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What are fundamentalist beliefs?

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ABSTRACT
Fundamentalist beliefs are often discussed in relation to extremist, radical, or fanaticist beliefs, or terrorist ideology, as well as in relation to terrorism, radicalization, and violent extremism. Besides, the notion is frequently defined and operationalized, for example in the field of psychology. Despite the frequent recurrence of the notion in the literature, no clear and agreed-upon definition exists. Elements and characteristics that are commonly thought of as constituting fundamentalist beliefs are intellectual vices such as closed-mindedness or dogmatism, certain group dynamics and affections, a high degree of certainty in holding these beliefs, and fundamentalist content. Drawing on, among other things, recent developments in (social) epistemology, these alleged elements are critically reviewed. Based on this review, we develop what we call the Content-Reaction-Affect account of fundamentalist belief. This account, it is argued, is not only accurate, precise, fair, and clear, but also theoretically and practically fruitful.

1. Introduction

Fundamentalism has various components. It consists of *actions and omissions*, like the building of parallel institutions or the refusal to converse with outgroup members. It also consists of *affections* like grievance towards the West. Moreover, it comes with *rituals and practices*, like initiation rites and the reading of holy scriptures. Another constituent is *desires and hopes*, like awaiting the Messiah restoring the Temple in Jerusalem. Last but not least, it consists of *beliefs*.[1] In fact, it is quite common in the literature to speak of 'fundamentalist belief'.[2] Examples of such beliefs abound: the belief that the Bible (or another holy scripture) is infallible, that it should be interpreted literally and historically in its entirety, that there is only good and bad, or that there is a divine law that must be obeyed by all and that should replace civil law. Numerous authors also distinguish non-religious varieties of fundamentalism, like fascism and market fundamentalism. These come with fundamentalist belief as well, like the belief that the market is 'natural, untainted by original sin' and 'that every market participant possesses unfettered freedom, along with equal opportunity, to succeed.'[3]

There is a challenging issue here, though: exactly what makes those beliefs *fundamentalist*? The various elements and stereotypical properties of fundamentalism

suggest different options here. Whether a belief is fundamentalist could be a matter of content, a matter of how certain one is of it, a matter of being formed or maintained in a particular way, a matter of being related to certain emotions, or maybe a combination of these. We step by step explore various elements and stereotypical properties of fundamentalist belief, gathering along the way the material for a tenable account of fundamentalist belief. Based on our analysis of various alleged elements of fundamentalist belief, we formulate a list of six desiderata and then go on to construe and defend an account that meets these desiderata. We call this account the Content-Reaction-Affect account of fundamentalist belief. It is cashed out in terms of four individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions. We also show how this is perfectly compatible with the idea, widely accepted in the literature, that fundamentalism is a family resemblance concept.

Let us briefly explain why we believe we need such an account of fundamentalist belief. For one, as fundamentalist belief is a dimension of fundamentalism, spelling out this dimension improves our understanding of the phenomenon and may shed light on its connections with the other dimensions of fundamentalism. Moreover, beliefs are commonly understood to be among the factors that influence how we behave (next to desires, intentions, affections, unconscious influences, and so on). An account of fundamentalist belief can help to better understand and further study fundamentalist behaviour, possibly even prevent it when that is desirable.

An account of fundamentalist belief would also benefit the operationalization of the notions 'fundamentalism' and 'fundamentalist beliefs.' Take the field of psychology, in which various definitions and operationalizations of 'fundamentalist belief' circulate. To name some examples: The most commonly used scale is Bob Altemeyer and Bruce Hunsberger's Religious Fundamentalism Scale which measures fundamentalism in terms of (the strength of) fundamentalist beliefs, and defines fundamentalist beliefs in terms of content.[4] Steven Rouse et al. developed the Bible Verse Selection Task to measure Christian fundamentalist belief. Instead of measuring the strength of believing certain allegedly fundamentalist contents, they measure the centrality of certain beliefs in the belief-system.[5] Aiming to take into account that different religious traditions have different fundamentalist beliefs, Paul Williamson et al. developed the Intratextual Fundamentalism Scale.[6] This scale is based on an understanding of fundamentalism in terms of beliefs about the nature of sacred texts (as being of divine origin, inerrant, self-interpretive, privileged, authoritative and unchanging) and ensuing interpretative practices. Here we thus see three ways of understanding (religious) fundamentalist beliefs: in terms of content and strength of belief, in terms of the centrality/fundamental status of certain beliefs in the belief-system, and in terms of beliefs regarding the sacred textual source. For the sake of valid, reliable, and comparable research, a proper account of fundamentalist belief is needed. Stronger and more systematic definitions would improve consistency across studies when it comes to operationalizing 'fundamentalism' and 'fundamentalist belief'.[7]

Finally, there is much debate on the role of radical, extremist but also fundamentalist belief and terrorist ideology in explaining radicalization, extremism, and terrorism. Of course, fundamentalist belief usually does not lead to extremist or terrorist violence, but in rare cases it does. This has been particularly explored for Islamic fundamentalist belief.[8] An account of fundamentalist belief may, thus, contribute to a better

understanding of the process of cognitive radicalization and, where belief contributes to action, also to behavioural radicalization.

This paper combines ideas from empirical and historical work on fundamentalism with insights from contemporary epistemology. The alleged elements or characteristics of fundamentalist belief that we discuss – intellectual vices, group dynamics, certainty, affections, and content – were identified in the course of a broad scoping review on the uses and meanings of the term 'fundamentalism' in the past twenty-five years.[9] On the basis of that discussion, we seek to formulate an account of fundamentalist belief that *accurately includes stereotypical examples and accurately excludes stereotypical non-examples.* Second, there is a distinction between fundamentalist beliefs *of the individual* and those *of the group*. It is widely acknowledged in social epistemology that a group can believe something even if various members of the group fail to believe it, whereas belief of an individual requires that that individual actually hold the belief.[10] We confine ourselves to fundamentalist beliefs *of the individual.* Doing so is helpful for explaining fundamentalist behaviour on the basis of fundamentalist belief and also relevant to an assessment of responsibility for a fundamentalist's beliefs and behaviour. We leave the exploration of fundamentalist belief on a group level for another occasion. This is not to deny that we will touch on group dynamics, as some accounts of fundamentalist belief are cashed out in terms of its relation to the group (see §4 for an elaboration), and undoubtedly, the group usually plays an important role in the formation and maintenance of the fundamentalist beliefs of individuals. This also prompts the question how fundamentalist beliefs of the individual and being a fundamentalist relate. We will reflect on this question in the conclusion.

How should we understand the word 'belief'? Most broadly, the term can be understood as referring to a propositional attitude about what we regard to be the case or what we regard to be true. There is an ongoing debate about how to specify the nature of belief. We believe that the account of fundamentalist belief we develop here is compatible with the major approaches to belief, such as representationalism, dispositional and interpretational accounts, and functionalism.[11]

The paper is structured as follows: we start by briefly laying out what we take fundamentalism to be (§2). Subsequently, we elaborate upon five alleged elements or properties of fundamentalist belief: intellectual vice (§3), group dynamics (§4), certainty (§5), affect (§6), and content (§7). We then explicate six desiderata that an account of fundamentalist belief should meet and (§8) present our account, the Content-Reaction-Affect account (§9). Finally, we reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of our account and point out avenues for further research (§10).

2. What is fundamentalism?

To start with, we need to briefly map the debate concerning the meaning of the term 'fundamentalism.' The origins of fundamentalism can be clearly identified. The late nineteenth and early 20th century United States witnessed strident conservative Protestant movements that reacted to what they considered to be threatening modern developments. In response, they formulated various alleged 'fundamentals' that were non-negotiable. Among these fundamentals are the alleged inerrancy of the Bible, the

divinity of Jesus Christ and his virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, and his physical resurrection.[12]

Scholars studying fundamentalism have gone on to identify as equally fundamentalist various other movements in Christianity, such as certain strands of American evangelical fundamentalism or the Italian Catholic movement Comunione e Liberazione. Similarly, many distinguish fundamentalist movements in other Abrahamic religions, such as Jihadi Wahhabism in Islam, or Haredi Judaism.[13] Many of those who study fundamentalism also identify as fundamentalist various movements in non-Abrahamic religions like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in Hinduism and some nationalist Sinhala Buddhists.[14] Others have gone on to describe and explain what they consider to be various *secular* varieties of fundamentalism, such as extreme environmentalism and neo-Nazism.[15]

This broadening of the term's meaning beyond its Christian Protestant context has sparked a debate concerning the usefulness, aptness, and scope of the term 'fundamentalism'.[16] Some of those who embrace the idea of so-called 'global fundamentalism'[17] often define it in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions.[18] Others view 'fundamentalism' as a family resemblance concept.[19] The core idea of a family resemblance is that some things are *not* related by having features or conditions in common (so-called necessary and sufficient conditions), but by *overlapping similarities* none of which they all share. The challenge is what a reasonable end-point is: what still shows sufficient similarity to be included in the list of fundamentalisms and what stretches the concept beyond reasonable limits?

Here, we need not take a stance on these issues. We initially confine ourselves to cases that are commonly seen as stereotypical cases of fundamentalist movements, such as early 20th century American Protestant movements and contemporary Jihadi Wahhabism. Among the stereotypical properties that fundamentalist movements exemplify are: strong dismissal of modern, liberal ethics; scepticism towards certain kinds of science, evolutionary theory and cosmology in particular[20]; embracing a narrative of the world in terms of paradise, fall, and redemption; literalism and infallibilism, and cosmic dualism.[21]

As briefly noted in the introduction, fundamentalisms consist of at least five related components. They come with (i) *behavioural*, (ii) *doxastic*, (iii) *conative*, (iv) *affective*, and (v) *practical* elements. This paper zooms in on the doxastic side of fundamentalism: what makes a belief a *fundamentalist* belief?

3. Intellectual vices

Several authors suggest that fundamentalist belief might at least partly be analysed in terms of cognitive shortcomings. J.S. Krüger champions the view that fundamentalism is characterized, among other things, by oversimplification, and dualistic and uncritical thinking.[22] Others charge fundamentalists with selective interpretation of their holy scriptures.[23] Still others ascribe to fundamentalists arrogance in seeing their own views as superior. On this view, fundamentalists 'feel they have a monopoly on the *truth* and they possess the ultimate answers to the hard questions in life.'[24]

Karol Giedrojc points to the common approach of understanding fundamentalism partly in terms of dogmatism.[25] George Ellis makes this point even more forcefully, arguing that fundamentalism 'is characterized by dogmatism replacing reflection, by the

infallible guru, by intellectual stockades.'[26] Altemeyer and Hunsberger argue that fundamentalists are characterized by dogmatism, defined as 'relatively unchangeable, unjustified certainty' and by not allowing doubts in their beliefs, disregarding contrary evidence (e.g. scientific evidence), and being (racially) prejudiced.[27]

It is common to associate fundamentalism with prejudice: Critically reviewing psychological literature on the relation between fundamentalism and prejudice, Mark Brandt and Daryl van Tongeren cite multiple studies that found a positive relation between the two phenomena.[28] One explanation that has been offered for this connection is that fundamentalists have certain personality traits and cognitive styles that accompany these traits, such as a lower openness to experience, as well as higher measures of the need for cognitive closure, lower measures of the need for cognition, and lower measures of integrative complexity.[29] Other authors cite evidence describing fundamentalists looking down on, stereotyping, and othering outgroups.[30] These may induce fundamentalists to be more prejudiced. Wanting Zhong et al. conclude from a neuropsychological experiment that fundamentalist beliefs are rigid, do not update in the light of evidence, and contain prejudices towards outgroups. This has been linked to the character trait of 'lack of openness' and its neurological underpinnings.[31]

Some of these characterizations coincide with intellectual vices, which are commonly understood as intellectual faculties or traits that impede knowledge. It has been argued that 'one might think that fundamentalist beliefs are always beliefs that are brought about by the operation of intellectual vices.'[32] The vices of closed-mindedness, dogmatism, prejudice, and epistemic arrogance seem to be most important in relation to fundamentalist beliefs.

While several authors seem to understand certain cognitive attitudes and ways of thinking that are commonly viewed as intellectual vices as being characteristic for fundamentalist belief, there are several limitations to such an account.

First, are the relevant cognitive attitudes and ways of thinking indeed vicious? This depends on our conception of intellectual vices, as well as on the contexts in which fundamentalist beliefs emerge and are sustained. There is much debate on the right conceptualization of intellectual vice. Is something an intellectual vice just in case it systematically leads to falsehood or missing out on knowledge, or does it also matter what one's *motivation* is? For instance, is bad vision a vice or does one also need a wrongheaded motivation, such as not wanting to know the truth? There is also much debate on the conceptualization of specific intellectual vices.

How these conceptual issues impact the question whether the relevant cognitive attitudes and ways of thinking are indeed vicious, can be illustrated by the example of Heather Battaly's discussion of closed-mindedness, of which dogmatism is a sub-category.

Battaly defines closed-mindedness as 'an unwillingness or inability to engage (seriously) with relevant intellectual options.'[33] Evidence citing lack of reflection, a lack of openness, the disregarding of evidence, and not allowing doubts with regards to beliefs that are already held seem to fall in line with Battaly's conception of closed-mindedness. As Battaly rightly notes, whether closed-mindedness is an epistemic *vice*, depends on whether or not it meets certain conditions.[34] What these conditions are in turn depends on our conception of vice.[35] One can conceive of environments in which closedmindedness does *not* systematically lead to falsehood; maybe the epistemic environment is so

hostile – say, there is much fake-news around – that closed-mindedness (not considering the news) actually leads to truth and avoids falsehood.[36] On an alternative conception, one is closed-minded only if one is accountable or blameworthy for that. One can conceive of situations in which closed-mindedness is acquired without the agent being responsible for it.[37] It is clear that more work is needed here.

Second, the formation and sustenance of fundamentalist beliefs seems also to be characterized by epistemically innocent motives and potentially even virtues. Fundamentalists' preoccupation with an absolute and universal truth is a recurrent theme in the literature.[38] This indicates that many fundamentalists possess the virtue of caring for the truth. As fundamentalist beliefs are often held in wide contexts (society at large, for instance) in which such beliefs are not mainstream,[39] fundamentalists may even possess the virtue of intellectual courage.

Third, we can imagine rare scenarios in which fundamentalists form their fundamentalist beliefs unaided by any cognitive vices. If, as has been argued, fundamentalist beliefs emerge and are sustained in echo chambers,[40] and if it is possible to enter and stay in an echo chamber without being vicious,[41] we have a situation in which no vices are involved in the formation of fundamentalist beliefs.

Fourth, a practical problem is whether we should build into the definition of 'fundamentalist belief' that it is formed by the exercise of intellectual vices. A definition should be accurate, precise, fair, clear and fruitful.[42] As Williamson has shown, normatively ladened descriptions of fundamentalism can lead to pejorative stereotypes of fundamentalists and a "pejorative but unwarranted sense of otherness."[43] This, in turn, has negatively impacted research, for example through the development of 'instruments used by psychologists to assess fundamentalism (...) based upon a limited understanding of fundamentalism and uncritical assumptions.'[44] An account of fundamentalist beliefs in terms of intellectual vices might add yet another pejorative notion to our understanding of fundamentalism and fundamentalist belief in particular. This can decrease fecundity in research, as it may lead to biases and misconceptions in researchers. This is not to say that social philosophy and critical theory cannot rightly negatively assess and evaluate fundamentalism. What we say should be compatible with critical endeavours like arguing that fundamentalism (often) is irrational, immoral, unwarranted, a pathology, or intellectually vicious.

Given these challenges, it is worthwhile to explore further alleged components of fundamentalism.

4. Group dynamics

Many authors analyse fundamentalism as an inherently social phenomenon. Instead of focusing on individuals and their beliefs, they analyse fundamentalist movements and the beliefs held by the group and its authorities. They (partly) characterize fundamentalism in terms of its social nature: in terms of in-group structures and authority relations,[45] exclusivist and isolationist group behaviours and intergroup relations, or the interaction of the fundamentalist group or movement with the larger institutional and social environment – think of the building of parallel institutions by fundamentalist groups.[46] These social aspects of fundamentalism also relate to its doxastic component, namely the beliefs concerning the in- and the outgroup. Examples of such beliefs are that the own

group is special (e.g. in terms of being 'the elected people'),[47] that the own group are the only 'true believers',[48] or that outsiders are essentially different, inferior, bad, unknowing or hostile.[49]

There are a few examples of scholars who also emphasize this social aspect of fundamentalism when accounting for individual fundamentalist beliefs. Finlay Malcolm, for example, defends a view of fundamentalist belief on which 'being formed and sustained within an enclave structure of social insularity, involving forms of collective belief, echo chambers and group provisions to remain within the community' is a paradigmatic element of fundamentalist belief. Malcom's account reflects three ways in which the group can feature in an account of individual fundamentalist beliefs. First, he discusses the 'normative pressure that group believing puts on individuals.' He highlights that fundamentalist leaders can sanction beliefs to which the belief group members are likely to be committed. Moreover, he elaborates on the pressure that group members exert on one another 'to keep up their joint commitments to group beliefs.' The idea is that a belief is fundamentalist in virtue of its relation to the beliefs of the group or, alternatively, to the beliefs of other members in the group (these are two distinct things). Second, he discusses the social-epistemic environment of a fundamentalist group, analysing it in terms of an echo chamber. Third, he discusses the influence of the relationship between fundamentalist groups and the 'outside world' and to other groups: fundamentalists tend to be exclusivist and isolate themselves, to the extent that they build parallel institutions providing for 'many of the needs of its members.'[50]

Michael Baurmann, Gregor Betz, and Rainer Cramm focus on the social conditions in which fundamentalist beliefs paradigmatically arise and are sustained. According to them, fundamentalist beliefs typically emerge in contexts in which there is a leader who has authority over the (selective) interpretation of holy scriptures. This leader develops a message on the basis of what has been written and in connection with the reality of the potential followers. The authority of that leader implies the coming about of a 'group-specific particularist trust.'[51] This means that a group trusts its leader and other group members, but mistrusts outsiders. In a world dominated by non-fundamentalist beliefs and ideology, in order to stabilize fundamentalist beliefs, the group must be socially isolated. This leads to epistemic seclusion, defined by Baurmann as 'a situation in which individuals are systematically restricted in their options of getting acquainted with dissenting views and options are limited to a flow of information which uniformly supports a selective point of view.'[52]

To summarize, Malcolm distinguishes between accounting for individual fundamentalist beliefs in terms of (i) the influence of group beliefs, (ii) the group dynamics and epistemic characteristics of groups, and (iii) the interaction of the fundamentalist group with its wider social context and other groups. Baurmann, Betz, and Cramm focus mainly on aspects (ii) and (iii). While there are many parallels between these two theories, there is one important difference: In contrast to Malcolm, Baurmann et al. do not *define* fundamentalist beliefs in terms of these social processes but aim to *explain* the emergence and sustaining of these beliefs.[53]

There are, however, at least two problems with attempting to analyse fundamentalist belief in terms of group dynamics. First, in rare cases, individuals might hold fundamentalist beliefs without this being attributable to internal group dynamics. Again, they are exceptional but not impossible: One can, for instance in virtue of one's own need

for certainty, start to read holy scriptures literally, come to believe that there was an historical fall from a perfect state and that one is under an obligation to restore that original state, and so on. It is thus a desideratum that an account of fundamentalist belief allows for rare cases in which *fundamentalists acquire and hold their beliefs outside of group contexts*.

While we reject the view that what makes a belief fundamentalist are specific fundamentalist group dynamics as described by Baurmann or Malcolm, we want to emphasize that fundamentalist beliefs are developed in a social context. Fundamentalism is often portrayed as a reaction to secularization[54] and the alleged marginalization of religion,[55] to scientific and theological developments[56] and to associated discussions about their influence on, for example, education, to demographic and economic developments such as urbanization and industrialization, to the fragmentation of life worlds causing a feeling of alienation, insecurity and lack of control, and to globalization.[57] Islamic fundamentalism, specifically, is often portrayed as a reaction to Western dominance.[58] Such developments to which fundamentalists react are often subsumed under the term 'modernity'.[59] Highlighting fundamentalism's *reactive nature* means to situate it firmly in the social world. Some authors explicitly tie fundamentalism's reactivity to fundamentalists' *identification with a fundamentalist group or movement*. Peter Herriot, for example, argues that fundamentalists, while embracing certain aspects of modernity, explicitly react to those aspects that challenge their own core beliefs, norms, and values which they see as the only correct ones. This leads to and is enforced by a strictly binary understanding of reality, often in terms of good versus evil or truth versus falsehood. Needless to say, this way of thinking also entrenches how the social domain is classified: those embracing and enacting the same beliefs, norms, and values ('us') versus those who do not ('them').[60] While not necessarily wedded to Herriot's account of how individuals come to identify as fundamentalists, we do endorse the following desideratum: an account of fundamentalist beliefs must *do justice to the reactive nature of fundamentalism*, and this reactivity makes fundamentalism an inherently social phenomenon. The social and reactive nature, however, need not involve any of the tangible group dynamics involving echo chambers or epistemic seclusion as described by Malcolm or Baurmann et al.[61]

Second, even if it is true that typically fundamentalist beliefs are formed as a result of group dynamics, those group dynamics are hardly distinctive of fundamentalist beliefs. We encounter epistemic bubbles, relying on virtually infallible authorities, echo-chambers, and similar group dynamics also when it comes to certain kinds of racist belief, sexist belief, nationalist belief, conspiracy belief, highly conservative belief, and other beliefs that are not necessarily fundamentalist.[62]

5. Certainty

A third suggestion might be that the fundamentalist is *completely certain* of her beliefs or that there is *no room for doubt or self-criticism* when it comes to these beliefs. It is hard to find views that say this expressis verbis. It is not difficult, though, to find statements that lend some support to this idea. Baurmann, for instance, suggests that:

> Fundamentalists claim that their view is certain and that there is no room for doubt: an essential part of their thinking is their conviction of the absolute truth and infallibility of their Weltanschauung and that critique or discussion of their views is superfluous and a sign of misunderstanding or personal weakness.[63]

Quassim Cassam makes a similar point about the closely related phenomenon of extremism:

> Extremism's view of compromise is a reflection of its *certainty* in its own rectitude and the complete *absence* from its mindset of any element of *self-doubt. Certainty* and *absence of self-doubt* are epistemic postures, attitudes towards one's own epistemic standing and that of one's principles and commitments. The extremist's *certainty* is subjective, though taken to be objective. The extremist is *totally convinced* of the correctness of his principles even though, objectively speaking, there is plenty of room for doubt.[64]

Cassam seems to champion either the view that extremists are certain of their beliefs, or that they are certain of *the fact that they are right* about their beliefs, or maybe both.

Bob Altemeyer and Bruce Hunsberger argue that fundamentalists believe *strongly* in the basic tenets of their faith.[65] According to Karl Ernst Nipkow, for the fanatic fundamentalist, doubt and faith are opposites.[66] Lynn Davies briefly mentions the idea that fundamentalism, extremism, and terrorism 'may share an absence of doubt.'[67] Henry Giroux suggests something that is ambiguous between leaving no room for doubt and the epistemic vice of dogmatism when he speaks of fundamentalisms 'that refuse to question their own assumptions' and of Christian fundamentalism as a movement that 'punishes critical engagement and questioning.'[68] The idea of certainty also nicely fits what have been considered to be *affective* rather than *doxastic* elements of fundamentalism (see §6 on their connection): fundamentalism provides security in an uncertain world.[69] Something similar applies to extremism, hate and uncertainty do not go well together.[70]

There are two important issues that need to be addressed in assessing this suggestion. First, is it *true* that most fundamentalists – and mutatis mutandis for extremists – are highly certain of their beliefs and leave no room for doubt? Remarkably, the empirical evidence leaves room for the possibility that quite a few of the subjects in question are not that certain of their beliefs at all. For instance, in questionnaires one might avidly affirm certain propositional statements precisely because one is somewhat uncertain of them and seeks certainty in an uncertain world. This, of course, is an empirical issue that cannot be settled a priori. There seems to be the possibility that at least some fundamentalists *claim* certainty with regard to specific statements precisely because they are rather *uncertain*.[71] Moreover, there is a risk here of relying on the psychological doxastic profile of *representatives* of fundamentalist movements, such as their founders, leaders, and theological legitimizers. Even if *they* are indeed highly confident of their beliefs and leave no room for doubt, it does not follow that the average fundamentalist is highly convinced of what they believe.

This account, then, may work better for fundamentalist beliefs of *groups* rather than those of fundamentalist individuals. After all, what a group believes is usually determined by its operative members, such as leaders and theological legitimizers, even if many individual members of those groups lack those beliefs.[72] As we pointed out at the outset of the paper, though, we here seek an account of *individual* fundamentalist belief.

Second, even if fundamentalists hold their beliefs with a high degree of certainty, is *that* what turns beliefs into fundamentalist beliefs? A challenge that presents itself straight away is that high degree of certainty and no room for doubt may not be unique to fundamentalist belief. Conspiracy theorists may be rather certain of their beliefs, and so may racists and sexists be. In fact, much more innocent phenomena also come with high degree of certainty, such as belief in abolitionism, conservatism, liberalism, and democracy. What this shows is that high degree of certainty may be an important feature of fundamentalist belief, but that it can never be a sufficient condition and that certainty theories, therefore, lack important resources to do justice to the complexity of fundamentalist belief.

6. Affections

Couldn't we analyse fundamentalist belief in terms of the relation between those beliefs and certain affections? While it is rather common to understand fundamentalism partly in terms of affects, e.g. feelings on insecurity or outrage, fewer authors explicitly connect the doxastic to the affective components of fundamentalism. Johannes Beller and Christoph Kröger find a positive correlation between religious fundamentalism (defined and operationalized in terms of fundamentalist beliefs) with perceived threat describing a 'tendency of religious fundamentalists to perceive or experience a greater degree of threat.'[73] Michal Gierycz's characterization of fundamentalism seems to imply that doxastic certainty facilitates coping with the feeling of threat:

> On the affective level, fundamentalists would thus be characterised by a sense of threat (fear) and by opposition, sometimes developing into hostility, to what is recognised as alien and standing in contradiction to the *truth they possess about the right arrangement of human affairs* (…). At the same time, fundamentalism (…) helps restore a sense of security and commitment within one's own group, generating also high social control.[74]

James Jones, in the concluding section of *The Fundamentalist Mindset*, is explicit about the affective component of a fundamentalist mindset: 'A discernable constellation of beliefs, emotions, and schemas of self and world characterize fundamentalism wherever it exists.'[75] Building on Robert Young's work, Charles Strozier and Katherine Boyd explicitly relate fundamentalist ways of thinking to emotions, arguing that 'psychological anxiety due to perceived threat or uncertainty' enables black-and-white thinking.[76] Others have contended that black-and-white thinking which encourages cosmic dualism at the same time discourages critical analysisand reduces anxiety.[77] These observations prompt the question, whether a fundamentalist belief might be defined as a belief that fulfils a specific emotional role, such as protecting against perceived threats and uncertainty, reducing anxiety, and heightening the sense of (social) control. The nature of that role needs further exploration and goes beyond the scope of this paper.[78] For now, we want to critically review the possibility that a fundamentalist's emotional attachment to her beliefs may be what is distinctive of a *fundamentalist* belief.

This suggestion faces some challenges of its own. True, it seems that in many stereotypical cases, fundamentalist beliefs *do* play a certain emotional role. Yet, that is hardly sufficient for qualifying as fundamentalist belief. Take what Paul Katsafanas says about fanaticism. According to Katsafanas, fanaticism might fulfill a similar role: one

defining feature of fanaticism is that 'the individual adopts one or more sacred values.'[79] These values have 'characteristic emotions' and, when not adopted by others, are threatened, which in turn is perceived as a threat to the fanatic's self. If this is also true for fanaticist *belief* (which seems to be the case), the emotional role of fundamentalist belief is not distinctive of it. Moreover, a rather large body of research has established that perceptions of threat positively correlate with conspiracist beliefs because 'conspiracy thinking and conspiracy-theory endorsement can imbue meaning to complex, threatening phenomena.'[80] Such examples show, then, that emotional attachment to a belief all by itself is hardly distinctive of fundamentalist belief.

7. Fundamentalist content

An intuitive idea is that beliefs are fundamentalist in virtue of their content. In other words, beliefs are fundamentalist if they have as their content one of the stereotypical propositions that we discussed in §2: belief in traditional gender roles, belief in a master narrative in terms of paradise, fall, and redemption, belief in the secular bias in science, and so on. An approach along these lines is embraced by Altemeyer and Hunsberger, who argue that fundamentalism is constituted by the following beliefs:

> that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity.[81]

An important problem for this idea is that at least *some* of the beliefs with contents characteristic for fundamentalism are *also* embraced by people who do *not* count as fundamentalists, such as conservatives, orthodox religious people, science sceptics, conspiracy theorists, and so on. Given the family resemblance nature of fundamentalism, no particular content is necessary or sufficient for fundamentalist belief. In reply, one may revise the original suggestion and say that a belief is fundamentalist just in case it is one of a cluster of appropriately related beliefs with contents that are characteristic for one of the many varieties of fundamentalism, such as early Twentieth century conservative evangelicalism or Jihadi Wahhabism.

The main worry we have with this is *not* that it is incorrect: It seems to rightly include the main varieties of fundamentalism and rightly exclude movements that are not fundamentalists. Our worry is rather that this theory is not truly *informative* or *rich*. Compare it to this: how should we define 'political belief'? One could say that it is a belief about the activities associated with the governance of a country or an area. That would – roughly, at least – be true, but it would not be particularly informative. A richer account would tell us something about how and why such beliefs are formed, how they relate to one's plans and desires, and so on. This consideration suggests an account of fundamentalist belief that we will explore in the next section, an account that takes not only the content, but also various other properties of fundamentalist belief on board.

8. Desiderata

So far in our exploration, we have identified four desiderata that an account of fundamentalist belief should meet. It should:

(a) accurately include stereotypical examples, and be compatible with the possibility that in rare cases, fundamentalists hold a fundamentalist belief outside of group contexts[82];

(b) not only be accurate, precise, fair, and clear, but also theoretically and practically fruitful;

(c) do justice to the reactive nature of fundamentalism;

(d) be rich and informative.

Before developing an account of fundamentalist belief, let us add two desiderata to this list:

(e) in line with the development of the term 'fundamentalism' and the fact that it is oftentimes defined in terms of a family resemblance, an account of fundamentalist belief should account for the to the possibility that fundamentalism can but need not be religious;

(f) an account of fundamentalist belief must be able to accommodate that fundamentalist beliefs are not only general beliefs but also rather specific ones.

The latter desideratum, (f), requires a bit of explanation. What we mean by 'specific beliefs' are beliefs that by their very nature are not widely shared, beliefs like 'I should not trust this person's testimony on the evolutionary origins of humanity' or 'my niece's homosexual behaviour is morally impermissible.' These surely can be fundamentalist beliefs, but while the type of content is characteristic for stereotypical cases of fundamentalism, how the content is individuated or applied is highly specific for the person and her context. An account of fundamentalist belief should do justice to this fact.

9. The Content-Reaction-Affect account

Our critical review of potentially characteristic elements of fundamentalist belief and our ensuing list of desiderata allow us to develop what we consider a tenable account of fundamentalist belief. It is dependent on a definition of 'fundamentalism' in the following sense. It is a necessary condition for a belief to qualify as a fundamentalist belief that it has a particular fundamentalist content or a content derived from it. What qualifies as fundamentalist content depends on one's account of 'fundamentalism'. We need a condition along these lines to distinguish the fundamentalist's fundamentalist beliefs from her other (non-fundamentalist) beliefs. After all, those other beliefs may also be believed with too much certainty, or fulfill a specific affective role, they may even be due to group pressure from the fundamentalist group, such as belief in various norms of etiquette, and yet not be fundamentalist. This is not sufficient though, as non-fundamentalists may also believe one or more propositions characteristic of fundamentalism. For instance, various science sceptics believe that we should distrust science and yet are in no way fundamentalists. It is, therefore, also necessary is that a belief is *among a sufficiently large number* of beliefs that are characteristic for the fundamentalist movement in question.

These beliefs constitute a belief-system that is characterized by two additional features. On the one hand, the belief-system is such that the believer is emotionally attached to it or, in other words, has high emotional stakes in upholding the system, for example because such beliefs help to cope with perceived threats and uncertainty, reduce anxiety, and heighten the sense of (social) control. On the other hand, the belief-system is a reactive response to certain historical, social, cultural, and economic developments. As the reactive nature of fundamentalism is a property of fundamentalist groups and only some of its members, we need to specify how this property translates to the *individual* fundamentalist belief. Being reactive can refer to the process by which the belief-system is brought about (that is, as a reaction to some modern development), as well as to the content of the belief-system. Take the following example: In reaction to the coming about of evolutionary theory, the creation locus is reinterpreted through a literalist reading style and gets a more prominent position in the belief system (e.g. having been a rather periphery belief before, it now becomes one of the core beliefs of a movement). Here the content and the structure of the belief-system change in reaction to a modern development. In our account, being reactive is a qualification of the belief-system. This entails that the individual having fundamentalist beliefs need not develop these beliefs in a reactive manner herself, nor does she need to be aware that these beliefs were developed in a reactive manner. For reasons that are clear by now, we call this the Content-Reaction-Affect account:

Content-Reaction-Affect Account
A person's belief is *fundamentalist* if and only if (i) it has a particular content that is characteristic for the fundamentalist movement in question or is derived from that content, and (ii) it is part of a sufficiently large number of beliefs that that person also holds with content characteristic for that movement, (iii) the belief-system is reactive, and (iv) that person is emotionally attached to that belief-system.

Three alleged elements of fundamentalist belief that we explored in the preceding sections did not end up in our analysis: certainty, cognitive vice, and certain kinds of group dynamics. The reasons are, respectively, that there is insufficient empirical evidence to the effect that fundamentalists are always or usually highly certain of their beliefs, that there is insufficient evidence to think that fundamentalist belief issues from cognitive vice, and that in rare cases fundamentalist belief may arise outside of group contexts. Before we draw a conclusion, let us address four potential objections that one could level against our account.

1. First, one could worry that any theory that appeals to content, including ours, seems to make the definition circular. Maybe a belief is fundamentalist only if it has content characteristic for a fundamentalist movement, but, as discussed above, there is no consensus as to when something counts as a fundamentalist movement. We gave a brief characterization in §2 above. The literature provides further, more detailed accounts of fundamentalism in general as well as of various specific fundamentalist movements.

One can use the existing work on fundamentalism, then, to shed light on the nature of fundamentalist belief. This does not render the account circular: fundamentalist beliefs are indeed part of fundamentalist movements, but accounts of fundamentalism can provide detailed analyses of what types and token beliefs fundamentalists hold. It follows that any account along the lines we suggest will be deeply empirically

informed and we consider that a virtue. Another virtue of this approach is that it can do justice to the fact that new varieties of fundamentalism may arise in the course of time. Our account of fundamentalist belief is, thus, *flexible* and can take such new developments on board, as it relies on other work, both present and future, on fundamentalism.

2. Another, closely related worry is that, even though the account is not circular, it nonetheless analyses something complex (fundamentalist belief) in terms of something that is even more complex (fundamentalism). Shouldn't it be the other way around? We reply that this would be true for a *reductive* analysis, but that we have not pursued a reductive analysis since none of the potential reductive accounts – in terms of certainty, vices, and so on – seemed to work. Instead, we have construed and defended what Peter Strawson calls a *connective* analysis: we have shed light on what fundamentalist belief is by showing the *relations* between fundamentalist belief on the one and fundamentalism on the other.[83] This turned out to be more accurate and more fruitful than a reductive analysis.

3. A third worry is that the Content-Reaction-Affect analysis of fundamentalist belief is cashed out in terms of three individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, one of which refers to the notion of fundamentalism, while, as we pointed out in §2, fundamentalism is often analysed in terms of a family resemblance, not in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. This is no problem, though: it just means that in some cases the first necessary condition is clearly satisfied, whereas in other cases things are not that clear, because some stereotypical properties of fundamentalism are met, whereas others are not. In fact, this is exactly the result we want, because it implies that in some cases it is not clear whether something is a fundamentalist belief. At the outset of the paper, we said that there are clear cases of fundamentalist belief, such as various beliefs in Jihadi Wahhabism and early 20th century evangelical infallibilism, whereas others are boundary cases, like rigid belief in market capitalism. The Content-Reaction-Affect account, then, can do justice to the fact that there are paradigm cases and boundary cases.

4. A final important question is whether our account of fundamentalist belief can be operationalized. In other words, can it be put to work in qualitative and quantitative research? We believe this could be done. Compare our theory to the revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale as presented by Altemeyer and Hunsberger. Respondents are asked to rate whether they disagree or agree with a particular statement (on a scale from −4 for 'strongly disagree' to +4 for strongly agree, where 0 denotes that they feel neutral). They are then presented with a list of twelve statements that the authors deem to be paradigmatic for fundamentalism or for its absence. Comparable scales have been used for right-wing authoritarianism, prejudice, and attitudes towards homosexuals.[84] Similarly, one could try to develop a scale that aims to capture acceptance of particular fundamentalist contents, and emotional attachment to these belief-systems.

10. Epilogue

We have explored and assessed five alleged elements that one could appeal to in formulating an analysis of fundamentalist belief: intellectual vices (or traits that might be characterized as such), group dynamics, certainty, affections, and fundamentalist content. We

argued that they won't do all by themselves to provide a satisfactory account of fundamentalist belief: either they do not accurately include stereotypical cases of fundamentalist belief and accurately exclude stereotypical cases of non-fundamentalist belief, or they *are* accurate but fail to be rich and fruitful. Based on our critical review, we have put forward our own account: the Content-Reaction-Affect account, which says, roughly, that a fundamentalist belief is a belief that is part of a larger belief-system characteristic for a variety of fundamentalism, that belief-system is reactive to certain historical, social, cultural, and economic developments, and one is emotionally attached to such beliefs.

Our account is not only accurate (as far as we can see), but also potentially fruitful in the debate. On the one hand, it is non-pejorative. This is an advantage: (a) it is more helpful to work with a neutral definition in, say, interview settings, (b) it lowers the chance of researchers being biased, (c) it does justice to the fact that many fundamentalist beliefs may not be blameworthy and some even justified, (d) it does not rule out that fundamentalists may be right about certain things; of course it is exceptionally unlikely that they are right about rejecting evolutionary theory, but they may be right, for instance, about criticizing certain parts of modern liberal ethics. On the other hand, we also saw that it can easily be operationalized. Moreover, we hope that our account provides the conceptual tools to study (i) how fundamentalist belief relates to extremist, radical, or fanaticist belief, or terrorist ideologies, and (ii) how fundamentalist belief relates to militant, violent and terrorist behaviour.

Let us close this paper by drawing attention to three avenues for future research. First, we have confined ourselves to fundamentalist beliefs *of the individual*; does what we have argued shed light on fundamentalist beliefs *of groups*? Note that the epistemology of group belief is substantially different from that of individuals. Among others things, a group can believe a proposition while various members of the group fail to believe or even reject it (arguably in some cases even all members can fail to believe that proposition, but that does not seem to be the case for fundamentalist group belief). This clearly deserves further scrutiny.

Second, another important issue is how holding fundamentalist beliefs relates to being a fundamentalist. Of course, many fundamentalists hold a wide variety of fundamentalist beliefs of the kinds we have explored in this paper. It seems possible, though, to belong to a fundamentalist community and yet not be convinced of everything that the community takes to be true. One may have one's – usually private – doubts about things. What should we say about such cases? Is one a member of the fundamentalist community, but less of a fundamentalist oneself? Or should we say that they believe these things in some important sense of the word because they chose to act in accordance with those beliefs of the community? These issues deserve further attention.

Third, what does our account mean for accounts about extremist, fanaticist, and terrorist beliefs? One thing that would be worthwhile exploring is to what extent it can be *extrapolated* to these other kinds of beliefs. In other words, it would be valuable to try spelling these out in terms of (i) content characteristic for extremism, fanaticism, and terrorism respectively, or maybe specific extremist, fanaticist, or terrorist movements, (ii) their reactive natures, and (iii) emotional attachment to those beliefs. Maybe specific conditions do not hold for certain phenomena, such as the social condition (ii) for fanaticism, which may be more a matter of the individual. Our account, then, won't

straightforwardly imply accounts of extremist, fanaticist, and terrorist belief, but it can hopefully serve as a fruitful starting point.

Notes

1. W. Barton, 'What's Fundamental About Fundamentalism?' *Psychological Perspectives* 52/4, (2009), pp. 436–444; M. Baurmann, 'Rational Fundamentalism? An Explanatory Model of Fundamentalist Beliefs', *Episteme* 4/2 (2007), pp. 150–166; D. Pratt, 'Religious Fundamentalism: A Paradigm for Terrorism', *Australian Religion Studies Review* 20/2 (2007), pp. 195–215. Some, such as Altemeyer and Hunsberger, have even claimed that fundamentalism *is* a belief, a belief-system, or a worldview. E.g., B. Altemeyer, B. Hunsberger, 'Fundamentalism and Authoritarianism', in R.F. Paloutzian, C.L. Park (eds.) *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (The Guilford Press, 2005), pp. 378–393;
2. See, for example, 'Rational fundamentalism?', *op. cit.*, ref. 1; P.J. Silvia, E.C. Nusbaum, R.E. Beaty, 'Blessed Are the Meek? Honesty–Humility, Agreeableness, and the Hexaco Structure of Religious Beliefs, Motives, and Values', *Personality and Individual Differences* 66 (2014), pp. 19–23.
3. R. Crane, 'Enslaved Imaginations: The [Pelagian] Heresy of Market Fundamentalism and Christian Moral Discernment', *Review & Expositor* 116/1 (2019), p. 16.
4. B. Altemeyer, B. Hunsberger, 'Authoritarianism, Religious Fundamentalism, Quest, and Prejudice', *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 2/2 (1992), pp. 113–133; B. Altemeyer, B. Hunsberger, 'A Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale: The Short and Sweet of It', *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 14/1 (2004), pp. 47–54.
5. S.V. Rouse, A.H. Haas, B.C. Lammert, K. Eastman, 'Same Book, Different Bookmarks: The Development and Preliminary Validation of the Bible Verse Selection Task as a Measure of Christian Fundamentalism', *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 47/4 (2019), pp. 278–295.
6. P. Williamson, R.W. Hood, A.A. Mahmood Sadiq, P.C. Hill 'The Intratextual Fundamentalism Scale: Cross-Cultural Application, Validity Evidence, and Relationship with Religious Orientation and the Big 5 Factor Markers', *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 13/7-8 (2010), pp. 721–747.
7. For a similar point on terrorist ideology, see G.A. Ackerman, M. Burnham 'Towards a Definition of Terrorist Ideology', *Terrorism and political violence* (2020), pp. 1–30.
8. For a discussion, A. Kundnani, 'Radicalisation: The Journey of a Concept', Race & Class 54/2 (2012), pp. 3–25; Pratt, *op. cit.*, ref. 1; D. Silva, '"Radicalisation: The Journey of a Concept", Revisited', Race & Class 59/4 (2018), pp. 34–53; M. Verkuyten, 'Religious Fundamentalism and Radicalization among Muslim Minority Youth in Europe', European Psychologist (2018).
9. N. Kindermann, R. Peels, A.I. Liefbroef, L. Schoonmade, 'Mapping Definitions of 'Fundamentalism' – A Scoping Review', unpublished manuscript.
10. E.g. J. Lackey, *The Epistemology of Groups* (Oxford University Press, 2021).
11. See E. Schwitzgebel, 'Belief', in S. Bernecker and D. Pritchard (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* (Routledge: New York, 2011), pp. 14–24. The account is, of course, not compatible with eliminativism, which says that there is no such thing as belief. Our account is meant to take both occurrent and dispositional beliefs on board, that is, both beliefs for which one currently considers the relevant proposition and beliefs that are stored in some sense of the word and that can usually be recalled.
12. See, e.g. G.M.Marsden. *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of 20th-century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (Oxford University Press, 1980).
13. See K. Armstrong, *The Battle for God: Fundamentalism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Harper Collins, 2011).

14. M.E. Marty, R.S. Appleby, 'Conclusion: An Interim Report on a Hypothetical Family', in M. E. Marty and R.S. Appleby (eds.) *Fundamentalism Observed* (The University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 814–843.

15. See R. Hannesson, *Ecofundamentalism: A Critique of Extreme Environmentalism* (Lanham: Lexington, 2014), and L. West, *Distress in the City: Racism, Fundamentalism, and a Democratic Education* (London: Trentham Books, 2016), who speaks of 'Nazi fundamentalism'.

16. See the contributions to the edited volume by S.A. Wood and D.H. Watt (eds.), *Fundamentalism: Perspectives on a Contested History* (University of South Carolina Press, 2014).

17. A. Shupe, 'Religious Fundamentalism', in P.B. Clarke (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 478–490.

18. For example P. Herriot, *Religious Fundamentalism: Global, Local and Personal* (Routledge: London and New York, 2009), p. 3.

19. G.A. Almond, R.S. Appleby, E. Sivan, *Strong Religion, the Rise of Fundamentalism around the World* (University of Chicago Press, 2003); M. Ruthven, *Fundamentalism. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

20. Rejection of evolutionary theory is less common in Islamic fundamentalism than in Christian fundamentalism. Yet, there is a creationist movement in Islam as well, see the description in Kenneth Chang's 'Creationism, without a Young Earth, Emerges in the Islamic World', *The New York Times*, 2 November 2009, and particularly the writings of Oktar Babuna.

21. Almond, Appleby, Sivan, *Strong Religion*, *op. cit.*, ref. 19.

22. J.S. Krüger, 'Religious Fundamentalism: Aspects of a Comparative Framework of Understanding', *Verbum et ecclesia* 27/3 (2006), pp. 886–908.

23. E.g. Almond, Appleby, Sivan, *Strong Religion*, *op. cit.*, ref. 19; F. Kratochwil, 'Religion and (Inter-) National Politics: On the Heuristics of Identities, Structures, and Agents', *Alternatives* 30/2 (2005), pp. 113–140.

24. N. Abi-Hashem, 'Parapsychology, Sects, Cults, and Religious Fundamentalism', *Abnormal Psychology Across the Ages* (2013), p. 242.

25. K. Giedrojc, 'Die Grundlagen Des Modernen Fundamentalismus', *Forum Philosophicum*, 15 (2010), pp. 427–424.

26. G. Ellis, 'Fundamentalism in Science, Theology, and the Academy', in N. Murphey, C.C. Knight (eds.) *Human Identity at the Intersection of Science, Technology and Religion* (Ashgate, 2010), p. 60.

27. Altemeyer, Hunsberger, 'Fundamentalism and Authoritarianism', *op. cit.*, ref. 1., p. 382.

28. E.g. M. J. Brandt, C. Reyna, 'To love or hate thy neighbor: The role of authoritarianism and traditionalism in explaining the link between fundamentalism and racial prejudice', *Political Psychology*, 35, (2014), pp. 207–223; D.L. Hall, D. C. Matz, W. Wood, 'Why don't we practice what we preach? A meta-analytic review of religious racism', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14, (2010), pp. 126–139.

29. Brandt and Van Tongeren develop an alternative model. Instead of arguing that prejudice only typifies fundamentalists (due to certain allegedly characteristic personality traits or thinking styles), they develop the Religious Values Conflict model. The basis of this model is that people (fundamentalists as well as non-fundamentalists) are prejudiced towards those with dissimilar views and values. This model can account for and provides the same explanation of the prejudices in fundamentalists as well as in non-fundamentalists. While they find that higher scores on fundamentalism correlate with more prejudice, they conclude that 'belief dissimilarity leads to initial levels of prejudice, but strongly held beliefs [which is characteristic for fundamentalism] are able to exacerbate these initial levels of prejudice.' M.J. Brandt, D.R. Van Tongeren, 'People Both High and Low on Religious Fundamentalism Are Prejudiced toward Dissimilar Groups', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 112/1 (2017), p. 93.

30. E.g. J. M. Vorster, 'Perspectives on the Core Characteristics of Religious Fundamentalism Today', *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies, 7*/21 (2010), pp. 44–65; A. Leonard, 'The Market Economy Unchecked: Another Version of Fundamentalism?' *Kybernetes* 33/ 3-4 (2004), pp. 538–546.

31. W. Zhong, I. Cristofori, J. Bulbulia, F. Krueger, J. Grafman, 'Biological and Cognitive Underpinnings of Religious Fundamentalism', *Neuropsychologia* 100 (2017), pp. 18–25.

32. R. Peels, 'Responsibility for Fundamentalist Beliefs', in K. McCaun, S. Stapleford (eds.) *Epistemic Duties. New Arguments, New Angles* (Routledge, 2020), pp. 225.

33. H. Battaly, 'Can Closed-Mindedness Be an Intellectual Virtue?', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 84 (2018), p. 23.

34. H. Battaly, 'Closed-Mindedness and Dogmatism', *Episteme* 15/3 (2018), pp. 261–282.

35. Battaly argues that, from a vice pluralist standpoint, closedmindedness can be an effects-vice (i.e. fall in line with the reliabilist conception of vices), but may also be a responsibilist-vice as well as a personalist vice. Battaly, 'Can Closed-Mindedness be an Intellectual Virtue?', *op. cit.*, ref. 33, p. 29.

36. Battaly, 'Can Closed-Mindedness be an Intellectual Virtue?', *op. cit.*, ref. 33, p. 41.

37. Think of an agent being born into an epistemic environment in which closed-mindedness is stimulated and open-mindedness discouraged.

38. E.g. R.E. Frykenberg, 'Contesting the Limits of Tolerance, Intolerance and Toleration', *South Asian Survey* 4/1 (1997), pp. 13–23; J.A. Milligan, 'Teaching in Moloch: Toward a Prophetic Pragmatic Critique of Pedagogical Fundamentalism,' *Journal of Thought* 40/2 (2005), pp. 97–111; K.E. Nipkow, ‚Die Herausforderung Des Fundamentalismus‘, *Hikma* 8/ 1 (2017), pp. 30–47.

39. M. Baurmann, G. Betz, R. Cramm, 'Meinungsdynamiken in Fundamentalistischen Gruppen. Erklärungshypothesen Auf Der Basis Von Simulationsmodellen‘, *Analyse & Kritik* 36/1 (2014), pp. 61–102.

40. F. Malcolm, 'The Rationality of Fundamentalist Belief', *Journal of Social Philosophy*, pp. 1– 20.(forthcoming)

41. See for a discussion C.Th. Nguyen, 'Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles', *Episteme* 17/2 (2020), pp. 141–161.

42. One of us has defended these desiderata for definitions elsewhere. See Rik Peels, "On Defining 'Fundamentalism'", forthcoming in Religious Studies

43. P. Williamson, 'Conjectures and Controversy in the Study of Fundamentalism', *Brill research perspectives in religion and psychology, 2*/3 (2020), p. 54.

44. 'Conjectures and Controversies in the Study of Fundamentalism', op. cit., ref. 42, p. 60.

45. E.g Y. Gitay, 'Jewish Fundamentalism Today: Defining Fundamentalism and Religious Conservatism in South Africa', *Scriptura* 99/1 (2008), pp. 368–78; 'Religious fundamentalism', *op. cit.*, ref. 1.

46. E.g. R.T. Antoun, 'Fundamentalism', in B.S. Turner (ed.) *The New Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion* (Blackwell Publishing, 2010), pp. 519–543; H. Munson, '"Fundamentalisms" Compared', *Religion Compass* 2/4 (2008), pp. 689–707.

47. E.g. S. Segura, 'Fundamentalismo Invisible', *Religión e Incidencia Pública* 4 (2016), pp. 17–5; C.E. Stockwell, 'Fundamentalisms and the Shalom of God', *Journal of Latin American Theology* 3/1 (2006), pp. 44–70.

48. E.g. Almond, Appleby, Sivan, *Strong Religion*, *op. cit.*, ref. 19.

49. E.g. W. Deifelt, 'Fundamentalism: Controversies over what is Fundamental in Christianity', *Theologies and Cultures*, 2/2 (2005), pp. 15–30; D. Lawrie, 'Why I Am a Lukewarm Enemy of Fundamentalism: Defining Fundamentalism and Religious Conservatism in South Africa', *Scriptura* 99/1 (2008), pp. 404–421.

50. 'The Rationality of Fundamentalist Belief', op cit., ref. 40, pp. 19, 14, 16, 18.

51. Fundamentalistischen Gruppen', op. cit., ref. 39, p. 71 (own translation).

52. 'Rational fundamentalism?', op. cit., ref. 1, p. 161.

53. Baurmann et al. define fundamentalist beliefs in terms of salvation goods, certainty, absolute and infallible truths, and Manichaeism and intolerance.

54. E.g. M. Gierycz, 'Religion: A Source of Fundamentalism or a Safeguard against It?', *Religions* 11/3 (2020), p. 104.

55. E.g. Almond, Appleby, Sivan, *Strong Religion, op. cit.*, ref. 19; S.V. Rouse, 'The Sensitivity of the Bible Verse Selection Task to the Relationship between Christian Fundamentalism and Religious Outgroup Prejudice', *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 49/2 (2020), pp. 161–176.

56. E.g. Z.S. Ahmed, G. Bashirov, 'Religious Fundamentalism and Violent Extremism', in *The Difficult Task of Peace* (Springer, 2020), pp. 245–60; Hussain, 'Fundamentalism and Bangladesh: No Error, No Terror', *South Asian Survey* 14/2 (2007), pp. 207–29; J. Liht, L. G, Conway, S. Savage, W. White, K.A. O'Neill, 'Religious Fundamentalism: An Empirically Derived Construct and Measurement Scale', *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 33/3 (2011), pp. 299–323.

57. P. Herriot, *Religious Fundamentalism and Social Identity* (Routledge: London and New York, 2007).

58. E.g. D. Reetz, 'Aktuelle Analysen Islamistischer Bewegungen Und Ihre Kritik', *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen* 17/4 (2004), pp. 61–68.

59. E.g. Herriot, *Religious Fundamentalism and Social Identity, op. cit.*, ref. 56; N.A. Orekhovskaya, A.V. Volobuev, N.N. Kosarenko, V.L. Zakharova, V.A. Shestak, Y.N. Sushkova, 'Religious Fundamentalism Salvation or a Threat to the Modern World,' *European Journal of Science and Theology* 15/4 (2019), pp. 60–70.

60. Herriot, making use of social identity theory, tries to explain how individuals come to identify as fundamentalists and come to actively join fundamentalist groups. Social identity theories understand the self as being constituted by the personal and social identities. Social identities are acquired by group membership while the personal identity is obtained from individual experiences and characteristics. For fundamentalists, their fundamentalist social identity becomes of central importance to the See Herriot, *Religious Fundamentalism and Social Identity, op. cit.*, ref. 56, pp. 30–31.

61. How group membership is understood by social identity theory is enlightening for our distinction. Herriot seems to understand group membership as membership of a social category as well as membership of a specific, delineable group. To illustrate, he also views gender identities as social identities. In parallel, we distinguish being (or perceiving oneself to be) part of a social category versus being a member of a clearly demarcated fundamentalist group, say a local fundamentalist church community. To further clarify this point, a parallel with terrorism studies is enlightening. Lone wolf terrorists are individuals who are socially isolated and act alone. According to Bouhana et al., it is commonly recognized that in their radicalization phase, lone wolf terrorists are not all alone. Instead, argues Baele, they mostly 'engage in violence in the name of ideas shared by other (violent or nonviolent) people' (see also Gill, Horgan & Deckert). Little is known on the exact nature of the environment or the (social) processes leading to lone wolf radicalization, but research, according to Bouhana et al., has emphasized the following two components: on the one hand, 'the lone actors' reference to a wider movement and connection to a "virtual community", either in the form of shared worldviews and frames of interpretation, or in the form of claims to belong and act as part of this movement.' On the other hand, 'the role of the internet and particular online publications, platforms or high-profile figures (. . .) in informing the lone-actor terrorists' ideology.' More research is necessary. It seems possible, however, that social processes facilitating lone wolf radicalization do not involve the group-dynamics (i)-(iii). S.J. Baele, 'Lone-Actor Terrorists' Emotions and Cognition: An Evaluation Beyond Stereotypes', *Political Psychology* 38/3 (2017), p. 451; N. Bouhana, S. Malthaner, B. Schuurman, L. Lindekilde, A. Thornton, P. Gill, 'Lone-Actor Terrorism: Radicalisation, Attack Planning and Execution', in A. Silke (ed.) *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism* (Routledge, 2018), p. 112; P. Gill, J. Horgan, P. Deckert, 'Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor

Terrorists', *Journal of forensic sciences* 59/2 (2014), pp. 425–435, Herriot, *Religious Fundamentalism and Social Identity, op. cit.*, ref. 56.

62. See J. Lackey, A. McGlynn (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Social Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

63. 'Rational fundamentalism?', op. cit., ref. 1, p. 158.

64. Q. Cassam, 'The Vices and Virtues of Extremism', in M. Alfano, J. De Ridder, C. Klein (eds.) *Social Virtue Epistemology* (Routledge, forthcoming), italics ours.

65. Altemeyer, Hunsberger, 'Fundamentalism and Authoritarianism', *op. cit.*, ref. 1.

66. 'Die Herausforderung Des Fundamentalismus', op. cit., ref. 38.

67. L. Davies, 'Gender, Education, Extremism and Security', *Compare* 38/5 (2008), p. 612.

68. H.A. Giroux, 'Resisting Market Fundamentalism and the New Authoritarianism: A New Task for Cultural Studies?', *Journal of Advanced Composition* 25/1 (2005), pp. 3, 5.

69. 'Rational fundamentalism?', *op. cit.*, ref. 1.

70. Cassam, 'Vices', *op. cit.*, ref. 110.

71. To give an example, the set-up of Altemeyer and Hunsberger's religious fundamentalism scale (the original 1992 and the revised 2004 version) does not seem to preclude such an interpretation. Respondents are asked to indicate their reaction to certain statements with allegedly fundamentalist content. Per statement, they can choose between the following reactions: very strongly disagree with the statement, strongly disagree with the statement, moderately disagree with the statement, slightly disagree with the statement, slightly agree with the statement, moderately agree with the statement, strongly agree with the statement, very strongly agree with the statement. This tool, however, seems to leave room for the interpretation that they claim to be highly certain because they are radically uncertain.

72. See various contributions to J. Lackey, A. McGlynn (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Social Epistemology* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

73. J. Beller, Ch. Kröger, 'Religiosity, Religious Fundamentalism, and Perceived Threat as Predictors of Muslim Support for Extremist Violence', *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 10/4 (2018), p. 349.

74. 'Religion: A Source of Fundamentalism or a Safeguard against It?', op. cit., ref. 53, p. 5, italics ours.

75. J.W. Jones, 'Conclusion: A Fundamentalist Mindset?', in by C.B. Strozier, D.M. Terman, J. W. Jones, K.A. Boyd (eds.) *The Fundamentalist Mindset: Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History* (Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 216.

76. C.B. Strozier, K.A. Boyd, 'Definitions and Dualism', in *ibid.*, p. 14.

77. J. Reid Meloy, 'Sexual Desire, Violent Death, and the True Believer', *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 54/1 (2018), pp. 64–83.

78. It seems that there at least three possibilities to further qualify the relation between certain affects and a fundamentalist belief: (1) There might be some underlying psychological mechanisms that account for certain emotions and beliefs that are characteristic for fundamentalists; (2) Certain emotions bring about certain beliefs, for example when the feeling of threat brings about black-and-white thinking; (3) Certain beliefs help the coping with certain emotions, for example when the belief that the world can be divided in what is good and what is bad, reduces the feeling of anxiety.

79. P. Katsafanas, 'Fanaticism and Sacred Values', *Philosophers' Imprint* 19/7 (2019), p. 12.

80. For an overview of that relationship, see C.M. Federico, A.L. Williams, J.A. Vitriol, 'The Role of System Identity Threat in Conspiracy Theory Endorsement', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 48/7 (2018), p. 935.

81. Altemeyer, Hunsberger, 'Authoritarianism', *op. cit.*, ref. 4.

82. Remember that in §4 we distinguish between the fundamentalism as a social category and fundamentalist group membership. Desideratum (a) only refers to the latter.

83. P.F. Strawson, *Analysis and Metaphysics: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 12–28.

84. Altemeyer, Hunsberger, 'Authoritarianism', *op. cit.*, ref. 4.

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