

## **International Conference: “Fundamentalism and Ethics”**

**Huissen, The Netherlands, August 27-31, 2006**

### **Report**

The Globethics.net annual conference on the theme *Fundamentalism and Ethics* was held on 27-31 August 2006 in Huissen, Netherlands. The conference was organised in close cooperation with Stichting Oikos, a member of Dialogue for Peaceful Change. The conference was held at the Dominican Activity Centre located in the Dominican Monastery.

The conference was composed mainly of plenary and workshop sessions. The six keynote lectures bore on:

- *Secularism, Enlightenment Fundamentalism, or Priority for Democracy?* (Prof. Veit Bader, Amsterdam);
- *The Challenges of Fundamentalism as a Public Phenomenon. Definitions and Issues* (Prof. Nancy Ammerman, Boston);
- *Fundamentalist and Liberal Conceptions of Development: Conflict or Accommodation?* (Dr. Nigel Dower, Aberdeen);
- *The Paradox of Political Islam. Politics without a Programme, Ethics without the Political* (Dr. Roel Meijer, Nijmegen/Leiden);
- *Civil Islam as an Alternative to Islamic Fundamentalism* (Prof. Muhammad Machasin, Yogyakarta, Indonesia);
- *The Virtue of Tolerance, Democracy and Fundamentalism(s): Challenges in a Time of Systemic Bifurcations* (Prof. Guillermo Hansen, Buenos Aires).

An additional plenary session was devoted to a panel discussion on *Fundamentalism and Society* in the Netherlands with Mr. Eimert van Middelkoop, member of the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament, Dr. Erik Borgman, director of the Heyendaal Institute in Nijmegen, and Dr. Roel Meijer, lecturer at the Radboud University, Nijmegen.

There were three workshop sessions, during which participants divided into four working groups:

Group A : fundamentalism and the moral point of view

Group B: ethical considerations of fundamentalism and religion

Group C: fundamentalism and ethics in politics and economics: civil society and democracy

Group D: fundamentalism and ethics in politics and economics: economics, human rights and terrorism

A concluding plenary session allowed for sharing questions left open after the workshop sessions. The conference participants were also given the opportunity to visit the Biblical Museum in Arnhem (*Museumpark Orientalis cultuur & religie*). The final morning of the conference was dedicated to the investigation and evaluation of existing and future networking experiences and possibilities within the Globethics.net online forum.

## **1. Participants**

Over 40 participants attended the conference, including scholars, religious leaders, representatives of international organisations and NGOs. Six were members of the international Globethics.net Board.

## **2. Content**

### ***2.1. Starting point: Definitions and understandings of fundamentalism***

From the very start discussions focused on the meaning of the term ‘fundamentalism’. It was agreed that fundamentalism could be of a religious or secular nature, but that further subdivisions and categorisations were needed. Discussions on this theme developed throughout the conference, both within the formal setting of the plenary and workshops and during informal discussions. By the end of the conference, a majority of participants agreed that they could reformulate their papers in light of the new understandings of fundamentalism that had been emerging in the workshops discussions.

### ***2.2 Main speeches and comments***

#### **DAY 1**

In his welcoming remarks **Prof. Dr. Christoph Stueckelberger**, Chairperson of Globethics.net, spoke of the development of the organisation since its inception in 2004. He said the network now comprised around 200 institutions or individuals, 60-70% of whom are based in the South. He explained that this was important as most of the groups working for ethics to date have been North-driven. Prof. Stueckelberger stated that Globethics.net was

committed to equality and mutual respect and that it was the aim of the organisation to include both faith-based and non-faith based groups/individuals. He said it was important to enlarge the participation to Muslims and to representatives of other non-Christian religious traditions. In terms of geographical representation, Prof. Stueckelberger pointed to his hope that more persons from Eastern Europe would join the Globethics.net network in the future.

**Jean-Daniel Strub**, Executive Coordinator of Globethics.net’s secretariat, gave a short introductory speech where he reminded participants that fundamentalism is now perceived as a threat by many societies. The critical question to be looked at over the coming days, he said, was ‘What makes fundamentalism an ethical issue?’ Jean-Daniel Strub told participants that the Netherlands had been chosen as the setting for the conference because of its renowned historical capacity to integrate many cultures, and because of the new challenges it is facing in this area.

The opening keynote speech on *Secularism, Enlightenment Fundamentalism, or Priority for Democracy? The Case of the Netherlands* was given by **Dr. Veit Bader**, professor in Sociology and in Social and Political Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. Prof. Bader said that religious fundamentalism is a militant form of spirituality responding to perceived crises and to perceived ‘enemies’. The intention behind fundamentalism is to fortify religious identity through dogma and to prevent ‘contamination’, thus leading to exclusivity. There are different forms of fundamentalisms, the great majority of which use non violent forms of expression. No world religion seems to be immune: religious fundamentalism comes indeed in many kinds (Hindu, Catholic, Muslim, etc.).

According to Prof. Bader, the Dutch society is well known for its religious pluralism (i.e. consensus democracy) that ensures the respect of individuals and of associative religions, and supports selective cooperation between state and various religions. If in the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Dutch were famous for their advanced forms of tolerance, many think that this has changed dramatically in recent years. While Prof. Bader disagreed with this opinion, he still acknowledged that since the early 1990s there has been a backlash against multi-cultural policies leading to inequality amongst different cultural groups.

Prof. Bader rejected the assumption that liberal democratic states need to be secular states. Secularism is in no way a guarantee of the liberal democratic character of states. It can even be a threat to the liberal democratic character of states, as much so as religious fundamentalism can be. He called for a ‘minimalist morality’ across cultures and religions including civic rights and tolerance, but also rights to security and subsistence – not only positive but also negative rights. He said that this minimum morality could be called secular morality because it is opposed to a religious state and theocracy: the state has to respect the relative

autonomy of the religions and vice versa. This minimalist morality is compatible with nearly all peaceful ways of a good life.

## DAY 2

In her speech on *The Challenges of Fundamentalism as a Public Phenomenon. Definitions and Issues*, **Prof. Nancy Ammerman**, Professor of Sociology of Religion at Boston University's School of Theology, set the ball rolling in what was to be an on-going discussion on the definition of 'fundamentalism' with the suggestion that 'fundamentalist movements are organised efforts to shape the future of a people in light of a past that is seen through the lens of traditional sacred texts and authorities. They are movements that arise in conscious opposition to forces that are seen as inimical to those texts and authorities'. Prof. Ammerman explained that the term fundamentalism originated in the US in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century around the Protestant community. This group wanted to distinguish itself from the mainstream 'evangelical' religious culture. 'Fundamentalists' kept the salvation concept, but introduced new ways of interpreting the scriptures in a more historical setting. The Bible was seen as 'true' and it needed to be the primary text used to judge everything that was done in the world. Fundamentalists also began to emphasise 'separation', i.e. a separate domain where they could be sure to keep orthodoxy pure. They also spent a lot of time talking about the imminent return of Christ. With regard the appeal of fundamentalist movements, Prof. Ammerman explained that participants are offered a very concrete way of life with strong communities and institutions. Congregations are tight knit communities. In this way, fundamentalists can become formidable players if the other institutions in society are particularly weak. Echoing a point made the evening before by Prof. Bader, Prof. Ammerman told participants that the notion of a secularised modern world is not as plausible a story as it was in the past and that there is increasingly space even in so-called 'secular' society for integration of religious and mystical practices. She said fundamentalists are morally outraged and want to use whatever methods they can to persuade fellow citizens to act. They are increasingly using political action. Prof. Ammerman said we need to see what the available sources of action are in order to know if a fundamentalist group is likely to be violent or not. In the US they are able to work through political system via elections. American fundamentalists understand US foreign policy through the lens of taking the gospel out to try to convert the non-believers.

Comments and questions from participants to Prof. Ammerman included:

- Since fundamentalist groups are so different from each other, is it not better to make a typology of fundamentalisms rather than formulating a single definition of the term?
- Not many fundamentalist groups engage in violent actions, but in their mythical worldview (scripture) change is always mediated through violence.

- How much are religious fundamentalists defined by secular fundamentalists, who dismiss anybody who does not follow their way?
- Why did the speaker not refer to economic fundamentalism or cultural fundamentalism?
- It would be useful to use fundamentalism for other non-religious contexts in order to show that mechanisms are similar and that you cannot overcome the phenomenon by only focusing on the religious phenomenon, e.g. nationalism has the same story-telling based in myth in order to defend a specific way of nation building.

**Dr. Nigel Dower**, Honorary Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Aberdeen, spoke on *Fundamentalist and Liberal Conceptions of Development: Conflict or Accommodation?* and focused on two important questions: Can a fundamentalist have a conception of development? If so, then are such conceptions compatible with liberal conceptions or not? Dr. Dower pointed to the fact that although development and fundamentalism seem to be conflicting concepts, in fact nothing about fundamentalism rule out development or economic growth. He further suggested that nothing in fundamentalism unerringly promotes intolerance, proselytising or violence. Dr. Dower based this talk on the definition of fundamentalism as 'a movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles'. This definition does not build on any commitment to tradition, although characteristically fundamentalism is committed to tradition and will make reference to some authority (e.g. Bible, Qur'an). Dr. Dower then went on to define the basic concept of development saying that it could no longer be seen to be merely economic growth, but that spiritual growth and relations with the environment should be considered as equally important. He felt that it was essential to develop visions of a better world that were not based on sacred texts at all, although such visions are important. Dr. Dower asked how a religious fundamentalist might think of development. He suggested that:

1. minimally they wish social changes allowed them to continue to do what they want, but as a minority they wish the social order enabled them to do that and supports them. Minimally, then, fundamentalists mind their own business (e.g. the Amish in the US);
2. most fundamentalists will go beyond minimalist position. They will want the world to be one in which more people come to take on their belief. Fundamentalists have a vision of society in the future where others come to take on their values and beliefs. How different is that from us, who do not see ourselves as fundamentalists? If we have firm values about fairness, integrity, human rights, social justice, and relations to the environment – surely we want other people to accept these beliefs. So this feature of wanting others to take on your beliefs is not specific to fundamentalism;

3. unless the fundamentalist is committed to material poverty or to having minimal amounts of wealth then there is no difference between 'us' and 'them'. Many fundamentalist views will also be compatible with democracy.

If a fundamentalist is not really a democrat, if he is committed to theocracy and only goes along with the democratic process for advancing his own values, then his vision of democracy is very different to the traditional view of democracy – his rationale for engaging in society is somehow disingenuous. Dr. Dower said that if a fundamentalist uses the democratic processes she/he is not a *threat*. There will always be tension between the commitment to promoting our values and the commitment to democracy. A fundamentalist could well be committed to economic growth including a distributive principle but not committed to democracy. Dr. Dower pointed to the importance of the *ethics of the means*:

- willing to be tolerant about the intolerant;
- willing to be reasonable with those who use unreasonable methods.

Dr. Dower made an interesting distinction between a freedom fighter and a terrorist: a freedom fighter is defined by the goal he/she is pursuing whereas a terrorist is defined by the means he/she uses. So a freedom fighter could also be a terrorist. He concluded that what divides fundamentalists from non-fundamentalists can be what else development is about apart from economic growth e.g. human rights, environmental protection. However, some fundamentalists and non-fundamentalists reject economic growth as constituting development at all.

Comments and questions from participants to Dr. Dower included:

- How can the balance be kept to ensure fundamentalism does not cause harm nationally and internationally?
- Neoliberal thinking i.e. that market economy cannot fail, is also fundamentalist thinking as economic growth can bring increased poverty.
- Fundamentalism is what is not 'the norm'.

In the panel discussion on *Fundamentalism and Society in the Netherlands*, presentations were given and questions answered by **Mr. Eimert van Middelkoop**, member of the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament, member of Christen Unie, **Dr. Erik Borgman**, director of the Heyendaal Institute in Nijmegen – an interdisciplinary research institute in the field of religion, contemporary culture, theology and science –, President of the International Society for Religion, Literature and Culture, and **Dr. Roel Meijer**, lecturer at the Radboud University Nijmegen and Postdoctoral Fellow at the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM). **Dr. Erik Borgman** pointed to the crisis of tolerance in Dutch society from the religious perspective. He stressed that the idea of the separation of State and relig-

ion was being more widely promoted than ever before, but also that religion and culture will always be intermingled. Dr. Borgman stated that in the Netherlands people believe that if a person is strongly religious she/he must be intolerant and, therefore, unable to be interested in what is really needed in public domain. Dr. Borgman did not share this view. He also spoke of the current erosion of the idea of the public domain in the Netherlands. People believe that they have their own individual projects in the public domain; the idea of a common responsibility within the public domain has been lost. Dr. Borgman stressed that we need to interrelate in the public domain because of our diversity; he regretted that this idea had also been greatly eroded. A real democratic society is able to discuss what it wants to do and what it wants to be. The idea that religion can be for the public good, as well as for the individual good, has now been eroded. If people show their religion, Dutch people feel threatened. They feel religion is something you should keep to yourself. Dr. Borgman warned that if you tell people they cannot express their religion in public, then they close up and begin to only discuss religion in their closed groups. This leads to sectarianism. Dutch society no longer sees the public sphere as somewhere everyone can express their views. It has become somewhere where people fight. Dr. Borgman suggested that the churches have done little to counteract the current negative attitudes towards Muslims. He stressed that the more discussion there is, the better our societies will be at integration. He said the public domain needs to be the place to have discussions about what it is to be Dutch, what it is to be a human being and that nobody should fear the consequences of what she/he says.

**Mr Eimert van Middelkoop** raised the issue of the prevailing less tolerant, populist attitudes against Muslims, Islam, immigration and religion that have taken hold of the Netherlands in contrast to the tolerance that characterised the Dutch in the past. He said that tolerance can be institutionalised, that is, it can be organised. Holland was and is a very religious country so it was and is important to institutionalise tolerance. Mr van Middelkoop said that the Netherlands was today divided in two opposing positions: i) secular politicians, journalists, and academics, who believe that modernisation and secularisation will go hand in hand for ever, which Mr van Middelkoop said was not possible as the influx of Islamic people into the Netherlands as well as the US policy showed; and ii) third generation Muslims, who feel extremely alienated in Dutch society and are adopting a fundamentalist religious position.

**Dr. Roel Meijer** warned that Islam has been used in the Netherlands as a way of promoting the careers of those politicians whose popularity had fallen, especially after 9/11. Following that event in the US, the debate moved quickly to Muslims in Holland, focusing on Islam as a religion. On the one hand, people felt more inclined to vent their frustrations by pointing their finger at Islam; on the other hand, the Muslim immigrants started to feel much more targeted

and as a result many of them began to take on more radical stances. Dr. Meijer pointed to the fact that Muslims have become more important as voters. He was of the opinion that it would be good for Muslims to integrate within existing political parties in order to be able to express their views through those parties.

Comments and questions from participants to the panel included:

- The more public power the Muslims get, the more likely it will be that they can have a say in the building of mosques and other matters. How far are Christians ready to share power, and with which minorities? Can we define criteria for sharing power? Sharing power needs to be a mutual agreement e.g. between Christians and Muslims.
- Most 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Muslims in the Netherlands are mainly from a rural background. As such, there are only a few Muslim intellectuals who can explain the Dutch perspective to the Muslims, or who can explain the Muslim perspective to the Dutch.
- Why are there no Muslims on the panel to speak about Islam in the Netherlands? We need to make sure Muslims speak for themselves not through other people.
- Why would it be a problem to have a Muslim party if there are parties that call themselves Christian?
- There are places where imams are trained in the Netherlands. For some Muslims this training is a way of reducing fundamentalism and promoting integration.
- There is constant reference to 9/11 as if that were the point in history when we discovered the 'self' and the 'other'. With regard the term 'tolerance' – who tolerates whom? Dominant society decides to what extent the 'others' can express themselves. Dominant society decides what 'tolerance' is. Mention was also made of the need to refer to religion as a positive impact, not just a negative one.
- Reference was made to the book by Amartya Sen on *Identity & Violence*, in which Sen says the problem is that people are being pressed to hold only one identity, but that people should understand that they have multiple identities.
- The importance of the inter-connectedness of the local and the global: the Dutch situation needs to be seen in the global perspective. The unfolding of events in Iraq and Palestine, and how they are portrayed in the media, plays a role in how Muslims see the Western world, and how the Dutch (for example) see Muslims.

### DAY 3

The third day was opened by a panel speaker from the previous day, **Dr. Roel Meijer**, who read his presentation on *The Paradox of Political Islam. Politics without a Programme, Ethics without the Political*. Dr. Meijer explored the idea that political Islam has no political content and is therefore largely based on ethics, an idea that originated in the past when 'there ex-

isted an extreme mistrust of politics, paradoxically because there was no theory of politics.' According to Dr. Meijer, there used to be no concept of politics, how it should be filled, and how power should be divided and on what it should be based. The shari'a was not enlightening in this regard because it had no theory of the state, except in the most rudimentary form – that the state should defend the *umma*. The basis of the problem is not that Islam does not recognise the separation between religion and politics but that it had no concept of politics. In theory it was based on the simple notion that if everyone acted according to the *shari'a* and lived a moral ethical life according to the Qur'an and hadith, than everything would be fine. It is based on an individual duty to check and control the neighbour and their own family and to preach religion. Because it had no theory of state and no concept of politics and was unable to incorporate the daily practice of negotiations of Muslims because it was holy, it became totalitarian when it was threatened by the West. Because it had no content it could take over totalitarian ideas prevalent at the time.' Dr. Meijer spoke about the experience of the London branch of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which '...has learnt from the past and the dangers of eclipsing politics and the individual and subsuming it under the collective. It is an example of creative reinterpretation of older general (un-Islamic) concepts as the 'general interest' and the acceptance of the concept of 'pluralism' based on an original idea of Islam. In more dire circumstances the Iraqi section of the Muslim Brotherhood came up with the idea of 'consensus' (also a very general concept) and rebuilt it for its purposes in Iraq. All of these new concepts are based on experience and analysis of past mistakes as well as possible corrections. They are flexible, open to debate and inviting others to participate, instead of being repressive, intolerant, nihilistic, millenarian and violent.' Dr. Meijer concluded that 'political Islam has indeed become political.'

Comments and questions from participants to Dr Meijer included:

- It has been said that early Islamic scholars were influenced by Aristotle. The latter spoke of the relationship between ethics and politics. Was this idea influential in the early Islamic thinking that the speaker described and in more modern Islamic thinking?
- If political Islam has no programme then what are its values?
- The Islamic parties in Indonesia and Malaysia Islamic have a religious duty to be ethical and they see that only through obtaining political power can they achieve those ethical standards.
- Aristotle emphasised that politics supplies the necessary condition for creating virtue in a society. Good politics creates virtuous citizens. In Indonesia, the Islamic political parties say the government needs to implement the shari'a in order to create virtuous citizens, which is different to the West where civil society is important for keeping a check on the State.

- It is said that Asian fundamentalist tendencies have a clear connection to the experience of Muslim students in US who have had contact with US Christian fundamentalists resulting in they themselves taking on more fundamentalist attitudes.

The second keynote address was given by **Prof. Dr. Muhammad Machasin**, former Director of Graduate Studies at the Islamic State University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, on the subject of 'Civil Islam as an Alternative to Islamic Fundamentalism'. Prof. Machasin began by stating that Islam has been accused of wanting to lead a holy way against the West. He emphasised that Islam is not monolithic. From the very beginning there have been variants of what are seen as the fundamental teachings of Islam. For example, there is debate over whether 'acts' are part of belief or not. Religious and secular authorities have appeared competing for legitimacy. Theoretically there is no human authority in Islamic teaching; however, usually those most familiar with the teachings have the most authority. In the absence of authority, some have tried to create such body, but no agreement has been reached yet amongst the majority of Muslims on who, or which body, should represent them. Hence individuals can legitimise their own individual judgements. Prof. Machasin pointed to the fact that the main reference to Islamic texts are in Arabic and are not easily accessible, hence many Muslims rely on other persons to interpret the texts for them.

He then asked a key question: 'Why is fundamentalism attractive?', and in response gave the following insights:

1. it comes as a response to the failure of modernity, as an alternative looking for justice for all;
2. in some cases, the majority of the Muslim community, represented by big organisations, react too slowly to the contemporary problems of the community;
3. some political authorities deal unfairly with some religious disobedience (e.g. accepting bribes instead of prohibiting bad deeds).

Prof. Machasin suggested that the emerging of fundamentalism is an indication that there is something wrong in society and that, as such, it was a legitimate form of expression if people felt that they were being ignored. On the concept of 'civil Islam', Prof. Machasin offered the following definition: 'Civil Islam is a practise of Islam within a pluralistic society in a polite manner'. Polite in the sense of complying with the rules and doing what is possible for the betterment of living together. Ready to enter any social frame whilst making possible any needed change in that frame. The rules do not always collide with Islamic principles, but there should always be the possibility to negotiate. Civil Islam is taking one of the many options available in Islamic heritage. Prof. Machasin clarified that in the beginning it was not the intention of the Prophet to build a social system apart from the existing social system. The Prophet added new parts to the existing system and as such the appreciation of local cus-

toms is a genuine part of the Islamic system. Prof. Machasin emphasised that civil Islam can prevent cultural conflict because it is about betterment coming from within as opposed to revolution coming from without. Through civil Islam the Muslim identity can be integrated into the larger identity of the group (the community). However, civil Islam may not satisfy some Muslims if they feel they are not getting what they deserve such as identity and bargaining power.

Comments and questions from participants to Prof. Machasin included:

- Islam is more law orientated than Christianity. Taoism is more wisdom orientated than Christianity. Is civil Islam more wisdom oriented than law oriented?
- Islam does not need change. What is needed is more open-mindedness about Islam and more knowledge about Islam.
- What is the conceptual and functional relationship between political Islam and Islamic fundamentalism?
- Civil Islam is probably not possible because of certain claims Islam has e.g. Islam is the only true religion. This is a very strong claim. If it were claimed that Islam was very unique that would be acceptable, but that it is the only true religion means other religions are wrong. With regard vocabulary in Islamic scriptures, it is very militant e.g. Holy War. Islam uses very strong terms that are not conducive to a pluralistic society.
- Fundamentalism is a legitimate form of expression especially for those who feel marginalised, however, civil Islam is improbable especially in the absence of a central authoritative body.
- Which are the values and principles that might be useful to guide politics in such a way that we will not have fundamentalism? Which values and principles would these be that we can apply across the board irrespective of the dominant religion?

#### DAY 4

The morning of the fourth day was dedicated to the continuation of the workshop discussions, which had begun on the afternoon of the first full day of the proceedings. In each session a number of papers were considered. Since each paper had been distributed in advance of the conference, only a brief summary was given by the author and time was mainly dedicated to the exchange of questions, challenges and dilemmas which arose from the paper.

Open questions were then presented to the plenary session held in the afternoon of this 4<sup>th</sup> session:

### **Group A: fundamentalism and the moral point of view**

- how in various cultural and religious contexts the concept of personhood, and the delimitation of the right to personhood, influences the definition of what is ethically acceptable or not?
- beyond genetics, struggle for survival, cultural and historical contexts, how do we explain fundamentalism as a human construction of meaning? The link between identity and the construction of meaning is also stressed: how do we use particular and universal categories to define ourselves in a way that keeps fundamentalism at bay?
- in the definition of fundamentalism, how can we use the notion of boundary, and the harmful exclusion from the space within the boundary?
- keeping in mind the circumstances where the term 'fundamentalism' was coined, how do we decide whether the extended notion that we seem to have now is at all useful? And for that matter, how do we escape the military propaganda that seems to underline this notion today?

### **Group B: the ethical considerations of fundamentalism and religion**

- the papers did not corner all aspects of religious fundamentalism: Buddhist fundamentalism, Hindu fundamentalism, Sikh fundamentalism, Moonist fundamentalism and Jewish fundamentalism were missing.
- there is a need to invite self-confessed fundamentalists to articulate their own perspectives.
- there is a necessity to formulate a template on the basis of which religious fundamentalism can be analysed.

### **Group C: fundamentalism and ethics in politics and economics: civil society and democracy**

- the notion of fundamentalism should be extended to non-Muslim and to non-religious trends, or abandoned altogether.
- the relationship between fundamentalism needs to be studied further.
- is there such thing as a 'gender fundamentalism'?
- are fundamentalists more duty- or right-oriented?

### **Group D: fundamentalism and ethics in politics and economics: economics, human rights and terrorism**

- wide variations exist in the definition of the term 'fundamentalism', as well as of the terms 'globalisation' and 'globalism'

- regarding neoliberal fundamentalism, which practical steps can be taken to present an alternative economic model? Would this include the possibility/necessity of an African block in the trade system?
- how can we best deal with our natural desire to experience new things, without having a detrimental effect on others and/or on the environment?

The final keynote speech was given by **Prof. Dr. Guillermo Hansen**, Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of ISEDET, Buenos Aires, who read his paper on *The Virtue of Tolerance, Democracy and Fundamentalism(s): challenges in time of systemic bifurcations*. Prof. Hansen warned that 'the globalising and unsettling forces of capitalism, technology, ecological changes, mass media and popular culture, chart a reality marked by fleetness, disorientation and rapid social change.' As a result of this, 'millions of people have reacted by identifying themselves with religious fundamentalist views.' Amongst the contributing factors in this move towards fundamentalism, Prof. Hansen identified the sense of marginalisation experienced by those excluded from the global economy as well as the perceived threat posed by 'the "materialist" and "secular" values of later modernity'. Prof. Hansen saw not only fundamentalism but also 'the economic and political forces of late modernity' as threats to democratic principles. However, he also saw a ray of hope for the future of democracy 'stemming from below, where new modes of relationships and power link – locally and globally – different religious identities, cultures, forms of labour, ecological concerns, ethnicities, and gender groups and issues.' The common denominator in these various initiatives is the use of tolerance, which 'becomes a key "weapon" in democratic solutions to systemic problems.' Prof. Hansen warned of the 'urgency to reach wide consensus over the values that will govern our lives' especially in the increasingly pluralistic modern societies and pointed to tolerance as 'not only a desirable moral virtue, but as a necessary systemic quality which, once grafted with freedom and equality, makes of democracy the best arrangement for shaping our collective and global fate'. Prof. Hansen indicated that religion would have an important role to play in this process.

Comments and questions from participants to Prof. Hansen included:

- we are being asked to make some radical changes in the way we see ourselves, our identities, and how we relate to 'the other'. What would be the concrete macro re-engineering that would be needed – macro in the sense of the systems of the nation state?
- how do we move passed what fundamentalism represents since we have to get real on what threats people perceive? How do we realistically respond to those threats?
- what is your perception of plurality and how might it be represented diagrammatically?

- fundamentalist groups are linked to groups that celebrate capitalism, the use of technology, mass media and popular culture. How do you explain that?
- none of the points the faith traditions hold is sure and true. Tolerance would entail a situation where I know what I stand for and what you stand for, so I can choose to tolerate what I *know*. As nation states disintegrate e.g. growth of EU, it makes people feel vulnerable because what they know (nation state) is disappearing. This is also a breeding ground for fundamentalism.
- Prof. Hansen's discourse on Catholic fundamentalism is similar to the discourse on Islamic fundamentalism; how is this possible when there are such differences in the mutual systems of power within the Islamic and Christian systems?
- the relationship between tolerance and power is different if there is cultural homogeneity or cultural heterogeneity.
- how do we arrive at the tolerance described in Prof. Hansen's paper? There is a link between tolerance and religion. What is the link between religion and democracy? What is the role of religion in a public space?

In a final summing up session, chaired by Prof. Heidi Hadsell, the question of the definition of the term fundamentalism was revisited and some valuable insights were offered to the plenary.

**Prof. Nancy Ammerman** suggested that fundamentalism has multiple dimensions and that there is usually too much emphasis one way or the other on such things as:

- boundaries – how open or closed to be; who are we? How do we define ourselves?
- person/group balance – liberty/constraint
- change – tradition/malleability, how open to change do we want to be?
- activism/passivism – shall we seek to change the world and others? If so, how? To what extent? What is an appropriate way to change the world?

Prof. Ammerman also spoke of the power that comes with the use of the term fundamentalism/fundamentalist: who gets to call somebody else a fundamentalist and the power that implies if somebody can call somebody else a fundamentalist.

**Dr. Nigel Dower** proposed five criteria to define our degree of fundamentalism:

- manner of holding belief: (1) degree of rigidity and (2) certainty in our beliefs
- content of belief: (3) proportion of non-negotiable beliefs, (4) weight of literal truth vs. interpreted truth, (5) importance of creedal formulations

Dr. Dower suggested that a fundamentalist presents a greater predomination of all these characteristics.

Dr. Bernard Adeney-Risakotta proposed the following table for a better understanding of the various dimensions of fundamentalism:

	Personal	Socio-economic structures	Political structures
<b>violent</b>	kill persons	lethal (conform or die)	war, genocide, terror
<b>coercive</b>	force persons	manipulative coercive	oppressive force
<b>intolerant</b>	oppose persons	antagonistic	politics of discrimination
<b>closed</b>	ignore persons	exclusive	exclusive 'apartheid' politics

**Brett Salkeld** reminded participants that we are all committed to powerful ideas that we hold very strongly and he asked how we decide that we are not fundamentalists but other people are. He concluded that it is the means through which we engage our opponents that decides if we are fundamentalists or not: the ethics of the means – if you do not pursue peace and justice with just and peaceful ways you are undermining yourself e.g. *enforcing* democracy undermines the principles of democracy. He felt that a fundamentalist has pride about her/his own position and is willing to take the opposite means to the principles they hold e.g. bombing abortion clients. Fundamentalists are committed to an inflexible idea of truth and have a pride which says, 'I can supersede my own values to enforce my ideas'.

### 2.3 Closing discussion

The conference was closed by a morning discussion on the past experiences and future possibilities of the Globethics.net network. Jean-Daniel Strub, of the Globethics.net secretariat, gave participants guidance on how best to use the website and encouraged all those present to continue to actively contribute to the work of the online working groups. Participants then divided into groups and formulated a plan of action for the coming months for their respective online working groups. It was also decided that a number of the speeches delivered in Huissen will be collected in a volume of the Globethics.net Series in 2007.