

## CURRENT CONVERSATIONS

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*When Alienation Turns to Nihilism: The Dilemmas Posed for Diversity Post 7/7*

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*(From the editors: The following is adapted from a lecture that Max Farrar gave at the Centre for Research on Social Change [Open University and University of Manchester] in November 2005. The lecture was itself an expansion of a shorter article that he wrote for the online journal, open Democracy, in July 2005.)*

Those of us who live in Leeds felt a particularly trauma last summer in learning that three of the suicide bombers in the subway and bus bombings in London on July 7 were from the Beeston area of our great city. In these reflections, I have the following aims. First, I want to offer some thoughts on how we might go about explaining the emergence in British society of young men – so far, only non-white young men, but, I expect, soon to be joined by whites – who will commit suicide in pursuit, they say, of an Islamic *umma*. Second, I want to draw out the implications of this analysis for our interventions as radical citizens who happen to be social scientists in public debate and policy formation in the discussion of diversity in a multicultural society. This will be rather sketchy and is designed mainly to stimulate debate, rather than fix a position. As usual, I am straying into academic, cultural, and political fields in which my claims to legitimacy are highly questionable, so I welcome challenge on that, too. I am aware that there will be readers who know much more about Islamic theology and history than I do, and I apologize in advance for errors I might make, or if anything I write seems patronizing to anyone who reads it.

My argument, in brief, is this. First, we need to sharply distinguish the phenomenon which is variously labeled fundamentalist, or fundamentalist, radical, militant or political Islam, or just Islamism, from the suicidal, militarist tendency associated with the label al Qaeda, and sometimes referred to as *jihadi* Islam. Most of the former terms are, in my view, misleading, and I shall refer to that tendency as the *Salafi*

phenomenon. While *jihad* is relevant to describe the latter grouping, I shall stake out my analytical ground by referring to that phenomenon as nihilistic Islam. Second, we need to understand why both of these phenomena have emerged in the UK. I shall argue that nonviolent *Salafi-ism* is best understood as a legitimate response to global and local social, economic, and political change, and I shall employ the concept of alienation as the lever for this argument. The nihilistic tendency is less easily understood, but I will have a shot at this, and I will argue (you will not be surprised to hear) that this is absolutely politically illegitimate when it translates into suicide and murder. Finally, I will argue that liberal multiculturalist discourse can, and should, be stretched to accommodate the *Salafi-ites*, but is inadequate to the task of responding to the nihilists. Overall, liberal multiculturalism needs to be replaced with a discourse that I want to call progressive cosmopolitanism.

### The Rise of *Salafiyah*

The common core to the forms of political Islam labeled fundamentalism seems to be the various ways in which they trace their doctrines and practices directly back to the Prophet and his immediate companions, basing their lives directly on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. To quote from one source:

A true Salafi values Tawhid, singling out Allah in all acts of worship: in supplication, in seeking aid, in seeking refuge in times of ease and hardship, in sacrifice, in making vows, in fearing and hoping and total reliance, and so on. A true Salafi actively seeks to remove shirk (polytheism) with all his capacity. (Global Security, 2005)

The source continues:

In the United States, Salafism has been equated by some with radicalism and terrorism in some newspaper articles, books, and public discourse. However, 'Salafism' is not inherently synonymous with violence, terrorism, or radicalism. Many Salafis throughout the world are doctrinally rigid, but peaceful. (Global Security, 2005)

I should mention that my source here is a US military website, which provides far more detailed information than any of the other sources I have consulted on this topic.

The reason for the association made by some commentators between *Salifayyah* and violent Islamism is that this type of teaching was introduced into the modern world by Mahommed ibn 'Abd ul-Wahhab, who was born in 1703 and died in 1792 (using the western calendar), and who preached in central Arabia. The aim of Wahhab and his followers was to eradicate Sufi influences in the version of Islam practiced

in his time – and in most parts of the world until the 1960s. Although there is clear influence from this movement, it has been wrongly argued that Osama bin-Laden and the Taliban are Wahhabi-ites. One connection between these movements that has become apparent in the UK is promulgation of the notion that Islam as routinely practiced in Pakistan and Bangladesh is impure, tainted not only by Sufi-ism but, perhaps more shockingly, by Hinduism. Even British Muslims with origins in south Asia who reject the reactionary, antifeminist, homophobic, antimodernism of the *Salafiyyah* will support the idea that Islamic theology and practice (in their Pakistani and Bangladeshi forms) needs cleansing.

The *Salafi* version of Islamic theology was transmitted mainly through the movement that emerged in Egypt in the early part of the 20th century named the Muslim Brotherhood, and it then became embedded in Saudi Arabia when the al'Saud dynasty adopted Wahhabism as their doctrine in the 1920s and 1930s. It is bin-Laden's claim – now backed by acts of terrorism by his supporters – that Saudi Arabia's current Islamic government (which claims to be Wahhabi) is corrupt and complicit with America which emphasizes the importance of the distinction that has to be made between peaceful *Salafiyyah* and bin Laden's nihilists.

I suggest we should explain the rise of the *Salafiyyah* globally as an understandable response to the depredations of capitalism and imperialism. As the capitalist market system spread across the globe throughout the 19th century, those who rejected its fetishization of consumer goods, its individualism, its licentiousness, its substitution of things for values, and its legitimation of extending the gap between rich and poor could turn to the movements which preached for a past paradise – the Khalifate – or a future paradise – the communist society. As capitalism blatantly used its military power to enforce its economic and cultural ends, initially in Palestine, then against Khomeini's Iran, in Afghanistan and finally in Iraq – combined with the disappearance of Soviet-style communism – the *Salafiyyah* were bound to gain influence. I should stress that an explicit critique of capitalism is to be found in many of the founding 20th century texts of the Islamist revival. (I should probably also stress that, as someone who remains sympathetic to Marxism, I do not accept their critique as sufficient, and I would emphasize the obvious fact that Islam is quite comfortable with trade and exchange within a market system.)

This is understandable sociologically if we borrow and slightly rework Marx's concept of alienation. The concept is directly applicable to those parts of the globe in which capitalism still imposes factory-style manufacturing processes. Workers – many of whom only recently controlled their own labor processes, albeit under exploitative conditions – literally witness the products of their divided labor being

plucked from their hands and experience those products as coming to dominate them. But capitalism is experienced as alienating by anyone, whatever their position in the labor process, who becomes aware of the multiple forms of domination and separation that it engenders. Not only do men attempt to dominate women, whites to dominate blacks, ruling classes to dominate lower classes, but it cleaves the soul of anyone who, for one reason or another, is dissatisfied with its tawdry pleasures, and who experiences the divisions between us and them, self and other as a painful process which depletes our humanness.

So far as the UK is concerned, the influence of the *Salafi* tendency has grown partly because of the loss of credibility among British Asians of the socialist alternative to capitalism. I see the decline of the British left in general, and in particular the disappearance of the 1970s and 1980s Asian Youth Movements (AYMs), as crucial to the rise of *Salafi-ism*. The socialist solution to alienation which was so attractive to so many of us lost its purchase during the 1980s. In particular, the growth of *Hizb Ut-Tahrir* on university campuses in the 1990s took place partly because the intellectual and political force represented by the AYMs in the 1980s was no longer present to counteract their influence. I will say a little more about this when I discuss the limits of multiculturalist discourse. The other crucial factor in the rise of this tendency was the response of British liberals and socialists to the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* in 1989. The rush to a 'freedom of speech' defense for Rushdie, the utter incomprehension by white liberals, followed by their ethnocentric condemnation of the upsurge of anger by British Muslims – in particular the youth – provoked something of a crisis for Asian socialists (see AYMs' website) and opened a door for Saudi money and *Salafi* influence. I was vividly reminded of the poverty of liberal response to Muslim's outrage over *The Satanic Verses* by the quotations from John Fowles' diary in last Saturday's *Guardian*. I was shocked to see Keith Flett, that marvellous scribe of all things left, point out that Fowles was a lifelong socialist.

But the social weight of the *Salafi* tendency has been massively boosted by the actions of both Labor and Conservative governments in the UK during the 1980s and 1990s. I reiterate these well-known issues because I want to briefly present the narrative that many British Muslims provide, and which most British radicals find entirely plausible. The Conservatives supported the US government in their backing of Saddam Hussein in Iraq's eight-year war against Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran. Although American policy has fluctuated, its overall support for Israel's illegal annexing of Palestinian land has been backed by both UK political parties. The situation in central Europe poses more subtle problems for radical critics of the Labor Government, as its (belated) support for military intervention against the Serbian ethnic cleansing of Muslims provided some credibility to Labor's claim not be anti-Muslim. The

government gained further credibility by its swift and laudable actions in the wake of 7/7 when it insisted that the atrocity had nothing to do with the overwhelming majority of Muslims, nor was it related to the Islamic faith as normally practiced. In Afghanistan, however, British Muslims were posed with a challenge, partly because they saw the hypocrisy of the US arming and training bin-Laden when he was fighting the Soviets – then invading the nation in an attempt to murder him and destroy his national base; and partly because of the credibility that bin-Laden had acquired by providing logistical support for the Islamic resistance movements in the former Yugoslavia and in the formerly Soviet countries with large Muslim populations. Nevertheless, the large majority of British Muslims, including the most observant, were highly critical of the Taliban, and that provided some cover for the Labor government's support for the invasion of Afghanistan. On the other hand, the failure of the massive opposition to Labor's support for the US invasion of Iraq provided yet another argument in favor of the *Salafi* view that western-style democracy is inherently flawed, and that the secular political process is worthless, to be substituted by Islamic processes.

If these are the ideological underpinnings of the rise in support for the *Salafi* movement, I want to briefly refer to what I am going to call the spiritual reasons. All of us, but particularly white atheists like myself, need to take account of the discernible move among British radicals toward a soft and tolerant version of the faith they acquired from their parents. I have noticed this among former members of the AYM, among former members of the Race Today Alliance, and among white former members of the far left. I think this reflects the shift many of us have made as we have aged toward a recognition that the material dimensions of life – perhaps especially as they are set out in the hard versions of Marxism – do not speak effectively to our emotional needs. Even those of us who do not turn to religion recognize and respect the decision of our comrades to do so. Thus, we should not be surprised to hear that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the USA.

### **Multiculturalist Discourse and the Celebration of Diversity**

What is the proper theoretical and practical response to the rise of this movement? Many of us here will recall the bitter divisions in the 1970s and 1980s between discourses which were labeled antiracist and those called multiculturalist. The former position was occupied by Marxists and the latter by people who were routinely denounced as liberals. While the left had a strong point when they said the multiculturalists were naïve about the structural force of racism, the multiculturalists had strong point when they said everyone should be better informed about differing cultural histories and practices. Saris, samosas, and

steel bands were pretty good things (and still are) and the multiculturalists were right to say we should celebrate them. To that list we should now add *shalwar kameez*, scarves, Shiva (though not as the destroyer), and lots of other things beginning with S. 'Celebration of diversity' which I take to be the key epithet in this discourse is a reasonable starting point for discussion. But multiculturalists now go further than that: Its discourse today includes a critique of institutional racism and support for legislation, which aims to embed antiracist practice in public sector organizations. Thus, it is probably incorrect to label that position as liberal, because philosophical liberals such as John Rawls are intent on basing their proposals on individual, rather than on collective rights, and are unsympathetic to structural determinist arguments.

The Labor Government is clearly not a liberal government in any sense of the word, but I think it could be described as being committed to multiculturalism, which I am beginning to think of as a distinct sociological position, probably best articulated by Professor Tariq Modood. If the government is correctly defined as multiculturalist, it is worrying when we hear that it wants to ban *Hizb Ut-Tahrir*. They are, so far as I can see, *Salafiyyah* and although they I cannot find a source in which they say that they are antifeminist and antigay rights, that is a foundational position for *Salafi-ites*, and *Hizb Ut-Tahrir* openly opposes the democratic process and the nation-state, in common with the *Salafiyyah*. They argue for a return to the Khalifa, the original (and from my point of view probably mythic) Islamic community, and the spreading of this supposed paradise across the globe. But their claim to be nonviolent is accepted by Dr. Magnus Ranstorp, director of the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St. Andrews (Radio Free Europe, September 5, 2005). Thus, I would argue that they should be included in the 'celebration of diversity' discourse. Much as I will disagree with them, their views and actions pose no threat to life or limb, and they should be entitled to argue their case as part of the richly diverse public conversation that should characterize a mature democracy like ours.

### The Rise of the Nihilists

What, then, are we to make of those who advocate, glorify, and engage in acts of violence, including the use of suicide bombers, in pursuit of aims that are very similar to those of *Hizb Ut-Tahrir*? Before I discuss this, I need to set out rather briefly my analysis of why this tiny, but deadly, grouping has emerged.

First of all, the ideological reasons outlined above for the increased influence of the *Salafiyyah* apply with even greater force to the advocates of violent *jihad*. Second, it is now very simple to acquire impressive

Islamic justifications, in plain English, for violence, which easily overturn the immediate reaction that Islam bans suicide. Although there is some dispute about the precise role of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan al-Banna (1903–1949), in the Brotherhood's turn to violence, his 'The Way of Jihad' is readily available. Stripped of any of the historical and sociological context in which such a text should properly be placed, it reads as though the Qur'an and the Sunna are straightforward incitements to shedding blood to impose Islam throughout the world. Naturally, it is grist to the mill of the British National Party and other Islamophobes. Nevertheless, it does the necessary work of providing divine sanction for murder, just as international law is required to do the secular work of justifying war. Thus, the Internet has made it possible for people to access rapidly impressive-sounding theology which helps to shift them away from the belief systems of their Muslim parents, and to draw others into the fold who are interested in acquiring a new way of life.

Third, there are specific sociopsychological reasons why this terrifying doctrine might find fertile ground in places like Beeston. My explanatory concept here makes the move from alienation to nihilism. The people who are engaging with the fierce debates in and around the mosques of Britain and around the dining tables of Muslim homes are already alienated from white, secular society. They may also be alienated at work, in the classic Marxist sense, but they are perhaps more likely than most of the rest of British society to be self-employed, or at College, which might disguise their economic alienation. But many feel dislocated and increasingly separated from mainstream white society, and experience the white, secular world as one which treats them as Other. If organized, physical attacks by racists, or by the police, reach a certain point, they will organize themselves into a fighting force and engage in what I analyze as violent urban protest and others call riots, as they did in four northern towns, including Leeds, in the summer of 2001. This put alienated British Muslims under the spotlight but the government again did a reasonable job of stemming the hostility to Muslims that appeared at that time. But September 11, 2001 – known to history as 9/11 – transformed the situation for British Muslims. Almost all Muslims seemed to feel that there was a rise of Islamophobia in Britain. Clearly, this experience has intensified since the events in London this year which I find myself calling, in abject deference to the American way, 7/7. It is testimony to their active involvement in the democratic process that so many Muslims actively engaged in demonstrations, meetings and other forms of lobbying against the war on Iraq. It is testimony to their social and psychological resilience that they continue to stand out against the violent *jihadis*.

But some have not, and I want to suggest that the reaction of this small but dangerous group is best understood psychologically as a form of

splitting and sociologically as nihilism. I am attempting here to apply Melanie Klein's idea of the infant splitting the mother's breast into the good and the bad; her theory that if this trauma is unsuccessfully resolved the adult will continually experience the world as one of persecution; and will therefore actively project his or her psychotic delusions onto others. I hope there are one or two sociologists here who are sympathetic to the effort to integrate Freud's thinking into social theory that started with the Frankfurt School, moved in a different direction by Talcott Parsons, and was then moved on again by some post-structuralists. Even so, I will remain in trouble as so few sociologists seem to think that Melanie Klein has much to offer us. I am not, actually, trying to do Kleinian psychoanalysis on the Beeston bombers. No one knows much about them and I will be very surprised if tonight's BBC radio program sheds any useful light on Mohammed Khan. I just want to use Klein as a stimulus for some sociological guesswork.

It seems to me worth asking how a young British Muslim comes to decide to kill himself. I am surprised how little commentary has taken note of the fact that these men were *suicidal*. If they do think at all about the *suicidal* aspect of these bombings, sociologists will probably turn to Durkheim. They might argue that suicide in pursuit of an Islamic vision of paradise is an example of the altruistic form of suicide. You will recall that this type of suicide resulted, according to Durkheim, from excessive integration into society, and he gave the Hindu widow's practice of *sati* as his example. This might help us think about the cult-like practices of the *jihadi* groups, and it is the sort of reasoning which is being applied when people say that the Beeston bombers must have been brainwashed. But the strongest argument against Durkheim is that, while they had been recruited to a tightly integrated and heavily regulated group, it is clear that the Beeston men were operating as 'normal' members of their society while, in physical and mental secret spaces, they were utterly divorced from mainstream society. These considerations would put them in Durkheim's egoistic category. So I do not think Durkheim's focus on social integration is particularly helpful here.

It seems to me that a psychoanalytic theory is required because an extremely personal decision is being made to commit suicide by people who live what seem to be quite normal lives. I am not suggesting that they are psychotic, but they might be, as plenty of psychotic people live very normal-seeming lives. But I do think that they were engaging in splitting. The split that I think is occurring is probably a reiteration of an only partially resolved split in infancy, and it is likely to be picked up in adulthood in a deep ambivalence toward women in general, and mothers or wives in particular. It seems highly significant that it is British men, not women, who are engaging in terrorism, while adhering to a doctrine which advocates the confinement of women

to the domestic sphere and the suppression of any symbols of the feminine. These are men who have witnessed the overt sexuality of postmodern Britain and, I expect, engaged in the same sexual experiments as the rest of British youth. They were particularly open, I think, to the doctrines of the *jihadis* because they were already experiencing guilt about their sexual activities and conflict with their girlfriends and wives which made the transition to the violent sect seem like it would provide a resolution for the anxiety and difficulty they were experiencing. This move would prove extremely traumatic when it was pointed out to those whose good/bad object relations were never effectively resolved that their mothers' Islam was corrupt and polluted, and that the religion of their childhood was, actually, close to paganism. Unable to deal with that in the way that one of my British Muslim friends does – by teasing his mother and calling her a witch, while loving her with the same depth as ever – these young men project all their fear and self-hatred onto humanity as a whole, all of whom, whatever their nominal beliefs, are seen as equally corrupt. They then protect themselves against the terror of death by the fantasy that they are not actually dying, but going to paradise.

Let me make the far-fetched assumption that you find this convincing. You might still ask why I want to attach the concept of nihilism to this sect. This seems counter-intuitive because everyone knows that nihilists say they believe in nothing, starting from their denial of the existence of God, while the *jihadis* have absolute belief. I suppose I should admit, therefore, that I am using this term in Weber's sense of elective affinity, rather than suggesting they are literally the same. To test the idea I recently read Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, his classic description of a nihilist cell in a small Russian town. The book is out of print, but if Penguin are smart enough, they will reprint it for the astonishing insight it provides into what is happening today. Here are the parallels which strike me between this tiny band of 19th century Russians and the miniscule circles of 21st century British Muslims. Both are newly facing the juggernaut of modernity. It was just arriving in Dostoevsky's Russia, just as modernity was relatively new in Saudi Arabia, Palestine, and other Middle Eastern countries, and just as it was new to the parents of these British Muslims. The British Muslim youth are experiencing a speeded up juggernaut called postmodernity. The Russian nihilist cell is a cross-class grouping, containing people who have recently been emancipated from serfdom and a school student, under the leadership of extremely rich aristocrats. Ideologically, they are incoherent – the anarcho-socialist Charles Fourier is mentioned, as is the First International, and atheism is sometimes invoked – but the most important point is that no detailed set of ideas is ever agreed upon. The closest we get is when Shigalov's view of his new world order is set out. This has uncanny resemblance to what the Khalifate

would actually deliver if the *ihadis* were to be successful. Shigalov's model society is one of complete despotism, where ten percent have absolute control and ninety percent are in 'boundless submission' living in 'primeval innocence, something like the Garden of Eden' (Dostoevsky, 1970, p. 366). The nihilists' obsession with an aristocratic leader whose authority is enhanced by remaining in perpetual hiding is perhaps serendipitous. Similarly, the central role of murder and a proposed suicide in the unfolding of Dostoevsky's plot is perhaps by-the-by. But the absence of any clear political methodology beyond the forming of a network of cells which secretly distribute leaflets and inspire arson (labelled by the authorities as nihilism), has clear resonances with the phenomenon called al-Qaeda. Finally, none of the core members of the nihilist cell have any discernible social or psychological roots – existence seems to have no purpose over and beyond their devotion to the cause. It is significant that two of the people who have decided to leave the cell do have viable family relationships, while the third has convinced himself that suicide is the only way to express his freedom. If an independent person was ever able to get close enough to the British *ihadis* to provide a detailed account, I think that most of the features Dostoevsky sets out for the nihilist cell would be replicated, including the ideological incoherence, the totalitarianism, the cross-class alliance, the rootlessness and the perpetual undercurrent of violence and death. It seems to me that despite their proclaimed commitment to God and to a heavenly afterlife, and despite the rudimentary political analysis set out in Mohammed Khan's valedictory video recording, this grouping is, actually, nihilistic.

### **The Limits of Multiculturalist Discourse**

Violence is the key focus for discussion in deciding whether or not any organization is to be legitimated within the 'celebration of diversity' trope. But – as has been revealed in the recent debate over the proposed banning of organizations which give support to those who advocate political violence – there are hard decisions to make over whether or not there are circumstances in which violence might actually be acceptable. I say this as someone who argued in support of the Black Panthers' right to shoot policemen in self-defense in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and who supported the IRA during the 1970s and 1980s. I vividly remember reading in *Anarchy* a coherent justification for the actions of the Angry Brigade, and being convinced. The group I was a member of, Big Flame, regarded Italy's Red Brigades as comrades, but who had taken the wrong path. I doubt if anyone here ever condemned the armed wing of the African National Congress (though of course Mrs. Thatcher did call Nelson Mandela a terrorist). I mention all this because I want to place the current

apparently incomprehensible murderous violence erupting today in Britain in the context of degrees of acceptance of violence in support of political causes. So, unless you are a pacifist, the ethical criterion is not merely the use of violence. The question really is about the goals, which that violence is thought to further, and the availability (or not) and viability (or not) of nonviolent political processes. In the case of the Angry Brigade, I was wrong on the latter count, and I now have some doubts about the Panthers and the IRA, but in the case of the African National Congress, we were probably all right on all counts, and Mrs. Thatcher was wrong. I have already argued that *Hizb Ut-Tahrir* have reactionary goals (in common with right wing Christians, Jews, Hindus, etc.) but, as their means are nonviolent, they should be included under the 'celebration of diversity' banner.

What about the nihilist *jihadis*, with their reactionary goals and their violent means? Clearly, their commitment to violence puts them outside the law, but it is possible that an ardent celebrator of diversity might possibly argue for a respectful attitude toward their position, despite opposing their methods. My argument is that we should abandon the 'celebration of diversity' position altogether, since it provides a logical opening for extreme reactionaries of all types. I think we should adopt a position which I summarized at the opening of this talk as 'progressive cosmopolitanism'. I shall conclude by briefly justifying my proposal. First, it identifies itself with progressive social and political values. Whether these are liberal or socialist is not important; what is important is that it places itself in the camp of the radicals in and after the Enlightenment. I stress the radicals here because, for all their manifold deficiencies, they were seeking to move beyond the classed, gendered, 'raced' and heterosexist assumptions of their time. This position includes valuing respectful democratic discussion, which is willing to embrace extremely diverse positions, including those of reactionaries committed to peaceful methods. Second, it is committed to the growth of cosmopolitan identities (Stevenson 2003) which do not root themselves in the nation state, but which aspire to a common global citizenship for all. It would enthusiastically embrace what Professor Parekh (2002) calls 'intercultural evaluation', because it recognizes that its goal is some long way from being achieved, and will require sophisticated negotiation among diverse cultural traditions. It would *negotiate* diversity, rather than celebrate it, because it is willing to confront those differences which it sees as outside the parameters of the radical Enlightenment.

Finally, it seems to me that 'progressive cosmopolitanism' provides us with a viable starting point for intervention in the debate about nihilism in British society. It is affiliated to radical social science which can help us understand the growth of this tendency, stop the analysis

from being foreshortened into discussions of poverty, or equal opportunities, or self-segregation, or being limited to a discussion of youth of Muslim heritage, and it can offer remedies to the problems that capitalism poses at the individual and societal levels. It also has an offer to make to all those people, probably (but not only) young, and clearly not only of Islamic heritage, who are being drawn to the *Salafi* camps (violent and nonviolent). It suggests to them that there is another direction to look – to the future, rather than the past. A future which acknowledges and values transcultural migration, and which, like the *Salafiyyah*, postulates a global citizenship, but which, unlike the *Salafiyyah*, offers cultural, economic, and social equality, and full participatory rights in shaping society. ‘Celebrating diversity’ was a useful slogan for the 1980s; ‘negotiating diversity’ and ‘promoting progressive cosmopolitanism’ are what is needed today.

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*Response to Max Farrar*  
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In this article, Max Farrar has attempted to explain why some British young men are drawn to commit suicide in the name of the *umma*. He develops his arguments by analyzing the emergence and popularity of various political and ideological movements which have become part of Muslim discourse and societies over the last few decades. In doing so, Farrar points in particular to three main areas: the *salafi* phenomenon, nihilistic Islam, and liberal multiculturalism which he says should be replaced by ‘progressive cosmopolitanism’ (p. 2).

Farrar's major focus of discussion distinguishes between peaceful *salafism* which he sees as having been adopted by many Muslims around the world and the more dangerous bin Laden nihilism, which he claims is essentially the thinking of a small group, in particular the group responsible for the July bombings. In his analysis of the rise of the *Salafiyya*, he is right to claim that many British Muslims, especially those with roots in India, Pakistan or Bangladesh, reject the cultural accretions which they perceive have tainted Muslim theology and practice. In fact, the growth of many of the AYM's of the 1980s was a direct reaction to, indeed a contempt for, the Islam which they saw their parents practice. They tried to create another Islam, which they saw as closer to the Islam of the Prophetic era. But the question they failed to address was how does one 'cleansed' this theology? There was an intellectual failure by many to understand that religions do not develop in cultural vacuums and that subcontinent Islam had developed in India and thus retained many of the Indian cultural trappings which are not all offensive or contrary to Islamic practice but just another way of practicing Islam. In fact, I would disagree with Farrar that there is a 'discernible move among British radicals toward a soft and tolerant version of the faith they required from their parents' (p. 7). While many first generation Muslims may have known little else than adopting rather entrenched views of preserving their cultural heritage, they did this for the most part as the only way of life they had known. Second generation Muslims who turned to various youth movements had choices. They had the social benefits of growing up in a more diverse and liberal society, the multiple advantages of higher education and relatively fewer restrictions put upon their lives. When they chose their version of Islam, it was not as an alternative to capitalism but as an alternative to British life. In the end it was the impracticability of creating a more nuclear Islam in Britain that led either to the disappearance of many groups or saw their mutation into more pragmatic thinking. Donning headscarves, arguing endlessly about the correct *tarbiya* and repeatedly calling for a united *umma* might have attracted young blood and held political sway for some time, but ultimately these movements simply did not have the intellectual content or vision for long term sustainability or allegiance.

Farrar argues that the *Salafiyya* tendency was boosted by the successive actions of both Labor and Conservative governments. He mentions the Palestinian issue, the war in Afghanistan, the one-time support of bin Laden and the invasion of Iraq as ideological issues that the *Salafiyya* used to gain support. While this is true, the support was based on a preexistent receptivity on the part of many communities to such ideologies. Many Muslims in the West hold onto the discourse that defines western governments as fundamentally secular democracies unsympathetic to Muslim religious and political sentiment. For some,

this creates a continuing tension about why and how they choose to live in such countries. And yet there is at the same time a contempt for many Islamic societies and governments in various parts of the Muslim world. Although we are now into the third generation of Muslims in Britain, this relative unease shows little sign of receding amongst many communities. The crisis may well be both spiritual and sociopolitical but the crisis is also an intellectual crisis. The need to hold onto certain ideologies as an alternative – as an expression of anti-Western sentiment – reflects not just the vestiges of a siege mentality where the use of such clichés as ‘Islam and the West’ is rife, but an inability to contribute and feel part of a wider society, a society that is continually perceived as being unsympathetic to Islamic ways of life. I would argue that the alienation felt by some is a deliberate, self-imposed alienation perpetuated by the ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality.

In Farrar’s initial comments on multiculturalism, there is a danger of continuing to simplify the term multiculturalism as principally a context for diversity. It has been evident from the discussions in British politics and media post 7/7 that the failure of multiculturalism is being viewed as the major reason behind the July bombings. Yet, multiculturalism, though coined, was never really defined explicitly 50 or 60 years ago when different communities first became part of the social fabric. If it glares at us now as the failed experiment of the past and the impasse of the present, it is precisely because the concept meant nothing or everything depending on to whom you spoke. Underlying the concept was a silent hope that the gradual integration of different races and religions would create a society where racial and religious differences were ultimately accepted as part of a changing Britain. The real issue, however, was not one of acceptance on either side. This simplistic assumption overlooked a fundamental aspect of the human condition which is that integration cannot be forced. While living in relatively poor ghettos may have been an economic necessity for some, for many others it was the only cultural option. Surrounding yourself with those who look, dress and eat like you provided the cultural familiarity that many needed to feel secure and safe. For the political elite, as long as there was no visible conflict between communities, multiculturalism did not have to be debated in political circles – these people were just there.

More problematic however, was the complete indifference by many to ever wishing to be part of British life outside the most basic interaction. This reflected not only an unwillingness to step outside the immediate familial context but was also based on prejudice and bigotry on the part of many of the communities, especially the Asians who often saw their white neighbors as unclean, immoral, living a life completely at odds with their own religious and cultural observances. For the most part, the communities who lived like this were from the rural

areas of the Punjab with little or no education. They replicated their former life almost entirely because they came primarily for economic reasons harboring no wish to be anything other than law-abiding citizens. Class differences determined who lived in the ghettos and who lived in the suburbs and to some extent, this divide has been passed down through the generations. But what is interesting is that the impetus for the youth movements, including some of the most zealous members of these movements who promoted various Islamic alternatives, came not from the ghettos, but from middle class backgrounds. Even if we concede that economic deprivation might have left some in the ghettos alienated from mainstream society, why did the relatively affluent and well-educated youth also desire an alternative to the mainstream model? Quite simply, why did so many Muslims remain indifferent or hostile to the cultural context of Britain?

The British government's response to the July bombings has also aroused much controversy, especially in the government's attempts to distinguish between the array of organizations. Which ones are peaceful and which ones incite terror and violence? Farrar judges Hizb ut-Tahrir as nonviolent and thus possessing the right to argue their case as part of the diverse discourses that characterize multicultural Britain. In principle, Farrar is correct but my contention is that where there is already some form of mental and emotional alienation, even under the guise of a return to the *khilafat*, it does not take much for peaceful determination to lapse into some form of *jihadi* aggression. In our current context, how healthy and constructive is it for the Muslims in Europe to be engaged in any discourse which encourages feelings of separation or calls for meaningful identity only within an Islamic state? Do we really want to give any legitimacy to Muslim groups, albeit peaceful, whose vision of global society is always one where the Muslim excludes himself deliberately? Furthermore, where is the theological base for such sentiments? Referring to select verses from the Qur'an or the period of early Islam as a premise for their arguments is simply untenable and goes against the very tradition of Islamic intellectualism.

Farrar's analysis of the nihilistic thinking within a small group is interesting but the psychoanalytical dissection is not entirely convincing, as he humbly expects. I myself write as someone who has no expertise in psychoanalysis nor any special knowledge of the Muslim communities of Beeston. Has Farrar carried out any empirical research into the reasons people give for suicidal tendencies in this particular form of nihilism which reflects absolute belief as opposed to denial of everything? It is the possible causes of this particular nihilism that I find problematic. The issues of gender inequalities, guilt over personal sexual activities and the ambivalence toward women may reverberate across some Muslim young men but I cannot understand the

hypothesis that the feelings of deep guilt result in the move to violence as a liberating resolution. There is no doubt that gender issues continue to remain a problem within many Muslim communities and the relatively ill education of many women is in my opinion a fundamental factor in slowing the social and intellectual progress of these communities while exacerbating all kinds of problems within different generations. In saying that, however, I am not convinced that the complexities surrounding sexual interaction belie so many of the mental frustration with which we are concerned.

Farrar is probably correct in saying that the Beeston men 'were operating as "normal" members of their society while, in physical and mental secret places, they were utterly divorced from mainstream society' (p. 11). But I would argue that this state of mind is not just particular to these men – there are unfortunately many people from Muslim societies who feel completely divorced from mainstream life. Thankfully, they do not all wish to project any hatred, they are just indifferent. They may be indifferent for a number of reasons but this status quo does pose another dilemma: can different peoples and cultures live meaningfully side by side or will they always just tolerate each other? Farrar's conclusion is therefore absolutely right that what we need as a strategy of, to use his phrase, 'progressive cosmopolitanism', is the willingness to 'negotiate diversity'. I would argue that for too long we have talked of diversity as if it is inherently a good thing without stating openly that even diversity has its limits. Part of living in a civil society is that we must be prepared to accept with peaceful consensus that there may well be things that society finds unacceptable.

Overall, Farrar's articulates well many of the issues that are being currently addressed after the bombings of July 2005. My main concern is that in offering possible explanations for the bomber, drawing a link between a presumed psychotic state and the promise of a martyr's paradise – both under the general umbrella of alienation – many questions and gaps remain. What is the 'cause' that these people aspire to? What do we mean by alienation and if the alienation is so strong, why is it that the Muslims are the only minority facing it?

I would say that the onus is on the Muslim communities themselves to have the discourse; the problem is within the community, the solution must also be there. While there may be a rise in feelings of persecution or victimization among some members of the community, especially after the London bombings, there is also a reluctance among many to think of any vision for themselves or for future generations. Muslim communities cannot just react to global events or the global agendas; rather they must be willing to look inwards, to be critical of their own weaknesses and prejudices. They must think creatively and act positively about what kind of lives they want in Britain and how

they can keep their own religious discourse alive while respecting and being part of the multiple discourses around them.

*Response to Max Farrar*

*By Mahan Mirza*

*Yale University, USA*

Until the London bombings on July 7, 2005, it was commonly imagined and portrayed widely in the media that terrorism emerges from the backwaters of the inhabited world. The Bush doctrine is geared toward fighting the terrorists 'abroad' so that Westerners can be safe 'at home'. The working assumption of the project is that the 'war on terror' can be won by bringing democracy to the world, since unlike oppressive authoritarian societies, free and democratic societies do not breed terror. These notions were shattered when three of the London bombers turned out to be relatively successful British nationals living in the heart of the free world. For anybody paying attention, the working assumptions of the 'war on terror' needed to be scrutinized in the aftermath of the London bombing. The terrorists could no longer be regarded as ignorant barbarians deprived of freedom. It could no longer be asserted that the simple remedy for Islamic terrorism was democracy. The world was obviously confronting a more complex phenomenon in relation to which the free world may well be active accomplice rather than passive recipient.

Max Farrar's article grapples with the acute conceptual problems posed to the conventional 'us' versus 'them' formula in the aftermath of 7/7. He does this first by distinguishing between 'fundamentalist' Islam (which he calls *Salafī*) and 'militarist' Islam (which he calls *Jihādī*). Farrar deems the former harmless and tolerable and the latter 'nihilist' and intolerable. Engaging constructively in developing a discourse on tolerance on the basis of this distinction is the crux of his presentation. The thesis is that 'liberal multiculturalism' (which is the label chosen for the dominant paradigm of British – and by extension Western – society) is incapable of making the nuanced distinction between the *Salafī* and *Jihādī* positions that is necessary to overcome the dangers posed by the *Jihādīs*. In other words, liberal multiculturalism is incapable of creating a discourse that accepts and tolerates the *Salafīs* while rejecting the *Jihādīs*. For this, argues Farrar, what is required is a shift from liberal multiculturalism to 'progressive cosmopolitanism'.

The article covers a lot of ground, both historical and conceptual, in relatively few pages. Farrar is candid, offering frequent autobiographical comments that highlight his own convictions. Through the article, the reader learns that the author is a white atheist (with a specialization in the social sciences and little background in the study

of Islam) who is sympathetic to Marxism and identifies with being a radical citizen. Apart from ethnic origin, the author's presentation is best understood through the lens of these self-identifying character traits, which is how the rest of this response proceeds.

The author's lack of familiarity with Islam is apparent; it is no surprise that the attempt to first define the term *Salafī* and then trace the historical reasons for the rise of the *Salafīyya* in the modern world lacks clarity. This is complex terrain even for a specialist. In principle, the sources of all Muslim faith and practice are the Qur'ān and Sunna. What makes the *Salafīs* different from 'traditionalists' and 'modernists'? Speaking in broad generalizations, a 'traditionalist' is someone who believes that medieval Muslim scholarship arrived at basic theological and legal axioms through an unsurpassable scholarly methodology. It is within this medieval consensus that the true and eternal Islam is to be found. For 'modernists', the world has changed in fundamental ways since the time of the Prophet. The Islam of the past should be left in the past, and new ways of thinking are needed to live in step with the times. The unifying factor for *Salafīs* is that they believe something went wrong in history as Islam developed, and that true guidance is to be found in returning to the spirit at the very beginning of it all with the Prophet and his companions (bypassing the intervening errors, with the exception of one solid thread that links back to Islamic origins). The word *salaf* literally means 'forefathers' or predecessors. *Salafīs* are thus, by definition, those who look to the forefathers for guidance.

The most common kinds of *Salafīs*, and indeed those who self-identify as such, are those who turn directly to the words of the Qur'ān and Sunna for guidance, with reference (but without binding obligation) to interpretations that have been offered through the ages. Such forms of interpretation can be both liberating and stifling: liberating in the sense that new interpretations may be sought without the fetters of medieval precedents, but shifting because of the limits inherent within the letter of the foundational texts.<sup>1</sup> These *Salafīs* are also called *Wahhābīs*, and fit the definition offered by Farrar with reference to the US military website. Depending upon the nature of the interpretation, such *Salafīs* may or may not be prone to violence. It is clear that there are two parties within this camp: those that support the Saudi government and the global status quo that accompanies this position, and those that wish to topple the pompous Saudi regime and its alliance with the Great Satan – the USA. Bin Laden finds himself in the latter camp. The *Tālibān*, on the other hand, are 'traditionalists' whose religious worldview is quite different

<sup>1</sup> Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, 2nd Edition (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 109ff.

from that of the *Wahhābīs*, even though fate happened to bring them together in the battlefields of Afghanistan toward the final quarter of the 20th century.<sup>2</sup>

A second type of *Salafism* is that of revivalist movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the *Jama'at-i Islami*, and the *Hizb ut-Tahrir*. With the exception of the *Hizb*, which relies on a formal religious methodology with strong 'rationalist' undertones (an anathema to the original *Salafīs*), the other groups consist of adherents from various socioeconomic backgrounds who, at the level of personal law, follow any of the classical schools of thought, but at the level of mission, seek to establish Islam as a complete political, social, and economic way of life. They are *Salafīs* in the sense of seeing a perfect model for society in the first generation of Islam (which has undergone a gradual decline with the flow of history). They may consist of *Salafī*-modernist hybrids, since many of them incorporate much from the modern world into their system in order to make that original prophetic ideal relevant to the world of today.<sup>3</sup> Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghanī (1839–1897) is commonly considered the founder of this sort of *Salafism*. According to the renowned author on modern Islamic movements, Gilles Kepel, al-Afghānī 'sought to expose the roots of modernity within Muslim civilization – and in the process resorted to a somewhat freewheeling interpretation of the sacred texts'.<sup>4</sup>

Farrar's failure to distinguish clearly between the various sorts of 'Islams' is a weakness that pervades the article, although his main point remains intact nonetheless (which will be taken up at the end of this response). Let us now proceed to another character trait of the author, which is his sympathy to Marxism. On this note, Farrar offers one primary reason for the rise of the *Salafiyya* phenomenon in the 20th century: capitalism. He highlights two negative aspects of capitalism that have aided the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. First is the penchant of capitalism to use 'blatant' force to advance its interests, and second is the 'alienation' that Muslims experience on account of 'factory-style manufacturing processes'. These forces, according to Farrar, have only intensified with the fall of communism and, particularly in British society, with the disappearance of a 'socialist alternative' to capitalism. These are valuable observations but, specifically with respect to the rise of militant Islam in the 1990s, ultimately insufficient. The global *jihād* movement got a boost from certain realities on

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Jihad and the Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2003), pp. 222ff., and Rashid Ahmed, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 128ff.

<sup>3</sup> See John Voll's Foreword in Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Kepel, p. 220.

the ground and its rise cannot be explained through the lens of a smooth historical process alone. In the 1980s, holy war as an Islamic ideal was promoted in textbooks published in the USA in order to motivate the Afghans to resist Soviet occupation. Muslims from all over the world flocked to the region to engage in the noble struggle supported by the very forces of capitalism. When it was all over, these highly trained individuals who had few other skills to their merit other than waging *jihād* on the battlefield were shunned from their former homelands and dispersed throughout the globe in search of new causes (Bosnia, Chechniya, Kashmir, etc.). It must be pointed out that whereas there are certainly social and historical forces that have shaped the Islamist scene in the world today, there have also been sudden and unexpected disruptions, such as the debacle of the two Super Powers in Afghanistan, that have been major factors and cannot be overlooked.

In contrast to the analysis on Islam, Farrar's expertise as a social scientist comes across strongly. In fact, it can be said that the presentation is difficult to follow for someone who is not well versed in the author's own professional and cultural milieu or the history of British politics. As these things are not the strong suit of this reviewer, the section has been difficult to navigate. For example, the presentation mentions in passing, among others, Keith Flett, Fowles, Dr. Magnus Ranstorp, Melanie Klein, Talcott, Parsons, Charles Fourier, and Professor Parekh, along with a slew of theoretical concepts and organizations. It may be that the expert has relished such references, but for this reader, it gets to the point where the terms, labels, and names become distracting rather than helpful.

The labels that the author has employed autobiographically, however, have been instrumental in constructing this response. Let us now turn to the final two, atheist and radical, which will both be dealt with in tandem with the thrust of the article's argument. As a radical citizen and social scientist, Farrar is committed to looking at both sides of apparently irreconcilable positions in order to find some common ground and in order to advance his own vision and agenda for a global society; as an atheist, he is committed to purely rational explanations and solutions – without any reference to, or guidance from, a scriptural or religious tradition. This approach has its strengths in that it is able to explore causes for extreme and fanatical phenomena such as those witnessed on 7/7 in unique ways. For example, in seeking psychological reasons, Farrar muses that the perpetrators may have been 'experiencing guilt about their sexual activities and conflict with their girlfriends and wives'. To the author's immense credit, he is even willing to struggle with the dilemma of the limits of legitimate violence that emerges as the result of despair.

Ultimately, Farrar settles on the idea that the *Jihādīs* can best be categorized as nihilists, not in the philosophical sense of the term, but rather

in the political sense. He does this by drawing on the description of a nihilist cell in Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*. That modern *Jihādīs* are to trace their existential kinship to the modern Western paradigms rather than traditional Islam is a significant conclusion reached by the author. The British Islamic scholar Timothy Winter ('Abdul-Hakīm Murād) articulates, in detail, a similar point of view.<sup>5</sup> The difference between Winter and Farrar is in what is offered as the way forward. Farrar hopes to find a solution to the crises in a new discourse of 'progressive cosmopolitanism'. This philosophy carries all the merits that Farrar has identified with: It is 'affiliated with radical social science . . . it can offer remedies to the problems that capitalism poses at individual and societal levels . . . it suggests to them [the *Salafīs*] that there is another direction to look – to the future . . . [and it] postulates [an alternative] global citizenship'.

It is here that Farrar's inability to see the other side for what it is shines most clearly, which is the possibility that there are some people who actually *believe* in God and Muhammad as his Prophet. For them, there is no way to the future but through the past. If they turn violent, then accompanying the sociopsychological reasons for this tragic turn must somewhere be a conviction in something 'beyond' that is legitimated through conviction in a message from the past. Simply overlooking this element and hoping it will disappear is not an option – it must be engaged constructively if one is seeking meaningful dialogue. Most interestingly, although Winter and Farrar see eye to eye in many ways, the most glaring contrast lies in their suggestions for the future. For Farrar, as has been seen, it is in pegging one's hopes to the meandering journey of European rationalism. For Winter, the 'war on terror' is actually a war within Enlightenment modernity. According to him, the forces that Farrar is longing for are losing ground and ultimately have no hope:

The danger, then, is that liberalism will prove too weak to prevent one form of Enlightenment chauvinism – carceral Islamism – from triggering a sudden revival of another such form – Hitlerian essentialism. The prosperity of the far-right across the liberal West shows how far this march has already come. Postmodernity is methodologically incapable of resisting this; and monotheism must step into the breach. A monotheism, however, which bears all the arms it has acquired and sharpened during its travels: its intellectual appropriation of Athens, its hospitality to the autochthonously non-Semitic, its insistence on diversity, all enabled and preserved by the centrality of spiritual purgation. The civil war within Enlightenment modernity that Gray identifies as the essence of the 'war

<sup>5</sup> 'Bombing without Moonlight', to be found at <http://www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/ahm/moonlight.htm> (last accessed January 20, 2006).

on terror' is suicidal. Only a *ressourcement* in the anchored past can deliver us.<sup>6</sup>

Farrar's general inability to deal with the complexities involved in looking at phenomena related to Islam in the modern world may be excused on account of a disclaimer offered at the onset that such matters lie beyond the scope of his expertise. Nonetheless, the author's basic distinction between militaristic and purely ideological strains of Islam is valuable. It is clear that the author's strengths lie in contemporary sociological theories, and indeed, the basic correlation between militaristic Islam and Western nihilism is extremely valuable. The direction for the present predicament of humanity and its ultimate future, however, are still open to debate. In conclusion, let it be pointed out that in the very beginning, the reader is informed that the article is 'designed mainly to stimulate debate rather than fix a position'. In this objective, one can say, Farrar's reflections are a success.

*Response to Mona Siddiqui and Mahan Mirza*  
 By Max Farrar  
 Leeds Metropolitan University, UK

This article started life as a piece of journalism for the web-magazine *open Democracy* (July 22, 2005) which opened with the words 'I don't really know why those men from Beeston set off those bombs in London [on July 7, 2005] but I think I know where to look for the answers.' I really did not know why the men committed that atrocity, and I still do not. As Mahan Mirza graciously acknowledges, I am simply trying to open up a debate, albeit on rather different lines from both the mass media and most academic and political commentary. Beeston is the low-income suburb on the south of the city of Leeds where around 12.5 percent of the population is Muslim, of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage. For the past 35 years I have lived in or near the low-income suburbs of north Leeds where British Asians (10 percent) and British Caribbeans (10 percent) live. I have written about that area in voluminous detail (see, for example, Farrar, 2002). In those suburbs, British Caribbeans led what I call violent urban protest and most others call riots in 1975 and 1981, and British Asians led similar violent protests in 2001. In the *open Democracy* article I wanted to point out the connection between this history of organized violence by young dark-skinned men and the bombings in London. But the intrusion of

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* Winter is referring here to John Gray's *Al-Qaeda and What It Means to Be Modern* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003).

suicide and Islam made the July 2005 events rather different from their antecedents. I had a hunch about nihilism and a more developed idea about the impossibility of masculinity. The article led to an invitation to contribute to an academic sociology seminar on 'Diversity', at which I gave the lecture kindly reproduced by the editor of this journal.

Both commentators respond quite positively to my suggestion that there is an elective affinity between the suicide bombers who claim to be Muslims and the nihilistic revolutionaries of Russia in the 19th century. Mirza says he finds this 'basic correlation . . . extremely valuable' and Mona Siddiqui says it is 'interesting'. I am grateful for this – I had expected to be criticized from left and right, by the secular and the religious, for this proposition. I am working now on the Nietzschean connection (see Ansell Pearson and Morgan [2000] for an effort to put the best possible spin on nihilism) and I have already found Mirza's reference to the work of T.J. Winter (Murad, 2004) extremely stimulating. (It is one of the immense gifts of dialogue – in this case 'trialogue' – promoted by this journal, to receive the guidance of people like Mirza and Siddiqui.) But neither are entirely convinced. Mirza picks up on the most counter-intuitive point: nihilists deny the existence of God, so how can the *ihadis* be nihilists? He points out that, even among those who turn to violence, 'there are some who actually believe in God and Muhammad as his Prophet'. This is where I declare yet again my sociological hand: Epistemologically, my analysis starts from the words and actions of humans and the meanings they hold, but my analysis does not end there. I take the view that someone might say they believe in God, but they might act *as though* God is dead, just as someone who does not believe in God might act in full accordance with the common values of the religions of the book. In referring to Dostoevsky's *Possessed*, I was drawing the sociological parallels, in terms of the social composition of the cells, and in terms of the terrifying disruptions that the Russians were experiencing 150 years ago and Muslims are experiencing today.

Mirza usefully adds to my account of these disruptions with his reflection on the US textbooks which incited Muslims to rise up against communism in Afghanistan and the subsequent events in Bosnia. Siddiqui comments in some detail on my remark that one of the possible antidotes to the disorienting and alienating effects of capitalist modernity in Britain – the AYMs – had lost their efficacy some time before the rise of Islamism. Sociology – despite its frequent claim to be the authoritative social critic of the present – has signally failed to give proper attention to phenomena such as the social movements that have countered British racism over the past 40 years (for a sketch, see Farrar, 2004). So it is interesting to read Dr. Siddiqui's comment that 'the growth of many of the Asian Youth Movements of the 1980s was a direct reaction to, indeed a contempt for, the Islam which they saw their parents

practice. They tried to create another Islam, which they saw as closer to the Islam of the Prophetic era'. I have to say that nothing in my encounters with AYM members during their political hey-days, nor since, conforms with that analysis. Dr. Anandi Ramamurthy, who has conducted extensive research on the AYMs, argues that religion was a private affair for AYM members, and that 'the concept of blackness with which the AYMs identified was the fermentation of a very British identity. . . . This black identity was profoundly secular. Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, Jains and others all worked together' (Ramamurthy, 2005). This of course does mean that Siddiqui is incorrect – it reminds us that there are many sociological perspectives on any one phenomenon, and that it is our job to continue to investigate and debate.

Turning now to the most critical points raised by the commentators, I should briefly respond to Mirza's point that my apparent lack of familiarity with Islam leads to lack of clarity in my account of *Salafiyya*. I hope my trepidation on entering the field of Islamic scholarship was apparent. It is now turning to outright anxiety and the feeling that I should get out of the way while still relatively intact. I found Mirza's additional information helpful, and it conformed to materials I had already obtained, but did not feel I had time to use. I think the conceptual distinction I made between the peaceful and the violent *Salafiyya* stands. This distinction is particularly important in the UK in order to preserve the civil liberties of groups like *Hizb al-Tahrir*. But Siddiqui makes a very important point when she argues that this distinction, in practice, does not always hold. The nonviolent tendency has already split at least once in the UK and *Salafiyya* organisations which condone suicidal and military actions have emerged.

Professor Siddiqui is not at all convinced by my rather faltering effort to apply psychoanalytic theory to the suicide bombers, although Mirza hints that he might entertain some investigation of their psycho-social backgrounds. In reply to Siddiqui's question, I have not been able to do empirical work on this, and I cannot find a psychoanalyst who has (though one has made some odd observations on a terrorist; see Bolla, 2005). My basic point might be worth reiterating: these were *suicidal* actions. To commit suicide, one has to be in a very special mental state, which itself has a very specific etiology. I do not take at face value the argument that their action was over-determined by the idea of Paradise; if it was, we might expect much larger numbers of young men to engage in this activity. On the contrary, it seems likely that these young men are being identified as vulnerable to the appeal of the *jihadi* leaderships. That vulnerability, I suggest, derives from a series of unresolved traumas in their childhood and adolescence. Just as in any other cult, the most vulnerable are groomed, and sacrificed.

Finally, I should respond to Mr. Mirza's ending. I do, as he says, peg my hopes 'to the meandering journey of European rationalism', and I

accept the veiled contempt for that journey which is implied. Europeans (like me) must take full responsibility for our abominable histories of genocide, slavery, and holocaust. From Zygmunt Bauman's memorable work on the holocaust (1989), we should conclude that all these atrocities are intrinsic to the modernist project. We might add that it was western Christianity which invented the Crusade. But there are two points to bear in mind. One is that T.J. Winter (as quoted by Mirza) calls for the legacy of Athens to be incorporated into his monotheism, and I take that as an advocacy of rational thought. The West should more often thank the Muslims in Spain for preserving and amplifying Greek philosophy and science. My other observation is Winter is mistaken in his project of locating suicide bombing simply in western history and culture. There are no pure cultures, no religions which have perfectly eradicated violence, no humans who are without conflict and contradiction. But there are many of us, secular and religious, who have a common aim, to struggle with our own fallibilities, and to affirm the best in the human condition: our loving responsibility for one another. That must include making every effort to respond to the despairing cry of the most alienated among us, black, brown, or white. I am warmed by those British Muslims such as Modood (2005) and Parekh (2005), and am eloquently supported by Mona Siddiqui who advocates strengthening the commitment to Britishness among the alienated Muslims, but this is an irretrievably tainted identity. In the 21st century we must forge transnational, cosmopolitan identities, committed to global peace, justice, fraternity, and sorority.

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