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978-0-521-64184-5 — Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution: The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity

S. N. Eisenstadt

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*Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution* is a major comparative analysis of fundamentalist movements in cultural and political context, with an emphasis on the contemporary scene. Leading sociologist S. N. Eisenstadt examines the meaning of the global rise of fundamentalism as one very forceful contemporary response to tensions in modernity and the dynamics of civilizations. He compares modern fundamentalist movements with the profundamentalist movements which arose in the great “Axial Civilizations” in pre-modern times; he shows how the great revolutions in Europe which arose in connection with these movements shaped the political and cultural programs of modernity; and he contrasts post-World War II Muslim, Jewish, and Protestant fundamentalist movements with communal national movements, notably in Asia. The central theme of the book is the distinctively Jacobin features of fundamentalist movements and their ambivalent attitude to tradition: above all their attempts to essentialize tradition in an ideologically totalistic way.

S. N. Eisenstadt is Rose Isaacs Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Senior Fellow, The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute. He has served as a visiting professor at numerous universities, including Harvard, Stanford, MIT, Chicago, Michigan, Washington, Oslo, Zurich, and Vienna. He is the recipient of a number of awards, among them the International Balzan Prize in Sociology and the McIver award of the American Sociological Association. He is the author of numerous books and articles; his recent publications include *Power, Trust and Meaning* (1995) and *Japanese Civilization* (1996).

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*To the memory of  
Myron Weiner  
1931–1999*

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The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity

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## Preface

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This book has many origins. Its remote origins lie in my interest in the place of sectarianism in the dynamics of great civilizations – an interest that arose from my reexamination of the Protestant ethic and my attempts to put it in a broader comparative perspective.<sup>1</sup>

This interest became interwoven with my study of the Axial Civilizations, first in a series of conferences, organized by a core group headed by Prof. W. Schluchter reexamining Weber's analysis of the major civilizations,<sup>2</sup> and later in the conferences on the Axial Age organized by me.<sup>3</sup> An interim step was the analysis of Revolutions which I presented in my book on revolutions and transformation.<sup>4</sup>

All these have been connected with a continual reexamination of the theories of modernization and of the major characteristics of modernity,<sup>5</sup> of modern civilization.

The more immediate origins of this book as related to fundamentalism have been the conferences organized in the framework of the Project on Fundamentalism sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and

<sup>1</sup> See S. N. Eisenstadt, "The Protestant Ethic in Analytical and Comparative Framework," in Eisenstadt, *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization*. New York, Basic Books, 1968, pp. 3–46.

<sup>2</sup> W. Schluchter: *Max Webers Studie über Konfuzianismus und Taoismus*. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1983; *Max Webers Studie über Induismus und Buddhismus*. Ed. Wolfgang Schluchter. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1984; *Max Webers Sicht des Antiken Christentum*. Webers Analyse des Islams und die Gestalt der Islamischen Zivilization. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 1985; *Max Webers Sicht des Islams*. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1987; and S. N. Eisenstadt, "The Axial Age: The Emergence of Transcendental Visions and the Rise of Clerics," *European Journal of Sociology* 23, 2, 1982, 294–314.

<sup>3</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt (ed.): *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations*. Albany, State University of New York Press, 1986; *Kulturen der Achsenzeit*, I, 2 volumes, 1987; and *Kulturen der Achsenzeit*, II, 3 volumes, 1992.

<sup>4</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Revolutions and Transformation of Societies*. New York, Free Press, 1978. Hebrew, Portuguese and German translations.

<sup>5</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change and Modernity*. New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1973. German and Italian translations.

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Sciences and organized by Martin Monty and Scott Appleby in some of which I participated,<sup>6</sup> and in one of the volumes of which I published a chapter which constituted the kernel of several papers ultimately leading to the present book.

During the preparation of this book, I have engaged in conversations about the problems of fundamentalism with many colleagues – Nehemia Levtzion and Hava Lazarus Ja'ele in Jerusalem; Nikki Keddie in Los Angeles who also was kind enough to send me a draft of her very interesting paper on the subject; Bjorn Wittrock and Ulf Hannez of SCASSS (the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences) in Uppsala; with Jeffrey C. Alexander during our common stay at SCASSS; Nilufer Güle during a preparatory workshop on Multiple Modernities convened in September 1997 in Cambridge under the auspices of *Daedalus*.

A crucial stage in the preparation of the manuscript occurred during my stay as a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars in Washington D.C. in the fall of 1996 where I had many conversations with Henry Munson Jr. who was then studying in depth different fundamentalist movements; and with Dale Eickelman, and with Seymour Martin Lipset. During that period Raymond Grew gave me very detailed comments on an earlier draft of the manuscript.

During the spring and summer of 1997 I served as the Max Weber Visiting Professor at the University of Heidelberg, and one of the lectures I gave in the Max Weber lectures was devoted to fundamentalism. I greatly enjoyed the discussions with my host and friend Prof. W. Schluchter as well as the discussions after the lectures – and indeed those in all the seminars and lectures I gave on these topics in various universities in America and Europe.

I am also very grateful to two anonymous readers from Cambridge University, and Catherine Max and Elizabeth Howard at Cambridge University Press, who were helpful in the preparation of the manuscript, and above all to Jason Mast for his excellent editorial work.

Last, I would like to thank my secretary in Jerusalem, Batia Slonim, for her continual help; to Marjo Schejtman for his research assistance throughout the preparation of this book, and above all for the help in the arduous preparation of the bibliography; and to Esther Rosenfeld who has faithfully typed and retyped the many – too many – drafts of the manuscript.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
and the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, Jerusalem

<sup>6</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, "Fundamentalism, Phenomenology and Comparative Dimensions," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby eds., *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 259–276.