognise in Sutton and Vertigans's usage of 'group charisma' another extremely simplified variation of so-called social identity theory or role theory.[14] Hence, 'group charisma' is what social identity theory calls 'prototype', 'group disgrace' and the process of 'stereotyping'. Sutton and Vertigans, although right in focusing on the dynamics of community to understand the function of charisma among 'radical Islamic groups', have brought their analytical tool (that is, 'group charisma') to the most extreme consequences. The individuals' actions disappear, identities melt into an indistinct imaginary 'common history' and emotional aspects remain unexplained, so that essentialism becomes the main feature of this reading of Islamic fundamentalism. In other words, a form of social Manichaeism affects Sutton and Vertigans's analysis, as their understanding of terrorist attacks (most of which are unconnected and performed by different groups) may demonstrate.

Charisma of the group has surely a role to play within expressions of emotional Islam. First, as my respondents have emphasised, charisma, within these groups, is not understood as a personal characteristic of the leader, but as part of the communal effort to respect tawhid, or better, as we have disused, the specific 'tawhid ideology' developed by the community. Secondly, the activists of the different organisations understand themselves, and their Muslim identity – how they 'feel to be Muslim' – not as the product of a sectarian division – or even enclave – but rather as part of the Muslim ummah and, what is more important, as the defenders of it. Finally, some individuals may join the groups and become active members, whereas others may just remain supporters or support the group's ideas. Nonetheless, these 'supporters' are also part of the charisma of the group. I suggest that Hetherington's re-thought of Schmalenbach's theory of Bund (1998) may be the right theoretical tool to understand the relationship between charisma and emotional Islam. In the introduction, I have emphasised how emotions and feelings (in Damasio's terms) are essential not only to understand the relationship between individuals and their environment, as well

as identity formation, but also community formation. Nevertheless, within studies of community (Amit 2002, Cohen 1982, 1985, Olwig 2002), academic studies have overlooked emotions in favour of more traditional symbolic determinism. By contrast, Hetherington's work (1998) has provided a framework for a sociological and anthropological understanding of community that re-establishes the centrality of feelings and emotions in the process of identification and community formation. In developing his theory, Hetherington has modified Maffesoli's understanding of 'emotional communities' (1996) as well as Schmalenbach's definition of Bund (1922).

Maffesoli has suggested that grouping and identification are not based on rationality and 'its modes of identification and organisation' (1996: 52), but rather on the expression of sentiments, feelings and the capacity of sharing them, through 'affectual forms of sociation' (1996: 52). He has argued that the source of ethics within the community is not a product of the rational but rather of the expressive and emotional. Hetherington has used Maffesoli's argument to show how people who are not in a predominant social position can identify with those in the group who are in subaltern conditions, through what he has called 'a politic of metonymy',

> One becomes authentic, has an identity that is real and valuable by identifying with that (or who) which is marginalized within society. The politics of difference is not only a politics where those in a subaltern position begin to speak for themselves and challenge the way they are represented as the other within society, it is also a politic of metonymy in which those not in a subaltern position identify with one or more such positions as means of valorizing their own identity as real and significant.
>
> (Hetherington 1998: 71)

As we have discussed in this chapter, and the previous one, Muslims adhering to ideologies derived from emotional Islam see themselves as struggling (that is, jihad) against a-justice, or the lack of justice that brings injustice in the form of a contemporary *jahiliyya* which denies the dignity of humanity as slaves of Allah. Therefore they feel to identify with 'that (or who) which is marginalized' not just within a particular society, but within all humanity. Hetherington has explained the historical development of the term Bund (or communion) and its, mostly unknown, usage within sociology, and concludes that mutual sentiments and feelings make it 'a fully conscious phenomenon'

(Hetherington 1998: 89). Hetherington's Bund differs from Weber's idea that being part of a group is an unconscious fact because it is a fundamental need of the individual (1968). The Bund, Hetherington has told us, is a space in which energy and charisma tend to be defused and become part of a collective ideologisation of feelings, so that within it we can find charismatic people, but they do not become objects of adoration. This is because, Hetherington has explained, 'the goal of collective responsibility and enthusiasm for a set of beliefs is likely to lead to attempts to generalise the condition of charisma through a process of diffusion within the Bund' (1998: 93).

My fieldwork tends to confirm such 'diffuse' charisma and 'enthusiasm' – which can be even observed in radical Islamic web forums and Internet communities – in the case of emotional Islam. Hetherington also has suggested,

> a Bund […] as an organizational form it performs a charismatic mode of governance to which individuals submit themselves; this is not the same, however, as saying they submit themselves to the will of individual leaders. Rather it is an expression of the subjectivised occasionalism which those engaged in creating these types of identification are active in promoting. One commits to the group one has joined and its core values rather than to a person. While it is debatable, therefore, whether this has to be embodied in a person, what has to be considered is the means by which this charisma is dispersed to all the members.
>
> (Hetherington 1998: 93)

We have seen in this chapter that one of the means through which this charisma is dispersed is the ideology of tawhid. Indeed, tawhid, in this case, has become something completely different from the orthodox Islamic concept. It has been transformed into a powerful empowering tool of identity, both personal and of the group, through which to share emotional values based on empathy with the divine; a divine, however, that as we shall see in the next chapter, is in reality a tautology of the emotional Islamic Bund.

Conclusion

We are living in a world marked by old and new conflicts as well as old and new fears. Today, there are fewer certainties and more doubts. Muslims are facing a difficult time as both communities and individuals.

During my research, I have met an increasing number of Muslims who feel discriminated against and oppressed. Yet it is not personal rights or personal respect, or even the ummah as such, which some of them feel the need to shield, but Islam. Islam is under attack, as a religion, way of life, political thought as well as a civilisation. For some of my respondents, Islam cannot be other than one, as God is one. Islam is at the same time presented as the word of Allah but also the embodied, or better the 'should be embodied', creed; it is Muslims who make it real. Yet an increasing number of young, and not so young, Muslims in the world fear for Islam: they are living in what I have called 'a circle of panic', a rumour that spreads without the possibility to verify it, or to discredit it. Parallel to the Muslim fear provoked by the idea that Islam is under attack, is 'the Western' fear that Islam is threatening 'our' civilisation. Clearly, not all Muslims think that Islam is under a generalised attack and not all people living in Europe and the USA fear Islam or perceive it as a barbaric force. However, the people who do believe so tend to be the most vocal, and consequently receive special mass-media attention. Following Bateson, I have suggested that such a dynamic is a case of schismogenesis. I have explained how a fundamental theological concept such as tawhid has become ideologised in the case of emotional Islam. I have also argued, following Hetherington's interpretation of the theory of Bund (1998), that the ideology of tawhid is the tool through which the movements express their identification.

Notes

1. For an introduction to the Chechen resistance, I suggest Seely (2001).
2. There is no God other than Allah. This is the first part of the Muslim declaration of faith or *shahadah*. Yet the shahadah has also a second part, which states that Muhammad is the prophet of Allah, a part that interestingly is missing here.
3. Taqi ad-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyah (1263–328) Islamic Sunni scholar from the Hanbali school of thought. Some scholars have suggested that his theological and political ideas have inspired some fundamentalist and radical groups. For more on Taymiyah, see Al-Matroudi (2006).
4. A popular and very much quoted hadith, but with little evidence for its authenticity, says 'Seek knowledge even in China'.
5. I have here borrowed some terminology from Geertz's definition of religion (Geertz 1973: 4), which is based on the 'system of symbols'. As I explained in my book *The Anthropology of Islam* (Marranci 2008b), we have to reconsider definitions starting from emotions and feelings, rather than adducing human agency to a vague and undefined web of symbols. From here originates my use of the terminology without, however, the reference to the universal 'system of symbols'.

6. See Marranci (2008b) for a discussion of why anthropologists have paid very little attention to the discussion of Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism.
7. In Islam Jesus, or Isa, is considered the most important prophet after Muhammad. Yet Muslims deny the divine nature of Jesus as well as his martyrdom and resurrection.
8. For example, Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses*.
9. Mercy Giver, one of the 99 names of Allah.
10. Muslims believe that when a person dies s/he has to face questioning from the two angels of death and then starts to expiate his or her sins. For a detailed explanation you can read Smith and Haddad (2002).
11. See, for instance, Freund (1968), Schweitzer (1984), Bryman (1992), and for a discussion of Weber and Islam, Turner (1974).
12. Normally translated as faith or creed, it also means trustworthiness, conscience and confidence.
13. Actually, Norbert Elias in his *The Civilizing Process*, has been the first to develop the concept of 'group charisma' and 'group disgrace' (1998) starting from Weber's idea of 'clan charisma'. For more on the sociology of Elias, see Loyal and Quilley (2004).
14. See Chapter 2 in this book for a critique as well as Marranci (2006, 2008b).

6
How to be Human: The Civilised and the Civilisable

Over the centuries, the concept of civilisation has changed and adapted to the historical context. The Greeks, Romans and Arabs associated the word 'civilisation', which derives from the Latin word *civilis*, to the urban environment and lifestyle. From a technical word, the word civilisation, as we shall see, has become part of a political discourse of difference. Similarly, the concept of 'West', from a geopolitical definition, will acquire a political connotation (Bonnet 2004).

After September 11, references to 'Western civilisation' as a Judaeo-Christian historical development appeared in the speeches of some European and American politicians and commentators. In this chapter, after reviewing the genealogy of the idea of civilisation in both Western and Arab culture, I shall discuss how some Muslims today have formed a rhetoric of civilisation which expresses a teleological vision linked to the ideology of justice and tawhid discussed above.

I also argue that within what I have called 'emotional Islam', individuals, and then communities of emotions, have developed a discourse focused on the dichotomy 'civilised' and 'civilisable' in order to affirm how to be human. It is my contention that this view has little, if anything, to do with theological or historical causes (though it may be expressed as such); rather, it serves to affirm a personal, and emotional communal (Hetherington 1998), identity as an expression of a personal autobiographical-self.

Genealogy of the 'Western' and 'Muslim' idea of civilisation

In the aftermath of September 11, a word that rarely has appeared in post-Cold War political speeches gained a new momentum: civilisation. It is not difficult to navigate the many speeches coming from Europe,

North America, Australia and all other nations that have adopted the self-definition of 'the West', and find catchy statements such as 'a struggle for civilization',[1] or, as the infamous Italian prime minister Berlusconi stated on 27 September 2001,

> We should be confident of the superiority of our civilization, which consists of a value system that has given people widespread prosperity in those countries that embrace it, and guarantees respect for human rights and religion [...] This respect certainly does not exist in Islamic countries [...] [The West] is bound to occidentalize and conquer new people [...] It has done it with the Communist world and part of the Islamic world, but unfortunately, a part of the Islamic world is 1,400 years behind. From this point of view, we must be conscious of the strength and force of our civilization.
>
> (*New York Times*, 27 September 2001)

Berlusconi's words sounded particularly shocking because of the fascist past of some ministers of his government (such as Mr Tremaglia). Indeed, the idea of the superiority of Christian Europe, and in particular the concept of *Romanità*, became central to the Nazi and fascist propaganda during the war with the Soviet Union, 'in occupied Europe this was presented as a crusade of European civilization against Asian Bolshevism. Such theme became even more prominent later in the war, paralleled in Rome by the presentation of *Romanità* as the leader of European culture against the barbarous outer world' (Payne 1995: 379). Of course, more than the nostalgic fanfare of fascist rhetoric, the work of an American political scientist, Huntington (1996), has influenced Berlusconi and several other political leaders. Although I shall discuss Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' theory later, it is relevant for my argument to observe the genealogy of the concept of civilisation both in European and Islamic philosophical, political, and sociological thought. However, because today's understanding of 'civilisation' is extremely linked to an essentialist view of another concept, 'the West', we need to start from it.

Bonnet (2004), in his book *The Idea of the West*, has provided an interesting, and provocative, reading of 'the West' as a concept. He has suggested that the historical development of the modern idea of the West cannot be understood in isolation, but rather as part of the cultural and political effort to differentiate human society. The key, according to Bonnet, is to observe the change in fortune of another powerful European myth, the superiority of the White race. If today the

expression 'Western civilisation' is widely used and accepted, 'one only has to look back some hundred years or so to find that something called "white civilization" was once also taken for granted' (Bonnet 2004: 14). Bonnet, through an analysis of works written between 1890 and 1930 in Britain, has observed that literature that supposedly had to celebrate white identity highlighted in reality the vulnerability of such a social category. By the 1930s, 'with hindsight, its decline and eclipse appears foretold in its own propaganda: for even the most ardent advocates of white solidarity found the idea inadequate' (2004: 23). One of these vulnerabilities was the lack of a proper history; the myth, in this case, had to be rooted within nature and the scientific domain. Bonnet is very careful not to directly connect the decline of Whiteness and White solidarity with the development of the modern idea of the West. He has, however, rightly observed that the fading of the former has made the latter central to the European discourse of superiority because, 'the idea of the West helped resolve some of the problematic and unsustainable characteristics of white supremacism' (2004: 36).

Nonetheless, Bonnet has noticed, the idea of the West has shown a similar vulnerability and weakness to that of its predecessor,

> For like whiteness, the idea of the West has been conflated with modernity and global mastery. These vast ambitions create a state of vulnerability. When Western colonialism was at its height, it was said that the West was in its death throes. When communism spread in East Asia, and as Asian and African countries achieved independence, it was said, perhaps with more justification, that the West was in retreat. Yet even minor phenomenon, like the rise of youth culture or the decline of classical music, have been interpreted as signalling the end of Western civilization.
>
> (2004: 36)

As we shall see, such vulnerability of the idea of the West has been recently reinforced through a new powerful myth, the progressive and theological Judaeo-Christian roots of the Western civilisation. The roots of the West are normally sought in the history of the Roman empire and the subsequent Christian Byzantine empire, as well as the so-called *Sacrum Romanum Imperium* (The Holy Roman Empire), which represented the 'Western Christendom', with its spiritual but also complex political power that is still based in Rome under the Pope (Brown 2003). With the advent of Protestantism, and the rejection of Papal authority, the term 'Western Christendom' had a legacy with a

past that the new Protestant churches wished to obliterate as an evil that had betrayed the real values of Christianity. Hence, they adopted a more sober, and malleable, 'West' (see, in particular, Federici 1995). If through the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries the idea of the West did not seem to attract much scholarly or political attention, from the mid-nineteenth century things changed. As the idea of the West became increasingly powerful, it started to carry 'traditional religious and political connotations […] [which] were, fitfully, being put to use to interpret Europe's rise to global power' (Bonnet 2004: 25).

It is in this conjecture of colonialism and European expansion that the idea of the West met the idea of civilisation. From that meeting has derived the semantic, symbolic and powerful rhetoric of civilisation that, though from opposite fronts, bin-Laden and Berlusconi (or Bush and Blair) share. Yet that conceptual and rhetorical space is not a clear and definite one; it is more a vacuum to be filled with new meanings, still rooted, however, in the mythology of a linear evolutionary history. But what is the concept of civilisation? When did it really start to matter? The answer is not easy or straightforward. Rather, it made Braudel exclaim, 'It would be pleasant to be able to define the word "civilization" simply and precisely, as one defines a straight line, a triangle or a chemical element' (Braudel 1994: 55). There are two different aspects to the concept of civilisation. One deals with the genealogy of the word: its history and development. The other, however, deals with the conceptualisation and semiotic power of defining the other. Epistemologically we can link the word 'civilisation' to the Latin *civis* (citizen) and *civites* (city) (Simpson and Weiner 1989). The Latin *civites* has both a human geographical but also a political value because it includes the active partaking in the social and cultural life of the city. By the time Europe entered the Middle Ages, the term had widened to include the meaning of humanity (Boer 2005). The terminology was not so neutral, because it helped to distinguish between the people who lived within the city (and so presumed to be learned and educated) and the people living in the countryside. Indeed the antonym of *civis* was none other than *barbarous* (from ancient Greek βάρβαρος). Hence, Mazilish has observed, 'Historical awareness, agriculture, the polis, a more refined treatment of women, such are some of the attributes the Greeks allocated to themselves as "civilized" beings. The attributes become essential elements of the further development of the term and provide reasons for the later claim that ancient Greece was the cradle of Western civilization, when the noun enters common discourse' (Mazlish 2004: 3).

Notwithstanding the genealogy of the term, 'civilisation' was fully conceptualised only starting from the second half of the eighteenth century – as different from the simple distinction between 'being civilised' and 'being barbarian'. The first use can be found in 1758 in Mireabeau's *L'Ami des Hommes: Traitè de la Population* (Mirabeau 1758). The term indicated the progress from a society under military law towards a civil administration as well as people who were 'polished, refined and man-nered as well as virtuoso' (Mazilish 2004: 7). It is interesting to note that Mirabeau suggested that the main source of civilisation had to be found in religion, which has the power to educate individuals to politeness and respect (Starobinski 1993). The new concept spread quickly and increas-ingly became part of, and adapted to, the European of understanding the others, and particularly the Islamic other, which at that time was the Ottoman Empire. For Europe it was a time of expansion and revolutions, including the industrial one (Weinner 1973). Although with a new con-notation, which included the idea of good manners, status of women and secular values, 'the concept of civilization provided a standard by which to judge societies, and during the nineteenth century, Europeans devoted much intellectual, diplomatic, and political energy to elaborating the criteria by which non-European societies might be judged' (Huntington, 1996: 41). One of these tests of 'civilisation', as I have mentioned, was the 'status' of women within societies. Mill in 1817 argued, 'The condi-tion of the women is one of the most remarkable circumstances in the manners of nations. Among the rude people the women are generally degraded; among the civilized people they are exalted' (Mill and Thomas 1975). These arguments supported the colonialist idea of the civilising mission of European colonialism. However, we can observe that, though expressed in different terms than the nineteenth-century writer Mills, politicians justified the 2001 war in Afghanistan also as a war to free women from the barbaric and uncivilised actions of the Taliban (Stabile and Kumar 2005). Starobinski has suggested that the word civilisation,

> gained rapid acceptance because it drew together the diverse expres-sions of a preexisting concept. That concept included such notions as improvements in comfort, advances in education, politer manners, cultivation of the arts and sciences, growth of commerce and indus-try, and acquisition of material goods and luxuries. The word referred first to the process that made individuals, nations, and all mankind *civilized* (a preexisting term) and later to the cumulative result of that process. It served as a unifying concept.
>
> (1993: 3, author's emphasis)

The concept of civilisation was not the only one that was gaining popularity among intellectuals, because it developed at the same time that other keywords appeared in the growing social sciences, including anthropology. Tylor used 'culture' and 'civilization', which he interpreted as a progressive advancement of sciences, arts and political life. The idea of civilisation increasingly became forged upon the idealisation of Europe, modernism and the Enlightenment (Huntington, 1996: 41). Although universality characterised the conceptualisation of civilisation firstly in France and then in Britain, with the ideal prototype in the modern Western culture, in Germany two different words expressed the concept of civilisation, *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. In 1939 Elias, in his book *The Civilising Process*, explained that Zivilisation and Kultur, though both referring to the same idea, are of two different orders because 'Zivilisation means something which is indeed useful, but nevertheless only a value of the second rank, comprising only the outer appearance of human beings, the surface of human existence' (Elias 1978: 6). Though today the differentiation cannot be detected in common speech, it remains a powerful intellectual tool of distinction with which to mark the difference between a 'civilisation' as a universal state of humanity and a civilisation based on the supremacy of culture (Bowden 2004). Some, such as Kuper (1999), have even suggested that Germany perceived the First World War as nothing else than the inevitable clash between the European Zivilisation and a very German Kultur.

As tensions between European nations continued to grow during the 1930s, the popularity of the term civilisation shifted from the intellectual to the political sphere. More than the simple idea of the West, civilisation provided politicians and nations with a 'verbal arsenal of praise and blame' (Starobinski 1993: 29). If European intellectuals, convinced of Enlightenment-type values of endless progress and scientific achievement, used the concept to evaluate the 'progress' of cultures and societies (see Tylor 1958), Starobinski has correctly observed that then, 'Civilization itself becomes the crucial criterion: judgement is now made in the name of civilization. One has to take its side, adopt its cause. For those who answer its call it becomes ground for praise. Or, conversely, it can serve as a basis for denunciation: all that is not civilization, all that resists or threatens civilisation, is monstrous, absolute evil' (1993: 30). The consequences of the transformation of civilisation from a social scientific analytical tool, strongly rooted in a unilinear understanding of culture, to an ideological weapon of superiority did not need much time to express its the most terrifying potential.

In the 1930s, Nazism illustrated the nightmare that humanity can endure when the concept of a pure, totally superior – since representative of the human apogee – civilisation becomes a shared value and belief of a nation and entire society. During the 1920s and 1930s, rhetoric of civilisation invited the sacrifice of the blood of millions in its name, in order to defend '*the civilization*', the only way to be fully human, because, as Starobinski powerfully summarised, 'civilization's enemies, the barbarians, if they cannot be educated or converted, must be prevented from doing harm' (1993: 30). What better prevention could there be than genocide, the eradication of an entire *gens*? Or perhaps prevention in the form of the medical and scientific efforts to purify the civilisation of its weaknesses as legions of doctors attempted during the Third Reich (Lifton 1986)? The Second World War ended the Nazis' 'civilizing' delirium, but opened a new confrontation between the Western and Eastern superpowers. The Cold War, which would shape global history for the next 50 years, became a new space for claims of civilisation and accusations of barbarism. This time, however, religion played an important role in the differentiation between the perceived evil and good of future 'Western civilisation', and its defence became a powerful expression, and 'Christianity was constantly appealed to as something that helped define the West against the atheistic menace of communism' (Bonnet 2004: 3).

The collapse of communism in 1989 saw the term 'Western civilisation', and the strong Christian association with it, lose popularity and gradually substituted with other political keywords focusing on the alleged global success of capitalism and democracy. The 'West', according to some, had no rivals or enemies left and could guide the world towards prosperity and in particular freedom, passing through modernism and secularism. Yet some scholars of the Cold War perceived the renewed and finally successful *Pax Americana*[2] as only the first part of a battle for civilisation. They argued that Western civilisation – according to them the highest expression of which being the USA and its democracy – would face the resistance of another 'civilisation'. Freed from the communist yoke, it would fight Western values, particularly democracy, and even attempt to destroy them (see Huntington 1996); the 'Islamic civilisation'. This would be identified as the most pernicious in its resistance and a threat solely comparable to the two previous barbaric opponents, Nazism and communism. The West would have to resort to religious values as a main marker of its civilisation because 'what has changed since the collapse of Soviet communism is not the secularity of the West (the USA remains, relative to many East Asian societies, a notably religious country) but the rise of a new, religiously defined, opponent in Islam' (Bonnett 1994: 3). We have

observed the genealogy and conceptualisation of the idea of the West and civilisation in Europe and the USA; but what about the Muslim world? Have Muslims, during their history of nations and empires, developed an equivalent conception of 'civilization'?

Scholars (Al-Azmeh 1981, 1982) have suggested that in 1377 Ibn Khaldūn introduced, in his monumental work *al-Muqaddimah* (Ibn Khaldūn 1986), the terms *'umran* and *hadara* for the first time with the meaning of 'civilisation'. Ibn Khaldūn argued that civilisation was exclusively a human characteristic involving social pacts and social supports in order to satisfy human needs (1986: 84). Although 'umran has a general meaning of civilisation, Ibn Khaldūn defined hadara as 'sedentary culture' in contrast to *badw*, the 'Bedouin culture'. Other words, other than 'umran and hadara, have also been used in the history of Arabic to indicate civilisation: *madaniyah*, *nahdhah* and *tamaddun*. All of them have something in common with hadara, rather than the Ibn Khaldūnian 'umran (Cowan, 1974: 183–5 and 898–9). The roots[3] of all these terms refer to city, *medinah*. In other words, the idea of civilisation is the result of the difference between rural, Bedouin and urban life.

The terms 'umran and hadara remained the preferred ones until the nineteenth century and contact with the Europeans, where we can observe a shift in preference to madaniyah, and its direct synonym tamaddun. Although the term madaniyah refers to the urban space, its root link with medinah makes it a term with religious connotations. Medinah is the city that Muhammad reached when he had to leave Makkah (the so-called *hegira*). Not only does this very act mark the beginning of the Muslim calendar, but also the birth of the first-known constitution, the so-called Constitution of Medinah (Lecker 2004). The idea of civilisation, which passes through the foundation of a new city under the auspices of God's revelation, and the first organised social pact among different groups, marked a differentiation with the values attached to the idea of civilisation we have observed in Europe and the USA. Unsurprisingly, madaniyah and tamaddun (which is used particularly by non-Arab Muslims) became the preferred terms for civilisation among revivalist Islamic writers. Yet, today hadara remains the preferred and generic term that you can read in newspapers or books.

Clash of civilisations or clash of civilisers?

In the previous section, we have discussed 'Western civilisation' both historically and ideologically. Then we have observed how Ibn Khaldūn introduced the word 'umran as the signifier of civilisation and the

change in usage during modern and contemporary times. Definitely, these genealogies of 'civilisation' as a concept are relevant in the academic, intellectual and political sphere. As we shall see, some of these notions have become common sense, or they have been absorbed within everyday usage. Nonetheless, it would be naïve to assume that the above genealogies of 'civilisation' reflect completely the views of ordinary people, Muslim and non-Muslim, today. The question that, as an anthropologist, I am compelled to ask is how my respondents understand 'Western civilisation' and 'Muslim civilisation'? How do they form their own ideas, or in certain cases ideology, of civilisation? What elements can change and modify their views on it? Although I am sure that many people have changed their ideas of what 'Western civilisation' may be and how they deal with the concept itself in the aftermath of September 11, my research on the conceptualisation of civilisation started only after that tragic event. Furthermore, to be economic with space, I will discuss in depth only the views of my Muslim respondents, though the idea of a confrontation between two civilisations tends to be common among both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Starting in 2005, I have organised, in London and some Scottish cities (see Marranci 2007), focus groups in the attempt to understand how people, in this case Muslims, comprehend concepts such as 'radicalism', 'extremism' and geopolitical ideas such as the 'West' and 'civilisation'. I intended to see whether the idea of a 'clash of civilizations' elicited some support among my respondents. Huntington, taking inspiration from Bernard Lewis's article '*The Roots of Muslim Rage*' (1990), argued that today, after the end of the Cold War, we are living in a time where culture matters more than before, and 'the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. […] The fault lines between civilisations will be the battle lines of the future' (1993: 22). He indicated eight 'major civilisations' that will interact with each other in different ways. However, according to him, the main conflict will be between the 'Western civilisation' and the Confucian and Islamic civilisations. Huntington has emphasised that the struggle occurs at two different levels, 'At the micro level, adjacent groups along the fault lines between civilizations struggle, often violently, over the control of territory and each other. At the macro-level, states from different civilizations compete for relative military and economic power, struggling over the control of international institutions and third parties, and competitively promote their *particular political and religious values*' (Huntington 1993: 29, emphasis added).

It is to the religious and cultural values that Huntington paid more attention, particularly in his book *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996), in which the question mark of the previous essay (Clash of Civilizations?) was removed. According to him, the 'Velvet Curtain of culture' would replace the 'Iron Curtain' by finding its most dangerous front in the historical, military confrontation between the Christian civilisation and the Islamic one. We may try to understand what led Huntington to interpret the relationship between Islam and 'Western culture' as a conflictual dichotomy. It was the assumption that Islam (and at a certain level Confucianism), challenges the 'perfect' and progressive Greek-Judaeo-Christian heritage on which all the West is, according to him, founded.

Huntington's theory attracted the attention of academics, politicians and the mass media. The title, in a certain sense, became more popular than the theory. Particularly within academia, critics emphasised Huntington's monolithic understanding of both civilisation in general as well as the idea of a unified Western culture (Pippidi and Minreuda 2002, Fox 2001). Some scholars have rejected his theory and suggested that, if a clash might exist, it is a clash of interests (Gerges 1999). Others have argued that what Huntington has misunderstood for the culture of an entire civilisation is in reality the expression of a discontent among Muslim populations because of their economic and political status, which has driven them to support manipulative radical Islamic movements, seen as the only alternative to their corrupt, Western-supported, governments (Kupchan, 2002: 70). Seib (2004), Faoud (1993) and Halliday (1996) have observed that Huntington's argument received such attention because, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the theory of a clash of civilisations offered the myth of a new challenge, a new battle against evil, which appealed to the imaginations of both politicians and the mass media (see also Bottici and Challand 2006). Hussein (2003) has suggested that the most relevant weak feature in Huntington's model is his view that there would be a transnational link between Confucianism and Islam.

Hussein has rightly observed that, because Huntington rejects that the idea that political interests are behind current conflicts and has advocated instead a cultural–religious explanation, he seems totally unaware of the Islamic theological divisions between 'People of the Book' (Jews and Christians) and *kafirun*, disbelievers (polytheists). Indeed, Bulliet (2004), in his provocative *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*, has suggested that if we carefully observe historical and cultural facts, we can notice that to speak, as Huntington does, of a Judaeo-Christian

civilisation opposed to a Confucian-Islamic one does not make sense. If we really want to make a case for civilisations and their interaction, Bulliet has suggested, then we must notice the Islamo-Christian civilisation. Turner has also observed that Huntington's theory cannot be understood if we do not consider its philosophical and sociological origins,

> The popular debate about the Huntington thesis has obscured its intellectual dependence on an academic tradition of political philosophy that sought to define sovereignty in terms of civilizational struggles between friend and foe, namely the legacy of Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss. It is not possible to understand fully the contemporary 'state of emergency' and 'clash of civilizations' without a re-appraisal in particular of the political theology of Schmitt. While Jürgen Habermas (1989: 135) expressed the hope that the Anglo-Saxon world would escape contagion from the Schmittian revival, his optimism was probably premature. The attack on New York has made Schmitt's ideas about state emergency, the crisis of liberalism, 'decisionist politics' and the division between friend and foe highly relevant to understanding contemporary American politics.
>
> (Turner 2003)

Huntington's 'clash of civilization' theory has found also its supporters, such as Lewis, Spencer, Pipes and others, particularly among American neo-conservative commentators. Yet among Huntington's supporters, there is one whom Huntington probably would prefer not to have: bin-Laden. On 21 October 2001, Taysir Alluni, a famous journalist of the Arab satellite channel al-Jazeera, succeeded in interviewing bin-Laden. Among the many questions aimed at understanding bin-Laden's views and ideology, one focused on Huntington's 'clash of civilization' theory. bin-Laden, who probably had read Huntington's work, replied,

> I say that there is no doubt about this. This [Clash of Civilizations] is a very clear matter, proven in the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet, and any true believer who claims to be faithful shouldn't doubt these truths, no matter what anybody says about them. What goes for us is whatever is found in the Book of God and the *hadith* of the Prophet. But the Jews and Americans have come up with a fairy-tale that they transmit to the Muslims, and they've unfortunately been followed by the local rulers [of the Muslims] and a lot of people

who are close to them, by using 'world peace' as an excuse. That is a
fairytale that has no substance whatsoever!

<div align="right">(Bin-Laden and Lawrence 2005: 124–5)</div>

bin-Laden not only confirms Huntington's views of culture, civilisation
and conflict, but gives the theory a divine imprimatur: the thesis of the
clash of civilisations is not a product of scholarly conjecture, but rather
a divine plan sanctioned in the Qur'an and Hadiths. Real believers, bin-
Laden has insisted, should not only accept it but practice it, because
'world peace' is just a fairytale created by the evil civilisation, the
Judaeo-Christian West, to deprive Muslims of their only weapon: faith
in jihad, and of course, in bin-Laden's views of Islam and the world. The
ideology behind this rhetoric is that of a perpetual war because the clash
is about values and beliefs.

Yet how popular is the idea of a 'clash of civilizations' among
Muslims? Of course, in conflict areas that see some Muslims resisting
occupation or fighting dictatorial governments (for example, Palestine,
Afghanistan, Iraq, Chechnya, Pakistan, to mention just some) the idea
of a clash of civilisations is very popular and widespread (Hafez 2003).
Even without knowing Huntington's name, people tend to perceive
such conflicts as a clash between good and evil, between the civilised
and barbarian, and between holy resistance and satanic oppression
(Bowden 2007). However, for Muslims living in Europe and in other
Western countries, they are not involved in an armed conflict, they are
not oppressed by tyrannical governments and they are not under forms
of occupation. They may support Muslim causes around the world, but
are not directly involved in conflicts. Hence, has the 'clash of civiliza-
tion' a popular view?

I shall use here some of the data that I have collected through inter-
views and in particular the focus groups that I conducted in 2005. The
people involved came from different ethnic backgrounds, ages, statuses
and genders. They also differed in political views and experiences,
understandings of Islam as religion and lifestyle and attitudes towards
the current conflicts and the war on terror. I could probably fill an
entire page listing the differences, and this would still not be enough to
portray an accurate illustration of the variety. There are, however, some
similarities too: none of the participants in the focus groups defined
themselves as being 'secular Muslims'; all of them stressed their attach-
ment to their faith, though in different degrees.

Although some authors (see Patel 2007) have attempted to define a
scale to evaluate the level of radicalism for both movements and people,

I have explained in the Introduction that I prefer to define an idea as 'radical' when most of my respondents, and the wider Muslim community within a certain country, perceive it as such. I adopted the same criteria during the discussion of 'civilisation' and the 'clash of civilizations' (Marranci 2007). This surely is not a scientific algorithm, but because we do not have one, it is certainly better that an etic assumption and judgement based upon ethnocentric values. Just to provide you with an example, although most of my non-Muslim students perceive as radical the idea of an absolute monarchy, this was not the case for most of my Muslim respondents and friends. Should I define as 'radical behaviour' the support of absolute monarchy? My answer is that when referred to within the group of my students, certainly yes; but not in the case of my Muslim respondents.

During the focus groups, disagreement happened often when certain concepts or terms were debated, such as terrorism, suicide bombers, jihad, insurgency, democracy and the Caliphate, just to mention a few. Accusations of being either an extremist or a Friday Muslim[4] were not so uncommon, and some of the respondents defined themselves as fundamentalists, by extension of 'following the foundations of Islam'. Although I could not verify the claims, certain Muslims who took part in some focus groups declared in confidence to be part of specific local and international Islamic movements, or to having been former members of resistance movements (such as the Islamic Salvation Front [FIS] and Hamas). Some of these alleged activists found some of the ideas of some other Muslims, who were never activists in organised Islamic political parties, to be radical. This demonstrates the complexity of the views expressed and the differences in opinions. Notwithstanding the fact that most respondents frequently disagreed upon the various terms and concepts, they did so less when we focused on related themes dealing with 'civilisation', the 'West' and the 'clash of civilisations'. None considered radical the idea that the West is corrupt and can corrupt, that civilisations exist and that Islam is superior to others, or that the clash of civilisations is a reality and a destiny. For instance, Habib, a 24-year-old British Muslim of Bangladeshi heritage, while discussing the concept of civilisation observed,

> I think that there are different civilizations, the Qur'an speaks of civilizations, it speaks of Rome and Romans, and the rise and fall of civilization. So, I think that civilization exists and our religion tells us that they are divided. There are the Christians, the Jews and the Muslims, then within these there are other divisions. Indeed, the

Qur'an tells us that the human ummah is the only one which is divided, since the birds, for example, are a single ummah. I think that civilizations are either good or bad: they are good if they follow God, but if they reject God, they become bad and people will suffer. We have to try to avoid clashing, but we know that it is part of life – and civilizations, like humans, clash, but they clash over the problem of the truth. Islam is under attack because it has the truth and the Western civilization rejects it and wants to impose its Godless view of life and law.

With very few differences, the respondents in that focus group agreed with Habib and his definition. Although the members of the focus group knew the main tenets of Huntington's clash of civilisation theory, they had learnt them from the mass media and in particular from the Internet and forum discussions. Yet like bin-Laden in his interview,[5] most of the focus group saw 'civilisations' and the consequent clash as inevitable. However, the blame for this inevitable clash remains with the West and its lack of religious values. Contradicting Huntington's viewpoint, and bin-Laden, my respondents adduced the clash of civilisations to the betrayal of Christianity in the West. Rana, a 30-year-old British Muslim of South Asian origin, proved to be one of the most vocal on this point,

The problem is clear, there is a basic difference between the Islamic idea of civilization and the Western one. The Islamic [civilization] is inclusive and based on the respect of differences; the Western one is exclusive in that either you are part of it or you are the enemy, one of the backward people of the past. Islam based the idea of civilization on few things: justice, order and willing submission to Allah, but the last point is only for Muslims; there is no compulsion in religion.

So, there is no compulsion to convert in Islam, but there is a compulsion to convert to Western civilization. I say that the Western world is saying: convert to our values and creeds or die, and the values, they say, are Christian, and then they call themselves secular […] what a chaos – in reality they do not even know what they are here. It should be a Western condition, you know, because many in the West do not know what they are. I mean women, men, both or even none [audience laugh]. The reason here is clear, Islamic civilization has to respect Allah's will, while Western civilization is the product of *ghayr mazhabi* [Urdu for without creed] and, though they say they are Christian they do not respect their faith because of aspects of materialism and *diniyat* [Urdu for 'atheism'].

Rana shows a Manichean division between the 'two civilisations': on the one hand, the Islamic civilisation, seen as a historical essence originating from religious and divine order; and on the other, a Western Civilisation, presented as aggressive, expansionistic, but at the same time fragile, confused, without a clear identity or blueprint, a-moral and consequently a-just. In his joke, Rana links the 'sexual confusion' – a reference to homosexuality, and as he clarified later, particularly bisexuality – to the lack of divine blueprint and the consequent, inevitable, condition of being the slave of diniyat, the material, the a-God space. Nobody in this group, and with extremely few exceptions in other focus groups in which very similar essentialist and stereotyped views were expressed, argued against Rana's analysis.

If essentialism has affected the descriptions of the two 'civilisations', what about the interactions between the Islamic and the Western? 'Abidah, a Palestinian–Jordanian woman aged 34 and living in Dundee, seemed to hit the right note with the group during the meeting I had organised there, which, on other topics (for example, suicide bombings, bin-Laden, democracy and so on) had shown, like the other cases discussed, strong disagreements. 'Abidah, as Rana, started from a historical perspective to end with an emotional understanding of the differences between Islam and Western civilisation. 'Abidah, energetically and passionately stated,

> History, and not fantasy, tells us the truth: it is the so-called Christian West which attacked the Islamic civilization again and again with Crusades. This is still what is happening today. Only the names have changed, but look – the torture is still the same.[6] They say war on terror and they mean war on Islam because now they are secular, aren't they? How could they come and say that they lead their people in a religious war? They cannot; so war on terror – War cannot be against terror, only against people. They are now Judeo-Christians because they support Israel so that they can clean their homes and ship the Jews into our land. They want Jews out of Europe and they say that their civilization is Judeo-Christian […] another cover up, you see. Now there was no conflict between Islam and the West because there was a common fear. For the Muslims, communism was spreading atheism and attacking the right to pray to God; for the West, it was attacking their capitalism. But you know, when the first devil was defeated, thanks to the mujahidin in Afghanistan, the second devil, the West, became bigger and Islam was an obstacle to its expansion.

There is a conflict and it is between the West and Islam; we can have a truce, but we will never have real peace because the West must impose its values. They need globalization so that people cannot see that the truth they want us to have is a world which is just like McDonald's. They want to teach us how to be human, civilized, how to respect women and how our men and women have to dress or shave. But I tell you that they have to learn, not us. We have only to apply what has been taught to us by Allah through our Prophet. The West has to learn to accept that there is only One God, even for Christians. Civilization is only in the state of *ubudiyyah* (servitude) to Allah; this is the same for everybody. Muslims and non-Muslims, you cannot escape it because you cannot escape death. But you can rebel against it, though this is stupid – but the West is arrogant. They want to change us. Leave us alone with your fake values. Let us enjoy *ubudiyyah* to Allah!

Many of the points raised by 'Abidah summarise well other comments that I have received. Like Rana, she represents the Western civilisation monolithically and as characterised by a religious rhetoric that the West does not respect but rather abuses. Rana, 'Abidah and many others expressed the idea that time has passed, but history has remained the same: Muslims are suffering Crusades. Very common among my respondents was the conviction that Allah, through the sacrifice of His mujahidin had defeated the Soviet Union, and this has actually opened a new confrontation with the other, sleeping until then, Satan, the USA. Western civilisation is viewed as lacking justice or even the 'ethos' of justice. During 'Abidah's speech I could observe the level of emotions expressed; this was not an 'intellectual' discussion on civilisation; this was about lives, hopes, dystopias, new utopias, anger, sadness, fear, honour and pride.

During these focus groups an interesting topic came forth: the need to correct, to forbid what is wrong and impose what is right (see also the previous chapter). Yakub, who was 43 and came from India, explained,

Civilizations are like human beings, they are born, develop, and age. That is destiny and we know that we cannot do very much about that. Yet there is one civilization which is Islam, I mean […] if Muslims would respect it, something that they are not doing […] Islam does not age, Islam is perfect and an Islamic civilization has the truth. Now we have to teach this truth. You are a parent and have to teach your children. Think about that. You have the responsibility to

do so or you will be a bad father. You can use three different things: you can speak, you can threaten, and you can beat. Well, this is the same with civilizations. The West is a very bad society full of the children of Adam who have decided to reject God. The Western civilization has lost values and justice. I think that we need to do something about it: we need to teach how to be human, how to be real men and real women. This means to believe in God […] look, I do not say Allah […] I say God, it would be just something wonderful if they believed as Christians instead of being attracted by the idols of money, power and selfish behaviour!

Yakub has presented the metaphor of the father that has to teach his children; this metaphor was very successful with the participants in the discussion. Many added that, for the young Muslims born in the West, it was vital to their identity to try to correct what was wrong in the West. Yakub, as the respondents whom I have quoted in the previous two chapters, has mentioned justice and, though not directly, alluded to the relevance of Tawhid. Westerners, all of them, are seen as being distant from God because they equate or associate the worth of material things to Him and consider such material aspects of life more important than faith. Again, we can observe a clash of values that my respondents perceive as threatening to their identity of 'being Muslim' and 'feeling Muslim'.

   Although during interviews with single members of the focus group, I understood that these views existed before September 11 and the war on terror, many respondents read those tragic events as proof that they were right. Western civilisation preaches freedom, justice, human rights and liberties, yet it is ready to kill innocent lives to impose the 'values of civilised world', as a politician once put it. Western civilisation contradicts its own values and commits torture, suppresses human rights and civil liberties. Noura, a 19-year-old British Muslim of Lebanese heritage, expressed her frustration,

I was born here [London]. I studied in public school and was exposed to all that this society could have given me, good things as well as bad things. I have been taught of the value of freedom, human rights and democracy. I was really sorry when 9/11 happened and I prayed for those dead. I was shocked when they bombed Afghanistan. I was depressed to see how we, Muslims, have been treated because of the actions of others. I have been horrified to see how my religion, which is part of me, of who I am and how I want to be seen, was attacked,

offended, and brutalised. It was like people pushing one knife after another into my heart. I never before dressed with the hijab, yet today you see me with a niqab [face veil]. I decided to wear them for two reasons: to test how all these words about freedom and dignity and respect were real in this country, and secondly I wanted to show my full support for Islam. I wanted to sacrifice something to say 'people, look at me, I've given up all the stupid things and I have renounced even to show my face and hair. Here you are, Allahu Akbar, a Muslima!

Noura's very emotional account describes a process of dystopia. During her education, the West was often presented as a civilising power gifting humanity with democracy and justice. The reaction to September 11, the mass media and political rhetoric, as well as the collective fear that such rhetoric has helped to spread (Altheide 2006, Jackson 2005), all suggesting that Muslims are 'uncivilised' because their religion is a dark age 'leftover', had an emotional impact on this young woman. She completely changed her behaviour and personal style. At the same time, she rejected the 'civilising' Western discourse and countered it with a 'civilising' discourse of Islam.

The opinions that my respondents have expressed on the idea of civilisation, and specifically Western civilisation, show some similarities among themselves, and with both the genealogy of the concept of civilisation as well as Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' theory. Indeed, the respondents I have quoted agree with Huntington on the fact that civilisations are culturally/religiously based and they are clashing. However, they add a divine intervention and decision that is missing from the famous scholarly theory. Civilisation has been identified as an ummah, and nobody, not even among those fluent in Arabic, used the common Arabic hadara. Yet the main aspect that has been emphasised during these focus groups is the dyad teaching/learning, which in this case is translated into 'civilising'. Certainly, with all the differences among the popular conceptions of civilisation among my Muslim respondents, we should recognise that

because of the connection with the ideas of perfectibility and progress, the word *civilization* denoted more than just a complex process of refinement and mores, social organization, technical progress, and advancing knowledge; it took on a sacred aura, owing to which it could sometimes reinforce traditional religious values and at other times supplant them. The history of the word *civilization*

thus leads to this crucial observation: once a notion takes on a *sacred* authority and thereby acquires the power to mobilize, it quickly stirs up conflict between political groups or rival schools of thought claiming to be its champions and defenders and as such insisting on the exclusive right to propagate the new idea.

(Starobinski 1993: 17)

I could not agree more with Starobinski. The concept of 'civilisation' among some respondents becomes a tool to reinforce identities, through a rhetoric of the sacred that often is linked, as we have seen, to emotional constructions of memory and identity. A clash surely exists; after my research on the use of the term 'civilisation' among some Muslims living in the UK, I cannot deny such an evident truth. However, the clash is not between or among, as Huntington has suggested, civilisations. The clash is both between and among aspiring civilisers! The clash of civilisers exists because of the prize at stake: the power of defining how to be human and consequently who is human. For some Muslims, as we have discussed in the previous chapters, to be a real man or woman means to have dignity and enjoy justice, both of which result from proclaiming tawhid and so being slaves of God. This, for some people, is not just an intellectual, theological and philosophical conceptualisation, but a vital part of their 'feeling to be Muslim' (Marranci 2006), an essential feeling that affirms individual identity.

Conclusion

In the aftermath of September 11, politicians and commentators re-enhanced the rhetoric of civilisation (Seib 2004), the 'civilised world', the West, the Western values of 'democracy' and 'freedom', and claimed that they were under attack. Such as the rhetoric implied, the enemy had to be represented as 'uncivilised' and 'barbaric'. Heads of state, such as Bush, Blair and Berlusconi, explained that the terrorist attacks in the USA and subsequently in Madrid and the UK were the result of barbaric hatred aimed against the 'civilised' nations and the 'civilised people'. On the other side, bin-Laden presented the terrorist attacks as a justified reaction to the Judaeo-Christian Crusade against Muslims and Islam (bin-Laden and Lawrence 2005). This, as we have seen in the chapter, is not the first time that the concept of civilisation has been used to provide Manichean views of the other.

By observing the genealogy of the conceptualisation of civilisation in the West, we have noticed this historical shift of meaning and the

transformation of 'civilisation' into a tool for justifying, particularly during colonialism, European expansion. We have observed also how, in the Muslim world, the term 'civilisation' has changed in its usage, but still maintains a strong link with the idea of 'urban' and 'urbanisation'. The Western genealogy of the concept of civilisation, with its colonialist assumption of 'educating' the other to be human, has among contemporary Muslims more influence than, for example, Ibn Khaldūn's conceptualisation of it. Some of my respondents who strongly believed that Islam, as a civilisation, was under a dangerous attack, have adopted what, at first glance, can appear as a Huntingtonian vision.

However, during this chapter, we have seen that my respondents understand the conflict as a clash of 'ethos' and values. According to them, there is only one way to be human, to be civilised: and that is not simply to be Muslim, but to be a Muslim who surrenders completely to tawhid. Yet, as we have discussed in the previous two chapters, this conception of tawhid, which I consider to be the result of a 'circle of panic' provoked by a schismogenic process, is not theological, but rather teleological. As such, the emotional component is very relevant. It is not difficult to see this dynamic as part of a defence mechanism against the, common both today and in Qutb's time, dehumanisation of Islam as way of life. Those respondents who strongly believed in a conflict between the West and Islam saw this in terms of 'civilising' and 'civilisable'. In other words, within the context of what I have called 'emotional Islam', the dynamic hegemonic relation between the ideas of 'civilising' the 'civilisable' as part of correcting wrong serves to affirm a personal, and emotional communal (Hetherington 1998), identity as an expression of a personal autobiographical-self.

Notes

1. Bush, 12 September 2006.
2. For more on *Pax Americana* in the post-Cold War era, see Alasuutari (2004) and Hurrell (2005).
3. Arabic words derive, in most cases, from a trisyllabic root.
4. For example, a Muslim who attends only the Friday communal prayer to show off, but who does not follow all the aspects of Islam.
5. I emphasise here that only two per cent of all the participants in the focus group showed support for bin-Laden.
6. She refers to the news reporting allegations of the torture of suspected terrorists in the so-called rendition programme.

7
Conclusion

How to define Islamic fundamentalism? Is it right to use the term 'Islamic fundamentalism'? Is Islamic fundamentalism a religious or rather a political phenomenon? What is Islamic radicalism? In which way could we understand Islamic extremism? Is Islamic fundamentalism a tool of patriarchy? What role has Islam in the current violence and terrorist attacks? These are only a few of the questions that for the past 20 years scholars have asked, debated, diatribed and, sometimes, answered (see Chapters 2 and 3). Each of them has often provoked other debates over the debate. One of these certainly involved the term 'Islamic fundamentalism' itself (see Introduction). Fundamentalism in general, and Islamic fundamentalism in particular, has seen a proliferation of attempts to define it: from Riesebrodt's (1993: 9) sociological definition, 'an urban movement directed primarily against dissolution of personalistic, patriarchal notions of order and social relations and their replacement by depersonalized principles', to the most quoted, Marty; Appleby; as well as Almond et al.'s (2003: 17) social political explanation of, 'a discernible pattern of religious militance 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 behaviours'. Also, more recently, the not so anthropological approach of the anthropologist Antoun (2001: 3), who describes it as, 'a religiously based cognitive and affective orientation to the world characterized by protest against change and the ideological orientation of modernism.'

Four keywords: scripturalism, militancy, modernism and secularism; one clash: patriarchal, scripturalist religious traditions versus progressive, Enlightened modernism; and two Maginot lines: religious beliefs and secularism; these appear to be the recipe for fundamentalism.

Scholars such as Lawrence (1990), Antoun (2001), Marty and Appleby (1991–5), just to mention a few, have explained that religious fundamentalism exists because of the consequences of the Enlightenment which in Europe produced not just modernity but modernism, a way of life. At the centre of modernism, we find secularism that relegates the inerrancy of the holy text to the private domain of personal beliefs. Therefore, as Emerson and Hartman have rightly emphasised,

> How fundamentalism is defined and interpreted depends in good part on one's perspective. From a modern, secular viewpoint, fundamentalists are reactionaries, radicals attempting to grab power and throw societies back into the dark ages of oppression, patriarchy, and intolerance. These fundamentalists are misguided, scary, and even evil. Supporters of modernization do not view themselves as being like these fundamentalists. Rather, modernists are the good, reasoned people, lovers of freedom and human rights. Again, from their own viewpoint, because they think more clearly and value empirical evidence and individual rights, modernists can see that fundamentalists are wrong. Conversely, for fundamentalists and their sympathizers, Western versions of modernization rush over them in a tidal wave of change, ripping apart communities, values, social ties, and meaning. To these changes, some groups say, 'No.'
>
> (2006: 131)

Yet, as we have discussed in the Introduction, disagreement about the very term 'religious fundamentalism' has divided the scholars themselves (Varisco 2007), with some suggesting that the concept itself is faulty (Iannaccone 1997).

Other terms, which I have summarised under 'Islamic-isms', have been tried, such as Islamism, radical Islam, Islamic extremism. After September 11, Islamic terrorism has become a frivolity in the diatribe of terminology. However, most of the studies have discussed these Islamic-isms through two main essentialisms. The first, which I have called Eurocentric historical evolutionarism, advocates that the Enlightenment has marked the Parnassus of human history, blessing it with modernism and secularism. The second, a drastic comparative reductionism, through which different religious movements, in different countries, in different times and with different histories, languages and culture, have been compared and contrasted, in order to provide those universal characteristics of religious fundamentalism that I mentioned above. The so-called 'family resemblance' of religious fundamentalism has helped to justify both the essentialisms.

Other scholars, as I observed in Chapter 3, have attempted to avoid these extreme culturalist positions. Neither the Qur'an, nor the fight against the Enlightenment is the reason behind this militant movement, but political and economic reasons. In Chapter 3, I reviewed the most quoted and most widely known viewpoints about the Islamic-isms, yet I have clearly noticed two main, recurrent, weak points. These theories have not paid attention to the individual and, though they describe the dynamics through which these groups form, they do not explain why they are different, for instance, from secular resistant movements. Why religion? The answer provided by many scholars (see Chapter 3) tells us that militants just manipulate to their advantage, for recruitment and ideological justification, Islam. This is quite a weak answer, because it implies that most activists in these groups are consciously using their religion for political aims. My research suggests that many of the activists take their religiosity seriously. They surely are, with few exceptions, strong believers, ready to sacrifice their lives not just for an ideal, but rather for their own religion and soul. Islam matters, but not for the reasons that the scholars, as discussed in Chapter 2 and in particular Chapter 3 (with the exception of Wiktorowicz 2005), have suggested.

In this book, starting from Milton's (2007) and Milton and Svašek's (2005) idea of ecological emotions, I have argued that fundamentalism is not a 'real thing', or a 'cultural object' that we can describe. In this, Iannaccone (1997) is correct in viewing the label (as well as the other Islamic-ism labels) as one of the causes of the failure in theorising fundamentalism. The family resemblance of religious fundamentalism became a kind of cognitive map of what fundamentalism might be, similar to a kind of 'connect the dots' picture available in puzzle books. The different Islamic-isms do not exist per se. Rather, they are processes that have very little to with Islam and everything to do with how human emotions, identity and self work. This means deconstructing another culturalist myth. There is nothing particular to Muslim identity, it is just another human identity. And of course identity, by definition, as I have explained in the Introduction, cannot be Muslim (see Marranci 2008b) because it is the result of a process between feelings (in Damasian terms) and the autobiographical-self. Identity is an imaginary machinery to make sense, through the environment–emotion–feelings causation, of our autobiographical-self (see Marranci 2006). How can this process be Muslim? It is the person, the individual who 'feels to be Muslim' because such a 'feeling' helps to make sense of his or her autobiographical-self. Hence, to be Muslim is not the result of a state of mind, it is not

a kind of mind, nor is it a theological embodiment of the Qur'an or the five pillars. There are as many Muslims as those who 'feel to be' Muslim; of course the society, group or community can reject the individual's 'feeling to be Muslim' (as it can reject any other 'feeling to be'), but this does not mean that the individual stops 'feeling to be Muslim'.

As I have explained in the Introduction, I reject the Islamic-ism labels as an analytical tool. To understand the processes though which people develop religious ideologies and form groups aimed at changing their environment through such ideologies, we need to re-start from the individual (Rapport 2003), his or her identity and relationship with the formation of the autobiographical-self. Hence, in Chapter 4, I suggested that some ideas, such as justice and dignity, through emotional processes can achieve, for the person, the status of ethos, and depending upon the environment and context, an ideology of justice. Muslims, not only in the so-called West, tend to be suspicious and untrusting of the Western concept of human justice. Indeed, they perceive it as unstable and lacking in universal ethical values. Again, as part of the emotional process described above, fairness becomes the essential element of the idea of justice among some Muslims who have experienced, or perceive to have experienced, discrimination and injustice; hence their rejection of any form of human justice. Unsurprisingly, my respondents have strongly linked their views on justice not only to Islamic, more or less orthodox, discourses, but also particularly to the idea of dignity. In Chapter 4, I rethought through this model one of the most mentioned characters within the literature of 'fundamentalism': Sayyid Qutb. Through an analysis of his life, and his persecution as an ideologue at the hands of the nationalist Egyptian government, we can clearly notice that Qutb, through his powerful Islamic rhetoric, was looking for dignity, and so justice. He did this not just through his mind, but also with his heart, with his emotions and feelings. The Qur'an, which for a long time he studied as a form of, though divine, art, became the best framework through which to express such feelings. Yet Qutb's ideology was not a product of either the scripture or a cunning political manipulation of Islam as religion; rather, it was the product of his own identity, of how 'he felt to be Muslim' and how this 'feeling' had been denied and even humiliated. Qutb, through his ethos of justice, and the contextual disruption of his feelings of dignity, developed a powerful ideology of justice, which, as I discussed in Chapter 6, provided powerful eschatological drivers.

In Chapter 5, I observed and discussed how this feeling of justice and dignity – which sometimes turns into ideologies – has affected

how Islam is understood as an 'act of identity', through one of the main tenets of Islam, tawhid, the oneness of God. Wiktorowicz (2005) and other students of radical movements have observed the centrality of tawhid for the members of different Islamic movements (Sageman 2004). Yet we can observe that respondents' narrative of tawhid goes beyond the theological and scripturalist domain, and is, as in the case of justice, the result of a reaction to an environment in which their 'feeling to be Muslim' is threatened. Islam, in other words, becomes the mirror of their emotional processes, of their formation of feelings and of the way in which they make sense of themselves.

During my research I have observed that there is a general feeling among Muslims, both living in the West as minorities and in Muslim-majority countries, that Islam is under attack, both in its physical embodiment of the ummah (see the cases of Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine and Chechnya among others) as well as culturally and politically. Hence, schismogenesis (Bateson 1936, 2000) marks today, even more than before, Muslims' lives. I do not need to highlight here the amount of political, social and mass-media attention that Islam (more than Muslims as fellow humans) receives. It is also evident that what is presented and represented is not a nice, positive and rewarding view of Islam. To quote one of my Palestinian respondents, 'today you can only defend or attack Islam; you cannot just speak about Islam'. Islam, as we have seen in this book (see also Marranci 2008b) is not just an abstract, cultural category, but is also part of the complex relationship between environment and the formation of self that I have described above.

As I discussed in Chapter 5, some of the respondents who have been involved, or decided to be involved, in Islamic political movements clearly displayed fear, anger and shame about what they called 'the condition of Islam'. Today that 'circle of panic' is affecting Muslims and non-Muslims in a very dangerous process of division and resentment. Although different Muslim communities, and different Muslims, may react in many varied ways, the emotions derived from the current, and seemingly permanent, conflictive aura – often marked by a demonisation of Islam, and the monolithic representation of the West as cruel Satan – traps some Muslims (and some non-Muslims) in schismogenic processes.

It is within this dynamic, and not, as has been often suggested, in the rejection of Enlightenment values, modernism and secularism, that the ideology of tawhid is formed. Some Muslims see political

action, and sometimes violence, as a means of breaking the schis-mogenic processes. I have also explained how within this 'emotional space' of Islam, leaders, such as Omar Bakri, compete within a market. Potential followers of radical religious leaders are not seeking a particular 'Islamic scholar' because of his recognised knowledge of Islam (as actually Wiktorowicz seems to suggest). Rather, they do so because the Islamic scholar's rhetoric matches the potential follower's blurred mix of feelings and moods, powerful enough to be persuasive and long-lasting enough to justify motivations and actions (or urgency of actions).

This means changing our understanding of how Islamic groups form and how charisma works within them. In the available studies on the different Islamic-isms, the formation of the Islamic movement is often described through the figure of a charismatic leader in whom followers recognise barakah, a blessed endorsement from Allah, and a nearly supernatural power. It is not difficult to recognise in the different models, presented in the available literature, variations of Max Weber's theory of charisma, in which the irrational and supernatural have a great part in the acceptance and acknowledgement of the leader by the group. Discussing with my respondents and observing the activities of groups, such as Hizb ut Tahir, I can conclude that Weber's model of charisma is not suitable to explain the real dynamics between leaders and followers as well as group formation. Indeed, members of radical groups based in the UK, or even in Muslim-majority countries, reject the idea that the leader is charismatic because of barakah, as the concept of individual barakah is associated with Sufism, which they consider a deviation from the correct path of Islam. Rather, I have observed that charisma, within these groups, is not understood as a personal characteristic of the leader, but as part of the communal efforts to respect tawhid, or better, as we have discussed, the specific 'tawhid ideology' developed by the community. Therefore, I suggested that a better way to understand the formation of these groups is through Hetherington's re-thought of Schmalenbach's theory of Bund (1998), and that the ideology of tawhid is the tool through which the members of the movements express their identification with the group and each other.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I suggested that what has been read as a 'clash of civilizations' – a theory that shows many weaknesses – can instead be seen through the discourse of 'emotional Islam' as a clash of the 'civilised' and 'civilisable'. This is not the product of a particular understanding of civilisation, as for instance in the case of 'Western' rhetoric

of civilisation. Rather, it is a direct consequence of what we have discussed in the previous chapters of this book. Today the most evident form of schismogenesis is the 'clash of civilisers', the clash of those people, both Muslim and non-Muslim, who wish to teach the other 'how to be human'.

Although, as I have described in this chapter, the genealogy of 'civilisation' as a concept has followed a different path in its history between the Western conceptualisation and the, mainly Arab, Muslim one, today, because of the mass media, a more historically European understanding can be found among contemporary Muslims. The West, thus, becomes a monolithic Judaeo-Christian entity, which, however, does not respect even the main tenets of both religions. There is a betrayal of values, of universal elements, which can guarantee universal, because divine, dignity and justice. This view is shared by many of my respondents, and the result is that not only that the West has been seen as a-just, but also incapable of being fully 'human'. Its people have to learn how to be 'human'. From here it is easy to see how the circle of panic, in some cases caused by highly conflictual, schismogenic environments, facilitates 'acts of identities' expressed through the rhetoric of civilising. Violence, as history has taught us, has been often part of this 'noble' effort. The clash of civilisers exists because of the prize at stake: the power of defining how to be human and consequently who is human. For some Muslims, as we have discussed in the previous chapters, to be a real man or woman means to have dignity and enjoy justice, both of which result from proclaiming tawhid and thus submitting oneself as a slave of God. This, for some people, is not just an intellectual, theological and philosophical conceptualisation, but also a vital part of their 'feeling to be Muslim' (Marranci 2006).

In conclusion, I have written this book to engage with an incredibly expanding academic literature, which, however, tends to explain this phenomenon on the basis of culturalist or social theory discourse. I wish to offer a different reading in which the central element is the individual as a human being and her/his relationship with the surrounding environment. Surely, I can define this approach not only as 'ecological', in Kay Milton's terms, but also as cybernetic, in Bateson's. Emotions, and the consequent feelings, can explain and answer those 'whys', where hermeneutical, social political and culturalist approaches have been unable to. Indeed, though we can acknowledge that the sacred text, the political aims and the tendency to manipulate religious discourse all play a part in the development of radical manifestations of

'political Islam', we cannot, as has been done, say that these elements are the ultimate reasons behind it.

I have proposed a different model; a model in which Islam becomes part of the feelings – induced by emotions that are the result of interaction with particular schismogenic environments – used to make sense of the personal autobiographical-self. In these terms, what has been labelled as 'Islamic fundamentalism', with the other Islamic-isms, is not a thing, but a process; a process of emotional communication, which, for the benefit of shorthand, I have called 'emotional Islam'.

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Muslim contributors/informants