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## SOCIAL CONTRADICTION, GLOBALIZATION AND 9/11

**Tom Rockmore**

*This paper will focus on a basic social contradiction, due to a deep, often overlooked tension between capitalism, the main motor of the main world, and an influential form of Islam, which, in applying the Protestant term of religious 'fundamentalism' I will be calling 'Islamic fundamentalism'. I believe that this contradiction, which is largely due to the unfettered expansion of increasingly globalized economic capitalism, lies at the root of 9/11. This paper begins by reviewing theories of 9/11 associated with the names of George W. Bush, Samuel Huntington and Bernard Lewis. It argues against the approach to 9/11 in terms of religious or cultural explanation in calling attention to the economic component of the problem. It is further argued that 9/11 can best be understood as social contradiction between capitalism and Islamic fundamentalism. It is suggested that this social contradiction indicates an important limit of capitalism.*

*Keywords:* globalization, 9/11, capitalism, fundamentalism, contradiction.

### **Bush's Religious Approach to 9/11**

By '9/11', I will understand the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Islamic fundamentalists, mainly of Saudi Arabian origin, in the United States on September 11, 2001. There is no dispute that Islamic fundamentalists, mainly from Saudi Arabia, mounted this attack. The problem is how to understand this ongoing series of events.

There has been so much effort directed toward meeting the threat of 9/11 that there has been surprisingly little attention directed toward understanding its origins. There seem to be so far three main theories. These theories are identified with the names of George W. Bush, Samuel Huntington, and Bernard Lewis. Bush was president of the U.S. at the time of the attacks. His whole presidency was taken up in the aftermath of dealing with their consequences. Huntington was a professor of political science, whose views were dependent on those of Lewis, who was a professor of Middle Eastern history.

When I refer to George W. Bush I have in mind not only opinions he may or may not privately hold and publicly represent but also the convictions held by those who work together with him in forging, amending and defending the religiously-based policies that so often characterized his administrations. Three sources of his policies include: fundamentalist Christianity (opposition of one religious fundamentalism to another); American exceptionalism; and an overt link to neo-conservatism as formulated in the PNAC<sup>1</sup> strongly influenced by Vice-President Dick Cheney, his closest advisor.

Bush, who identifies strongly with his particular variety of Christian faith, is a so-called born again Christian. The term 'born again' is frequently used in Evangelical, Fundamentalist, Pentecostal and some other forms of Protestantism. According to Jesus, only those born again will be saved. 'Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily,

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I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' (John 3: 3).

Bush is representative of a widespread American form of religiosity. Studies show that evangelicals constitute some 40 % of the American population. Bush, who was earlier apparently an alcoholic, is strongly committed to his version of Christian faith. This and related forms of Protestantism are sometimes called fundamentalist. Protestant fundamentalism, which is a defense of religious orthodoxy, arose in the U.S. in the controversy between fundamentalists and modernists early in the twentieth century. It is often noted that Protestant fundamentalism, which has parallels in other religions, can be understood as an effort to prevent or impede the absorption of religion into an increasingly secular culture.

Protestant fundamentalism is closely linked to a particular worldview. Evangelicals like Bush often subscribe to biblical literalism and biblical infallibility or biblical inerrancy. They tend to read the Bible literally. They tend to accept that the Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit and literally true. They accept the virgin birth of Christ. They believe Christ's death was the atonement for the sins of mankind and that Christ was bodily resurrected. They often accept the reality of Christ's miracles (see *e.g.*, Sproule 1992: 65–66).

Fundamentalist Protestantism is strongly influential in American politics. The ability to mobilize the fundamentalist vote is a main reason why Bush was twice elected president of the US. Fundamentalist Protestantism is allied with a 'Manichean', dualistic vision of good and evil, them and us.

Throughout the long years of his presidency after 9/11, Bush applied this kind of dualistic view in responding to the Islamic terrorist threat.<sup>2</sup> Bush's religious approach to the problem of 9/11 is rooted in the idea of American 'exceptionalism'. According to this view, America represents God's will on earth. As citizens of the country that is the only legitimate representative of God on earth so to speak, Americans have a manifest destiny, which is expressed in its policies, which are designed to thwart evil perpetrated by its enemies. This certainty about the supposed divine mission of the United States makes it relatively easy for those who represent the country on a political plane to engage in activities that might seem inconsistent with its view of itself, such as more or less exterminating the American Indians, whose survivors live in reservations, entering into a long series of wars when it feels threatened by large and small foes, including Panama and Grenada, torturing prisoners, and so on.

Then there is the neo-conservative viewpoint, which holds that the period after the end of the Cold War is not less but rather more dangerous for the so-called American way of life. This view, which was spelled out in a document called the Project for a New American Century well before Bush became president, called for the U.S. to establish bases in all sections of the world in order to take pre-emptive military action not if there was in fact a clear and present danger but rather if there was ever a possibility of one arising. The similarity between this political posture and the views of Carl Schmitt, the German Nazi legal philosopher who became influential after the War in conservative political circles according to which [that] the world is divided into friends and foes, a view which was amply illustrated in the identification of the so-called axis of evil as well as the coalition of the willing, which was assembled by bribing and coercing a series of other nations to enter into the War in Iraq in which they had no clear stake.

## Huntington on Clashes of the Future

A rather different analysis is suggested by Huntington, who already in the 1990s worked out a vision of future wars as due, not to economics or political considerations but rather to what he called differences between cultures or 'civilizations', which he later applied to understand 9/11.

Huntington's theory arose in the early 1990s after the break up of the Soviet Union and the claimed capitalist 'defeat' of international communism. To understand Huntington's position, it is useful to see it as a possible answer to ideas that were attracting attention at the time, especially the view of Francis Fukuyama. It was a moment when Fukuyama, inspired by Reagan's conservatism, but who has in the meantime turned against neo-conservatism, was confidently proclaiming the end of the history.

Huntington refutes Fukuyama through an approach based on identity politics and a conception of the nation-state. When he worked out his theory, Huntington was not concerned with a particular series of historical events, but rather with fundamental sources of conflict in the present historical moment. His position revises the view of the modern nation-state as a primary cause of historical events.

According to Huntington, we are in a new phase of world politics. Views of 'the end of history, the return of traditional rivalries between nation states, and the decline of the nation state' miss a crucial point, which he formulates as the hypothesis that 'the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic' (Huntington 2004: 37). His basic claim is that 'The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will be the battle lines of the future' (*Ibid.*: 36). In other words, the causal role earlier played by nation-states will shift to civilizations, or what he also calls cultures.

It would be as mistaken to disregard economics in conflicts between nation-states and even 'civilizations' as it would be to reduce any and all international conflicts to such factors. Huntington's suggestion that economics is now less important than before can be interpreted in two ways. Either it has somehow become less significant in international conflict than it once was, or other, more important factors have emerged in the meantime. Yet there is no evidence that the role of economics in international conflicts has diminished, especially in the period with which he is specifically concerned of more than a half century since the end of the Second World War.

Huntington's book, which appeared several years later, extends his argument that since 'clashes of civilizations are the greatest threat to world peace ... an international order based on civilizations is the surest safeguard against world war' (*Ibid.*: 13). The term 're-making' which figures in the title of the book – *The Clash of Civilizations and the Re-making of World Order* – can be understood in two ways: as referring to the historical change in the world order or even – in a way closer to the neo-conservative view of hegemonic empire – as inviting (us) to modify it. In that sense, it is in principle consistent with so-called regime change dear to the Bush administration.

Huntington's suggestion that 9/11 manifests less a clash of civilizations (and/or cultures) than difficulties due to Islamic politics and living conditions in the Islamic world contradicts his 'official' hypothesis that international conflict is currently best explained through the hypothesis of a clash of civilizations in calling attention to ideology and economics as explanatory factors. If the problem of 9/11 is due to, and can be amelio-

rated through, a change in Islamic politics and living conditions, then the clash of civilizations is no more than an effect following from other, deeper causes. Huntington's cultural model, which is intended as an alternative to other models of international relations, is not useful directly or even indirectly to analyze 9/11 or international conflict. Since differences in civilizations, which Huntington regards as primary, are themselves caused by other, deeper factors, it is incorrect to attribute the primary cause of international conflict to this factor.

### Lewis' Historical Explanation of 9/11

It is but a short step from Huntington's 'official' view that 9/11 is explicable through a clash of civilizations to the further view that it is explicable through a clash of religions. This claim is an ad hoc thesis, invented specifically for the purpose of explaining 9/11 after it occurred. According to this thesis, 9/11 can be understood as a clash between two religions: Islam, which is ill adapted to the modern world, and Christianity, which is very much up to date.

This suggestion is a variation on Max Weber's well-known thesis that religion, particularly Christianity, is particularly important for the rise of capitalism. As concerns 9/11, Weber's thesis can be reformulated as the general claim that various forms of religion are useful for, or on the contrary harmful to, the prospects of the democratic way of life.

The religious analysis of 9/11 exists in both popular and scholarly versions. The non-scholarly, popular version takes the form of a dualistic analysis, mentioned above, that opposes good and evil, our religion and theirs, one fundamentalism to another. As specifically applied to 9/11, it suggests that Christianity is deeply attuned to democracy (and freedom), which, on the contrary, fundamentalist Islam opposes.

Lewis explains current events through the role of the religious dimension of modern life. This is different from the well-known concern to provide a religious explanation for both sacred and secular phenomena. The religious approach to knowledge is basic to the effort common to all three main Abrahamic religions to explain the events of human history, and finally history itself, through God. This religious reliance on God as the ultimate and finally only explanatory factor has never wavered.

Lewis elaborated his view in two works published around this time. In the first book, which was completed before 9/11, he analyzes the familiar theme of *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* in adding many details. In an Afterword, he notes that President George W. Bush clearly indicated that the war against terror is not a war against Islam, although some, such as Usama bin Ladin, who proclaimed a *jihad* in the classic sense of a war against infidels, depict it as a struggle between Christendom and Islam. Lewis points to the problematic nature of Western dominance during centuries over the Islamic world, which reached its peak in the twentieth century. He detects Islamic pluralism in the difference between traditional and non-traditional forms of Islam. For some, such as bin Ladin, the cause is to return to an earlier, purer form of Islam through removing Western influence and restoring Islamic authenticity. But for other Muslims, the cause is freedom, including freedom from corrupt Muslim tyrants. According to Lewis, either the Muslim moderates will triumph, or the prospect for the West is grim (Lewis 2002: 163–165).

In the second study, which was completed between the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, Lewis applies his theory – a theory about the inability of Islamic countries other

than Turkey to modernize – to 9/11. The work is based on an article that appeared in *The New Yorker* in 2001 (Lewis 2001), where Lewis once again insists on the significance of the failure of Islam to modernize. This leads in turn to a rejection of modernity in favor of what Lewis calls a return to the sacred past. This return is fueled by the poverty and tyranny of the Islamic world, made increasingly visible by the mass media. Lewis agrees with the Ayatollah Khomeini that the temptation of the US is the greatest threat to a strict vision of Islam. He ends by predicting that, if bin Ladin can impose his leadership, a long and bitter struggle lies ahead.

In the appendix, he indicates that the American objectives in the former war are to deter and defeat terrorism, and ‘to bring freedom, sometimes called democracy to the peoples of these countries and beyond’ (Lewis 2004: 165). He repeats his view that Middle Eastern tyranny derives from a failure to modernize and cautions it will not be easy to bring democracy to the region. Pointing to Turkey, his example over many years, he suggests that, though the task is difficult, democracy can be created in the region. What he does not say, which is just as significant, is that the Turkish brand of democracy is so different from what, say, is understood by that term in Europe that the European Common Market asked for major changes before Turkish candidacy could even be discussed. A main instance is the continuing repressive treatment of the important Kurdish minority, whose rights, extending even to the right to speak their language in public, have consistently been violated (de Bellaigue 2005: 43–47). Another problem is the massacre of the Armenian minority early in the twentieth century, which Turkey has never acknowledged as a crime against the Armenian people. Left unclear is what ‘democracy’ can reasonably mean in a part of the world that has never known a system of government approaching any of the many forms of democracy that have long existed in the West (for recent discussion of the meaning of ‘democracy’, see Hiley 2006).

### **Human Actions and the Intelligibility of History**

All three views overlap in a number of ways, for instance through a recognizably pro-Western bias. Ever since the events occurred, there has been a well-established tendency to assess the conflict from a dualistic, Western perspective based on prior adoption of Western standards as well as a further tendency to reject even the semblance of adopting, taking seriously or even considering Islamic standards of evaluation. This pro-Western bias results in three limitations rendering many Western theories of 9/11 unsuitable for an overall interpretation of the ongoing events. First, it creates a spurious link between the problem of understanding the ongoing struggle between fundamentalist Islam and the capitalist West, a struggle it tends to judge in moral terms. Yet since neither the non-Muslim West nor the non-Western Muslim world has a moral monopoly, the impression that moral right is uniquely situated on one side but absent on the other is misleading. Second, since a moral judgment ought not to be formulated before the problem has been successfully characterized, it is simply premature to render a moral judgment prior to identifying the problem. Third, identification of any kind with one of the parties to the conflict, in effect taking the part for the whole, prevents the formulation of a general theory encompassing all the parties within the wider framework of a single analysis.

The discussion so far has reviewed and criticized the three main current approaches to 9/11. It shows we do not currently possess anything resembling an acceptable or even

a widely shared view of this series of events, which continue to be described from varying perspectives. It remains to formulate an alternative categorial framework (or conceptual matrix), in short a general theory to comprehend, to understand and/or to interpret<sup>3</sup> – three terms I will be using interchangeably here – the events comprising 9/11 understood in the wider sense.

It is obvious that to comprehend history it must be intelligible. The intelligibility of historical phenomena is understood in very many ways. Writing in the fifth century Augustine set the tone for much of the historical debate in suggesting that human history is comprehensible only against the background of divine history (Augustine 1998). This means that human history can be understood on the condition it is a working out of divine history, which is independent of the aims, intentions, and knowledge of human individuals. In refuting Bossuet's restatement of Augustine, Voltaire, who coins the term 'philosophy of history', arguably formulates the first secular theory of history. Yet Löwith still defends the general Augustinian view in insisting that historical meaning is essentially theological (Löwith 1949). Others think that history has no intrinsic meaning, hence cannot be known, or comprehended. Shakespeare famously reports that 'it is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing' (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*: Act 5. Scene 5).

If nothing rational is happening in a given sequence of historical events, then it cannot be grasped rationally. Hence there is an intrinsic link between the rationality of historical phenomena and the ability to know them. Yet it does follow that the rationality of history is theological either in part or in whole. In raising the question of the rationality of history, I will be treating historical knowledge as a special part of, but in all other ways inseparable from, the general problem of knowledge.

The rationality of history is different from its claim to cognitive objectivity. The rationality of history indicates something is happening, which can be grasped through human reason. This is different from a claim to make an objective determination. Thus some observers are concerned with the ability to discuss the past objectively in terms of present evidence or other evidence that might later become available.<sup>4</sup> For present purposes, the problem at issue is not whether or not evidence is sufficient to justify a particular historical inference, but rather how to understand what has been and may still continue to take place.

Since 9/11 is composed of an ongoing series of historical events, the task of formulating a theory of 9/11 belongs to the domain of historical explanation, or the epistemology of history. There is a difference between writing about historical events or history in general and the epistemology of history. 'Rules' of how to go about writing history are not permanent, but are constantly being 'negotiated' between working historians who arrive, through public debate among themselves, at views that are shared for a time and then later revised about the appropriate ways to approach historical phenomena. At any given moment, working historians presuppose a series of shared views about the discipline in gathering information in a wide variety of ways, which they narrate and interpret. The 'construction' of a historical narrative, may, but need not, touch on epistemological questions.

The events of history can be understood if and only if we can treat them as rational, hence cognizable. If history is just one thing after another, then it cannot be understood, but if it is rational, then it can be understood. Human history is rational, hence cogniza-

ble, since it is composed of human actions, which are themselves rational, hence cognizable. In this respect, three thinkers help us to formulate a view of 9/11 as rational, not irrational. Aristotle, an a-historical thinker, points out that all human actions are goal-directed, aimed toward the good for human being. Even the actions of a person allegedly mad aim at what that individual understands as the good. Hegel, who was a profoundly historical thinker, shows that in the historical process there is a difference between what we aim at and the result, what we desire to do and what we accomplish in virtue of the cunning of history. Marx, whose thought is equally historical, notes that the main motor of the modern phase of the historical process is economic since basic reproductive needs, which can only be met through economic activity, are more basic, hence more important, than any others.

### **Social Contradiction and 9/11**

Though all human actions aim at the good, human actors understand it in very different ways. The result can be a social contradiction. By the term 'social contradiction' I will understand a clash between two or more incompatible interests, which may take many different forms and whose consequences can be minor or of major importance.

The events of 9/11 do not constitute either a break within history, in which case they could not be understood, or even a new phase of the historical process. They are lodged within an ongoing historical process, which precedes and succeeds them. They represent the interaction, in this case the violent interaction, between two very different views of the good for human beings, which we can simply identify as capitalism and Islamic fundamentalism.

On the one hand, there is the constant expansion of capitalism, which has now reached or is about to reach economic globalization. 'Economic globalization', which has no precise meaning, is understood in very different ways. By (economic) 'globalization' I will have in mind the integration of national economies into international economy in different ways (see Bhagwati 2004: 3). I will further have in mind two related phenomena: On the one hand, there is the tendency in capitalism, which needs constantly expanding markets, either by developing already existing markets or by entering other markets in the process of continuing to extend itself throughout the world. This process has already culminated, or will one day culminate, in a point in which nothing is left untouched by it. When that point is reached, the process of economic expansion characteristic of capitalism will come up against its natural limit, its *terminus ad quem*, beyond which there is no further possibility for development. On the other hand, there is the effect of globalization, the way in which capitalism encroaches upon, adheres to, and transforms everything with which it comes into contact in the course of attempting to maximize profit. This aspect of globalization, which is by no means benign, is extremely menacing, even a deadly threat for all (indigenous) forms of social 'organization', including, but not limited to, local customs, traditions, and economic structures, which it tends to displace in substituting a version of itself.

Economic globalization takes many forms, such as the creation of an interlocking, exceedingly complex series of relations among the major banks, which was brought to the attention of the wider public during the subprime crisis in early 2008. It has been known at least since the middle of the nineteenth century, if not earlier, that it is basic to capitalism that it produces constant change in extending itself in the search for new mar-

kets.<sup>5</sup> It has been emphasized by a number of observers, including Adam Smith, Hegel, Marx, and others, that there are enormous disruptions and social consequences to the constant extension of capitalism. To put the point briefly but not inaccurately, the price to pay for incessant economic expansion is a permanent, enduring threat to anything, including all local forms of economic, social and/or cultural practices of the most varied kind that even appears to stand in the way of further economic development. In its most extreme form, this takes the form of economic globalization, which is identified as good in itself, and at any rate, and despite apparent difficulties, in any case always better than all its alternatives. Thus skeptics about economic globalization, such as Dany Rodrik (see Rodrik 1997), who think economic globalization risks going or has in fact already gone too far, are countered by its enthusiasts, such as Jagdish Bhagwati, who think that, if anything, it has not gone far enough (see Bhagwati 2004).

The unrestricted commitment to economic globalization as the good life is not without its costs. One obvious cost is that in practice this vision sometimes conflicts with a very different vision of the good life. In place of the synergy between economics and religion that supposedly exists in capitalism one finds a direct opposition, not between Islam and economics, but with respect to Islam and capitalism.

The opposition takes place on different levels. They include the very distinction between economics and religion, a distinction, which is not made in Islam, where religious criteria determine economic practice. Thus, to take a banal example, on religious grounds, and though in practice various accommodations are possible, it is forbidden within Islam to require interest on a loan.

The relation between Islam and capitalism plays out in various ways as a function of the kind of Islam in question. For present purposes, we can distinguish between moderate Islam, in which it is possible to seek a compromise with various aspects of modern Western life, including capitalism in all its many forms, and conservative views of Islam, which are less prone to compromise, more resistant to the idea of abandoning any of the practices of Islam as traditionally prescribed. In its most conservative form, Islam takes the form, in borrowing the Protestant term ‘fundamentalism’, of Islamic fundamentalism directed in two directions: On the one hand, Islamic fundamentalism is directed toward recovering the supposedly authentic form of Islam as it was created by Muhammad during his lifetime and may or may not, depending on the interpretation, later have been corrupted. On the other hand, Islamic fundamentalism is directed toward refusing, indeed opposing by any and all means, opposition of any kind to social life organized wholly and solely along fundamentalist Islamic lines. What this means is that fundamentalist Islam, like other forms of religious fundamentalism, is directed toward the ceaseless reproduction without change of any kind of a form of life based on the original view of Islam.

In practice, this opposition to any perceived change in the original view of Islam takes two different forms. First, there is the opposition, which often takes a violent form, to any effort, of any kind whatsoever, to update, modify, or otherwise alter the perceived view of the original form of Islam. Thus Sayyid Qutb, the central intellectual figure in the Muslim Brotherhood, rejected any compromise, leading to change in Islam on the premise that either there would be Islam or there would be something else, which must be rejected in principle.<sup>6</sup> This attitude leads in practice, on the part of Islamic fundamentalists, to intra-Islamic conflict between the immoderate Islamic fundamentalists and all

other, more moderate followers or Islam. Second, there is the conflict between Islamic fundamentalists, the defenders of an Islamic life without compromise in the traditional Islamic space, especially in the Middle East, on the one hand, those, including the Muslim actors of 9/11 who defend their highly traditional view of religion in opposing, if necessary by violent means, the perceived threat to the continuity of an entirely traditional Islamic way of life. They understand the obvious point that the continued expansion of capitalism can only be carried out at the expense of the effective demise of the Islamic dream of the recreation of Muhammad's view of the good life according to Islamic principles.

### **Conclusion: Economic Globalization and 9/11**

According to Hegel, contradiction moves the world (see Hegel 1991: § 119, addition 2, p. 187). If not in general, it is clear that in the specific case, Western and Islamic views of the 'good' for human beings are different and incompatible, based on different and incompatible frames of reference. The Western view of the good life is linked to modern industrial society, which features ceaseless economic expansion requiring constant change. The Islamic view of the good life, at least as originally described by the Prophet, requires simple reproduction of the type of human existence specified in the *Qu'ran*.

This difference can be restated in terms of a well-known anthropological model between basically different kinds of society. The French cultural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss concentrates on the kinship systems, which he analyzes in terms of social function (see Lévi-Strauss 1967). Roughly speaking, he argues that social facts exist not because they are functional for the social order, not because they are functional for the person. On this basis, he suggests that in tribal societies, there is a basic structure that is reproduced over time or conserved. This leads to a contrast between self-reproducing societies, which resist change of any kind, such as the traditional Islamic society to which Muslim fundamentalists are attached, and which in that sense are not 'historical', and those very different societies, in practice those associated with modern capitalism, in which change at any cost in order to maximize financial gain through economic expansion is a paramount value.

The ceaseless economic expansion characteristic of modern life in the West is not innocent. There is a two-fold price to pay. On the one hand, there is the zero-sum game in which at least schematically wealth is accumulated in ways that enable some to profit through their economic relation to others. It is often noted that Western economic expansion has not so far 'solved' the problem of poverty and that it barely helps, if at all, the very poor. According to the United Nations Food Agency some hundreds million people currently subsist on less than 1900 calories a day. On the other hand, the need to continually expand the economic base runs up against social differences that are overcome as it were in the process of reaching Western economic goals. To put the point bluntly, despite the malfaisance of non-democratic Islamic countries, which have also failed to solve the problem of poverty, hence increasing the number of people turning to radical Islam, the fact of the matter is that even if the problem of poverty had been resolved, the results of capitalism are in conflict with a commitment to fundamentalist Islam.

The result is a form of alienation located 'outside' capitalism, or alienation with respect to the very economic process. Marx, who was concerned with the effect of the normal functioning of a modern form of free market economy on people who work

within it, insightfully describes ways in which as a result of the normal working of capitalism such individuals are alienated by the very system that is in principle intended to realize the good life. This economic form of alienation, which is still unfortunately with us, is now being supplemented by a different kind of alienation. What we are confronted with now is a form of alienation arising not within but outside of, hence in reaction against, capitalism, which to many individuals situated both within and outside capitalism, seems inimical to their understanding of the good life.

There is an obvious social 'contradiction' between two prominent views of the good life, which are now locked in a deadly confrontation. On the one hand, there is the mainly non-Muslim Western view that the human good lies in ceaseless economic expansion. On the other, there is the fundamentalist Islamic conviction that the human good lies in the ceaseless maintenance of the traditional form of Muslim religious life focused on the ceaseless repetition of the same.

This 'contradiction' suggests the West faces a deep problem that cannot be corrected through the expedient of a global war on terror. This difficulty clearly cannot be assimilated to the 'mistaken' actions of a few dissident, rogue elements within Islam. Many in the Islamic world reject Islamic fundamentalism, but many more also reject as mistaken the pursuit of a Western way of life, including Western 'democracy', however that term is understood, as well as the bare economic incentives of modern industrial capitalism. Al Qaeda, the 'official' enemy of the US and its allies, is only the currently most visible form of the fundamentalist view of Islam, in that sense similar to the fundamentalist Protestant movement in Christianity, which is engaged in a struggle for the heart and soul of Islam.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Project for a New American Century is a right-wing think tank begun by Dick Cheney and his very conservative colleagues in 1997. It reflects the thinking of the political philosopher Strauss, and is associated with the idea of creating and conserving American hegemony after the end of the Cold War. It is reasonable to suppose that the Bush government seized on the events of 9/11 to put this aggressive foreign policy into place.

<sup>2</sup> Bush provided different explanations of 9/11 over the years. There is no single explanation. Most of the references to 9/11 were formulated in dualistic terms of, in informal language, them and us, the bad and the good, and so on (see e.g., U.S. President Bush's speech to United Nations, November 10, 2001. URL: <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/11/10/ret.bush.un.transcript/index.html>).

<sup>3</sup> Some observers distinguish between interpretation and understanding. For an account of their relation, see § 32: 'Understanding and interpretation' (Heidegger 1962: 188–195).

<sup>4</sup> Day, who runs together writing history and understanding history, addresses historical methodology with a view toward 'describing and critiquing the ability of historiography to bring us understanding of the past on the basis of evidentially justified claims' (see Day 2008: 16).

<sup>5</sup> For instance, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels write: 'The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is

solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind. The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the entire surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature' (Marx and Engels 1959: 10–11).

<sup>6</sup> The term 'jahiliyya' is used in several places in the Qu'ran, for example in 5:50: 'Is it a judgment of the time of (pagan) ignorance [jahiliyya] that they are seeking? Who is better than Allah for judgment to a people who have certainty (in their belief)?' Before Qutb, this term was used to refer to pre-Muslim Arab society. Qutb, who thought in typically Manichean, dualistic categories, and who rejected the entire modern world in both its Islamic and non-Islamic versions, reconfigured this term to refer to the barbarous nature of the contemporary world as such. According to Qutb: 'Islam cannot accept any compromise with jahiliyya, either in its concept or in its modes of living derived from this concept. Either Islam will remain, or jahiliyya; Islam cannot accept or agree to a situation which is half-Islam and half-jahiliyya. In this respect Islam's stand is very clear. It says that truth is one and cannot be divided; if it is not the truth, than it must be falsehood. The mixing and coexistence of the truth and falsehood is impossible. Command belongs to Allah, or else to *jahiliyya*. The Shari'ah of Allah will prevail, or else people's desires' (Qutb 1990: 101–102, 112, cited in Zeidan 2001: 5).

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