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Fundamentalism in the Light of Selected Psychological Concepts¹

Abstract: The aim of the article is to present the psychological roots of fundamentalism, which can be found in each type of the phenomenon, and also an attempt to show fundamentalism, as the configuration of certain personality traits. As the basis for such an interpretation of fundamentalism, serve the psychological approach, which relate to the personality, cognitive style, refer to the prejudices, as well as to the concept of authoritarian personality and its constitutive characteristics. Article raised the question of so-called “fundamentalist personality” on the basis of diversity of manifestations of this phenomenon and its correlation with the concepts of authoritarianism and dogmatism. Author also addresses psychological category of attitude, which is the starting point in the discussion of the phenomena, such as fundamentalism or nationalism. In the background of considerations is an attempt to organize knowledge on fundamentalism, taking into account the historical roots of the phenomenon, and also, as a complementary reflection, a legitimacy of identifying fundamentalism with terrorism.

Keywords: *fundamentalism; authoritarianism; dogmatism; modernity; personality; religion*

Introduction

The concept of fundamentalism is often cited in various contexts, but usually in reference to Islam and religious extremism. It is also mentioned along with religious orthodoxy, nationalist attitudes, or political doctrines. It is perceived as part of the

¹ The paper corresponds with the author’s previous work published in Polish (see: Zasuń, 2015).

process of growing out of the Enlightenment and modernism, which led to the pluralism of values and standards, relativism, fragmentation of truth, but also to striving to restore the monolithic image of the world (Szulakiewicz, 2005, p. 15). Fundamentalism is discussed from many perspectives, as an ambiguous phenomenon. Usually we talk about religious fundamentalism, which is a relatively new concept and has been used for approx. 20 to 30 years as an opposite of globalization (Giddens, 2010, p. 582). Philosophical meaning of fundamentalism (epistemological fundamentalism), geopolitical (ethnic-fundamentalism), psychological (personality fundamentalist), or political (Motak, 2002, p. 7–8) is also assumed. Due to so many meanings and aspects of this phenomenon, some researchers recommend using the plural form (different types of fundamentalism, depending on culture and/or religion), and not reducing it only to radical forms of expression (Pace & Stefani, 2002, p. 21–22). The difficulty in defining this category is not only in its ambiguity, however, but also its pejorative meaning, which it has gained as an antithesis of modern thinking and as a result of political events since the Iranian revolution. This paper departs from the controversy associated with various meanings of fundamentalism, although they will be presented in their outline. Its aim is to present the psychological aspects of fundamentalism, which can be found in any of the manifestations of this phenomenon. The objective is also an attempt at analyzing fundamentalism in correlation to authoritarianism and dogmatism, as well as a specific attitude, which may be at the root of many other activities.

Fundamentalism originated from the Protestant world as a theological trend, which was shaped at the end of the nineteenth century in the United States and was a reaction to the processes of modernization and liberal tendencies within Christianity (Pace & Stefani, 2002, p. 31; Casanova, 2006, p. 231–282; Motak, 2002, p. 37, 67 - *passim*). It was a response to the collision of authority of the Bible, faith and traditional theology with the development of science, including criticism of the Scriptures. Fundamentalism, which was literally understood as “a belief in a return to the literal reading the source writings (...) is sometimes a response to modernization and rationalization, refers to the faith and defends tradition with traditional methods” (Giddens, 2010, p. 582, 721). Those, who fought in the name of foundation of the faith, were in that religious and anti-modernistic context, precisely called fundamentalists. When explaining the issues of terminology, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt points out that the term “modern fundamentalist movements” referred to the trends that have grown on the basis of American Protestantism and also to later movements within the Islamic and Jewish communities, which, however, were described with this term by the West (Eisenstadt, 2009, p. 507). Another meaning of fundamentalism comes from the second half of the twentieth century. It appeared in the critical rationalism and

philosophical views of Karl R. Popper and Hans Albert. The epistemological sense of fundamentalism is contrasted here with the attitude called fallibilism, which refers to the conviction of the unreliability of human knowledge. Contrary to the dogmatism, fallibilism undermines infallibility and durability of our knowledge, if we seek truth in theory, we must also discern falsity, because one can never rationally justify the theory or to prove that a given claim is true (see: Popper, 1992, p. 25, 116; Popper 1999; Albert 1982, 1998, in: Motak, 2002, p. 38–39)².

Since the mid-70s, there has been a growth of fundamentalist tendencies in different societies and religious traditions. The extended meaning of fundamentalism began to be used, to determine “many religious phenomena of anti-modernistic nature. In the first place, the term was transferred to religious mass movements within Islam, the so-called re-islamization movements” (Motak, 2002, p. 39). In Muslim countries where their effects were perceived, they developed the ideas of the Iranian revolution of 1979: “Islam in great style becomes a banner of liberation of the entire nation from the symbols of the West (...) and the foundation to build an Islamic state in the eyes of the leaders and activists of various radical movements, spread all over the Islamic world. It will be perceived as a sign of the times, a sign of the revival of Islam from rule of the West” (Pace & Stefani, 2002, p. 86; Motak, 2002, p. 39–40). For the mentality of the West, fundamentalism was connected with those events and it has become a threat to the modern world, strongly linked to the policy of the Islamists (Motak, 2002, p. 40). Its essential, distinguishing features became: a return to the sources of faith, politicization of religion which serves as an ideology hostile to secular state, proclamation of the Islamic revolution in Muslim countries, hostility to Western values (Holyst, 2011, p. 488). It is worth mentioning that from the perspective of the Islamic world, the desire to preserve the pure form of religion, unspoilt identity and radical need to rebuild an ethical-religious state, based on divine right, is referred to as the renaissance (*nahda*), which is the phenomenon of modern times, includes social movements, political and religious in the modern Muslim world (Pace & Stefani, 2002, p. 59)³. Meanwhile, the trend of identifying any movements of Islamic renaissance with fundamentalism and, by extension, with extremism and terrorism, has contributed not only to simplification of the notion of

² Motak notes that ilfallibilism, as an opposite to fallibilism is an attitude which is present in non-Western cultures, refers to a strong connection with tradition and doctrine and knowledge infallible. While fallibilism represents more the West and culture of modernity, where there is the fallibility of human reason and so all knowledge (Motak, 2002, p. 38–39).

³ The term, which in Islam is close to the Western concept of fundamentalism is *Salafism* (in Arabic *al-Salafyya*), current of thought, which was born in the second half of the nineteenth century (Denoeux 2011, p. 58–59).

“Islamic fundamentalism”, despite a number of phenomena in the bosom of Islam (awakening or reformist movements), but also resulted in confusion in the meaning of the fundamentalism itself (Denoeux, 2011, p. 56–58).

Definitions

There were many works and analyses that were published about fundamentalism. They can be divided into two thematic groups. The works that discuss the types of fundamentalism that arose within the great religious traditions (Protestant, Islamic, Jewish, Catholic, Hindu) and include the historical and socio-political factors of this phenomenon. The second type of work concerns interpretation of fundamentalism as a response to the specific conditions of the present. In this group, there are also discussions on the psychological roots of fundamentalism (review of the subject literature is presented in the work by Pace & Stefani, 2002, p. 199–207). Extension of research on fundamentalism shows problems of terminology and methodology, which, according to Maria Marczevska-Rytko, head in two directions: maximalism, where fundamentalism is synonymous with traditionalism, nationalism, orthodoxy and communalism, and minimalism, where fundamentalism refers only to the Protestantism in the United States, and rejects its propagation to other cultures and other religions (Marczevska-Rytko, 2010, p. 197). Definitional problems relate also to the need to distinguish the scientific approach to fundamentalism from the journalistic one, paying attention to the difference between fundamentalism and political Islamism, avoiding identification of religion and religious worldview with fundamentalism. Whereas, some researchers postulate removal of this concept from the vocabulary of social sciences, because it has too many connotations and does not explain anything (Marczevska-Rytko, 2010, p. 198).

In view of the indicated problems, it can be assumed that according to one of the more general definitions of fundamentalism: it is „a set of ideas prevailing over the political content (ideas, attitudes, ideology, doctrine, program, social movement or governance – in all of them at the same time or only in some of these categories of activity), where the core is the system of values, which is essentially aspiring to be admittedly universal, the only right and necessary one to achieve happiness in describable space and contains directive of self-realization, regardless of circumstances and at any price” (Pawłowski 1994, in: Marczevska-Rytko, 2010, p. 198).

Because of the diversity of theoretical approaches to fundamentalism and considering its internal structure, Dominika Motak presented a typology of its definitions dividing them into those that relate to the content of beliefs, and those that depart from the content of beliefs. The first category included narrow definitions, which

combine fundamentalism with the American mainstream Protestantism or with other currents of Christianity, refer to narrow confessional identity, take account of a theological approach directly related to the content of the faith, and are critical of the evolution of dogma (Motak, 2002, p. 41–42). Defensive attitude towards modern thinking and defense of the purity of faith, however, characterized also other religions. Fundamentalist movements arise also within non-Christian world, their presence is noted in each religion of the world. One can say that the seeds of fundamentalism lie in every civilization, „it can occur even in ‘supramundane’ civilizations such as Hinduism and Buddhism” (Pace & Stefani, 2002, p. 22–23; Eisenstadt, 2009, p. 522; Marczevska-Rytko, 2010, p. 199).

An appropriate example of a narrow understanding of fundamentalism is its reception in the context of Islam, especially the one presented by Samuel Huntington. His cultural model of fundamentalism was called by Marczevska-Rytko „the Huntington stereotype”. She points out that for the author of *The Clash of Civilizations* religion is seen as a determinant of civilization. Huntington formulated the main thesis of his work in this way: „culture and cultural identity, which is in a broad concept of civilization identity, shape the patterns of cohesion, disintegration and conflict in the world, which was formed after the Cold War” (Huntington, 2011, p. 15; Tibi, 1997, p. 25). With this thesis, he has developed his key assumptions, i.e. the inevitable conflict between the West and Islam, strengthening the stereotype of Islam as the sole source of the risk, strengthening the stereotype of the sameness of fundamentalism and Islam (Huntington, 2011, p. 15–16; Marczevska-Rytko, 2010, p. 201). Not without reason, there are attempts to separate these concepts to avoid improper associations. The term Islamic fundamentalism is often replaced by the concept of Islamism, and Islam as a world religion is distinguished from Islamic fundamentalism as a political ideology (Holyst, 2011, p. 485).

A similar thesis, formulated by Bassam Tibi, states, that “all contemporary fundamentalisms are characterized by opposition to the civilization of cultural modernism, wherein, this opposition stems from the global historical context of this civilization” (Tibi, 1997, p. 23; Marczevska-Rytko, 2010, p. 202–204). Tibi says, that in societies other than the western ones, religious fundamentalism as a political ideology has distinguishing features, such as opposition to the secular nation-state, anti-Western character (including a special aversion to Western principles of democracy and human rights), rejection of a secular state as the basic unit in international politics, incitement to civilization war against global order, the politicization of religion (Tibi, 1997, p. 24). In this context, fundamentalism is also connected with the desire to save one’s own cultural identity, to escape from the state of anxiety, which is induced by postmodernism. In this pursuit, it is connected with the idea of orthodox Islam as the

authentic and only true doctrine, entangled in the fight against other religious systems or against relativism of postmodern cultures (e.g. Turner 1994; Ahmed 1992 in: Ismail, 2011, p. 21). It is worth noting, that according to Tomasz Aleksandrowicz, a strong religious or ideological motivation is also one of the essential elements connecting fundamentalism with terrorism. Absolutist ideology „leaving no place for any doubt as to the validity of the case (...) because it has a transcendent and holy character, is nearly revelation“ – this is characteristic of the new terrorism, which is often confused with fundamentalism, as a result (Aleksandrowicz, 2008, p. 36).

The second category of definitions, selected by Motak, includes sociological approaches taking into account the environment on the one hand and psychological approaches that relate to the personality (includes category of attitudes, cognitive style) on the other (Motak, 2002, p. 42). Sociological analyses of fundamentalism take into account the cultural changes and modernization. Here an opposition to fundamentalism is modernity, and definitions usually include this opposite referring to fundamentalism as a return to tradition and roots. The definition of Thomas Meyer, who within the meaning of fundamentalism shows its retreat from modern civilization as a return to the tradition and anti-modernist religiosity can be used as an example here (Meyer, 2001; Tibi, 1997, p. 35; Motak, 2002, p. 44). Similarly, Jürgen Habermas naming the fundamentalist movement as a protest against the „dismantling of the traditional forms of life“, considers fundamentalists as hostile to the contemporary culture (Habermas, 2002, p. 638; Motak, 2002, p. 44–45).

Different position is presented in his sociological analysis of fundamentalism by Eisenstadt, who speaks of the close relationship between fundamentalism and modernity. It is reflected among other things in “the way of creating an ideology and mobilizing various sectors of society“. Although fundamentalist movements have their own anti-modernist ideology, they assimilate elements of the political program of modernity, “above all, faith in the possibility of transformation of society, through totalitarian, political action“ (Eisenstadt, 2009, p. 510). In this group of definitions, there is also an approach proposed by James W. Björkman, who assumes, that the “absolutist system of beliefs“ and “the totalistic definition of reality“, which are undemocratic and serve revival of traditional values, are typical for fundamentalism (Björkman, 1988 in: Motak, 2002, p. 47).

The clash between fundamentalism and modernity was also presented by James D. Hunter, who named fundamentalism “orthodoxy confronted with modernity“. It is also a protest against the modern world and the defense against it (Hunter, 1993, p. 28; Motak, 2002, p. 47–48). Hunter, however, claims, that “all religious traditions confronting the modern world order – its rationality, its pluralism, its public/private dualism, its secularity – are faced with basically three options. The first one is that

religious communities, cultivating tradition, stay on the sidelines (withdraw from engagement). (...) The second option is simply to accommodate the traditions to the social and cultural forces of the modern world. (...) The third option involves resistance of a religious community to modernity and the pressures that would dilute the purity of traditional religious expression“ (Hunter, 1993, p. 28–29). With reference to the above, Hunter recognizes that fundamentalism „derives its identity principally from the posture of resistance towards the modern world order“ (Hunter, 1993, p. 29). Finally, psychological concepts of fundamentalism, which will be presented in the next part, usually describe it as a kind of attitude, prejudice, and refer to the category of authoritarian personality. In this type of definitions, there appear specific traits of fundamentalist personality, such as anxiety, accompanied by a strong need for security, a sense of powerlessness and hopelessness, aggression, existential uncertainty. This way of defining fundamentalism will be the subject of further considerations.

Fundamentalism, although it grew out of a particular religious tradition and culture (American Protestantism), extended to other cultural and political contexts became difficult to analyse theoretically. Its definitions are either too broad or too narrow, or pejorative. Taking into account this diversity, Marczevska-Rytko proposed six key features of fundamentalism: 1. criticism of the government elite for departure from the principles of religious law and order towards the principles of foreign cultures and civilizations, 2. the idea of a return to religion as a remedy for the evil in the world, appealing to tradition and its sources (holy book) reinterpretation, adjustment to modern requirements, 3. advocates of fundamentalism know the thoughts of the Absolute, have a monopoly on truth and ways to rectify the situation, 4. all the others are enemies, 5. religious law extended to other spheres of human functioning, the rule is subordination of life, social and political systems to the dictates of religion, the authority and the legal system derive legitimacy from the religious order recognizing its superiority, 6. intense activity in the social and political arena, in an effort to abolish the established order and replace it with a new one, use of violence justified by higher targets, the idea of holy war it is not characteristic only for Islam (Marczevska-Rytko, 2010, p. 204–205).

Psychological aspects of fundamentalism

Motak asked the question about the possibility of research of the so-called “fundamentalist personality“, on the basis of many manifestations of this phenomenon and its correlation with the concepts of authoritarianism, dogmatism, intolerance, ethnocentrism, „ the fact was repeatedly pointed out that these conceptualizations correlate with each other at the empirical level, and they also show the relative similar-

ity to the characteristics of religious and political conservatism“, moreover, they are similar thanks to the worldview specifics, typical attitudes and cognitive styles (Motak, 2002, p. 180). In the opinion of Motak, bringing different conceptual categories to a common denominator is objectionable and introduces misunderstanding as to the boundaries between these categories. Moreover, research tools for the analysis of fundamentalism, which are based on the dogmatic content, examine in fact, religious orthodoxy, which is not synonymous with fundamentalism. Taking into account the above claims, the author will be limited to the characteristics of certain traits of fundamentalism from the perspective of selected psychological concepts. The most frequently invoked ancillary concept, useful in psychological analysis of fundamentalism will be taken into account, i.e. the authoritarian personality, dogmatic mind, as well as the category of attitude, providing a starting point for further considerations.

The basic psychological category, which underlies many patterns of behavior, is the attitude, a kind of backbone of our functioning in the world, a phenomenon which is both personal and social. The attitude is the “evaluation of people, objects and views“, formed of emotional (feelings and values associated with the object of attitude), cognitive (beliefs and perceptions about the object of attitude and his properties) and behavioral (behavior towards the object of attitude) components (Aronson & Wilson & Akert, 2006, p. 180–181). In the case of fundamentalism, we are dealing with an overt attitude, which means, that individuals consciously confess and are able to determine their object, acknowledge it as their own assessment. Attitudes affect most aspects of reality which we encounter, they are various, because our environment is diverse. Each attitude is a different configuration of the abovementioned components, an advantage of one of them determines about specificity of an attitude. For example, attitudes with emotional sources are formed on the basis of values (the most important beliefs) and they are not a result of rational assessment or guided by logic. Persuasion rarely changes this type of attitude, because an attempt to undermine it is tantamount to questioning the values (Aronson & Wilson & Akert, 2006, p. 180–181). One can say that the emotional component is the key aspect of an attitude, because emotions determine durability of our values and beliefs. Just look at the person, who is ready to give his life for the professed ideology.

Studies on the attitudes of nationalism and patriotism have delivered conclusions about formation of the compounds with the social categorization or identity. The premises resulting in this regard from the conception of H. Dekker and D. Malov can be extended for the analysis of fundamentalism (Skarżyńska, 2002, p. 283). The nation, ideology or dogma, as objects of attitudes, are formed relatively early. The researchers point out, that the first step is awareness of the object of an attitude, i.e. awareness of national, ethnic, religious affiliation (its foundations develop before the

age of eight). In the opinion of Dekker and Malov, national self-identification, as an aspect of social identity (as well as ethnic, religious ones), is an important part of “a coherent syndrome of social-personality”, functioning as adaptation (Skarżyńska, 2002, p. 284). The stronger identification, the stronger roots in the group. The cognitive element of a discussed attitude is then the gradually shaping up system of beliefs, linking people of the same nationality, connected with the common history, traditions, culture, language, etc. The intragroup perception, formed on this basis, leads to categorization through belief in identity (us-them, ours-strangers), and shapes a sense of common identity. It is also accompanied by certain emotions, associated with positive self-esteem of one’s own group, to which strong positive emotions are assigned. This positive evaluation (the need of a positive identity) fulfills an important psychological need of being rooted in a longlasting greater community (Skarżyńska, 2002, p. 284). The key element of this community is their cohesive ideology, so-called, system of group beliefs, built around issues that are fundamental for the group. People recognize universality of such element within the group and on this ground “a collective system of meanings” is created as a derivative of the core values and shared identity (Skarżyńska, 2002, p. 285).

As has already been said, fundamentalism correlates with authoritarianism and dogmatism, with a specific cognitive style, certain personality traits. Authoritarianism is one of the most studied personality variables, understood as a set of beliefs about power, morality and social order. It is connected with obedience to authority, prejudices towards strangers and the tendency to accept violence in defense of conventional morality and the former state of things (Winter, 2008, p. 115–116). Krzysztof Korzeniowski drew attention to the fact, that the category of authoritarianism grew out of efforts to “closer understanding of sympathy for a particular kind of right-wing doctrines which are referring to the key role of authority” (Korzeniowski, 2002, p. 70). The first work devoted to the authoritarian personality is Erich Fromm’s *Escape from Freedom* published in 1941. Analysing Nazism in terms of psychodynamic processes on the lower middle class of German society, he linked his concept of the authoritarian character with the interaction of socio-cultural factors, revealing the process of its formation and dynamic change. Fromm writes, that a person may encounter the cultural patterns that can meet his or her needs (e.g. in the form of obedience to the “leader” in the fascist ideology), ensure a sense of security by connection with millions of similarly sentient individuals (Fromm, 1978, p. 151). Although Fromm’s was undoubtedly a pioneering work, the competent flourishing research on the authoritarian personality was started with the work by Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and Nevitt Sanford *The Authoritarian Personality* published in 1950 and considered by many to be the source. Its main

hypothesis was recognition that “the political, economic, and social convictions of an individual often form a broad and coherent pattern, as if bound together by a ‘mentality’ or ‘spirit’, and this pattern is an expression of deep-lying trends in his personality” (Adorno et al., 1950, p. 97). Researchers have created a list of typical characteristics of authoritarianism: conventionalism, authoritarian subordination, authoritarian aggression, anti-intracception, superstition and stereotypical attitude, belief in the strength and being tough, destructiveness and cynicism (Adorno et al., 1950, p. 228; Korzeniowski, 2002, p. 60–61).

This set of features, occurring at the same time, specific and necessary for the determination of a given phenomenon, is called a syndrome. Because the syndrome of authoritarian personality is a complex category, attributed with many different features, Korzeniowski proposed, to bring it to a few major ones, prevailed by the abovementioned authoritarian aggression, conventionalism and subordination. A cognitive approach to the authoritarian syndrome was proposed by Jadwiga Koralewicz. She has defined authoritarianism as “strong stressing of the domination and subordination as the key relationships that exist in the hierarchical world. This world and the fate of individuals are ruled by the forces uncontrolled by man, to which they can only surrender, subordinate passively, seeking a foothold in a strong authority and identification with the narrowly understood community” (Koralewicz & Ziółkowski, 2003, p. 47–48). According to Koralewicz, axial features of thus understood authoritarianism, include a normative-evaluative (belief in the necessity of subordination to the idealized authorities) and cognitive-descriptive layer (conviction of the lack of influence on one’s own fate and on the world, lack of control over it) (Koralewicz & Ziółkowski, 2003, p. 48–49; Korzeniowski, 2002, p. 61–62).

Given the similarity of the indicated traits of an authoritarian personality to the fundamentalist attitude, the latter can be called „a variation of the authoritarian syndrome, i.e. an authoritarian kind of religiosity” (Motak, 2002, p. 184).

The category which corresponds to the fundamentalist attitude, is also a dogmatic mind, described by Milton Rokeach in *The Open and Closed Mind*, inspired by studies of Adorno on authoritarian personality. Dogmatism here concerns the system of individual beliefs (usually referred to as closed or dogmatic). Therefore, cognitive abilities have crucial meaning, as well as the ability (or lack thereof) to distinguish between one’s own beliefs and beliefs derived from an authoritarian source. It is „a relatively closed form of cognitive organization of claims about reality, structured around a central set of beliefs relating to absolute authority, which in its part provides patterns of tolerance and intolerance towards others” (Rokeach, 1960, p. 60; Motak, 2002, p. 185). High level of dogmatism means perception of reality as something global, less diverse, with logically related convictions, idealized authorities, it also

means lack of approval for difference, especially in the beliefs. At the same time, Rokeach connects the dogmatic mind with a vision of the world as a threat, increased suspicion that protects against possible dangers (Jakubowska, 2002, p. 194). Because of correlation between the level of fear and dogmatism, this type of perception of reality is a kind of defense mechanism (Motak, 2002, p. 185). A dogmatic mind, like authoritarianism, is a broader theoretical construct not directly related to a specific ideology or system of beliefs, it is rather the basis of a particular way of processing information and functioning of cognitive structures, as pointed out by Motak. Fundamentalism, considered in the context of the dogmatic mind, is then a specific organization of the system of beliefs, where the main element is faith in the supreme authority and its infallibility, in truth of the sacred knowledge, tradition, combined with commitment to them.

Fundamentalism is often compared or equated with terrorism. Although similarity of these attitudes is discussed at the historical, social or political level, it is worth considering on their psychological link. Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post pay attention to the fact, that in all cases of religious violence and killing in the name of God, the perpetrators act in the name of defending their own system of beliefs, and acts of such violence are defensive aggression against the enemy who threatens individual and collective identity, sacred principles, system of beliefs. The authors conclude, that anything which threatens this system and values, constitutes a fundamental threat to the mental integrity of a fanatic (Robins & Post, 2007, p. 183–184). Recognizing, that the focal point of the so shaped psyche is the belief demanding defense (passive or active) against everything incompatible with the latter. Post and Robins give a basis for considering the similarity of religious violence and fundamentalist attitude.

Brunon Hołyst defines the religious terrorists (as opposed to the secular ones) as fundamentalists. He also acknowledges that terrorism is the effect of education in the spirit of fundamentalism, „it is the result of fundamentalism, both in the religious and political dimension” (Hołyst, 2011, p. 776). It seems, however, that fundamentalism is a wider category, and only under certain conditions can generate extremist attitudes, so these phenomena should not be confused (Tibi, 1997, p. 30). In the case of fundamentalism, there is no clearly defined relationship with psychopathology. Meanwhile, acts of terrorism are often seen as an expression of pathology and/or mythologized, regarded as irrational. Revising this belief, Hołyst characterizes the terrorist pattern of actions as a „rational choice”, closely related to the collective phenomenon and social development (which rather de-mythologizes this category), and the structure of personality (Hołyst, 2011, p. 576–577). Hołyst also rejects identification of pathological personality with the personality of a terrorist. Firstly, the boundaries between normality and pathology or fanaticism are sometimes

fluent, secondly, it has not been established exactly what traits the personality of a terrorist have to reveal, thirdly, there is no clear correlation between brutal acts and pathological features of an offender, fourthly, despite indicating some typical traits of a terrorist, there is no explanation why only certain people manifesting these qualities actually engage in terrorist activities, and finally, fifthly, acceptance of the possibility of existence of a number of types of personality specific for a terrorist (Hołyst, 2011, p. 576, 579; see also Horgan, 2015, p. 69–73).

Terrorism cannot be directly identified with impaired personality either, because of the ability of a terrorist to cooperate or perform tasks in a group. The person affected with terrorism has difficulties in many ranges of co-existence and operating in a group. Jerzy Sielski draws attention to the fact that the personality of a terrorist is closed and aggressive on the outside. Its point of reference is frustration. Therefore, it is a fundamentalist or fanatical personality (when the frustration of a terrorist is oriented on a mission he or she becomes a fanatic, and in defense - becomes a fundamentalist) (Sielski, 2006, p. 107–114; Hołyst, 2011, p. 776–777). Some of a terrorist's traits, further to this authoritarianism and dogmatism, include a simple, stereotypical way of cognitive organization, high conformism, susceptibility to prejudices, typical categorization (simple and clear division of the social world to us and them - strangers), intolerance (of various origins: ignorance, a sense of otherness, anxiety and fear, superstition, situational factors), etc. These traits can lie at the bottom of their readiness to use violence, special motivation (often religious) and purposes, of self-identification in relation to a group, of seeing themselves in terms of victims (an act of terror is a form of defense), a high level of aggression (both instrumental and / or emotional). Although the terrorist personality is a vague and undefined concept, in the characteristics of a terrorist there is often a reference to the typical characteristics of temperament, to the category of introversion-extraversion, to disorders of the nervous system (in reference to the study of criminals) and to the narcissistic personality (Hołyst, 2011, p. 578; Horgan, 2015, p. 74). Note, however, that in the case of all personality disorders (not just narcissistic), there are some common features: disharmonious attitudes and behaviors in terms of emotions, excitability, control of impulsive behaviour, cognitive style, relationships with others. The behavior pattern is stable not episodic. It is also overall and maladjusted to different, individual and social situations. Difficulties show up early and remain for most of their life, etc. (Puzyński & Wciórka, 2000, p. 170–171). Among the characteristics typical of the personality narcissistic. Hołyst mentions the belief about their own uniqueness, hatred of others who pose a threat, lack of empathy, the desire to humiliate others, as well as showing contempt, aggression and its justification, exaggeration of their own achievements, fantasies of their own power, strength, wisdom, expectation of admiration and excitation with arousing fear,

using others to achieve their own goals, arrogance towards others, aggressive reactions caused by their own failures⁴. Such a complex of psychological conditions connected with the extremist ideology and special motivation (mainly religious), can contribute to radical actions, involving an escalation of violence, cancellation of morality and even self-destruction in the name of the greater good.

Conclusion

The psychological perspective adopted to the fundamentalism shows that it is not a phenomenon associated exclusively with a particular era, social or cultural processes, nor is it only a caricature of modernism, a form of rebellion or movement of protest. Fundamentalism should be seen as a merger of personality and situational conditions. It is a psychological reaction and attitude towards social, cultural, political processes and phenomena. The specific configuration of psychological characteristics makes a person react to the external contexts with an adequate attitude. These contexts have a fourfold impact on the personality: a) treated as a whole, they provide incentives, which by interacting with genetic endowment, influence the level of many personality variables, b) provide a network of meanings, customs and relationships, in which the personality and behavior are embedded, and according to which they are considered „normal“ or pathological c) certain personality traits may be present only in certain cultures, or may become widespread in them, as „typical“, d) social contexts indicate possible ways of expression of all traits of personality (Winter, 2008, p. 118–119). Fundamentalism can be regarded as such a response to specific social contexts, cultural, political, which usually includes processes of modernity and modernization entailing the destruction of the existing order, traditional sources of legitimacy (according to religion, ideology), disturbance of the sense of existential certainty, which is replaced by uncertainty and the threat of anomie. It is the desire to „reconstruct the individual and collective personality and identity by means of conscious human action, mainly of a political nature, as well as creating new personal and collective identity, which assume total subordination of an individual to the totalitarian community“ (Eisenstadt, 2009, p. 114).

In the name of unlimited freedom brought by modernity, people strive to break free from any embarrassing frameworks, including tradition or religion. Many researchers of modernity admit, that the basis of social life is now rationality and an adequate

⁴ Narcissism is not the only theory relating to the psychological traits of terrorists. In studies dealing with this subject is also used hypothesis of frustration-aggression and selected elements of psychodynamic theory (Horgan, 2015, p. 76–82).

ethics. On the one hand, this emancipation gave an individual the possibility of unlimited choice and pluralism of values, and on the other, it has brought certain consequences. These include not only the anomie, which Emile Durkheim connected with the suffering of an individual resulting from an infinite scope his or her desires (Durkheim, 2011, p. 317), but also the desire to restore the old order and the image of reality based on traditional grounds. It is here that fundamentalism found its place.

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