

Fanaticism and Its Forms of Manifestation in Psychology

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Abstract: This article examines the psychological nature of fanaticism at the intersection of religion and psychology, highlighting its hazardous impact on individual development and social integration. The study provides a comprehensive comparative analysis of Western and domestic scholarly frameworks to elucidate the cognitive mechanisms and typologies of fanatical behavior. The paper details how the total erosion of critical thinking, personal agency, and multifaceted social roles manifests across various domains, ranging from religious and political spheres to cyber-fanaticism. The findings emphasize that external socio-economic interventions remain ineffective unless accompanied by deep psychological disengagement strategies that address the subject's internal value system.

Keywords: Psychological dependence, radicalization, tolerance, fanaticism, deradicalization, dogmatism, rigidity, cognitive flexibility.

Introduction: The issue of human behavior and psychological characteristics has interested mankind since ancient times. Many scientists who have conducted research in this field have discovered its extremely complex aspects by studying all the phenomena related to the formation of a person from birth to his birth. The initial attitude towards the essence of fanaticism, its philosophical roots can be found in the works of Aristotle. In his work "Nicomachean Ethics", he put forward the rule of the "Golden Mean". He considered fanaticism to be a violation of moderation (excess). Aristotle explained that one-sided, extreme (fanatic) views of social or political groups lead to the destruction of the state (revolutions and chaos). He believed that the abundance of moderate people in society prevents fanaticism. Aristotle's famous conclusion in "Nicomachean Ethics" is: "Virtue is the mean between two evils (lack and excess)." This work also sheds light on the fact that every good quality is between two bad ones. Through this, a borderline state is revealed for human actions. After all, even if it is a positive event, if any behavior exceeds the norm, it serves harm.

Although Abu Nasr Al-Farabi did not directly use the term "fanaticism" in its modern sense (fanaticism) in his famous work "The City of Virtuous People", he

perfectly revealed its essence through the analysis of the "ignorant city" (al-madinah al-jahiliya) and the "misguided city" (al-madinah ad-dolla). In his opinion, the inhabitants of the ignorant city do not want to know true happiness and divine truths. They cling to their erroneous views and reject any other correct path (virtue). Al-Farabi builds the city of virtue on logic and reason. Bigotry, on the other hand, relies on emotion and blind following (imitation), pushing aside logic. According to Al-Farabi, the only way to get rid of bigotry is to perfect the human mind through education and upbringing. Only a person connected to an active mind can rise above selfish and narrow-minded views (bigotry). Abu Rayhan Al-Biruni was the first to scientifically use the term "bigotry" - bigotry in his work "India". The main content of the work is that "bigotry blinds a person's eyes so much that he not only does not recognize the truth, but also does not see his own shortcomings." The work highlights the differences in the way Indians and Muslims live and think. He criticizes the fact that Indians consider their culture and science to be absolute, and call other nations (evil people) "mlekha" (filthy, unclean) as a manifestation of bigotry. He explains their unreasonable adherence to the customs left by their ancestors and their refusal to accept the new (truth) as a sign of fanaticism. That is, fanaticism is a phenomenon that forces a person not to

see his own mistakes, leads to the denial of the virtues in others, and is also considered the greatest enemy for the development of science. Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali writes about fanaticism in his work "Ihyou ulumid-din": "Fanaticism is the lust of the soul. It leads a person to such a level that even though a person knows that he is on the wrong path, he stubbornly persists in his opinion only to win." That is, a fanatic is a person who does not seek the truth, but enjoys putting his "I" (ego) above all. A person who has reached the stage of fanaticism, even if he is powerless in the face of logical arguments, insists on his mistake in order not to admit defeat. This situation turns the scientific debate into a personal battle. In this process, the struggle is not for truth, but for personal views.

Abu Mansur Maturidi, through his works, called for getting to know religion not only through narration, but also in accordance with reason, and for respecting representatives of other religions. The scientist proved the balance between reason and narration (revelation), and outlined the middle path between "ghuluw"

(excess) and "tafsir" (moderation) - wassatiyya. The doctrine of Maturidi, with its principle of "wassatiyya", has an important strategic importance not only in the religious sphere, but also in ensuring social stability. After all, this issue recognizes the freedom of human will and choice. Maturidi's doctrine is still considered a symbol of "moderation" (wassatiyya).

The concept of a fanatic is "blind belief in the correctness of one's own views, beliefs, and an intolerant attitude towards other views, fanaticism." This term is derived from the Arabic root "asabiya" (عصبية) and has the following meanings: group affiliation - a strong attachment to one's own nationality, group or views; intransigence - a firm adherence to one's own opinion and denial of the truth of others; fanatic (متعصب) - an intransigent person who shows excessive sympathy for an idea or person. From the perspective of Islam, the synonyms of fanaticism are ignorance (the inability to understand the true essence of religion).

Term	Role in Fanaticism	Psychological Description
Dogmatism	Conceptual basis	Considering an idea as absolute truth and refusing to analyze it critically.
Intolerance	Social attitude	Hostility towards alternative views and denying their right to exist.
Rigidity	Thinking mechanism	Inability to change one's mind even when circumstances change; lack of cognitive flexibility.
Radicalism	Practical action	Striving to solve problems exclusively through extreme and uncompromising methods.

Considering that fanaticism manifests at the intersection of religion and psychology, the alignment of the aforementioned terms is interpreted accordingly. This demonstrates that fanaticism constitutes a hazardous process for the individual, both from the perspective of faith and in terms of social belonging. This is because both religion and science inherently care for personal development, human enlightenment, and intellectual advancement.

Within the framework of psychology, Olshansky characterizes fanaticism as follows: fanaticism is

primarily an absolute devotion that bestows a distinctive character upon a specific doctrine one that is unswerving, rejects all remaining alternatives, and finds expression in the subject's entire scope of activity and interaction. Fanaticism represents a process wherein a cognitive determinant emerges within the individual's consciousness, manifesting across their entire behavior and exerting a discernible influence on the social groups to which they belong. Depending on individual personality traits, behavioral patterns, and group affiliations, the human predisposition toward

fanaticism is classified into several distinct types:

- Religious fanaticism: Perceiving one's own faith as the absolute truth, leading to intolerance toward adherents of other religions or dissenting thinkers within one's own faith;
- Political fanaticism: Blindly following the ideology, party, or ideas of a particular leader, and vilifying opponents as "enemies of the people";
- National (ethnic) fanaticism: Placing one's own nation above others (chauvinism) and discriminating against other ethnic groups;
- Sports fanaticism: An extreme allegiance to a specific team or athlete that escalates into aggression (e.g., violent behavior among sports fans);
- Ideological fanaticism: The absolutization of specific scientific or philosophical doctrines;
- Cyber-fanaticism: A process wherein a user encounters radical content aligned with their interests; social media algorithms then continuously feed them increasingly extreme material. Consequently, the individual places greater trust in virtual "like-minded peers" rather than real-life friends, dismissing alternative sources as "hostile" or "fake."

Based on the degree of engagement, fanaticism is categorized into collective (mass) and individual types.

- Individual fanaticism typically characterizes "passive fanatics" whose focus is directed inward toward their internal world, exhibiting no pronounced need to affiliate with a collective.
- Collective fanaticism involves a group of individuals entirely devoted to a particular cause or ideology (political, religious fanatics, or sports enthusiasts).

Across all variations of fanaticism, behavioral destructiveness emerges within the individual, inevitably reflecting on their conduct to some degree.

According to Scott Atran, fanaticism is not driven by economic incentives or conventional political objectives; rather, it is anchored in "sacred values." The phenomenon of fanaticism cannot be explained through classical economic or political models. Atran argues that fanatical individuals operate within a framework of "sacred values" where material benefits lose their utility. Consequently, any external interventions designed to deter them from this path only serve to reinforce their ideological commitment. This dynamic necessitates analyzing fanaticism including its manifestation among women not merely through the lens of socio-economic deprivation, but rather through deep psychological and ideological attachments.

Furthermore, this model visually illustrates which socio-environmental factors trigger a predisposition toward fanaticism and serve as motivational catalysts. The scholar delineates the following three core factors as the root causes of fanaticism:

1. Relative Deprivation: Fanaticism does not stem from an individual's objective poverty, but rather from the subjective perception of being unfairly deprived compared to others.
2. Narrowing of Identity: The fanatical individual sacrifices their multifaceted social roles for the sake of a singular role within the fanatic group.
3. Lack of Local Control: When individuals feel they lack control over their own lives, they seek a sense of "pseudo-power" and "control" within fanatical groups.

Through these insights, Moghaddam conceptualizes fanatics as individuals who have relinquished their personal agency, critical thinking capabilities, and multifaceted social roles.

The aforementioned research and theories by foreign scholars elucidate the fundamental nature of fanaticism, the underlying factors of individual predisposition, and the subsequent psychological conditions that manifest within the personality.

Domestic studies have also explored this issue to a certain extent, offering distinct approaches to the psychological conditions that serve as the foundation and impetus for fanaticism. Specifically, researchers define deradicalization (disengagement from fanaticism) as a psychological process during which an individual renounces extremist ideology, thereby significantly reducing the risk of their involvement in terrorist activities. More precisely, deradicalization is defined as "a process of rectifying the belief system, rejecting the ideology of extremism, and internalizing national and universal values." It is a conscious process of rejecting specific values, attitudes, and orientations, accompanied by a fundamental shift in worldview. This cognitive restructuring occurs through targeted interventions that assist the individuals concerned in renouncing fanatical or extremist ideas and beliefs, thereby facilitating their departure from exclusionary groups. In doing so, L. Tursunov demonstrates the highly intricate nature of fanaticism and the profound impact of its penetration into the individual psyche.

Regarding the fanatical personality, Kh. Alimov posits that such individuals are psychologically characterized by arrogance, intolerance, aggressiveness, and deep distrust toward other religious denominations. Such individuals cannot be characterized as morally or spiritually advanced. They generally lack wisdom and

blindly reject logical reasoning, empirical facts, and common sense. While they may have read extensive volumes of religious literature and attained high status within their respective communities, they remain ignorant of the core principles of religion, fail to adhere to religious ethical standards, exhibit no tolerance in any religious matter, and consistently resort to extremism. This characterization of fanatical individuals illustrates the profound impact they can exert on their social communities. Their radical views manifest not only in their personal conduct but also gradually permeate the groups to which they belong.

The psychological underpinnings of religious fanaticism pave the way for its psychophysiology. Fanaticism in religion constitutes a form of severe psychological dependence. In this state, the individual's level of self-control is severely diminished, and they think and act in strict accordance with the dogmas deeply ingrained into their consciousness from "above." Such dependent individuals cannot conceive of an alternative way of life. This source effectively uncovers the correlation between a fanatical individual's psychological characteristics, personality types, and character traits, and their susceptibility to this phenomenon.

Certain commonalities exist across the perspectives of all scholars examining fanaticism. In fanatics, the emotional dimension overrides critical reasoning; they are characterized by an avoidance of personal responsibility and behavior driven primarily by imitation. The non-fulfillment of their social and psychological needs can serve as a primary catalyst for this behavior. While foreign psychologists focus on the global significance of fanaticism, its manifestations, sphere of influence, and its behavioral expression within societal relationships, domestic scholarly research and theories place greater emphasis on the foundational origins of fanaticism, its role in individual activity, cognitive processes, emotional-volitional dimensions, and the impact of education and upbringing on its manifestation.

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