

Unit T 7.7: Fundamentalism

1. Summary

The term fundamentalism has been used in public since the mid-1980s. As a collective term for (primarily religious) extremisms, it has become popular on the one hand, but on the other hand it has increasingly become an empty phrase. Particularly in intercultural communication and interreligious dialogue, it is essential to question the term and to explore the commonalities and differences of fundamentalist movements. Social, economic, political, and ideological backgrounds of fundamentalism are also of particular importance. In this text, the concept of fundamentalism is questioned and discussed in the form of 17 theses.

2. Fundamentalism

2.1 On the Concept of Fundamentalism

Case Study: Christian Fundamentalism in Guatemala

Under the rule of coup general and Christian fundamentalist Rios Montt in Guatemala, dozens of Catholic and Protestant priests and thousands of Guatemalans and Indians died in the most brutal ways. Pat Robertson's CBN television station and the fundamentalist missionary society Gospel Outreach organized \$10 million worth of aid, most of which went to feed the defense villages-some Guatemalans, according to the Catholic bishops of Guatemala, called them concentration camps-where Indian refugees were forcibly settled (Scherer-Emunds 1989:74/75). A preacher of the fundamentalist group El Verbo, to which Rios Montt also belonged, literally stated, "The army does not massacre Indians. It massacres demons, and the Indians are possessed by demons, they are communists. We see Brother Efraín Rios Montt like King David in the Old Testament. He is the king of the New Testament" (quoted from Scherer-Emunds 1989:75). For preacher Hap Brooks, Rios Montt was "the greatest miracle of the twentieth century, formed in heaven even before it took shape on earth" (as cited in Scherer-Emunds 1989:74). According to the newspaper "El Verbo," mouthpiece of the fundamentalist organization of the same name, one million Bibles were distributed in 1985 among the same security forces that had distinguished themselves by their brutal massacres among the Indians. According to the Catholic Church, some 8,000 fundamentalist missionaries were active in Guatemala in 1985.

I deliberately put an example of Christian fundamentalism at the beginning of this text. It shows that religious fundamentalism can occur not only in the Islamic environment but, under the right conditions, in all religions. The example points to two central difficulties of the concept of fundamentalism: First, there are not "fundamentalist religions" and "non-fundamentalist religions," but fundamentalist tendencies and people in all religions - though more or less of them, depending on the religious and socio-political context. Second, there is the question of the extent to which Bible- or Scripture-believing or evangelical or Islamist movements or currents are fundamentalist or not.

Term paraphrases: Evangelical, Islamist, fundamentalist

Evangelical or Islamist movements - also called integrist currents - are characterized by a literal understanding of Scripture that cannot be questioned, as well as by the rejection of a critical-historical theology, such as has become established in (Roman Catholic and Protestant) Christian theology.

Evangelical or Islamist currents are fundamentalist if they use violence against people with other opinions and basic religious convictions or are prepared to do so. It follows: Evangelicals and Islamist currents are not fundamentalist by default and vice versa.

The term "fundamentalism" is used today on all continents and refers to a wide variety of religious denominations. However, in recent years, the media's attention has been focused with preference on Islamist contexts.

The term "fundamentalism" is not very happily chosen: Strictly speaking, the term expresses nothing other than an effort to orient oneself more strongly to the central, "fundamental" contents of faith, i.e., to return to the "foundations" of a religious faith. The word comes from a U.S. Christian magazine, "The Fundamentals," which was published in the early 20th century with precisely this intention.

The term "fundamentalism" is now used virtually everywhere as a negative label. I endorse this use of the word here. But it should be pointed out here that "fundamentalism" also has a thrust that is usually concealed or not even recognized: Again and again and in the most diverse places, efforts are recognizable in the course of history to orientate themselves again to the original contents, to the historical "foundations" of existing world views and beliefs. Thus, for example, the movement around Francis of Assisi should be mentioned, but also in

the Renaissance the efforts to put again the knowledge of antiquity in the center of the worldview. The thrust "back to the original truth" or "back to the roots" brought again and again fruitful impulses into the most diverse religious and political movements. In this sense I already in 1988 somewhat provocatively called for a "new fundamentalism" (Jäggi in Neue Wege of October 1988:308-310). But, as I said, in what follows I use the term fundamentalism in its generally accepted negative sense.

The concept of fundamentalism has also been discussed in Islamic countries, including Iran. The Shiite magazine Al-Qiyam (The Awakening) took the view that Muslims should be proud of the term "fundamentalists" because it indicates that their religion stands on a "rock-solid foundation" (Kathpress Info-Dienst, 9. 2. 1990).

But what is meant by "fundamentalism"?

Thesis 1:	Fundamentalists represent and propagate a certain worldview - or parts of it - with all means and without consideration for people with other opinions.
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We can assume that fundamentalist behaviors represent **an ultimately unsuccessful - because always defensive and thus violent - attempt of backward-looking rebellion against social alienation, ethnic-cultural uprooting, ideological homelessness and social value decay of modernity and postmodernity**. According to the historian Urs Altermatt, fundamentalism - Altermatt speaks specifically of Catholic traditionalism (Altermatt in Tages-Anzeiger, 23. 10. 1989) - on the ideological level "falls back on world views that originate from pre-Enlightenment times". However, with such a definition - as Rolf Weibel rightly notes critically in Schweizerische Kirchenzeitung 2/1990 with respect to a publication by Knut Walf (1989) - there is always the danger of labeling as "fundamentalist" all currents and groups which "are simply not explicitly 'modern'". For this reason, the criterion for "fundamentalist" seems to us to be not so much the content, but the form of its dissemination.

Thesis 2:	Fundamentalists consider their own convictions to be the only right ones and try to enforce them socially and politically by all means and at the expense of others.
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The Zurich psychiatrist Berthold Rothschild formulated the historical backward orientation of fundamentalist movements as follows: "In fundamentalism, the conserving origin remains fixed, undiscussable, it is not something that has become human, but something backward utopian: it is a matter of fulfilling the divine word" (Rothschild in Neue Wege May 1988:143). However, the undiscernible in fundamentalism does not necessarily have to be divine, but merely absolutized truth and in principle unquestionable taboo. Even atheistic currents of thought such as Marxism or liberalism can take on a fundamentalist character - as history has proven.

Thesis 3: Fundamentalists give formulaic, simple and universal instructions for action without allowing for questioning.

The content and at the same time the transmission belt of fundamentalist movements can be religious or quasi-religious worldviews, ideas and concepts. By quasi-religious I mean here worldviews that convey and attempt to enforce values and behavioral norms (ethics, sense-making) without an explicitly religious claim (transcendence hypothesis, mediation or at least admission of spiritual experiences). Secularism also belongs to the group of quasi-religions.

Religions and quasi-religions become fundamentalist when they crystallize into ideologies and thus claim exclusivity or even absolute character - and try **to enforce it by force**. In other words, fundamentalist behavior is often, but by no means always, based on religious worldviews: Any worldview can, in principle, take on fundamentalist character if it is not - or no longer - reflected by its proponents.

As Caplan (1987:3), among others, points out, by far most people never describe their own attitude, but always that of those of other faiths as fundamentalist ("fundamentalist are always the others"). In principle, everyone can - and does - act fundamentalist in certain areas. Every time an opinion is held, the argument - on both sides! - can take on fundamentalist traits. This seems to be a basic problem of any discourse.

It means that the attempt of various philosophers and scholars to understand fundamentalism as a counter-enlightenment and anti-modernist current is too narrow:

Fundamentalism is not a revolt against modernity, but its product.

For example, political scientist Thomas Meyer (1989b) titled one of his books "Fundamentalism. Revolt against Modernity." Robert Spaemann contrasted (in Die Zeit of 22. 12. 1989) fundamentalist "fanaticism" with the ideal of the rule of reason. The Zurich religious scholar Fritz Stolz (in Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 14. 2. 1990) formulated this connection thus: Fundamentalists "emphasize ... the foundations precisely in demarcation against the plausible, the self-evident."

Here, however, it must be objected that everyday reason - as, for example, ethnomethodology has shown, cf. e.g. Mehan/Wood 1976 or Garfinkel 1963, 1967 and 1973 - can by no means be equated with "reason" in the scientific sense, since it is to a large extent very "unreasonable". "Plausible" insights can be very "unreasonable" in a scientific sense. Moreover, the "reasonableness" of science is often not too good, as Paul Feyerabend (1983 and 1989) has impressively shown.

It is true that fundamentalist movements always turn against the gap between modernist utopias and promises of a better world on the one hand and massively deteriorating living conditions on the other. As political scientist Thomas Meyer (1989b:11) correctly notes, "the occasions, the shapes, and the consequences of fundamentalist escapes from modernity are different each time ..., depending on the time, place, and antecedents of the triggering contradiction." However - and here many representatives of the Enlightenment or of schools of thought that developed in its succession seem to be blind themselves - fundamentalists do not generally turn against modernity as such. Rather, they seek, in their own - if ultimately unsuccessful - way, to provide answers to the increasingly open central questions of life. Modern worldviews, whose roots lie essentially in the Enlightenment, are less and less able to do this, as can be seen, for example, in the growing demand for new-religious movements. However, the answers to the central questions of life (meaning, death, etc.) are ultimately religious in character. That is why the fundamentalists are aiming not so much against modernity itself, but at the loss of religion that it has helped to cause.

Anti-modernists are not always fundamentalists

Conversely, not all anti-modernists are necessarily fundamentalists. Maja Wicki (in Tages-Anzeiger of March 24, 1988a), for example, rightly refers to Gandhi: He "was an anti-modernist and ... Gandhi was an anti-modernist and at the same time a reformer in the enlightenment sense, he was an undisputed figure of identification for millions of people, without therefore obliging them to exclusive allegiance or associating with allegiance or allegiance something like chosenness or exclusive salvation".

2.2 Social Dimensions of Fundamentalism

Thesis 4: Fundamentalist movements are mostly reactions to political oppression, social alienation, economic hardship, ethnic-cultural uprooting, ideological homelessness and changes in social values or value pluralism.

Loss of religion and meaning is often expressed in an increasing ideological, but also socio-cultural disorientation. Loss of meaning can also lead to violence (cf. Jäggi 1995).

In addition, fundamentalists regard the Western way of life - and with it clear achievements such as liberal democracy, human rights, etc. - as a threat to their own way of life and to the society in which they live. - as a threat to their own way of life and their religious self-image. Often there are also social, economic or political reasons behind so-called fundamentalist movements, which are "religionized" or "irrationalized," as it were, in order not to have to be addressed. Here is one example:

Case Study: "Fundamentalist" Protests in Turkey

On June 13, 1990, thousands of people demonstrated in Turkish cities against the Turkish government. In Konya, a city considered holy by many Turkish Muslims, a demonstration of bearded men and veiled women marched to the prefect's office demanding the resignation of the Turkish government. In Erzurum, an Islamist stronghold, police allowed only a small group of demonstrators to approach the prefect for fear of a riot. In the industrial city of Izmir, a large crowd chanted "Allahu Akbar," and in the capital, Ankara, Muslims occupied the squares in front of mosques. The Western media reported "fundamentalist unrest in Turkey." What had happened? The wave of protests was preceded by a decision by the Saudi government to grant visas to only 55,000 Turkish citizens for the pilgrimage to Mecca this year, although some 140,000 had applied for them. The Saudi government feared unrest caused by pilgrims. In previous years, more than 100,000 Turks had always received a pilgrimage visa. Now the Turkish government decreed - either out of carelessness, as the Neue Zürcher Zeitung (15.6.1990) thought, or on purpose - that only air travelers should receive a Mecca visa, but not the less wealthy Mecca pilgrims, who were dependent on the cheaper bus trip. Not without reason, many Turkish Muslims perceived this as discrimination

against the poorer sections of the population. It was not fundamentalist agitation but social discrimination in the exercise of religious duties that had been the reason for the protests.

Moreover, fundamentalists do not recognize the democratic rules of the game for the settlement of political and social conflicts that are generally accepted in our country, or recognize them only to a limited extent, because on the one hand they are convinced of the absolute correctness of their point of view (the end justifies the means!) and on the other hand they regard such rules of the game only as a "godless" or "satanic" attempt by which the "infidel" West wants to impose its rules of the game on them. A prime example of this is the Rushdie case: When Salman Rushdie published his book "The Satanic Verses," he already had a well-known literary name. He had won the prestigious Booker Prize for his novel "Midnight Children," and he had been awarded the prize for best foreign book in France for his biting novel "Shame and Disgrace." According to Guido Stefani (in Luzerner Neueste Nachrichten, Jan. 31, 1990), The Satanic Verses contains "an overabundance of facts, contemporary and historical, but embedded in a story that constantly shuttles back and forth between reality and fantasy, the line rarely being clearly drawn." By making barely veiled allusions to Khomeini, Rushdie's book appealed to fundamentalist circles in particular. Cat Stevens, a convert to Islam, also publicly supported Khomeini's call for murder against Rushdie. Above all, however, some passages that alluded to stories and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad aroused the deadly wrath of many fundamentalist - but also non-fundamentalist, deeply devout - Muslims. That is why Khomeini's call to kill Salman Rushdie was understood, if not supported, by many Muslims. It seems that far beyond fundamentalist circles, religious sentiments are considered so "sacred" and thus "exalted" that humor, fiction, and irony are perceived as "dirty" and "underhanded" insults and dishonors to those very sentiments. Here there is an interesting contrast with saints and mystics, of whose humor - often childlike - tradition repeatedly reports - and who were often bitterly persecuted by the official authorities. "True rootedness" in a faith or worldview means that even one's own point of view is definitely experienced and regarded as limited, whereby even self-irony and humor are no longer a threat, but welcome pedagogical and didactic aids, for example, when teaching students.

Religious Taboos

At this point we should recall the reflections of Sigmund Freud, who in "Totem and Taboo" pointed out the ambivalence of "taboos" as on the one hand sacred, sublime, and on the other hand dangerous, impure (Freud 1980:26). Fundamentalists view religious content as so above human beings that any criticism or irony is immediately perceived as impure, dangerous, or offensive. This suggests that fundamentalists have not in fact found their "foundations of faith" at all. Otherwise, they would not have to feel attacked by every humorous or ironic remark.

The thesis that fundamentalism is essentially anti-enlightenment is still widespread. This opinion is also wrong because it assumes that enlightenment - basically Western thinking - is always "rational," "reasonable" and "reflective. However, as we have known since the globalization debate at the latest, this is not the case. Even earlier "legitimate" and "illegitimate" children of the Enlightenment, from humanism to liberalism to socialism and communism, repeatedly took on violent and thus fundamentalist features.

Thesis 5: Fundamentalism is not "anti-enlightenment" or "anti-modernism," as has been variously suggested, but rather the consequence of unfulfilled promises of modernity.

Thomas Meyer's sweeping definition of fundamentalisms, namely "that they immunize some self-chosen foundation against any reasonable doubt" (Meyer 1989b:134), is hardly tenable. For, as I have shown elsewhere (cf. Jäggi 1987:17-24 as well as 1986:20-22), "reason" is in any case dependent on the "rationality" or logic considered valid in the relevant environment. For methodological reasons it is not permissible to judge the "reasonableness" of a worldview - e.g. labeled as fundamentalist - "from the outside", i.e. for instance from a "scientific" point of view or with the eyes of "everyday reason" or common sense. Doubts are always possible and meaningful only within a certain frame of reference, unless one doubts basically everything. But then one gets into the dilemma of having to doubt this doubt again, too, which makes the whole thing meaningless. To give an example: For a strictly believing Muslim it is not possible to doubt the truth of the Koranic statements. If he does so, he abandons his world view, i.e. the (orthodox) belief in Islam and in its revelator. With this, I must return the accusation of fundamentalism to Meyer himself: Anyone who believes that "reasonable doubt" in the sense of the Enlightenment tradition is the only

legitimate path to knowledge - and I maintain that this opinion is held by a great many scientists - is himself holding a clearly fundamentalist position.

These 6: Wie andere soziale Bewegungen zielen auch fundamentalistische Bewegungen darauf ab (oder geben vor), die Lebenssituation in irgendeiner Art benachteiligter Menschen (oder Lebewesen) zu verbessern.

Fundamentalist experiences and groups grant a kind of "social sanctuary," seemingly timeless, removed from current tensions, economic difficulties and social conflicts. At the same time, fundamentalist movements claim to fulfill, at least in part, the unfulfilled promises of Western thought and modernity. To this end, they not infrequently convey fragments of "cultural techniques of the Western world ... which in many cases help realize aspirations for social advancement and the desire for integration into national society" (Rohr 1993:31). Islamic fundamentalist movements in the Middle East, such as Hamas in Gaza, are known for their targeted and very successful social work on behalf of the poorest. At the same time, they often make use of the most modern technical means, such as video clips of fundamentalist Friday sermons on YouTube or revolutionary appeals on websites. Practically always, however, these efforts are accompanied by violent actions, terrorism or intimidation of believers and non-believers, as demonstrated, for example, by the practice of the Front Islamique de Salut in Algeria before the coup d'état or Salafist groups in North Africa or the Caucasus. Scheffler (2008:27) speaks in this context of a "tipping over into violence."

However, I do not want to go as far as Abderrahim Lamchichi, who teaches at the Faculty of Law and Political Science in Amiens, who called (Islamic) fundamentalism not a reaction against modernism but a "modernist avatar" (Lamchichi 1988:51), arguing that politicized Islam-just like the Enlightenment-attempts to improve the living situation of the people concerned. Although aiming in a similar direction, the considerations of the historian Urs Altermatt, who lectures in Fribourg/Switzerland, are more differentiated: According to him, fundamentalism is a component of the modernization process, the dynamics of which lead to rapid social changes, which the fundamentalists oppose. According to Altermatt (1989:376), fundamentalism "belongs in a certain sense to the everyday pathology of progress, for it arises from deficits left behind by the dissolving consensus on progress." This

is also true for Islamic societies. "One might say ... that Muslims-disappointed by the changes in 'modern' society-have taken refuge in an 'integrist Islam' ... that aims to restore the holistic harmony of a community of believers that has probably never existed in the perfection they imagine" (Richard 1985:71/72; translation from French by C.J.). If this is true, then the attitudes of religious fundamentalists and of messianistic representatives of enlightenment and modernism are significantly closer to each other than both sides want to admit: Disappointed by the lack of success of modernity, many - especially young - believers in progress "jump over" to a religious (or political!) fundamentalist attitude.

Skipping as a sign of fundamentalism

I deliberately use the term "skipping" here, which we (cf. Jäggi 1986, 1987 and 1988, Krieger 1986 as well as Jäggi/Krieger 1990a, 1990b and 1990c), starting from the concept of "snapping" in new religious movements, have extended and discussed to religious, cultural and ideological "conversion phenomena".

Thesis 7: Fundamentalist movements seek to gain or retain social, political or economic power by violent means. The question of whether more or less violence is used is not so much a question of more or less fundamentalism, but rather a question of the prevailing political culture. The decisive factor is the willingness to use violence if necessary and to violate the integrity of those affected.

In recent years, an actual **Islamist migration network** has emerged in a whole series of "fragile states," particularly in northern and eastern Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. Significantly, these terrorist networks are particularly strong where the state is weak or non-existent, including in a number of African states, some states in Central Asia, and the Middle East.

To be sure, when supporters of the Al Qaeda network carry out bombings, that is just as fundamentalist as when supporters of the New Christian Right plant bombs in America's abortion clinics or try to force librarians and church leaders by telephone threats to remove evolutionist literature from church libraries. But George W. Bush was no less fundamentalist when he spoke of "revenge" and "erase states" in his post-9/11 war rhetoric - and also took appropriate military steps.

We should not be blinded by the latest manifestations of (e.g. Islamic) fundamentalism: Every worldview can be represented in a fundamentalist way. Even an Enlightenment philosopher can, in principle, fall into a fundamentalist stance. This is precisely the case when he sees his worldview as the only correct one and wants **to enforce it by all means at the expense of other worldviews**. Fundamentalist attitudes can be found even in circles that see themselves as scientific.

The term "fundamentalism" originates from inner-Christian disputes in the USA in the 19th and 20th centuries and goes back to C. L. Laws (cf. Kienzler in Living Witness of March 1990:56). I am of the opinion that it does not make sense to use the term "fundamentalism" only for the resulting Christian currents in the USA, as has been suggested on various occasions. It is true that the fundamentalist movement was able to establish itself so well in the USA because it did not encounter the resistance of strongly rooted religious traditions (cf. Marsden 1980:223). But this fact **only increased the extent and speed of the assertion of fundamentalist views** and ways of life. For similar currents emerged or prevailed in other countries as well. This was the case, for example, in the period before the Second World War.

Fascism, National Socialism and Stalinism as Secular Fundamentalist Movements

Not least to be mentioned in this context are the non-religious, in some cases even explicitly atheist, movements of fascism, National Socialism and Stalinism, which were able to establish themselves broadly in many countries during this period. But many fundamentalist movements that saw themselves as religious also emerged during this period: for example, Opus Dei in Spain - whose founder José Maria de Balaguer was canonized by the Vatican in 2002 - or Muslim secret societies in a whole series of Islamic countries.

However, it was above all the development in the 1980s of the 20th century that led to a spread of fundamentalist attitudes that can be observed in all religions and worldviews as well as in dozens of countries. Thus, fundamentalism has become a worldwide phenomenon and has acquired a global character in the last 25 years at the latest. This fact can probably only be explained by recent history and the social and economic development of mankind.

The labeling problem

That the fear of "fundamentalism" is often additionally fueled by the media practice of labeling "exotic" acts of violence as "fundamentalist" that have nothing to do with "fundamentalism" is indeed regrettable. But the media presence of this term only shows that fundamentalist attitudes and behaviors are perceived as a danger today, which only supports our thesis. However, the question also arises today whether the terrorism of an al-Qaeda network against American institutions or the actions of Chechen terrorists in the hostage-taking at the theater in Moscow in October 2002 should not be understood more as anti-American or anti-Russian extremism than as a religious phenomenon.

Thesis 8: Fundamentalist movements create identity through closure and defense against other worldviews. Through group pressure and social control, they reduce or destroy individual freedom of choice and autonomy, both internally (their own members) and externally (violence against those who think differently). Often their violence is directed against entire groups or certain areas of life (oppression of women, hostility to sexuality, violence against "unbelievers" or people of other persuasions).

As is known, for example, from the area of new-religious movements - popularly known as "sects" - fundamentalist groups often use methods such as repelling contact with outsiders, isolating their members from their family members, and even brainwashing in order to gain as complete control as possible over their members.

Thesis 9: Fundamentalist movements can have both a reactionary-conservative and a progressive-revolutionary character in terms of their political dynamics. However, the content they convey is usually historically outdated fragments of more or less traditional world views or certain interpretations of them.

Although virtually all religious fundamentalist movements carry reactionary content and fragments, their social and political dynamics can be both reactionary and progressive: For example, in Iran, after the fall of the Shah, there was a long debate in the communist Tudeh Party about whether or not Ayatollah Khomeini's movement was progressive, that is, progressive. In Islamic countries-where secular movements tend to appear reactionary and as allies of the United States-many fundamentalist Islamist movements have been progressive, even revolutionary in character in some cases, and not infrequently helped topple reactionary regimes (e.g., in Iran, Sudan, and elsewhere). In contrast, Christian fundamentalist movements-such as the Rios Montt regime in Guatemala, the New Christian Right in the United States, and Colonia Dignidad in Chile-have or had a

mostly reactionary conservative character and were considered allies of the U.S. government. These examples show that what is decisive for the socio-political orientation of a fundamentalist movement is the national and international political environment, the social structure of society and the international alliance situation, and not so much the - in all cases - reactionary content.

Sociologist Klaus Feldmann (2005:301) has circumscribed four characteristics of fundamentalism: First, a "literal" understanding of sacred texts to the exclusion of alternative interpretations; second, rejection of religious pluralism; third, opposition to secular and scientific positions; and fourth, support for conservative, authoritarian, and patriarchal political goals and parties.

2.3 Fundamentalism as a communication problem

Thesis 10: Fundamentalism, however, is fundamentally not a question of the content represented, but of the way in which this content is understood, represented and enforced.

In the statements of fundamentalist leaders, it is always noticeable that they perceive the world in black and white. Either someone is a friend, or he is an enemy. Intermediate positions or attitudes of both/and are considered suspect and are persecuted: Anyone who is not for me is against me. This was true even for countries like the USA in the 1980s: "Every position and every person who opposed the divine mandate (of the fundamentalists; note C.J) was unmasked as an instrument of the satanic counterpower and became the merciless target of a political crusade that in this form probably for the first time in the history of modern societies merged the unculture of uninhibited friend-foe politics with the most advanced technical possibilities of modern electronic mass communication" (Meyer 1989b:79). This was especially true in the United States under the Bush presidency after September 11, 2001. Salim Nasr (1985:133) formulated this for the (moderate) Shiite fundamentalists in Lebanon using the example of Imam Sadr's movement in the period between 1970 and 1975 as follows: "The depiction of the enemy is in dichotomous terms; it is almost always rulers versus the ruled, the privileged versus the disadvantaged, a repressive minority versus the oppressed majority, the Israeli enemy versus 'our resistance'

or the 'Palestinian revolution.'" In this context, the enemy is much more often defined as a group than as a "system." According to Hünseler (2008:101), fundamentalists conceive of life "as a perpetual struggle between the good forces of God and the diabolical forces of evil." They see the world as a "binary dichotomy" and often believe in conspiracy theories.

The enemy is clearly identified by fundamentalists and labeled satanic. Well known is Khomeini's characterization of the U.S. and the Soviet Union as "the big devil and the little devil." The most heinous characteristics and behaviors are imputed and attributed to the opponent. Thus, the American TV preacher Jimmy Swaggart could warn President Reagan about the apocalyptic arch-enemy Gog and Magog: "The Soviet Union is the infection center for world communism. ... When the United States sits down at the negotiating table and proposes to make agreements with the leaders of the Soviet Union, ... they sit across from little more than hoodlums, gangsters and bandits. Indeed, the average American mob boss is squeamish in comparison with them. ... They are sadists and pathological liars, and they have openly stated over and over again that they have no interest whatsoever in honoring even one contract they make. ... The Soviet butchers continue to spew their atheistic darkness all over the world. We should make no treaties with them, no agreements with these subhumans" (quoted from Scherer-Emunds 1989:69). After 2001, the U.S. government used similar images and attributions for the "rogue states" or the "axis of evil."

Thesis 11:	Fundamentalists often represent contents that are less "authentic" or "literal" than "traditional" beliefs and worldviews. Often, the beliefs of fundamentalists consist of fragments and fragments that are no more than 100 or 200 years old.
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As Barr (1981), for example, has shown for Christian evangelicals, integrist and often fundamentalist movements use, propagate, and represent content, ideas, and behaviors that are claimed to be "authentic" and that are usually no more than 100 or 150 years old. Critical-historical theology always tries to include not only the (scriptural) text, but also the "pre-text" of the scripture (i.e. the social environment of its emergence), and the "post-text" (its history of impact over the centuries) in its understanding of religion and faith. Thus, critical-historical theology is much more "authentic" in terms of its faith content than

integrist and fundamentalist understandings of faith, which are usually projected unreflectively into the present. Or as the Shiite Muslim who teaches at Templeton University in the USA, Seyyed Hosein Nasr, once put it with regard to Islam: The "spiritual" Koran - that is, the intention and the context of meaning of the religion's founders - stands above the "written" Koran.

Thesis 12:	Fundamentalist attitudes and behaviors exist among people of all religions, worldviews and basic attitudes.
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Thesis 13:	It follows that members of areligious or atheistic worldviews can also act in a fundamentalist manner. There are fundamentalist Christians, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists, but also fundamentalist nationalists, liberals, humanists, Greens and feminists.
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From the above it should have become clear that all religious, but also secular worldview contents can become fundamentalist under certain conditions. Consistent world views that are postulated as one hundred percent free of contradictions and are to be enforced by all means and without regard to losses obey largely the same laws, regardless of whether they convey religious or areligious content. The transported content is secondary - and the content can often be exchanged very quickly. For example, the Janata Vimukti Peramuna Party (JVP) in Sri Lanka in the 1970s was Marxist-Guevarist in orientation; in the 1980s it espoused Sinhala-Buddhist goals, with the same names and under the same leaders. And in both phases it perpetrated violent actions and terrorism, namely bombings, armed robberies, etc. Or as one Islamist fundamentalist activist in France in the 1980s, who fifteen years earlier had held a Marxist-Gauuchist position, said to me, "C'est le même combat" (this is the same struggle).

Thesis 14:	Fundamentalism is ultimately not a religious phenomenon, but an identity problem and a perception and communication disorder.
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Fundamentalist groups use religious - or nationalist, racist and even Marxist - content as ideological set pieces to assert or defend their specific power interests. More central than

the question of content (religious or not) is the question of social dynamics, the political situation, and-above all-the attitude toward armed struggle and terrorism.

2.4 Psychological aspects

Thesis 15: In certain situations and areas, everyone tends to react in a fundamentalist way. This is especially true in social taboo areas and in connection with unprocessed "blind spots" in one's own biography.

Fundamentalist attitudes and behaviors are often a reaction at the individual level to increasing personal isolation, social marginalization and ethico-cultural uprooting. For a possibly growing number of people, the chances of a meaningful and satisfying life are reduced in material, social and ideal terms.

The theologian Stephan Pfürtner defined fundamentalism as an "attempt to relieve people of the risk of faith in their longing for security and safety and to offer them in exchange the **pseudo-security** of a fixed, unchanging or authoritatively protected living space" (KIPA, 9.2.1989).

In situations of persistent personal misery, material poverty and social marginalization, the person concerned can basically react in two ways: He opens himself to change and works to improve his situation. Or he locks himself into his negative experiences, as it were, and resists all new contacts, ideas and behaviors. While, for example, the Christian base communities in Brazil and the movement of liberation theology go the first way, all fundamentalist currents are expressions of an inner enclosure of the second kind. In what follows, I will refer to movements of the first type as progressive, and those of the second type as fundamentalist. Progressive movements are characterized by a high degree of spontaneity and creativity of **individuals and groups within the movement**. In contrast, adherents of fundamentalist currents submit to more or less rigid norms that are ostensibly expressions of eternal truth (e.g., Scripture revealed once and forever by God), but in reality represent an authoritarian and often Macchiavellian means of discipline. To the outside world, therefore, a fundamentalist movement often appears more orderly and better

structured, while progressive movements always run the risk of breaking up into small and minute subgroups. They often have trouble agreeing on common strategies and goals.

However, one should be wary of taking a movement's militancy or vehemence as a measure of its fundamentalism: Even progressive and spontaneous movements can be extraordinarily militant, while conversely there are quite unmilitant fundamentalists.

The Oxford biblical scholar James Barr (1981:255) pointed out with regard to Christian fundamentalism that fundamentalists - and this also applies to adherents of non-religious ideologies - do not individually study and critically question the scriptures to which they ascribe absolute truth content. When they encounter contradictions in them or are confronted with questions, they do not consult the scriptures themselves, but ask people they consider competent. "Study and interpretation of the Bible among them is usually a rehash of the common fundamentalist religious position with different words and individually different emphases. **It is a ritual repetition of what the group believes as a group**" (emphasis by C.J.).

Thesis 16: Fundamentalists are searching for unquestionable contents and truths, but this search fails a priori.

The child of fundamentalist intransigence and its exclusive orientation toward fundamentalist authorities is, paradoxically, total opportunism. Hassouna Moshabi demonstrated this with the example of a Christian Lebanese author living in exile in Australia who published a diatribe against Salman Rushdie in the London magazine Ad-Dastour. When Moshabi protested this vituperative article in a personal letter, the author of the article wrote back to him, "Dear friend, I received your letter and was very amused reading it. It is really wonderful that there are still young writers like you in the Arab cultural scene who still believe in freedom of expression and are always ready to defend it. That is really great! I feel immensely honored and delighted that you consider me a sincere intellectual who is true to his principles. However, my dear friend, you have forgotten one thing: Working in the Arab press - both abroad and at home - is pure prostitution from beginning to end. I frankly started 'selling words' at the age of 16. I wrote in newspapers and magazines of all stripes:

reactionary, progressive, nationalist, communist - even in scandal sheets, and all this to earn my living and that of my - very large - family. I will not hide from you that with time and circumstances in this profession I have become an 'old hooker'. So I can allow myself to write things I don't believe in! I tie the donkey where its owner can sell it. Without any heroism. Without principles. Without morals. Just like that. Everything I write in the Arabic newspapers, my dear friend, corresponds to my disappointed hopes and dreams, my repressed rebellion, all my feelings that I have buried forever in this exile - which seems to have no end. So I ask you not to take things so seriously! You can be sure that I am doing all this just to pay my phone and satisfy my daily needs" (Mosbahi in TransAtlantic 2/1989). Such experiences lead either to total conformity, or to - real or apparent - identification with the fundamentalists.

In other words, the social base of fundamentalist currents is to a large extent - and often also from progressive movements - the disappointed and disillusioned. They then "regress," so to speak, to their childhood attitudes and look for a representative to whom they delegate their own personal autonomy, as it were. The leaders of fundamentalist movements then perform a superego function, as it were, for these people. The loss of autonomy - which often took place much earlier - is then exchanged for the social security of a group, which often also takes away all personal decisions and thus protects the individual from insecurity and fear. Moreover, they offer their followers a consistent and simple worldview, which is perceived as a protection against the threatening and contradictory pluralism of modern society. Or as psychiatrist Berthold Rothschild (in New Ways, May 1988:141) puts it, "Perhaps ... it is precisely this modernist non-commitment, this emptiness above diversity, that longs for the supposedly unambiguous. Perhaps it is this that always makes us a little envious (and disparaging) of those who, under the wind of a purposeful truth, strive forward somewhere, are clearly identified with a course, and do not always, as soon as they are somewhere, already have to ask again whether they have not lost their way or gone astray after all - 'Aufgehobenheit' one calls this and is probably also prepared to pay a tribute of subordination for it."

This is also one reason why fundamentalist movements always develop very much in waves: In fundamentalist movements, the ideal and social security is always based on **a static interpretation of a certain** - e.g. religious - **worldview**. The theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, who was appointed cardinal shortly before his death, formulated this fact with regard to Catholic integrism as follows: Fundamentalists are of the opinion that "reality can be exhausted in abstract, fixed and unchangeable terms, so that it is sufficient to act in view of the right terms in order to move the world also rightly. ... (In this) revelation is primarily a system of doctrinal concepts which, by definition, cannot be found anywhere in the world of men, hence can only be presented to the lay people for passive acceptance by a purely descending ecclesiastical authority" (Balthasar in *Diakonia* 4/1988). In contrast to the fixed and canonized interpretation of the respective world view, however, the social circumstances change constantly in the course of history, and new, generally binding interpretations of this world view are needed again at ever shorter intervals. Significantly, earlier interpretations of central concepts or doctrinal contents which are different are then either subsequently concealed or passed off as a "deviation from the divine teaching". In this way, a critical - and thus questioning of the fundamentalist basic attitude - examination of the contradictions even in **the new interpretation of "truth" that is now passed off as valid** can be avoided.

2.5 What to do?

Thesis 17: Spiritual or religious recollection and dialogue with other religions/worldviews are possible counter-strategies to fundamentalism.

I dare say that today - in our age dominated by secularism and modernism - practically all religions have been marginalized. Thus, significant resources have been lost, central cultural experiences have been forgotten.

Obviously, what is needed today is, first of all, a religious recollection - in all religions: In Christianity, in Islam, in Hinduism and in Buddhism. Only when the loss of one's own invigorating religious tradition no longer has to be feared or no longer takes place, the psychological reason to take over other people more or less forcibly and to force one's own

understanding of faith or one's own world view on them is no longer applicable. Secondly, a religious return means a deepened and renewed religious and spiritual practice, which, among other things, contributes to answering the question of meaning and provides an ethical-normative framework for action that can support social behavior in everyday life. In the course of our poverty research, we have repeatedly found that loss of religion can be a cause of poverty that should not be underestimated. Third, in today's global society, with hundreds of different social, ethnic, and other groups in every country - including members of many major and minor religions - there is more need than ever for an interreligious dialogue that makes room for all religious communities and worldviews and does not take over any of them. This necessary, objective and often painful dialogue often leads to a deepened religious attitude in one's own tradition, which in turn strengthens true spirituality and religiosity. And fourth - last but not least - only a fairer worldwide distribution of available resources, more social justice, and a new international world economic and trade order in which all peoples, ethnic groups, and social groups participate as equal partners will ultimately remove the ground from fundamentalist currents.

I have written elsewhere: "Can it be said, then, that fundamentalist religious communities or religious terrorism are fundamentally not interested in religious peace? No, that is not so. Fundamentalist religious communities or groups that use terrorism and violence as weapons usually want to achieve ideological hegemony: Peace exists for them only when their beliefs, worldview and way of life are not only the dominant one in the space they claim or control, but the only one. Therefore, all totalitarian religionist groups are subject to the problem of always creating a new enemy to fight: All dissenting opinions or ways of life appear as a threat, an attack on the 'true faith'. But because the modern life situation is always a complex, multilayered, and multidimensional one, all attempts at ideological homogenization must ultimately fail-though at what cost!" (Jäggi 2017:37)

Therefore, the strategic response must aim to differentiate, to develop rules and mechanisms for internal communication, and to build mechanisms to ensure permanent ideological discourse.

For details on possible strategies against religious terrorism, see also ► Unit C19: "Terrorism."

3. Control Questions

1. Why is fundamentalism not simply anti-enlightenment or anti-modernism?
2. Why is it significant that fundamentalist movements often advocate for disadvantaged people or the socially weak?
3. What is common to all fundamentalist movements in terms of how they seek to achieve their goals?
4. What four characteristics of fundamentalism does Feldmann name?
5. In which areas do we tend to act "fundamentalist"?
6. What two approaches to thinking and acting can be counter-strategies to fundamentalism?

4. Links

Begriffsdefinition: Fundamentalismus

<https://neueswort.de/fundamentalistisch/>

Literatur zum Thema Religiöser Fundamentalismus

<http://www.theologie-systematisch.de/religion/12fundamentalismus.htm>

Fundamentalismus unter muslimischen Migrant*innen

<http://www.nzz.ch/nzzas/nzz-am-sonntag/fundamentalismus-unter-muslimischen-migranten-elementare-kluft-ld.4728>

Muslime in Europa zwischen Integration und Fundamentalismus

<http://www.relinfo.ch/islam-westen/usuliyatxt.html>

Hartmut Krauss : Der islamische Fundamentalismus als religiöser Totalitarismus.

<http://www.glasnost.de/autoren/krauss/islamismus.html>

Evangelikalismus und Fundamentalismus

<http://www.relinfo.ch/evangelikalismus/fundamentalismus.html>

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