

Religious Fundamentalism or anti modernity?

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Abstract

Religion Fundamentalism originates from a Protestant movement of the 1920s in the United States but has taken a broader meaning recently, referring to religious militance. It is even now more and more associated with religious violence. Our aim in this paper is to seek the origins of Fundamentalism and to classify the various religious movements that belong to that category. The study of several trends in the religious field shows that the most concerned Religions by Fundamentalism are Abrahamic religions, also called the religions of the Book. All the expressions of Fundamentalism are directed against Modernism, as expressed by Orientalism, secularization of modern societies, or the mixing of different and competing ethos in a common melting pot. These facts tend to confirm that modernism is deeply connected with printing, and follows the effect of restructuring and permanence of knowledge by the process of writing, which produces an « attachment » to a socio-temporal context. If Fundamentalism is a modern reaction to modernism, then what can be the reactions to Fundamentalism? A counter-Fundamentalism. How then to escape from the circle of endless counter-reactions? One answer can be found in the Oriental oral religion with « detachment », or in its equivalent in the Abrahamic religions: patience and forgiveness.

Introduction

Religious fundamentalism is often linked with violence and seems to influence most of the religions in the world. In our view, fundamentalism is only a part of various forms of extremism which are often due to political struggle in terms of territory or society, during this period of modernity which is characterized by the domination of Western societies and values.

According to Gerrie ter Haar, for many people today, the word

« fundamentalism » is automatically associated with Islamic fundamentalism. But the use of the term « fundamentalism » is not uncontested, and its meaning has often become so imprecise as to raise the legitimate question whether academics should use it at all. In the case of Hindu « fundamentalism » in India and Buddhist « fundamentalism » in Sri Lanka, these situations can be better understood in terms of cultural essentialism or ethno-nationalism than anything else. It is significant that in such cases religion becomes a powerful tool in the hands of politicians [terHarr].

After defining what we understand by modernity, we shall make a distinction between fundamentalism of Abrahamic religions and essentialism of Hinduism, then look for the roots of religious movements, their characteristics and their ways of action.

Finally we shall try to find possibilities of ending the vicious circle of counter-reactions which in our view is due to the fact that extremist movements are modern reactions to modernity, in the post-modern perspective. This paper is not supposed to be exhaustive but rather an attempt to deconstruct religious extremism and to explain the effects of modernity which is deeply connected with literacy, structuration and concentration of power, and domination. Post-modernity offers new options with relativism and decentralization but also needs reinterpretation of the texts through hermeneutics [Lehrmann1969] and *ijtihad* (independent legal judgment) for the Abrahamic religions.

What is modernity?

Gustavo Benavides places the beginning of modernity in the sixteenth century and even during the late fifteenth century [Benavides1998]. According to Lester Kurtz, modernity can be defined as the emergence of a global, scientific technological culture since the Industrial Revolution, and especially during the latter half of the twentieth century [Kurtz1995].

Richard Fox describes modernity as the Enlightenment project, the Western Truths of alienated production and bureaucratic rationality and secular progress, and the associated practices of science, technology, humanism, productivity, development, and management [Fox], and David Harvey stresses that the logic that hides behind Enlightenment rationality is a logic of domination and oppression [Harvey1990]. We find a confirmation of this in the words of Macaulay who said: “I have never found one among the Orientalists who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the Oriental plan of education” [Macaulay1835]. Kamakshi Murti adds: “Colonialism was powerfully aligned with Nazism toward a Final Solution, not unlike the clearly guided American policy toward the native American Indians, who were first demonized, then portrayed as wasteful savages, then exterminated, their tiny remnant confined to reservations and concentration camps” [Murti2000].

For Gerrie ter Haar, urbanization and technological innovation, ethnic and religious pluralism, and the creation of the nation-state, are some of the most radical changes to have affected societies worldwide in recent times. They have altered the way in which people view themselves and others, and the way in which they view their relationships with one another. Most importantly, these profound changes have

affected people's worldviews, and altered their relationship with the divine [terHarr] .

As Durkheim considered that society is the soul of religion and that it continues to be that the idea of the sacred is of social origin and can be explained only in sociological terms, it is clear that society has a key role in the condition of religion. [Durkheim1975]. Religion like society is influenced by the cultural exchanges and evolution of technology. We find the first element of modernity in the (re)invention of printing by Gutenberg in 1450, and find its substance with the Enlightenment project which inaugurated the gathering of knowledge into books through great voyages and scientific discoveries. Advocates of science came into direct conflict with church officials over the growing development of textual criticism, that is, the scientific study of texts, including scriptures. The next section deals with the different reactions according to the fact that religion is based on literacy or tradition and orality.

Fundamentalism and Essentialism

This section is dedicated to the dissociation between fundamentalism and essentialism corresponding with the Abrahamic religions for the former and the Oriental religions for the latter. Fundamentalism seems to be more linked with literacy and therefore the religions of the Book, as essentialism is rather a return to the values and tradition of religion which are expressed in various form in Hinduism and Buddhism.

Religious fundamentalism, generally speaking, refers to « an identifiable pattern of religious militance in which self-styled true believers attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity by outsiders, fortify borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular structures and processes ». The basis of this process of selective retrieval is found in a sacred history, often as recorded in sacred texts. It is worth noting here that fundamentalism is not exclusively found in book religions. Today a similar trend can be discerned in oral religions, which may be described as the fundamentalization of traditional religions [terHaar].

For Gilles Kepel, the word « fundamentalism » is generally thought to have come into common use in the 1920s, following the publication in the United States , from 1910 onwards, of a series of twelve volumes entitled *The Fundamentals* and containing ninety articles written by various Protestant theologians who were opposed to any compromise with the surrounding modernism. As contrasted with the « modernism » or the « liberalism » professed by the Protestant establishment, Fundamentalism is defined primarily by belief in the absolute infallibility of the Bible. The holy scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are held to be the literal expression of Divine Truth – especially all the moral or ethical commandments or politico-social injunctions they contain. Secondly, Fundamentalists believe in the divinity of Christ and in the salvation of the soul by the effective action of his life, death and physical resurrection [Kepel1994]. According to ter Haar, its recent significance, however, stems from the Iranian revolution in 1979. Religious fundamentalism has gained new attention from the dramatic events during and following the attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington on 11 September 2001 [terHaar].

Gilles Kepel considers that the 1970s was a decade of cardinal importance for the relationship between religion and politics. A new religious approach took shape, aimed no longer at adapting to secular values but at recovering a sacred foundation for

the organization of society – by changing society if necessary. The theme was no longer *aggiornamento* or updating the Church but a « second evangelization of Europe »; the aim was no longer to modernize Islam but to « Islamize modernity ». Wherever it appears, it sets itself up against a « crisis » in society, claiming to have identified the underlying causes of that crisis beyond economic, political or cultural symptoms through which it is manifested. Certain movement within Christianity and Judaism show striking similarities to Islamic movements. They all seem to fit into the context of a worldwide discrediting of modernism that was the hallmark of the 1970s [Kepel1994].

There is a kind of fundamentalism in Hinduism which comes from the fact that undoubtedly, the Gita became a vehicle of Hindu self-representation in the 19th and 20th centuries [Prasad] and Bharati Agehananda stresses that Indians and sympathetic occidentals alike have come to regard the Bhagavadgita as the Hindu Bible. But the informed Hindus must contest the Bhagavadgita Renaissance status ; it is not canonical like the Vedas or the Upanisads [Bharati1970]. For Ashis Nandy, once such concepts of religion (one Book, one God, for instance) and state are imported into Hinduism, the inevitable happens. One begins to judge the everyday lifestyle of the Hindus, their diversity and heterogeneity, negatively, usually with a clear touch of hostility and contempt. There is however a third sort of response. It usually comes from the non-modern majority of the society. this response does not keep religion separate from politics, but it does say that the traditional ways of life have, over the centuries, developed internal principles of tolerance, and these principles must have a play in contemporary politics [Nandy].

Ter Haar argues that in the case of Hindu « fundamentalism » in India and Buddhist « fundamentalism » in Sri Lanka, these situations can be better understood in terms of cultural essentialism or ethno-nationalism than anything else. It is significant that in such cases religion becomes a powerful tool in the hands of politicians. The rise of the Hindu nationalist movement can be explained in primarily political and economical terms, and Hindutva cannot be properly understood in terms of fundamentalism, given the nature of Hindu religious traditions. Hence, Hindutva, essentially a political movement that makes use of religious resources, and which has indeed been associated with violence, is often mistakenly referred to in the West as a case of « religious fundamentalism » [terHaar].

Ram Prasad also puts into question the Hindu fundamentalism in asking: Is there something called Hindu fundamentalism? Fundamentalism requires « fundamentals » available from a single authoritative source, and since there is no such single source in Hinduism, there can be no fundamental Hindu beliefs and no fundamentalist Hindu interpretation of religion. The other argument is that there is no such thing as a single Hindu religion, from which it follows that there can be no fundamental Hindu beliefs. The absence of the conception of « one-off » revelation is related to the very abundance of scriptures. Doctrinal pluralism has obviously taken the historical acceptance of multiple sources of authority to itself to be the fundamental characteristic, the unifying value and the common core of the Hindu tradition[Prasad1993].

In this section we have made the distinction between fundamentalism and essentialism and showed that fundamentalism is closely associated with the singular authoritative scriptural source, as essentialism is rather a return to the principles and tradition of religion. The use of the Gita as a vehicle of Hindu self-representation in

the Hindu Renaissance has certainly played a role in the emergence of fundamentalist-like movement India and seems to comfort our argument of literacy triggering extremist movements. The next section deals with the roots of religious movements and dissociates the struggle against domination and really religion orientated motives.

Roots and types of religious movements

Religious movements are twofolds, they can be driven against domination and invasion or strive for the renewal of religion. The first kind of movements are political movements that use religion in order to unite and strengthen as armies always pretend that God is on their side during wars.

On the religious parties in Israel, Beyer argues that Jewish messianism has for centuries associated the end of exile and the return of the Chosen People to the Promised Land with the consummation of history and of divine creation. This return is political in the sense that pious Jews believe it will be physical; but it is much more purely religious both because divine agency brings it about and because the human portion of it is an act of return only in the sense of conversion to the divinely sanctioned life. Secular Zionism contradicted this messianic relation to the land in a double way. It proclaimed an end to the suffering of exile in the Diaspora and promised the redemption of Jews through their return to the Land of Israel, but as essentially human enterprise. In short, by their project, the secular Zionists denied God and his sovereign power over human affairs [Beyer1994].

The Jewish “fundamentalists” fund their claim that Palestine belongs to the Jewish people in the Torah and that Jesus will come to rule the country. This is why Israel has no constitution, it is supposed to be put in place by the Christ. In that particular case, the Koran denies this right to Jews as they refused this land which belongs now to the people that lives there. So the three religions of the book believe in the coming, for the Jews, and return for the others (Koran ch 43 v61) of Jesus Christ but as we can see from the violence that prevails on the Holy land, in slightly different ways and purposes. But in fact these movements are aimed at keeping or gaining power in Palestine.

We can find a similar movement in northern Ireland where Catholics and Protestants fight because of the implantation of Protestantism by Great Britain on a former Catholic country. So the goal for the Catholics is rather to reunite Ulster with Ireland, as Protestants struggle to keep British influence on that territory. Historical examples of this kind can be found in the Crusades of Christians in order to recover control over Palestine.

The following of this section is dedicated to a classification of religious movements. On one hand we use the classification of Kepel [Kepel1994] who differentiates between movements « from above » which aim at changing the society by affirmed political means, and the movements « from below » which work rather on the modification of individuals and prone a religious « break » from the social environment. On the other hand we differentiate, like Beyer [Beyer1994], the movements from above into conservative movements which aim at reinforcing and returning to a particular practice of religion, from the liberal attitude that is more open to social variety.

1) Movements from above

Conservative options

Beyer takes the example of the New Christian Right in United States which mobilized institutional religious resources in order to recover public influence for religion by directly conditioning the operation of major instrumental systems especially the political, legal and educational. A nationalist and clearly conservative movement is sought to limit the inclusive tendencies of the global system by asserting the exclusive validity of a particular group culture. At the level of symbolic issues, perhaps the most significant link between early twentieth century Fundamentalism and the New Christian Right is the opposition to Darwinian evolution [Beyer1994].

Kepel on Mission Field Europe argues that in catholic Europe, the last quarter of the twentieth century opened on a paradox: never before, it seemed, had a society been so massively secularized and de-Christianized, and yet re-Christianisation movements were springing up everywhere. These are now based upon an a priori break with the principles of secular society, and are intended to restore to the « post-modern » world a meaning, an ethic and an order which, it is claimed, have vanished in the collapse of all certainties. Some churchmen saw the end of the modern era, which had begun with the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century when reason, self-confident and emancipated, had been rather too quick to reject religion. They have taken the form of Catholic movements aiming to put pressure on governments, or to attain power themselves, in order the change society « from above » in accordance with their own idea of the Church's teachings, and to combat secularism [Kepel1994].

Ahmad Mumtaz says that in the context of Muslim societies, there is the emergence of disciplined, organized, and mass-based fundamentalist political groups that aim at restructuring the affairs of the state and reorganizing social relations on Islamic principle. These groups aspire to reestablish an idealized Islamic system as first introduced and implemented under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad. The Muslim brotherhood in the Arab countries, Jamaat-i-Islami in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, Dar-UI-Salam in Indonesia, Islami National Front in Sudan, Islamic tendency in Tunis, Parti Se-Malaysia in Malaysia, and the Rafah party in Turkey represent an interesting and important phenomenon in their respective countries [Mumtaz1994]. ForKepel the first to try to make capital from the discontent surfacing in Muslim countries around Mediterranean were groups inspired by Marxism (Syria, Egypt, Iraq and Algeria). Of all the movements campaigning for an Islamic state after independence, the best known was born in Egypt in 1928 with the foundation of the Muslim Brothers [Kepel1994]. Beyer on the Islamic revolution in Iran and creation of the Islamic republic in Iran after 1979 argues that the outlook of this institutionalized religion political movement has been clearly conservative. Its ideology, action and aims directed against the global operations of modern instrumental systems. Its leaders have insisted that Iran must reassert its particular religion structure, namely Iranian Twelver Shi'ism against what they have often called « global arrogance », most notably attributed to the embodiment of evil in the world, The Great American Satan [Beyer1994].

Ahmad Mumtaz stresses that looking at the history and activities of the Jamaat-i-Islami of India during the past four decades, one is struck by the overwhelming importance that the Jamaat gives to political struggle. From its demand for the introduction of an Islamic constitution to its struggle against Islamic modernism, secularism, socialism, and ethnic separatism, it has kept aloft the banner of the Islamic way of life through the primacy of political action. The political struggle of the Jamaat has been based on the assumption that Islamic change in

society will occur only when political power is transferred into the hands of the party of God-conscious, Islamic activists, who by taking over the state, will establish the necessary conditions for reforming society. In order to achieve their objective, the Jamaat-i-Islami set out the following five programs for itself:

- to construct human thought in the light of the ideals, values, and principles derived from divine guidance.
- To « reform and purify » individual members of society so as to enable them to develop a truly Islamic personality.
- To organize these individuals under the leadership of the Jamaat and to prepare and train them to invite humanity to the path of Islam
- to take all possible steps to reform and reconstruct the society and all of its institutions in accordance with the teachings of Islam.
- To bring about a revolution in the political leadership of society, reorganize political and socioeconomic life on Islamic lines, establish an Islamic state.

[Mumtaz1994] .

Liberal option

Hefner argues that Islamic nationalism errs in taking at face values the claims of conservative Islamists that Islam allows no separation of social spheres and thus no differentiation of political and religious authority. This unitarian view of Islam and politics has been bitterly contested by liberal Muslims who insist, with good reasons, that there is a long precedent for just such a civil separation of powers in Islam.

If a theologically conservative Islamic nationalism has achieved a certain influence in recent years, this is less to do with a disposition unique to Islam (and shared by all Muslims) than it does with the battle raging among rival interpreters of Islam [Hefner1998].

Agudat Israel represented the position that only a religious definition of Jewishness was valid; and that political nationalist conceptions were not only less important, but more than that, improper. Socio-structurally, this attitude reflected the condition of Jews in pre-modern Europe and in the Muslim countries of North Africa and the Middle East: Jews lived as recognized communitarian groups with their own internal, religio-legal authorities. To be a Jew was to live as a member of these groups. Zionism represented privatization of Jewish faith [Beyer1994].

Beyer says that Religious environmentalism, like most new social movements, whose focusing on ecological issues have its practical origin in the 1960s. The statement from the World Council of Churches, Canberra assembly in 1991 on the theme “Come, Holy Spirit – Renew the Whole Creation” was: “ The divine presence of the Spirit in creation binds us as human beings with all created life. We are accountable before God in and to the community of life...”. What is most evident is the insistence that traditional religious symbols and sources contain the religious answer to ecological crisis; this is not a condemnation of modernity and globality, so much as it is a claim that received religion already contains the ethical resources for addressing the problematic results. Religious environmentalism is at the moment a predominantly liberal expression of religion [Beyer1994].

2) Movements from below

On the Tablighi Jamaat in Pakistan, Mumtaz argues that its aim was to bring about a reawakening of faith and a reaffirmation of the religio-cultural identity of Muslims. The Tabligh movement did not try to convert non-Muslims to Islam; its exclusive focus remained on making Muslims better and purer Muslims.

« Tablighi work is not a book » says Maulana Manzoor Noamani, « it is actions ». The Tabligh workers are extremely rigid in following the orthodox rituals and do not approve of what they consider the « modernist » and lax attitudes of the Jamaat-i-Islami. Unlike their counterparts in the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Tabligh workers emphasize both the form and the spirit of the religious practices. If a nation or a society is to be changed, the reform effort must begin with the individual and not at the level of political structures. These Tablighi units would visit a village and invite the local people to assemble in the mosque, and would present their message in the form of the following six demands:

- recite and know the meaning of the *shahadah*
- say *salat* correctly and in accordance with its prescribed rituals
- learn the basic teachings of Islam and do the *dhikr* (ritual remembrance of Allah)
- pay respect and be polite to fellow Muslims
- take time from worldly pursuits and regularly tour areas away from home in the form of groups (*jamaat*) in order to preach Islam to others.
- Inculcate honesty and sincerity of purpose in such endeavors. It is only the purity of motive and intention that can guarantee the success of one's missionary endeavors.

[Mumtaz1994] .

Barbara Metcalf adds that the qualities of a Tablighi are steadfastness in the face of hardship, fear of Allah, abstinence and self denial, devotion to prayer, piety and scrupulousness, self practice, valor and heroism, zeal for knowledge, obedience to the Prophet, and the love for the Prophet. The Jama'at lays more stress on practice than on information, and the books usually provide details that are not conducive to action[Metcalf2000].

For Kepel, the Jewish Lubavitch movement is giving fresh life to an idea of « community » that is undermining one of the main foundations of democratic societies, the equality of all citizens before the state and the law. This egalitarian universalist principle is rejected as being a product of the hatred spirit of the Enlightenment, which extolled the emancipation of reason from faith, the end of obedience to the special religious Law of the Chosen People. In the Jewish world, present-day communalism owes many of its successes to its links with a tradition whose logical outcome was the autonomy of the ghetto – which is now being glorified by the most orthodox disciples of re-Judaization. Both the Tablighi and the Lubavitch at first adopted a « minimalist » attitude of non-confrontation with the authorities, giving priority to their social work with young people in their community [Kepel1994].

3) Conclusion

On the differences between movements from above and from below, Mumtaz argues that the Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat, the two most important Islamic movements of South Asian subcontinent in the twentieth century, also

represent two fundamentally different approaches to Islamic revivalism. While the Jamaat-i-Islami's main emphasis is on the resacralization of political life and the establishment of an Islamic state with the Qur'an and Sunna (the way of the Prophet) as its constitution and the Shari'a as its basic law, the Tabligh movement, on the other hand, focuses its activities on the moral and spiritual uplift of individual believers, asking them to fulfill their religious obligations irrespective of whether there is an Islamic state or not. The Jamaat-i-Islami is a highly structured, hierarchically organized, bureaucratic-type organization that has established a clear line of authority and a huge network of functional departments and nationwide branches; the Tablighi Jamaat, on the other hand, is a free-floating religious movement with minimal dependence on hierarchy, leadership positions, and decision-making procedures. Although both are primarily lay movements with minimal participation by the *ulama*, the Tablighi Jamaat is definitely closer to traditional forms of Islam than is the Jamaat-i-Islami, which in its own self-perception represents a synthesis of tradition and modernity [Mumtaz1994].

All religious movements that are presented in this section reject modernity, except the liberal attitudes that however stress on the importance of going back to the principles of religion. So religious movements are mainly reactions against modernity, their aim for essentialist movements is to bring society back to their tradition and principles, the fundamentalist movements from above try to change society according to the scriptures as fundamentalism from below tends to work on individuals. We try to present in the next section the ways of action of religious movements, and the counter reactions.

Actions and counter reactions

In that process of action – reaction of religious movements against modernism, it is useful to try to analyze what can be the counter reaction against them. The three modes of action are politics, violence or individual reforming. We try now to analyze the different possibilities of attitudes for the modern countries, as the need for understanding religious “fundamentalism” is clearly a way to fight back these movements on the point of view of modern western democracies.

1)Politics: The political game is twofold,

- the first one is the attitude of Western countries toward “Fundamentalism” in other societies. In that case, the arena is the diplomacy and the construction of a neo-Orientalism based on the same characteristic of demonizing the other point of view according to the values of Western societies. This demonization takes place mainly in the mass media and acts by pressurizing the third world by the mean of humanitarian aid.
- the second concerns the inside of the society, mainly the second generation of immigration that search its identity in religious fundamentalism. In modern democracies, these native citizens have the power through their vote to lobby the government and influence the politics of their country. In that case, the arena is the democracy and the way of counter action is a kind of neo-fundamentalism based on the values of the society. The best example is the controversy about the scarf in France, where the argument is to defend the values of laicity. No signs of religious

or political belonging are tolerated in French schools. This discussion has reached the ridiculous when a politician proposed to consider the beard as an ostentatious external religious sign. In that case, the question with the increase of second generation immigrants is in the critical mass that can put into question the root values of the society. The choice between compromise and conflict will depend on the level of integration of immigrants in the society. This real integration relies much on education of youth, and the fairness of negotiating the compromise on the quality of democracy.

2)Violence

the question of violence is rather simple in the modern world as it triggers more violence. Because the military power is stronger on the side of the modern values, this is the mean that prevails at last in order to contain the influence of foreign ideologies or influences. On the political field, if negotiation fails, the game is to push the opponent to violence in order to have a pretext for using brutal force and defeat him.

3)Neutrality, individual reforming

The fundamentalist movements based on reforming the individual are not easy to deal with as they have no structure but the increasing number of their members represents a threat for democracies because they are latent and can quickly move to activism. They also tend to reach this critical mass which will give them some political power by the way of individuals following the same goal. In that case the attitude of politics in place is to start amalgamating words in order to disqualify these movements. The recent assimilation between fundamentalism, terrorism, Islamism in the media might be preparing the eventuality of a confrontation between western democracies and Islam.

In this section, we may observe that actions and counter reaction are in fact modern when they are violent or politic, mainly in nationalist and conservative movements from above, as these follow the pattern of intolerance, confrontation and refusal of other values, in state of cohabitation that prevailed in pre-modern societies, and that anti-modernity is in fact a modern reaction to modernity. The next section tries to find ways of exiting the endless circle of modern reaction to modernity.

Out of the endless circle of reactions?

The break out from the endless circle of reaction is not to take into account modernity, that is to stress on the real values of religion and to adopt a neutral attitude in conflicts. For Mumtaz, the Palestinian question, as well as other problems affecting the Muslim community, can be resolved only if the realization comes to the Muslims that they must once again take up their duty, i.e. to present themselves to others as « God's witness on earth » [Mumtaz1994], and Madan suggests: “We do not, of course, have a wall of separation in India, for there is no church to wall off, but only the notion of neutrality or equidistance between the state and the religious identity of the people” [Madan] .

As « The Great American Satan » of the Islamic revolution in Iran has turned, in reaction, into the « Axis of Evil » of Georges Bush, the exile of the Dalaï Lama to India after the invasion of Tibet by the

Chinese army in 1949, has had a much more powerful effect on the invaders. Taoism and Buddhism remained in China even after its Liberation by the Communist army. Taoism is embedded in the Chinese tradition, but many Buddhists have now joined the Falun Gong movement whose leader lives now in the US, is state of traditional Buddhism. This movement counts now more people than the Communist party of China and forces the government to put many of them temporarily in prison during official events. This example shows the efficiency of non violence in the long term.

It is clear that violence of modernity nourishes itself and that the only way out of this vicious circle is neutrality and detachment that we find in Asian philosophy but also in Abrahamic religions in term of patience, forgiveness and tolerance.

Post-modernity that we claim, begins with the advent of cybernetics in the mid-twentieth Century can have a positive influence in mutual understanding as it allows direct communication between people through the new means of information. The mixing of ethos in the virtual village stresses the importance of relativism and interpretation of information, but also the need of hermeneutics and *ijtihad* in religious terms, in order to actualize and understand the frozen scriptures from other socio-temporal contexts in the light of the present era. In that sense, orality might bring a transmission and interpretation of religion not tight to reading and therefore more flexible and adaptive to the present world.

Conclusion

Gilles Kepel argues that movements for the reaffirmation of religious identity have undergone a considerable change between 1975 and 1990. In fifteen years, they have succeeded in transforming the confused reaction of their adherents to the « crisis of modernity » into plans for rebuilding the world and in those plans their holy scriptures provide the basis for tomorrow's society. Their first task was to fix labels on to the confusion and disorder in the world as perceived by their adherents, breathing fresh life into the vocabulary and the categories of religious thought as applied to the contemporary world. Next they conceived plans for changing the social order so as to bring it into line with the commands and values of the Old Testament, the Koran or the Gospels; for, as they saw it, nothing else could ensure the advent of a world of justice and truth. These movements have a great deal in common beyond mere historical simultaneity. They are at one in rejecting a secularism that they trace back to the philosophy of the Enlightenment [Kepel1994].

Religious “Fundamentalism” , which is considered by all authors to be a reaction against the effects of modernity is not an homogeneous movement and has been deconstructed through this paper on different levels. First we have made a distinction between Abrahamic fundamentalism and Oriental essentialism, then we have differentiated the political struggle using religion from proper religious movements which we have tried to categorize, and finally analyzed the ways of action of these movements. In the end, Fundamentalism is reduced to very few religious movements that are often strongly connected to the literacy of their scriptures but not obligatory violent. It is important to observe that fundamentalism, like modernity are characterized by the importance of literacy and scriptures.

Most of the religious movements reject modernity as responsible of the disenchantment of the world and the secularization of society, but they are all “dancing around the pole of modernity” as their anti-modern attitude is modern. The only way to escape from modernity is a kind of neutrality and detachment that is stressed in oriental religions.

Religion is strongly influenced by society, but society depends also on inventions and discoveries. We place modernity from the end of the fifteenth Century with the (re)invention of printing and the discovery of America, to the advent of cybernetic in the mid-twentieth Century. Books and the printing industry explain the disease of modernity in the incoherence and conflicts between frozen scriptures. One positive effect of Post-modernity could be the need of interpretation of information that would also lead to reinterpretation of sacred texts in the light of the present time. If religions are to take back their role of bringing common values to society, there is a need to take distance and extract their values and message from the tradition and the scriptures and give explanation to people, who otherwise tend to adopt a pick and mix attitude. Therefore the importance of teachers, religious and political leaders in order to build a global coherence of the world and reestablish understanding in the reality of the social melting pot, in order to avoid the escape of individuals into schizophrenic attitudes in self-made religions or in the virtuality of the computer world.

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