

# Beyond Competing Identities and Ideologies: Building Resilience to Radicalization in a World in Transition

Dr. Elena MUSTAKOVA-POSSARDT<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract.** Paper presented to the NATO Advanced Research Workshop 'Indigenous Terrorism: Understanding and Addressing the Root Causes of Radicalization Among Groups with an Immigrant Heritage in Europe', Budapest, Hungary, 7-9<sup>th</sup> March, 2008. This author examines terrorism as a dysfunctional response of individuals from a communal and fundamentalist religious cultural background to the developmental crisis of the self in the context of the globalizing influences of an individualistic and highly secular Western culture. It offers a developmental framework for addressing these global tensions. The chapter suggests the need for a systemic approach to the cultivation of critical moral consciousness and the overcoming of ideologization, through opening a dialogue and collaboration among a wide range of cultural and religious groups in relieving the anxieties of the global transition, and articulating a coherent vision of social health, which integrates meaningfully collectivist values into democratic societies.

**Keywords.** Ideology & ideologisation; world-views; critical moral consciousness; religious identity; globalisation & spirituality; communal & individualistic cultures; unsustainability; radicalisation; moral motivation; education for unity in diversity; social health

## Introduction

Recent research shows a disturbingly fast pace of radicalization of first, second, and third generation Muslim immigrants throughout Europe. The spread of global terrorism has led to a disturbing number of over sixty currently designated terrorist organizations in the world, according to Albert Jongman, senior terrorist analyst with the Dutch Ministry of Defense. This is hardly surprising in view of the escalating war of ideas in the past century, and the deepening global destabilization evidenced by the Social Breakdown Syndrome, which, according to the World Health Organization, currently characterizes the whole world (Lambo, 2000; Mustakova-Possardt, 2006). It is becoming increasingly clear that the irreversible process of globalization, with all of its unresolved and still poorly understood aspects, has upset the equilibrium of the world to such an extent, that current methods of managing the resulting turmoil are proving by far inadequate to stem the tide of the spread of violent extremist Islamist movements.

The development of consciousness typically lags behind technological development. While technology has led to the emergence of the global village, the systemic question of the peaceful interpenetration and integration of diverse cultures and worldviews has remained unresolved. Hence, international response to radical Islamist terrorism remains piecemeal, albeit covering a wide range of initiatives: from short-term 'surgical strikes' on 'the enemy', to efforts by Western government agencies to reach out and include marginalized Muslim immigrant populations in decision making and community policing, to build bridges between cultures, and to understand and ease the Muslim immigrant experience. While it makes sense to combine high security focus on the terrorist threat, with developing good close relations with immigrant Islamic communities, and to reach out to the Islamic world, these important measures fall short of addressing the systemic problem that continues to create fertile ground for faster radicalization. Addressing the social, economical, and psychological grievances of marginalized groups is undoubtedly an important step in the direction of more peaceful intercultural and inter-religious relations in the global village. Yet, even the United States, a country that defines itself as a country of immigrants, and a melting pot for the races, ethnicities, and cultures of the world, has by far not resolved the problem of the spread of deadly Islamist extremism. Clearly, deeper systemic solutions are needed.

This author suggests the need for a two-pronged systemic approach, involving the opening of large-scale grass-root public forums for dialogue on visions of social health in a global society, and an educational campaign

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Mustakova-Possardt, former Associate Professor in Psychology at University of West Georgia, and currently cross-cultural psychotherapist and consultant in private practice in Arlington, VA.

on every level of public education. The combination of these two systemic long-term interventions can begin to engage a wide range of cultural and religious groups into dialogue and collaboration in relieving the anxieties of the global transition, and articulating a coherent vision of social health which integrates meaningfully collectivist values into democratic and currently highly individualistic societies. Short of pervasive free and open forums to address the issues of sustainable co-existence in the global village from a range of inter- and intra-religious and secular perspectives, and a systemic educational approach to cultivating an understanding of the potential for unity in diversity, violence may continue to be the unfortunate short-cut chosen by a growing number of disoriented and disillusioned youth and young adults, and sponsored by power-hungry or angry radicals.

## 1. Systemic Nature of the Problem of Terrorism

Sub-state radical Islamist terrorism is a dramatic result of the progressive hardening of boundaries between different world views, and the emergence of increasingly rigid and competing ideologies, throughout the twentieth century. Its pervasive destructiveness is fueled by an unprecedented level of arms proliferation in the world. Both problems point to the need for a paradigmatic re-thinking of our approach to a global age. This re-thinking is yet to happen.

With the advance of scientific and technological discoveries and liberation movements across the globe, and the human rights revolution (see Lindner in this volume), the twentieth century saw a breakthrough in the forging of new and increasingly independent identities. As the global village began to take shape, these new identities came into closer contact, and into frequent clashes. As the twentieth century advanced, it was less and less about the free exchange of ideas and perspectives, and increasingly a battleground of ideologies, such as Capitalism, Marxism, Communism, Nazism, Religious Fundamentalism, strident individualism, and others (Universal House of Justice, 2001).

It is important to distinguish between ideology and world-view. A world-view, an internally coherent way of making sense of life in the world, is an essential aspect of personality and culture. Ideology, in contrast, is more than a set of ideas that inform people's way of life. It has the fundamentally antagonistic purpose of *cultivating* a complex structure of affect, cognition, and action that functions so as to reproduce social relations of *domination* over other worldviews or ideologies (Sloan, 1992). Unlike a world-view, an ideology cannot be examined critically from within, without that act being perceived as a threat. (Note, for example, the long list of Islamic charges of apostasy, or the recent waves of aggressive patriotism in the US, inspiring civil rights violations.) An ideology is by definition not open to growth and re-thinking; rather, it is rigid, and self-justifying, resisting the essential movement of life. Its purpose is forced domination. When we examine the current "clash of civilizations" and the accompanying discourse on the war of ideas, it becomes clear that all sides in the current Global War on Terror (GWOT) are promoting reductionistic and poorly examined ideological claims that do little to move us in the direction of a sustainable global village.

Parallel to the ideologization of public social life, the twentieth century saw the rise of consumerism. With it came the massification of society, described by the critical theorists at the turn of the last century (Marcuse, 1989a, b) as a blunting of the critical faculty in the individual, despite spreading universal education, and an escape into mass consciousness and virtual realities (Mustakova-Possardt, 2003). Thus, the twentieth century 'normalized' the promotion of ideologies as ready-made world-views, to be embraced by masses of people without critical examination, as a direct path to inclusion into communities of power. *This inclusion into communities of power through identification with a particular ideology* (i.e. rigid and unexamined construction of reality) *has become an increasingly widely used avenue toward gaining a measure of empowerment in the midst of the large-scale global convulsions* with the transition into the third millennium.

Lindner (see volume) describes the current historical period as an intensifying transition from the hierarchical societies of complex agriculture and established honor rankings, prevalent in human history for the last 10 000 years, to a global knowledge society committed to equal dignity for every citizen. This process, which began 300 years ago, has gathered momentum at the turn of the millennium. It is characterized by two novel historical trends, which find the majority of humanity unprepared: rapidly increasing global interdependence and the growing impact of the human rights revolution. Both of these trends require the overcoming of long-held prejudices and power struggles, and the cultivation of a new understanding of the 'other'. However, as these processes of consciousness lag far behind other trends, *a highly unstable context* has emerged, *in which more and more previously oppressed people seek easy access to power through ideology*.

The alternative to that, a path of empowerment through the development of critical moral consciousness, which allows individuals to enter into dialogue with both self and world, and to define meaningful and ever-expanding forms of constructive engagement (Mustakova-Possardt, 2003), is relatively absent from collective focus. Such optimal development is yet to become the goal of contemporary education and socialization. While individual exemplars of this pathway are increasingly studied (see Lindner's reference in this volume to the "Mandela way"), the dominant paradigm is still the reactive use of force from a short-term position of power.

This paradigm is proving increasingly unsustainable for the planet, and the recent wave of Islamist radicalization is doing a lot to bring this message home.

In the meantime, military advisers continue to suggest that the best way to counteract terrorism is to mount an ideological counter-offensive. Lost from sight is the fact that ideologies do not change the power imbalance that generates radicalization, but simply seek to replace one power imbalance with another. The systemic problem thus perpetuated is one of *power imbalance*, and the *ideologization* of poorly examined, partial and incomplete world-views, that need to inform one another rather than compete for influence.

### *1.1. From Dominant and Subordinate World-views to Clashing Ideologies*

As globalization is penetrating every corner of the globe, and forcing new and often unexamined ways upon traditional cultures, it is disrupting the established order of societies, and unleashing unprecedented global mobility. In the resulting global flux, *all* worldviews and previous identities are having to be re-examined and re-constructed, so that *new, more balanced and compatible world-views and identities can emerge*.

Yet, in the absence of world-wide open forums where this process can be gradually and organically negotiated by ordinary people, the tendency has been to operate on unspoken assumptions and reactive group rationalizations. One such unexamined operant expectation has been that the primary adjustment has to come from developing countries, and from their displaced immigrant communities in the West. There has not been sufficient recognition of the imbalanced and problematic aspects of the secular Western world-view, and the potential corrective that the spiritual values of communal cultures can offer. Similarly, there has been insufficient recognition on the part of Muslim communities that their traditional communal religious cultures need to become more infused with genuine democratization in order to carry successfully into the third millennium the best aspects of their accumulated traditional wisdom, and to contribute to a sustainable global village.

In the absence of genuine open forums and dialogue, claims and counterclaims are promoted that do not sustain critical inquiry. For example, in defense to the accusation of pervasive Islamic religious intolerance, Islamist scholars are pointing to the long tradition of critical re-thinking of Islam (Zuhur, 2008). Impartial examination reveals *both* efforts at critical and democratic revisioning, *and* a history of religiously motivated repression and persecution within Islam, reminiscent of Middle Ages Christian practices, but increasingly taking advantage of global arms proliferation. What is not recognized is that the current global prominence of militant Islamist extremism, which claims to draw its value justification directly from the Qu'ran, raises serious questions about the unsustainable way religion continues to be used to pronounce value judgments on the spiritual validity of other groups, and to usurp the right to retribution. While Islamist scholars admit that the majority of Muslims worldwide disagree with such practices, they also point out that in the absence of forums in which they can explore more acceptable ways to uphold their religious identity in a globalizing world, they remain tepid and skeptical toward Western propaganda campaigns (Zuhur, 2008).

As noted by international psychologist Marsella (2003), who introduced the concept of global community psychology, "the *mass techno-commercial society* emerging from American culture and penetrating the rest of the world is considered a real and tangible threat to traditional cultural identities and ways of life. Non-Western cultures and nations often express ambivalence: They believe that they must join *the global march toward capitalism, democratization, and individualism* or be left behind, and yet they feel a simultaneous pull to preserve lifestyles that are familiar and that provide a strong attachment to history." The materialistic culture of the West, and its epitome in American popular culture, "favors a culture of individualism, materialism, change, and competition, whereas many non-Western cultures favor a cultural ethos of collectivism, spirituality-religion, stasis-stability, and sharing." (pp. 30-31)

Thus, the twentieth century has seen the formation of a dominant world-view, characteristic of wealthy and *individualistic Western* cultures. This world-view is characterized by opposition logic, low context, independent, mostly secular definitions of the self, emphasis on personal goals at the expense of communal goals, cognition focused on attitudes, personal needs, rights, and contracts, and an emphasis on rational analysis of advantages and disadvantages. In contrast, the subordinate/minority worldview, characteristic of developing *communal* cultures, is characterized by contingency logic, high context, interdependent, primarily spiritual definitions of self, alignment of personal with communal goals, cognitions focused on norms, obligations and duties, and an emphasis on relationships.

The global scene has seen the emergence of many hybrids of these two world-views; for example, extremist Islamist individualists willing to disregard the reality of interdependence; as well as a proliferation of Western spiritually-inspired efforts to foster and nurture a more sustainable global community. However, there have not yet emerged in the public eye coherent and well-articulated models of cultural and social life that successfully integrate these two poles.

As economic dominance has allowed the individualistic Western world-view to become an *unconscious ideology of cultural superiority*, this tendency has been paralleled by an *amplification of totalizing tendencies in Islamic cultures*, and a growing inclination on the part of Islamist religious leaders to formulate *militant counter-*

*ideologies*, and to cultivate radicalization into militant Islamist movements. Islamist leaders have shown little willingness to address the difficulties of mixing the secular and religious world-views in a globalizing world by seeking to articulate principled solutions. Instead, religious training often manifests a split between religiosity and spirituality, a form of *religious materialism*, which promotes intolerance toward the ‘other’, and self-righteous brutality in the name of a “religiously”-construed cause. Such religious training has resulted in the formation of whole radicalized Islamic enclaves in the West, which refuse to seriously entertain the democratic values of host countries, but rather adopt rigid reactionary militant attitudes. The experience of social humiliation at the core of such attitudes, is not being tempered by the kind of integrated spiritual values that allow critically conscious people, as well as whole oppressed religious communities, like the Bahá’is in some Muslim countries, to transform persecution and humiliation into constructive global social action. Rather, as Marsella (2003) points out, “collective memories of humiliation and defeat, become magnified within a culture that values and prizes the past and that seeks to limit rapid social changes because of their dislocating impacts...” These “formative causes” are followed by “precipitating causes” - events that set things off, and that are used by some radical Islamist ideologues to justify century-old struggles (p. 37).

### *1.2. Terrorism - the Disowned Child of the Pervasive Modern Philosophy of Strident Materialism*

Islamist terrorism, as an extreme form of ideologization, brings sharply into focus the basic unsustainability of ideological approaches to global problems. It manifests a pathological dissociation of the basic human faculties of knowledge, love, and will. Islamist terrorism reveals a creative use of scientific and technological *knowledge*. It reflects a strong *emotional commitment* to some traditional Islamic religious values. It manifests the *volition to act* on behalf of these values at all cost. Yet, neither these values, nor the means employed, are clearly and deeply examined vis-à-vis the religious and spiritual teachings of individual and collective transformation to which they claim to respond. While justifications for Islamist terrorism are sought and found in the Qu’ran, as many Islamic scholars point out, the terrorist approach contradicts in fundamental ways the spirit of Islamic teachings. The resulting dissociation has a distinctly pathological quality to it. It also illustrates how any ideological approach tends to subvert the faculties of knowledge and love to goals that are not critically examined, to the point where these faculties are no longer fully exercised and integrated.

In order to understand the particular kind of pathology<sup>2</sup> of modern sub-state international terrorism, it is necessary to understand the soil on which it grew.

Scholars from Max Weber to Habermas and Wilber have described the particular achievement of modernity between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as *the differentiation of the previously fused cultural value spheres* of art, morals, and science, which allowed each to evolve its own tools and pace of development. Science reflects the blossoming of the human faculty to pursue objective truth, or the “it” – the faculty of *knowledge*. Art expresses the human faculty to be attracted to beauty, or the subjective domain of “I” – the faculty of *love*. Morals reflect the human faculty to exercise volition in the direction of what is perceived as good, or the inter-subjective domain of “we” – the faculty of *will* (Wilber, 1998). The study of human development shows that these three human faculties are interrelated, and hence so should be the spheres of science, art, and morality/religion that develop them. Healthy growth involves both the differentiated development of each of these faculties, and their continuous integration through exploring meaningful interrelations between scientific knowledge, art and the moral domain.

Wilber (1998) points out that as the different value spheres of art, morals, and science grew apart, and ceased to inform and balance one another, *aggressive scientism* in the form of scientific materialism, with an exclusive focus on verification and prediction, began to invade and dominate other spheres in the West, crowding art and morals out of any serious consideration in approaching “reality”. The possibility for integration was lost, and differentiation became dissociation, i.e. pathology. This process began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, reaching a climax by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Increasingly, the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the realm of morality in the Western world reduced to utilitarian ethics, and religion as a source of knowledge about the meaningful organization of human life dismissed from serious consideration. With that, collective human society witnessed a mind-boggling escalation of atrocity and corruption throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the meantime, art became a form of escape, less and less a path for connecting the experience of beauty to the experience of goodness and truth.

With the rise of scientism in the West, lost was the process understanding of reality, which recognizes reality as having two basic forms: non-actual (ideas, theories, love, aims, ideals, the human soul, mind, spirit) and actual (observable, detectable, and often measurable entities and systems such as those found in the mineral, technological, vegetable, animal, and human realms). A process perspective, as described by Alfred North Whitehead, views reality as an unbroken chain linking the non-actual, spiritual realm with the actual, physical realm. Such a perspective links and harmonizes the “I”, the “we”, and the “it” domains of human activity. Such a

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<sup>2</sup> This author considers it important to acknowledge the pathological reality of violent terrorism, in distinction from some Islamist scholars (Zuhur, 2008), who claim that pathologizing amounts to “vilifying terrorists” and is not helpful to understanding the nature of the problem (p. 11).

perspective is still vibrant in many Middle Eastern Islamic cultures, whose poetry and mystical traditions have for centuries provided a source of integration of the communities' experience of their here and now with their cultural and religious roots. However, this perspective, which takes a somewhat passive approach to analytical scientific knowledge, has been increasingly crowded out by the rise of secular scientism and Western individualism.

In a world increasingly governed by materialism and the individualistic competition for actual resources, the spheres of the non-actual, art and morals, when dissociated from, and overridden by the actual, have developed *their own pathological reifications*. As has been noted, *religious fundamentalism* (both Christian and Islamic) exists in a symbiotic relationship with *aggressive secularism* (Armstrong, 2001). Both fail to reflect the fundamentally spiritual and interdependent process nature of life. Thus, modern religiously motivated terrorism reflects the climax of the dissociation between the spheres of "I", "we", and "it". It manifests an *extreme materialistic ideological approach to religion*, in which religious doctrine and moralistic double standard are exalted above authentic relationships and altruism (Hatcher, 1998). It can be said that religiously motivated terrorism stands in resistance to the contempt that scientific materialism exhibits for the spheres of religion and morality.

Materialism on both sides of the dividing line (secular vs. religious fundamentalism) relies on force, rather than grace. It fails to respect *the psycho-spiritual nature of the human personality and human civilization*, which transcends individual and cultural configurations.

Against this psychological and socio-historical backdrop, let us consider the fact that in every Arab nation, 50% of the population is below the age of 25 years, and, as is well known, young people seek vision and life purpose. In a context of extreme materialism and experiences of humiliation linked to the deprecation of minority identities and world-views, reactive religious counter-ideologies, arms proliferation, and frustrated spiritual yearnings, this situation represents a demographic and spiritual time bomb (Marsella, 2003). In the absence of other identifiable *models that recognize the spiritual impulse, and channel it into realistic globally-minded spiritual goals*, it is not difficult to understand why radicalization of Islamic youth is spreading much faster than any current counter-terrorist efforts.

The process of uncritical radicalization has been succinctly described by Marc Sageman, former CIA officer, forensic psychiatrist, and senior fellow of Foreign Policy Research Institute. It begins with an initial sense of moral outrage over incidents of Muslim suffering, which is then generalized to a broader moral context. At this point, people tend to fuse local and global into geopolitical grievances, and proceed to join a terrorist cell (surrogate family) nurturing a violent jihadist worldview. At no point in that process does there appear to be any connections drawn between instances of Muslim suffering and the suffering of other segments of humanity, including the suffering of religious minorities in Islamic countries (see, for example, [www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/05/16/iran.bahais/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/meast/05/16/iran.bahais/index.html)) Radicalization clearly relies on compartmentalized justifications rather than serious reasoning.

Another aspect of quick radicalization is the failure of the current materialistic approach to international development. According to World Bank statistics, 60% of development programs have failed to take root. The inability of communities in the developing world to find constructive expression of their spiritual capacities of knowledge, love, and will, has created conditions that allow for the disastrous dissociation of these capacities in growing segments of these communities under the influence of militant Islamist ideologues.

To sum up this gap between material development and the development of collective consciousness, we can refer to a recent analysis offered by British Prime Minister Gordon Brown: "We have global financial flows, but we do not have any form of early warning system for the world economy. We have environmental catastrophe, but we have no capacity to plan, finance and act globally. We have failed states and terrorism but we've got no organizational ability to deal with reconstruction, stability, peacekeeping and humanitarian work. And we've got a growing popular participation in the big issues of the day, but we don't have any forum for dialogue that even brings the different faiths of the world together." (Mayer, 2008)

Hence, the current transition to a global knowledge society committed to equal dignity for all is a slow and painstaking process of transforming mental modes and mindsets established over the past 10 000 years. Yet the pace of economic and technological globalization is so fast that it is leaving far behind our ability and commitment to creating viable and sustainable global structures that can provide social regulation and offset the massive global disturbance of long established ways of life. In this highly unstable context, the resilience of individuals and communities is an essential factor for the peaceful nature of the global transition.

## **2. Beyond Palliative Measures: Building Resilience in a Globalizing World**

While surgical strikes and efforts to redress the specific grievances of minority groups are important elements in the overall peace process, they remain palliative as long as not accompanied by positive systemic alternatives.

This section proposes some avenues for building the resilience of the global village and averting further radicalization.

Resilience can be understood as such a level of internal balance and integration (individual and/or group) that allows a person/group to feel secure enough in their sense of identity as to no longer need to grasp tightly, and throw around, hard-earned partial identities. *To the extent to which we foster resilience, we create opportunities for whole populations to explore how they can both preserve their sense of historical continuity, and accept change in the movement toward a global society.*

When resilient, we remain open to the on-going forward motion of life, which is about growth, expansion, deepening. The study of optimal consciousness (Mustakova-Possardt, 2003) shows that *such openness becomes possible when people feel grounded in a fundamental sense of themselves as spiritual beings, dignified regardless of social status or validation, rooted in history and context, yet bigger than its particularities.*

Since resilience is a fundamental characteristic of optimal consciousness, what can the study of optimal consciousness teach us about the immediate and pressing task of counteracting global Islamist radicalization?

### 2.1. Optimal, Suboptimal, and Terrorist Consciousness

Consciousness, according to neurology, psychology, philosophy and religion, can be described as (1) the experience of being alive; (2) an a priori sense of self who is aware; (3) memory which builds the moment-to-moment awareness into patterns of personal continuity. Clearly, each of these central aspects of consciousness can develop in widely varying degrees. In people who manifest optimal consciousness (Mustakova-Possardt, 2003), we observe the full development of these aspects. Such people are characterized by an acutely (and increasingly fully) awakened experience of being alive, described as *mindfulness* – an ability to be fully present to the here and now, and to perceive circumstances lucidly, without the typical distortions of a mind governed by its fears, painful memories and associations. Such mindful perception of life gives rise to thoughtful responses and wisdom.

People manifesting optimal consciousness reveal a morally and ethically defined sense of self. They operate from a fundamentally *moral sense of identity*, and are governed by ethical and spiritual values, which expand progressively into wider circles of moral responsibility and imperative. In the emerging global society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such sense of identity increasingly expresses itself as a sense of *global citizenship* and interdependence.

The memory of people exhibiting optimal consciousness is colored by a sense of the *meaningfulness* of life events. Life for these people is a lot more than a series of random circumstances. It holds together in meaningful patterns of *interconnectedness*, and it has a purpose. This sense of connectedness to others and to meaningful shared history brings about a sense of moral responsibility and *moral agency*. It brings a sense of respect for human life and makes it inconceivable to treat human life instrumentally, i.e. to consider it acceptable to sacrifice the lives of others in order to attain a goal. From an understanding of the meaningfulness and interconnectedness of all life, a person may choose to sacrifice their own life for the well-being of others, but they cannot choose to take away the lives of others.

As developmental research shows (see Mustakova-Possardt, 2003), optimal consciousness is still a fairly rare phenomenon, because it has not yet been clearly identified as the central collective goal of education and socialization. Rather, for the majority of people, moments of mindfulness are interspersed with struggles with varying degrees of fearful distortions, mindless reactivity, conflicted sense of self and identity, and a mixed bag of meaningfulness and meaninglessness in their experience of personal history. Hence, suboptimal consciousness easily becomes subject to reductionistic ideological influences or more extreme manipulations, and accounts for both sides of the ideological discourse. For example, the fearful reactivity to Islam on the part of the general Christian public in the West, as well as the short-sighted and summarily thrown together strategic anti-terrorist policy efforts, are examples of how sub-optimal consciousness can contribute to radicalization.

In a highly ideological context, where world-views are battling for power, and whole groups of humanity struggle with marginalization, ordinary suboptimal consciousness, especially in vulnerable populations, can easily be subverted into extreme forms of terrorist consciousness. Modern Islamist terrorism exhibits a *narrowing of consciousness* related to conditions of fear, under which, according to cognitive psychology (Gladwell, 2005), there is a resorting to a sub-optimal epistemology. This epistemology is characterized by obsessive overuse of deliberate linear analytical processing as illustrated by simplistic good/evil categories. It is also characterized by limited perspective and lack of permeability, which accounts for the inability of Islamist terrorists to perceive the whole human condition, and their exclusive focus on particular aspects that can justify, in their minds, the random destruction of life. Such narrowed consciousness often exhibits extreme clarity and tunnel vision, as illustrated in the deliberate planning, precision and narrow focus of terrorist operations. Finally, terrorist consciousness relies on intensely personal, reactive and defensive thinking, illustrated in propositions such as ‘I will sacrifice my life to fight the enemies of Islam, and God/Allah will reward me in the next world’.

In contrast, optimal functioning in the micro moment reflects an epistemology of *orienting the individual mind beyond its own intensely personal world and toward a greater good*. Such epistemology fosters the process of *on-going mutual corrective* between the objective, subjective, and interpersonal understanding of truth, beauty, and goodness. Hence, it seeks to integrate the spheres of objective scientific analysis, moral, spiritual and religious principles, and the subjective experience of beauty. Optimal consciousness is thus distinctly different from ordinary reactive and defensive consciousness. It is characterized by *resilience, larger perspective, and inner wisdom* bubbling up, and is *removed from the intensely personal* nature of ordinary, memory-based thinking. It has ready access to *highly-responsive and creative* innate intelligence, referred to as 'adaptive unconscious' or 'rapid cognition' (Gladwell, 2005), and manifests an *absence of over-active compulsive thinking*. It exhibits a general generous, loving, and deeply moral view of life, described in transpersonal psychology as 'fifth order morality' (Flier, 1995).

If we examine terrorist consciousness in view of the above characteristics of optimal consciousness, it becomes clear that the terrorist mindset is governed by an intensely personal epistemology that can be described as tunnel vision on reality. People prone to a terroristic mindset tend to perceive social and international processes in intensely personal terms distorted by personal memory and the collective historical experience of the group. They tend to develop compulsive attitudes, which quickly become rigid and are not subject to further examination or to the corrective of an open-ended experience with the 'other'. Such overall functioning is governed by high levels of insecurity.

Insecurity is a hidden and poorly understood psychological factor that fluctuates widely in most people from moment to moment. When people feel secure, they are much more generous, loving, forgiving, and understanding. When they start feeling insecure, they begin to slip into personal patterns of conditioning, and resort to increasingly mindless automatic reactions to events and circumstances. For most of us, the security/insecurity elevator fluctuates from moment to moment along with our physiological condition. However, the overall functioning of personality is colored largely by the level of security/insecurity at which the person predominantly functions. Consistently high levels of insecurity often account for highly destructive behaviors.

As whole cultures and societies organize their social life around the glorification of the past and its traditional ways, fear can become a primary mode of socialization, as appears to be the case to a great extent in some Islamic societies. Hence, the opening of world-wide forums for dialogue may be particularly helpful in allowing Muslims to come out of an 'under-siege' mentality, and to experience themselves as equal participants in the global transition. Such an approach may go a long way in transforming the psycho-social conditions which now breed increasingly rapid Islamist radicalization.

The opposite extreme, namely feeble, if any, groundedness in history, and a reckless orientation toward the future, which is characteristic of many segments of American culture, can also breed high levels of insecurity and reactivity. Altogether, the absence of a balanced and integrated understanding of history in times of such profound global transition can become an important factor in radicalization. A helpful approach here may be to begin to take a more global view of history, transcending narrow geo-political narratives, and capturing grand historic processes in ways that allow people a larger perspective. (Such an approach is discussed in Mustakova-Possardt's chapter on Education for Critical Consciousness in *Critical consciousness: Study of morality in global historical context*.)

In times of transition, it is particularly important how and in relation to what people define their sense of identity. To the extent to which various social identities are mediated by a core of clearly articulated moral and spiritual values, people have the ego strength to resist social pressures and are more willing to question and redefine. In contrast, direct socialization, either into secular social roles or into religious convention, leaves the individual with less strength to resist and redefine. Religion can foster a core spiritual motivation to become a better human being, or it can become yet another peer group convention used to prove one's worthiness, and to gain the power and the presumed moral right to judge others.

The study of optimal consciousness (Mustakova-Possardt, 2003) illustrates both types of developmental impact of religion. Out of the 35 individuals studied, about 1/3 exhibited some degree of development of optimal consciousness. All of those people manifested a notably higher discernment between authentic and false relationships, and a strong sense of responsibility to bring about more authentic relationships on every level. Due to the much more fully developed and integrated cognitive, affective and volitional capacities, critically conscious people engage life fully in the current complex global context. They reveal authentic self-knowledge and spiritual understanding of life, and a lived understanding of the oneness and interdependence of the human family. They take an empowered, agentic approach to transformative systemic interventions, and strive to serve the greater good and to become subjects of history, rather than experience themselves as its victims. These people show ever-expanding circles of agency in service to humanity.

What can the development of critical moral consciousness in these people teach us about influences that can allow more optimal functioning in a wide range of circumstances?

## 2.2. Dynamics of the Lifespan Ontogenesis of Optimal Consciousness

The study confirmed earlier research (Danesh, 1994) showing that inherent human spiritual strivings toward knowledge, love, and the constructive exercise of will develop throughout life in relation to the central human concerns with self, relationships, and historical time. When amplified by morally, ethically and spiritually oriented environments and choices, these spiritual strivings toward truth, beauty, and goodness develop into growing and deepening *moral motivation*, resulting in the formation of levels of increasingly optimal critical moral consciousness.

For most of us, motivation is a continuum between more or less moral and instrumental concerns. This continuum consists of four dimensions, each of which represents a continuum: (1) identity; (2) sense of authority, responsibility, and personal agency; (3) sense of relatedness; (4) sense of meaning in life.

### 2.2.1. Identity

For most of us, the sense of identity constitutes an uneasy mix of multiple social identities, not necessarily consciously connected by any clearly understood underlying organizing principles. In contexts, characterized by higher levels of principled reasoning (such as, for example, authentically spiritual environments), people develop a more internally coherent sense of identity. For example, to the extent to which self-transcendence and spiritual growth toward God (i.e. ‘the first jihad’), is the defining anchor of Muslim, or other religious identity, people are less prone to assimilation into ideological group identities. In contrast, Islamist terrorist consciousness appears to manifest a *sense of identity self-righteously anchored in Islam as a social and geo-political ideology*, as a configuration of ethnic and other group memberships, not primarily as a set of spiritual principles aligned with the spiritual nature of life.

Such an understanding brings to light the importance of and need for forums where people of various convictions can dialogue on central organizing values underlying the full range of social identities. To the extent that such dialogue also becomes central to education, there is a much greater likelihood that clashing partial ideological identities will begin to subside. There is also evidence that the majority of people want such principled spiritual education for their children, as evidenced in both Islamic revival (Zuhur, 2008), as well as grass-root spiritual education efforts in many parts of the world (<http://news.bahai.org/story/185> , <http://news.bahai.org/story/633> ).

### 2.2.2. Authority, responsibility, agency

The process of discerning what sources constitute authentic moral authorities, and what sources claim power simply on the basis of force, begins in childhood. Depending on how much the child’s intuitive discernment is supported or overridden by the surrounding adult culture, and on how much the child’s environment offers examples of authentic moral authority, the growing person develops and strengthens their discerning capacity. The substance of what we perceive as authentic moral authority growing up, becomes internalized as a sense of moral responsibility, which in adulthood becomes manifested as our agency (i.e. the call we hear to morally-inspired action in the world). Hence, the defining role of public models of moral authority as part of education – not just historical leaders, but also those transformative spiritual figures who have influenced millions of lives across the world, the founders of the great religious traditions in human history - Krishna, Zoroaster, Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, The Bab, Bahá’u’lláh, and others from the earlier oral traditions of the world. In a multicultural planet, to the extent to which we can help young people both learn to identify the common spiritual principles that unite these diverse figures, and to preserve their loyalties to a particular path of spiritual development, we are helping strengthen character and preparing global citizens able to work toward sustainable peace on the planet. To the extent to which our public discourse is governed by competition between different religious paradigms, and/or politically-correct avoidance of the subject, we are setting the stage for radicalized conflicting loyalties.

In the absence of authentic models of moral authority, young people begin to construct authority as based on fear. This appears to be the process characterizing fundamentalist consciousness, which expresses a sense of moral authority based on fear of ‘evil’, of the ‘wrath of God’, rather than love. An *aggressively self-righteous sense of moral agency* develops, which does not subject to moral examination the means used to achieve presumably ‘moral’ goals. In contrast, Muslims and other religious people whose sense of ultimate authority is located in an All-Knowing, All-Merciful, All-Loving God, manifest a spiritual responsibility to seek peaceful and transformative agency. Examples of that in the context of extremist Islamist terrorist groups have been reported by Salwa El-Awa in her research focus on state-community partnerships in the prevention of extremism in the UK and in Egypt. El Awa studied one of the earliest militant Islamic groups in the Middle East, The Egyptian Islamic Group GAMA, and its gradual transformation into a major advocate for a non-violent approach to political and social reform within an Islamic context. Her study reveals convincingly that at any point in a person’s life, it is possible to introduce authentic models of moral authority which transform consciousness.



### 2.2.3. Sense of relatedness

As we develop our sense of identity, we also develop a sense of who and what we stand in responsible relationship to – family, community, religious and/or social group, society, country, parts of the human family. The extent to which we can relate to fellow human beings and expanding circles of humanity accounts for the degree of empathic concern with others.

In extremist terrorist consciousness there appear to be *no empathic concerns with others or with any relationships outside the identity group*. Hence, education can go a long way to cultivate in young people a sense of relatedness to the planet, to nature, to the whole human family, to the state, needs and realities of the world. As such an education can prevent alienation and marginalization, it can not only diminish the foundation on which radicalization grows, but would proactively cultivate caring global citizens.

### 2.2.4. Meaning of life

Questions regarding the meaning of life arise early in childhood and continue to be negotiated throughout life. How these questions are acknowledged and addressed, and what frames of reference are available for young people, is a defining factor in development. In many cases of sub-optimal development, there appear to be no greater frames of reference beyond the self (Mustakova-Possardt, 2003), so that the meaning of life is constructed in rather limited instrumental and pragmatic ways, and the person manifests a deep sense of lostness, disempowerment, and frustration with the general meaninglessness of their lives.

In the case of radical Islamist terrorist consciousness, we see questions of meaning answered from a *larger but rigid ideological frame of reference*, which *does not encourage intense self-reflection and critical examination of reality*. Ideological meaning in general does not encourage the *integration of knowledge, love, and will*, characteristic of optimal consciousness. In contrast, principled and/or spiritual frames of reference tend to foster in people an expansion toward philosophical, historical, and global vision.

In summary, the above examination suggests that terrorist consciousness is a clear antithesis of optimal moral consciousness. It also suggests that perhaps the most fundamental form of prevention of further global radicalization is an *orientation to restoring a process perspective to reality*. We need to find principled spiritual solutions that overcome the symbiotic relationship between religious fundamentalism and aggressive secularism. We have to consistently and purposefully model in the public domain ways to *recognize and channel the human spiritual impulse into realistic goals in the global context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Such *clearly articulated public goals can serve as systemic antidotes to radicalization* and can help bring about in young people of various religious and cultural backgrounds a harmonious, balanced, and integrated development the understanding capacity of mind, the feeling capacity of heart, and the desiring/acting capacity of will.

## 3. Systemic Antidotes to Radicalization

The above examinations of the question of consciousness in the current macro-historical context, as well as in view of recent psycho-social developmental understanding, suggests that we need to seek positive systemic antidotes to radicalization in order to build the resilience of the global community in this time of transition. This author suggests that the two most critical levels of needed immediate intervention are education and informal public discourse.

### 3.1. Education for Unity in Diversity

An education that truly empowers individuals to not simply adjust to existing social conditions, but to overcome what clinical psychologists call false consciousness (Martin-Baro, 1994; Sloan, 1996), to achieve a critical understanding of themselves, their world and where they stand in it, needs to help people understand the historical context in which their lives are unfolding. It also needs to recognize the human spiritual potential and consistently amplify it along the four motivational dimensions discussed earlier, thus strengthening the attraction of the heart to truth, beauty, and goodness while engaging the mind in an ongoing examination and reconstruction of truth, beauty, and goodness.

For education to stand on the grounds of authentic authority, rather than be perceived by young people as an arbitrary conglomeration of socialization strategies, it has to be based on an ethical orientation to history (Saiedi, 2000). It has to help young people view themselves as part of a large collective process, in which humanity's spiritual potential is progressively "unveiled" and manifested "through successive stages of humanity's cultural and spiritual development" (Saiedi, 2000, p. 166).

Young people need to understand that in the current stage of this historical unfolding of collective human consciousness the greatest battle is for global justice and peace. As part of their educational development, they need to ask themselves what will be their individual roles in this grand historical process of learning to establish

justice and peace on the planet. They need to be assisted in articulating not just a career but a personal calling in service to the sustainable development of the human family. The ultimate testimony of their successful education would be the evolving of a world-embracing vision, an understanding of the historical processes convulsing different parts of the world, and a choice to commit to a specific field of human endeavor as a conscious localized contribution to the peaceful and sustainable globalization of the planet. Such an understanding of one's place in history is what Freire (1973) considered true empowerment. As he succinctly captured it, people's ability "to perceive the epochal themes of their times," and to enter into conscious relationships with them largely determines the degree to which they can become "Subjects" or "are carried along in the wake of change" (Freire, 1973, p. 7).

In this most education-oriented and information-filled century, relatively few people understand history in context, and even fewer are able to see their lives as part of larger historical processes at work. So far, historically changing human constructions of truth and value have been understood relativistically in Western academic circles. Such a historical understanding legitimized a thesis/antithesis, action/reaction type of education, where each new educational paradigm is a reaction to some past trends, and in that sense adopts an opposite extreme. It has also provided fertile ground for fundamentalist religious counter-interpretations of history.

Perhaps the most significant example of this action/reaction type of educational decision making is the place of religion in education. After having dominated education for centuries, often stunting scientific investigation and critical reflection and repressing minority religious views, religious dogma has now been thrown out of Western public education, and along with it, the recognition of spiritual reality, as well as of the role of faith in the formation of character. Contrary to what most of the great scientists in human history have believed (Wilber, 1984), science and religion in the twentieth century have been viewed as two irreconcilable opposites, creating a gaping chasm in the human experience, compartmentalizing it beyond the possibility of any meaningful integration.

Public education in a global society can and needs to cultivate faith in the ultimate meaningfulness of life and in our capacity to respond to life fully and completely, with both hearts and minds. What education cannot do is to teach religious beliefs, except as comparative religion, which deserves to be part of the basic curriculum. It is for families and religious institutions to teach beliefs, but education can foster faith. In a nurturing and strengthening educational environment, in which young people learn that humanity has forever been sustained by its capacity for faith in life (Fowler, 1981), and are exposed to rich examples of that from the history of world religions, young people can do their own independent and interdependent investigation of truth. They will find beliefs and traditions they can relate to, which can sustain them in their life journey. A content area that has the potential to support in significant and unexplored ways the cultivation of faith across the curriculum is the emerging global ethic discourse (Swindler, 1999).

From a developmental perspective, current ideological wars are characteristic of the adolescent world-view, which struggles to evolve a meaningful synthesis of old and new, past, present, and future. Many twentieth-century ideas reveal the same thesis/antithesis quality of thinking. The mature synthesis that our public understanding needs can occur only from the point of view of a large-scale metasystematic understanding of the historic advancement of human civilization. Such an understanding could be reflected in the educational curriculum by core history courses such as "The Evolution of the Idea of Social Justice in Human Civilization"; or "The Role of Religion, and Its Rises and Declines, in the History of Human Civilization." This understanding would also be reflected in considering it an integral part of education to train young people in all fields to think of their specific work in the context of global issues of justice and sustainability. It would require involving young people in first-hand experience with displaced populations, victims of war, repression and poverty, so that their explicit formalized knowledge can be stretched further, challenged, and ultimately supported by the deeper knowledge of praxis (Martin-Baro, 1994).

Education, in the age of globalization, is challenged to shift to a whole new level of dynamic historical perspective, to a genuinely spiritual understanding of history, as discussed in Saiedi's *Logos and Civilization*. People entering the new millennium need to be able to see the history of human civilization as a grand process of gradual emancipation of the majority of people by choice of free will, an emancipation both material and spiritual, and at great historical costs. Such a process understanding of history empowers rather than discourages; however, it implies a paradigmatic shift in the Western social sciences from a positivistic piecemeal approach to larger, more encompassing paradigms of knowledge. This large-scale integrative approach to teaching history and to preparing young minds to participate in history is yet to emerge. It has the potential to release young minds from the crushing burden of anomie or fundamentalism, and to strengthen them to explore how they can contribute to an ever-advancing diverse and interdependent human civilization.

### 3.2. Grass-Root Global Forums for Dialogue

Just as global terrorism is value-driven systemic destruction as an extreme expression of the fragmentation of consciousness, and of human desperation with the current unsustainable imbalance of globalization, so the growing sense of interdependence and the consciousness of world citizenship are the only bridge between an unsustainable present and a sustainable and truly global civilization, characterized by unity in diversity.

We can begin to do this by opening up grass-root global forums for dialogue, whose goal is:

- to redress imbalances in development,
- to overcome ideologization and polarization, and
- to articulate comprehensive and all-embracing conceptual frameworks for cooperative action toward a collective vision of a shared and sustainable global future.

These forums can help ordinary people grapple with the needs and realities of global citizenship by a focus on the discussion of values, and closing the value gap between horizontal individualism and horizontal collectivism. Such a process can help overcome the pathological dissociation of the value spheres of science, religion, and art through identifying guiding spiritual principles for sustainable life on an interdependent planet.

Grass-root forums for dialogue may well encourage government policies on every level to recognize and validate spiritual strivings of young people, and to seek ways to channel them in service of viable global ideals and goals toward building peace. They may encourage indigenous young professionals to engage with their countries of origin through viable community development projects, and to build partnerships among different communities and countries for the overcoming of poverty. Altogether, such forums may, over time, help the emergence of an ethic of collaborative action for peace, guided by shared spiritual responsibility for the integration of the spheres of “I”, “we”, and “it”.

The organic and coordinated spread of World-Wide Peace Forums will begin to give rise to a consciousness of world citizenship spiritually construed, and a new approach to sustainable global economic development. This emergent re-construction of world-views and identities, and related understanding of what constitutes sustainable global economic development, would have to infuse national and international government policies on every level.

The international structures and precedents for such a process are already in place, yet, they have to become infused with new meaning, as it is now clear that the old methods have failed to stem the current tide of growing world-wide terrorism. For example, according to UN statistics, military expenditures exceeding \$1 trillion and global trade in illicit drugs in excess of \$300 billion far exceeds the estimated costs of meeting the United Nations’ global development goals in areas of education, health, sustainability, and women’s empowerment. The old world order of competition for power has proven itself unsustainable in the global age. Only the collective will to salvage from the past all that is valuable, and to re-construct it in the context of a global age of genuine cooperation and interdependence, can bring about the consciousness and the will in the average citizens of every country around the world to stem the growing tide of global terrorism.

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