FANATIC Fundamentalism

Did you hear about that **fanatic** truckdriver who to save 1 squirrel killed 5 people? Didn't mean too, of course. Myopia: seeing/thinking about/feeling for only the squirrel. Fanatics, besides being emotional like others, are rational--use reason--only for (on behalf of), not on what they concentrate their attention on. Just think how rational, reasoning, Osama bin Laden had to be to destroy the Trade Towers! An awesome, long-range-planning feat of practical reason (to be Kant-contrasted, as his CRITIQUE OF..., with his CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON).

In the captivity of reason to agenda (Lat., the "action[s]" one sees as necessary to effectuating one's "cause"), fanatics do **psychospiritual** violence to themselves; & (since reason is not outside-the-cause available to act as brake on actions) fanatics are, in every situation of challenge, potentially TERRORISTS (meaning using **physical** violence against all obstacles: all opponents are enemies).

1 Analogy: What does a *black hole* do? Only one thing: it sucks. It's "a region in space where the force of gravity is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape from it" (CDAE).* Fanatics suck all reason down into the black holes of their minds, where it is constricted & condensed & ready to explode into violent outbursts of mind/muscle only they cannot see as irrational. All feelings are sucked down & forged into a single feeling, viz. HATRED. The moral sense of right/wrong is sucked down & boiled till wrong boils off: in their own eyes, haters are always right, & dwelling on their rightness (i.e., self-righteousness) further heatens their hate. Their aspirations & devotions are sucked down & melded into self-will masked as utter self-giving to the fundamental Cause (thus this Thinksheet's title's noun: **fundamentalism**).

2 Story (Diane Sawyer, 4.4.02 "Prime Time"): Consumed by hate in the form of the desire for vengeance against the Arab who'd shot her rabbi father in the head, leaving an ugly but nonfatal wound, Lora Blumenshine, an Am.journalist, went from the U.S. to Palestine, found that the terrorist was in jail (at least till 2010), & insinuated herself into his family with the intention of doing as much damage as possible. Surprise! These Arabs didn't hate Jews, & adopted this Jew into the family, even giving her a ring in token of it after she had visited them many times in her presented role of an Am.writer wanting to understand the Palestinians. Olbviously, she was unprepared to meet a *Christian* Arab family (with a Jesus wall-plaque worded "Love your enemies"). She corresponded with the prisoner & found him to be Eng.-fluent, a lover of Eng.lit., & determined "never to shoot a gun again; the bullet that struck your father was the only one I ever fired." She went to the Wailing Wall & stuck in one word: "TRANSFORMATION." Then the families got together, Rabbi Daniel B. coming from Am.--a tearful hug-in. (The Arab family's youngest son, the prisoner, had gotten caught up in a Jew-hating gang, & repented immediately after the shooting incident.)

You see the relation between the black hole & this story. The story cancels the black hole's gravity. Reason, feelings, the moral sense, aspirations & devotions are freed, released from constriction & condensation, readied for the works of forgiveness, reconciliatin, renewal, love, peace, joy. Grace abounding, paradise found (in contrast to the Palestinian Muslim would-be martyrs' promised afterlife-paradise).

3 Now imagine a *white*-hole fanatic fundamentalism. Please delineate it for yourself. Here I'll mention only that reason is restricted to the service of a single positive value or virtue--say, nonviolence. Or loyalty at the cost of truth & honor, as in coverups (Enron, RCC, et al). For a few teen years I tried to restrict reason to the cause of defending biblical inerrancy, then saw that I was restricting reason, then surrendered my Protestant fundamentalism when I realized I was denying reason. In the terms of this Thinksheet's 1st ¶ (not §), I'd been using reason only for the supposedly Perfect Book, not on it. (This is the #1 problem in Islamic hermeneutics: the earthly Qur'an, as a word-perfect copy of the heavenly Q., is sacred, so untouchable by rational criticsm....though in some quarter of Muslim scholarship the ice is beginning to crack up.)

4 No fanaticism, no **terrorism**, which is (CDAE) "violent action for political pur-

*Cambridge Dictionary of American English

Elliott △ Associates
309 Lake Elizabeth Drive
Craigville, MA 02632
Phone/Fax 508.775.8008 $20 per year
e-mail wandrelliot@mediaone.net

Noncommercial reproduction permitted

4.7.02

poses" (presciently illustrated in yr.2000: "We're fighting both domestic and international terrorism"). Too broad: this definition includes war, which can be excluded by beginning the definition with "unofficial." But the addition is unnecessary if the "violence" semene is only negative (in CDAE, "extremely forceful actions that are intended to hurt people or are likely to cause damage"). In the NT, βι- *(vi-)* is "force" (e.g., Mt.11.12 NIV, "the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing"), but not always "violence." The "violence" spin in political English unfairly prejudices against force & for nonviolent persuasion (a prejudice which has caused me some suffering from fanatic-fundamentalist liberal pacifists).

Indeed, force, as in the restraint of a "terror" (CDAE: "a child who behaves badly and is difficult to control"), sometimes *prevents* violence; sometimes *reverses its direction* (as in our greatest musical "Oklahoma!": unarmed Curley, attacked by knife-wielding Fry, resists death; & Fry accidentally stabs himself to death. Fry, in intending the other's death, was violent: Curly, intending life, was forceful.)

5 This Thinksheet's title emphasizes the adjective, which we might describe as the noun in **action**: the fanatic is into heavy-breathing from exertions. In today's PARADE, Eli Wiesel says that of the last century's "isms," only fanaticism has survivied into this century. Pre-20th-c. f. expressed itself in "religious wars and national extremism"; 20th-c., in "ideological and secular hatred." F. is characterized by "excessive behavior, uncritical political opinion, ethnic zeal and religious bigotry." It's "secuctive because it makes the f. feel less alone." But it cannot save: you can't break out of the prison of self by taking others prisoner; & "the fanatic who kills in God's name makes his God a murderer."

6 Ludwig Feuerbach proposed eliminating fanaticism by reducing religion to ethics, on the Christian God-model: "Just as God gave himself up out of love, we should give up God out of love. If we do not sacrifice God for love, we will s. love for God; and then, in spite of the predicate love' [in 'God is love'], we will have the God who is the evil creature of religious fanaticism." Long before F., Kierkegaard called this move from religion to ethics a degeneration from the reality that (as Eliade put it, & it runs through the 16 vols. of THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGION (of which he was editor in chief [1987]) religion is a universal human urge, not an optional human activity. One aspect of this urge was displayed, vis-a-vis competing contemporary Christian theologies, by David Tracy, as the BLESSED RAGE FOR ORDER.

Another proposal: instead of eliminating religion, have a love-in for them all. World-faith syntheses began early in the Enlightenment; later, single-faith eclecticisms (Jn.Dewey's A COMMON FAITH; United Religions Initiative; Transreligions; Temple of Understanding; et al). Then there's the faith of some academics that what they have to offer, viz. education, will do the trick of taming religious fanaticism: "no world peace without peace among religions, no peace among religions without dialogue between the religions, and no dialogue between the religions without accurate knowledge of one another" (Hans Kung, in his article for TOWARD A UNIVERSAL THEOLOGY OF RELIGION [1987, ed.by Leonard Swidler).

But fanatics are ineducable in that they see themselves as not knowledge-deficient! And they are interested in dialog only as an opportunity to move toward monolog, the victory of one mouth silencing all others: demo-logy (people-talking till only one remains heard), never demo-cracy (people-ruling themselves). Islamicizism is, here, precisely as **totalitarian** as communism, of which it is the successor in current world rhetoric.

7 "Fanaticism" is a pejorative term created to marginalize/reject certain enthusiasts whose actual/potential effects are viewed as deleterious to society.
It's the hot form of fundamentalism, narrowing not just the mind (call that cool fundamentalism) but the whole life of passion/thought/action--life as a hurled spear whose point is the ceaseless ("24/7") consumption of "the world" by the maw of militant, uncritical-absolute commitment to a vision or principle. But one may convert a pejorative term to a meliorative (i.e., from bad-down to good-up), e.g. calling St.Paul a fanatic for his ἑν *hen* "one" (Phil.3.13; Vulg., *unum*).