What is a Muslim?
Fundamental Commitment and Cultural Identity

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Abstract

An underlying theoretical point of this paper has been that if fundamental commitments and the questions of cultural identity that they bring with them (What is an X?) are understood in terms of functional analyses of the kind I have tried to give in the case of Islamic identity today, then there is scope to see these commitments as susceptible to various criticisms in the particular context of a conflict in which they might figure. All this seems to me to offer far more scope and interest to moral philosophy than Williams allows it, even after granting to Williams the validity of the central role he gives to the idea of fundamental commitment and the validity of his critique of traditional moral philosophy.

The paper has studied the question "What is a Muslim?" in the dialectic of a conflict arising out of a concern for Islamic Reform. The conflict is one that arises because of moderate Muslims' fundamental commitment to a doctrine which contains features that are often effectively invoked by the absolutists whom moderate Muslims fundamentally oppose. If a full analysis of the commitment reveals its defensive function which have disabled Muslims from a creative and powerful opposition to the absolutists, and if, moreover, this function of the commitment is diagnosed as itself based on a deep but common philosophical fallacy, it should be possible then for moderate Muslims to think there way out of this conflict and to transform the nature of their commitment to Islam, so that it is not disabling in that way.

The question of identity, "What is a Muslim?", then, will get very different answers before and after this dialectic about reform has played itself out. The dialectic, thus, preserves the negotiability of the concept of identity and the methodological points I

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began with, at the same time as it situates and explains the urgency and fascination that such questions hold for us.

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I

In recent years, the concept of identity has had its corset removed and hangs loosely and precariously in the domain of culture and politics. This is largely a result of a gradual realization in theoretical work in these subjects that local contexts of study determine our individuation of cultural phenomena quite variously, and that it is much too tidy and distorting to demand, or proceed as if there were, stricter criteria for their identification. The point cannot be dismissed as some arcane, post-modern development in the theory of culture. It accurately captures the experience of individuals and communities. I recall that some years ago in India, almost to my surprise, I heard the words 'I am a Muslim' on my lips. It is not just to meet a theoretical demand that I had better specify the context. I was looking for paying-guest accommodation in a neighborhood with a predominantly lower-middle class Hindu population, hostile to Muslims. A landlord who was interviewing me asked me what my religion was. It seemed hardly to matter that I found Islamic theological doctrine wholly non-credible, that I had grown up in a home dominated by the views of an irreligious father, and that I had then for some years adopted the customary aggressive secular stance of those with communist leanings. It still seemed the only self-respecting thing to say in that context. It was clear to me that I was, without strain or artificiality, a Muslim for about five minutes.[1] That is how negotiable the concept of identity can be.

Lying behind and consolidating the contextualization of 'identity' is a somewhat more abstract point. Quine has argued that the concept of identity occupies the minds of theorists only in the primitive stages of inquiry.[2] In this phase one is prone to anxiety over one's lack of exact criteria of identity of given phenomena, anxieties which are often released in strict stipulations or in taxonomical theorizing, which one then sheds as investigations become more theoretically sophisticated. Quine was concerned primarily with the phenomena

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1. No suggestion here that my commitment to being a Muslim has not been more than five minutes long. There are several other contexts, and many more sustained contexts, in which someone with that background and those anti-theological views could identify himself or herself as a Muslim. There is no particular list of <u>types</u> of such contexts for identification. If there were, that would undermine the very idea of locality since it would allow us to formulate the very sort of generalizations that stricter criteria of identity demand. Someone with no theological commitments might feel a sense of identity with Islam in contexts as diverse as: when he feels shame at the actions of Muslims -- as say, the Muslim response to the publication of Rushdie's <u>The Satanic Verses</u>; when he feels concern about the future of Muslims in some hostile area -- as say in parts of India or England; or quite simply by an intellectual inheritance of public-mindedness from the fact that his family has been involved in Muslim politics for a very long time. There is no interesting common thread running through these different contexts; and I take it to be obvious that birth into a Muslim family is not sufficient nor (given conversion) even necessary to Muslim identity, though, of course, one would expect the relevance of the contexts I have just mentioned to usually presuppose the fact of birth.

2. See: Quine, 1960.

and concepts studied by natural science, but the point, it seems to me, is no less valid, for questions such as "What is a Muslim?", "What is an Indian?" and so on. as inquiry advances, the absence of strict criteria need no longer be seen as a sign of one's confusion. It is justified by the fact that the concept in question ('Muslimness', 'Indianness', as it might be, or 'electron', 'the unconscious'...) is to be understood as having a place in a more or less systematic theory, with its own particular role in the inferences and transformations that the theory sanctions. This point is not the same as the point about the local and contextual nature of these concepts, but it allows one to embrace their locality with some methodological right. If, after all, these concepts depend on their place in a network of theory, then shifts in theory due to cultural difference or historical change will shift the inferential place and role of the concepts without any anxieties about losing our hold over them.

One might think that these methodological observations should have made us realize that our obsession with questions such as 'What is a Muslim?' is irrational; and, as with all neuroses, that that realization should by itself be the basis of cure. But things have not been that simple and more work needs to be done to properly diagnose the persistence not merely of an intellectual yearning which such questions reveal, but also the social and cultural phenomena which these questions are undoubtedly tracking. One needs to explain our interest in these questions, not merely dismiss them and, in any case, the best among those who have ushered in the localizing revolution would be the first to say, "context is only the beginning of wisdom". It does not sweep conceptual problems away nor does it herald the end of theory; it merely removes the rigidities and reifications of a longstanding theoretical tradition.[1]

II

The context of my own interest in the question of Islamic identity is shaped by a prior political interest in the reform of Islam. The fate of a reformist movement within Islam would depend on the extent to which Muslim populations will consider the details of their identification with Islam as negotiable, in the face of other values which they also cherish. There may be some for whom Islam is nothing short of a monolithic commitment, overriding all other commitments, whenever history or personal encounter poses a conflict. But I think it is safe

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1. In saying this I am taking a stand against the more apocalyptic, theory-destroying view of the emphasis on context which is to be found in Richard Rorty's numerous recent writings on the effects of pragmatism. This disagreement may turn on the fact that pragmatism for him, but not for me, is mixed in with Kuhnian incommensurability and deconstruction.

to say, despite a familiar tradition of colonial and post-colonial caricature in Western representations of Islam, that such an absolutist project is the exception in a highly diverse and internally conflicted religious community. For the most part, there is no reason to doubt that Muslims, even devout Muslims, will and do take their commitment to Islam not only as one among other values, but also as something which is itself differentiated internally into a number of, in principle, negotiable detailed commitments. If so, there is a pressing question that arises for anybody interested in the reform of Islam. What are the difficulties that recent absolutist assertions or re-assertions of Islamic identity pose for the prospect of Islamic social and legal reform? Like most questions about the determinants of culture, this question can also be posed from the opposite direction: to what extent is the relative absence of reformist thinking among moderate Muslims responsible for the susceptibility of Islamic polities to constant threat from powerful minority movements which would have it that Islamic identity is, for the most part, non-negotiable?[1]

The complexity of this pair of questions does not lie merely in the conflict between a minority of Islamic absolutists[2] (or 'fundamentalists' as they are sometimes misleadingly called) and the far larger class of Muslim moderates who oppose their vision of an anti-secular polity based on Islamic personal and public law (the '*Sharia*'). There is widespread today a more interesting conflict within the hearts of moderate Muslims themselves, a conflict made the more excruciating because it is not always explicitly acknowledged by them. This is the tension generated by their opposition to Islamic absolutism on the one hand and, on the other, their faith in a religion which is defined upon detailed commitments with regard to the polity, commitments which Islamic absolutists constantly invoke to their own advantage.[3] In the last few years it has become

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1. The threat is very real and can be seen, not just in the spectacular developments in Iran during the 1980s, but also in the "Islamisation" policies of Pakistani governments, in the complexion of powerful guerilla forces and political parties in Afghanistan and the Maghreb respectively, in the accelerating Islamist reaction in the Middle-East to recent Iraqi defeat, as well as, more generally, in the policy commitments in personal law, especially regarding the status of women, in many Muslim populations, even despite the fact of being under *de facto* secular governments. Recoil from "Orientalist" misrepresentations of Islamic countries should not blind us to the reality and threatening promise of these developments.

2. Though it will not be relevant to my concerns in this paper, it should be mentioned that the absolutist minority does not form a unified movement. There has, for some time, been division between the anti-imperialist Islamist groups and the Islamist groups who draw resources from and give allegiance to Saudi Arabia. There is partial coincidence of this division with the Shia-Sunni division because the anti-imperialist groups are inspired by the Iranian example, but it is only partial. This division is much more marked since the Gulf war for reasons that should be evident.

3. This internal conflict in the moderate Muslim is an essential stage in the dialectic of this paper. The paper's interest is to study what notion of reform and what extent of negotiation and transformation of identity is possible, once one records that there is this conflict.

clear to me that this internal conflict within the moderate Muslim will not be resolved in favour of the former unless he or she sees through to the need for a reform of the faith.[1] But this requires a capacity to criticize one or other detail or even central features of one's fundamental commitments. It therefore requires a careful scrutiny --in part philosophical-- of what the specific demands and consequences of one's particular commitments are in specific historical or personal circumstances.

There is a tradition of political and moral thought which might be thought to finesse these detailed tasks because it assumes that philosophical truth is on the side of the secular and the liberal ideal, and that a full grasp of the objectivity of this ideal will itself provide the basis for a deep and destructive philosophical critique of absolutism. From this point of view, and to put it more crudely than it deserves, philosophical argument by itself will give one the right to describe the conflict within moderate Muslims as a a conflict between moral truth and falsity.[2]

I have not yet come across the philosophical argument which would support this claim, and so will proceed on the assumption that liberal and secular values have no purely philosophical justification which puts them outside the arena of essentially contested substantive moral and political values. They happen to

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1. There are two quite opposite theoretical tendencies which resist the idea of doctrinal reform. First there is a tendency to think that if the doctrine, at least in its originary formulations in the Quran, is conceived of as the revealed word of God, no genuinely devout Muslim, however moderate, will tolerate its reform. Thus, it will be objected that I am, in emphasizing the need for doctrinal reform, unfairly imposing the theologically skeptical cast of my own mind --admitted to at the outset-- on the <u>devout</u> moderate. See my remarks toward the end of the paper about the non-codifiability of religious identity, which address precisely this objection. Second, there is a quite different tendency to think that a full and proper understanding of the underlying political, economic and cultural conditions (the specific themes of the other two papers cited in the first footnote) relevant to the question of this conflict, will undermine my claim (of this paper) about the necessity for <u>doctrinal</u> reform. the tendency is to think that changes wrought in these underlying conditions, without any need for doctrinal reform, would be sufficient to defeat the claims and the influence of absolutist movements. Such a view is usually the product of a fear that otherwise one would be endorsing simple-minded Western essentialist explanations of Islamic absolutism, where it is seen to be an intrinsic part of, or growth from, the doctrine and the faith itself. in the first of the two papers I mentioned in Footnote, I try and demonstrate how many Islamic absolutist movements sustain themselves and thwart efforts to bring about such political, economic and cultural changes by exploiting certain aspects of the doctrine. Thus doctrinal reform, I argue, must be a necessary part of the moderate Muslim's opposition to such movements. to that extent, and only to that extent, I think there is a kernel of truth to the idea of intrinsic or essentialist explanations of Islamic absolutism, over and above the extrinsic or nominalist ones invoking political, economic and cultural causes.

2. There has also been a partially overlapping intellectual tradition, much less current, which adds to this, an a priori historical conviction which makes it an inevitable outcome of the progressive development of social, political and economic formations that this liberal vision will take hold. This strand of argument has lost its thread in the last few decades but the more purely philosophical claims are still the subject of interesting and lively dispute among philosophers.

be my values and my commitments but I will not pretend that philosophical ethics affords them a more objective status than the values of those who reject them or other values that I myself espouse.

This position is, to some extent, a specific application of Bernard Williams's critique of some of the more ambitious claims of traditional 'Ethical Theory'.[1] The targets of Williams's argument are philosophical theories (e.g., Utilitarianism, Kantian theories) which offer principles that stand outside a man or woman's fundamental projects and commitments (such as Islam, say, or even more immediate commitments to one's family, lovers, close friends, deep and driving intellectual or artistic interests...), principles whose justification depends on considerations that make no specific reference to those commitments, principles which would in fact, when called upon, be the basis for assessing and adjudicating between those commitments. Though I will not argue for it here, I believe that Williams is right in concluding that, on inspection, such principles are simply unavailable.

However, there is a tendency, present in Williams's own writing, (and much more so in the writings of the existentialists who, I believe, are his philosophical antecedents in this critique of Ethical Theory) to conclude that what this leaves us with is a moral life filled with fundamental commitments, and no particular space to stand on from which they can be subject to our own moral criticism. Criticism requires a theoretical position outside the arena of these commitments, and that is exactly what the critique of Ethical Theory has removed. Thus when these fundamental commitments conflict, there is little scope for anything but moral 'tragedy', something that apparently ancient Greek playwrights understood better than ancient Greek philosophers or philosophers since. for those who have graduated from contempt and fear of the Islamic world to an alienated despair about it, this offers a cheap theoretical confirmation of their mood. Thus, in a curious way, in Williams's picture, identity remains non-negotiable; it's just that now a number of different non-negotiable identities stand in (possibly) tragic conflict with one another.

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1. I will continue to use the expression "Ethical Theory" with capital letters to mark that it is traditional moral philosophy which is the target of this critique. The critique may be found in a number of Williams's writings, including his contribution to J.J.C. See: Williams, 1973. See also Williams, in his Moral Luck, 1981. In more recent work, Williams addresses Aristotelian ethical theory in some detail as well, and his relation to it is much more complex than to Kant and to Utilitarianism. Since this paper is not intended primarily as a commentary on Williams, I will restrict my discussion to the points he makes in his earlier work, which I wish to exploit in the discussion of Muslims fundamental commitment to their faith. I should also add that in a letter to me Williams quite rightly points out that in more recent work he is far less obviously the target of the criticisms I make of him in this paper. See: particularly the Postscript to Williams, 1985.

But the picture is not compulsory, even if one accepts his skepticism about Ethical Theory.

Many have found the very idea of a 'fundamental commitment' or fundamental project (an idea and phrase that goes back to Kierkegaard) obscure. They would have us simply think of them as values, adding perhaps that they are 'thick' values, if that helps to bring out the particularistic nature of these commitments. (Not justice or goodness which are 'thin', but a whole variety of less abstract values ranging from properties of character such as kindness, detachment, sympathy, loyalty... to commitments that people might have such as to religion or theatre, say.)?[1] To them there seems nothing distinctive about fundamental commitments over and above thinking of them as one among many others in this range of specific values.

But that is not my complaint against Williams in this discussion of Islamic identity. There very likely is something distinctive about a devout person's commitment to Islam, over and above its particularity. Though he never spells out explicitly and in detail what he has in mind by fundamental commitments, Williams says enough for us to infer that they lead up to the existentialist idea (and even perhaps ideal) of authenticity and it is this connection between a person's fundamental commitments and the idea of the authentic self that explains the persistence of questions about identity (questions such as "What is a Muslim"?) despite an acknowledgement of the radical negotiability of the concept of identity.

A way to expound this theoretical connection is to look to the sorts of effects brought upon a person by his or her abandoning --or the prospect of abandoning-- such commitments. I once shared a flat with a close friend, who was an appallingly successful drug-dealer. He had made far more money than I thought was decent, and it was money made on the steady destruction of people's lives, some of whom were talented, even brilliant minds in the university. One day, while he was out, the police arrived at the door and asked me if I had any suspicion that he was a dealer. They said that they did not have sufficient evidence to produce a warrant and search the place, but they were morally certain that he was guilty, and all they needed was for his room-mate to express the slightest suspicion. That would give them enough to legally search his premises. I had long quarreled intensely with my friend about his

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1. This distinction may be found in Williams himself and is by now common in philosophical discussions of moral value.

cynical profiteering from drugs and had come to find him utterly reprehensible in this respect. But faced with the question from the police, I found myself turning them away.

Conflicts of this kind are not by any means unusual, nor is the sort of decision that I made. The right description to put on my decision, in the context of the present discussion, is that I could not abandon the fundamental commitment to friendship, even in the face of thorough and deep moral pressure from within my own moral values.

Here one finds oneself saying that what this amounts to is that I placed the value friendship over the sorts of values that made me disapprove of his drug-dealing; and there is nothing false about saying it. But I suggest that it is not all that it amounts to.

The suggestion is not that one could never give up a fundamental commitment. That is not what is "fundamental" about it. One can imagine oneself allowing the police in, even if one had a fundamental commitment to one's close friends. What makes the difference is the kind of effect that the relinquishing of a commitment would have upon one. I think it would be fair to say that for many people, in such a conflict, their betrayal of friendship would amount, in their own self-conception, to something of a different order of wrong (though not necessarily moral wrong, certainly not wrong from the point of view of utilitarian principles) than a betrayal of the values which take profiteering from destructive drugs to be reprehensible. It is notoriously hard to describe why there is a different order that is at stake in the comparison rather than merely a difference in degree. But one thing to say is that if I had betrayed my friend, I would have felt a deep and integrated destruction of my self which is missing from the more ordinary, though undoubtedly genuine and severe, bad feelings induced in me by my having failed to act on those other values. It is not merely that I would have had more such bad feelings or worse feelings. It is rather that I would have felt (and many people in my place would have felt) that I had lost something much more defining of what held my self-conception together. The existentialists described the source of this integrity of the self, as 'authenticity', an obscure term no doubt, but examples like this help to convey what they intended.[1] The idea is delicate and difficult but it is not incoherent nor irredeemably obscure.

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1. It is conceivable, though not perhaps routine, that people have fundamental commitments not to things like friendship and religion but to utilitarian and other sorts of principles of traditional moral philosophy that Williams is inveighing against.

So it is not the very idea of fundamental commitment that I am balking at in Williams. On the contrary, even moderate Muslims may well have such a fundamental commitment to their religion, and I think it is important to acknowledge this, or else one might make things much too easy for oneself, in one's efforts to think of the way out of the state of conflict in which they find themselves. It is partly because the commitment to Islam has this deeper and more integrated place in the moderate Muslim's self-identity that the conflict seems so entrenched, that reform has been slow to come, and that absolutist minorities have gotten away with the sort of exploitative appeal they have. But, on the other hand, having acknowledged that there is this more fundamental level of commitment, there is still the danger that one might settle down with the idea of being locked helplessly in a conflict, a sort of 'tragic' stasis; and that would make things too easy for oneself in another way --- something akin to the familiar intellectual laziness that accompanies existential anguish. In short, in the study of Islamic identity and the conflict that it generates in moderate Muslims today, it would be premature either to dismiss the idea of a fundamental commitment or to rest with it in the form that Williams own writings leave us with.

What is missing in Williams is any interest or effort to offer an explanation of what sort of animal any particular fundamental commitment is, what its origins are and what particular role or function it has in a person's or communities moral-psychological economy. Different kinds of fundamental commitment will naturally have very different roles, but it is only if one pays attention to them that one will come to some understanding of what is particularly disabling about any particular conflict in which any such commitment figures, and what the rehabilitating elements might be. Once Williams abandons the pretensions of Ethical Theory, which would deliver from on high, general principles with a power to criticize particular values and commitments on the ground floor, he does not return to focus on the theoretical possibility that one might, in the process of resolving conflicts between fundamental commitments, come to a fuller understanding of the critical power and generality that is built into the commitments on the ground floor.

I have made this last point with such abstractness that it might help here to repeat it with the more concrete theme of Islamic identity and conflict. Moderate Muslims, I have said, are conflicted between their opposition to anti-secular absolutist forces in their countries and their fundamental commitment to a religion whose Book speaks with detailed pretension to issues of the Law and of State.

They may often not perceive the conflict but there is plenty of evidence for it in their own behavior,[1] Confronted with this conflict it is tempting, as I said, to think that this is like any ordinary conflict between any two sets of values (in this case modern and traditional) and that sooner or later the conflict will resolve itself, with one side victorious. Even if one discards the Whiggish tendency to think the modernist victory inevitable, there is this temptation to think that there is nothing particularly distinctive or difficult about the conflict and its eventual resolution. There is also the other temptation. Acknowledging that there is something special and difficult about this conflict, which traditional moral philosophers are especially blind to, there is a temptation to say that moderate Muslims have a "fundamental" commitment to the conflicting values of Islam and of modernity and that it is the arrogance of abstract philosophy to think that it has anything specific and useful to say by way of diagnosis or cure about something so deep-going in a community's moral psychology. I have already said something to resist the former temptation. In doing so I have registered sympathy with Williams's dissatisfactions with Ethical Theory. The latter temptation, I'm saying, issues from a lack in Williams's own approach to moral philosophy. It is a failure to give moral philosophy the task of mixing it up with (in this case) History in order to say something about the specific functional sources of given fundamental commitments (such as to Islam) and then, relatedly, a failure to consider a more bottom-up approach to the study of moral principles.

<div align="center">III</div>

What, then, are the sources of a devout but moderate Muslim's "fundamental" commitment to Islam today?

In answering this sort of question, there is yet another temptation that philosophers are prone to. And that is to make a general and ahistorical claim about the human need for some sense of identity that is not merely determined by their material and social circumstances; a sort of Hegelian nod of acknowledgement that a long tradition of Marxist and Marxist-influenced social thought has neglected the sense of identity that Spirit and non-materially determined consciousness has to offer. Here is G.A. Cohen, chiding his own earlier work for precisely such a neglect.

> In Karl Marx's Theory of History I said that for Marx, by contrast

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1. See: Bigram, 1989, and Bigram, 1990, where I cite and discuss the schizoid behavior which would count as evidence for this conflict.

with Hegel, 'the ruling interest and difficulty of men was relating to the world, not to the self' [his emphasis]. I would still affirm that antithesis, and I now want to add that, to put it crudely, Marx went too far in the materialist direction. In his anti-Hegelian, Feuerbachian affirmation of the radical objectivity of matter, Marx focused on the relationship between subject to an object which is in no way subject, and as time went on he came to neglect the subject's relationship to itself... He rightly reacted against Hegel's extravagant representation of all reality as ultimately an expression of self, but he nevertheless over-reacted, and he failed to do justice to the self's irreducible interest in the definition of itself [my emphasis], and to the social manifestations of that interest... I refer to the social manifestations of the interest in self-identification because I think that human groupings whose lines of demarcation are not economic, such as religious communities and nations, are as strong and as durable [my emphasis] as they evidently are partly because they offer satisfaction to the need for self-identification. In adhering to traditionally defined collectivities people retain a sense of who they are. (Cohen, 1989: 154-5)

I don't wish to enter into a discussion of the details of Marxist theory, and my interest in criticizing these remarks is not prompted by a desire to defend economic determinism or Historical Materialism. The issue between us is entirely over the question as to whether we should rest our analysis of the concept of religious identity with the self's primitive or 'irreducible interest in the definition of itself'.[1] I think it both unnecessary and wrong to assign one's understanding of a particular community's religious commitments, in a particular historical and cultural context, to this kind of irreducible interest in self-definition. That would only distract us from the what I really wish to emphasize, namely the historical and functional determination of a community's

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1. I should stress that the question here is not primarily at the level of individual sensibility and psyche. When in this passage Cohen talks of the "strength" and durability" of religious and nationalist sentiment, he is referring to a communal phenomenon. I think that despite his claim that the spiritual search for identity in the individual subject explains the communal phenomenon, Cohen would nevertheless say that these are different phenomena, irreducible to one another. What I say below, by way of disagreement with Cohen, obviously does not amount to a denial of the fact that individuals often have spiritual yearnings. Rather it amounts to a denial that this fact satisfactorily explains the phenomenon of communal religious identity, as we find it in many Muslim countries today. That is, I deny that the phenomenon is, to use Cohen's words, merely a "social manifestation" of the "self's irreducible interest in the definition of itself". It has a quite distinct functional and historical explanation, about which more below.

fundamental commitments and the sense of identity they impart. I agree with Cohen that it is a crucial function of their commitment to Islam that it does indeed give Muslims a sense of autonomy and dignity, so I am not suggesting that there is a materialist dissolution of religious commitment. But, as I argue below, that function is itself to be understood as a function of historical, social and material circumstances in precisely the sense Cohen wishes to abandon for some concession to the Subject's "irreducible interest in the definition of itself". In explaining what he rightly notices as the "strength and durability" of religious and nationalist sentiment, Cohen swings from materialist prejudice to an equally unsatisfactory and unhelpful explanatory resting-point.[1]

In contemporary Islam, the further historically determined function is not hard to trace. It is hardly questioned by any but the most stubbornly resistant 'Orientalist' that a good deal of Islamic revivalism in various countries in the Middle-East, South Asia and North Africa, not to mention some of the northern cities of England, is the product of a long colonial and post-colonial history, which has shaped a community's perception of itself in terms of the Other. It is a defensive reaction caused not only by the scars and memories of Western colonial rule but by the failure of successive governments to break out of the models of development imposed upon it by a dominating neo-colonial presence of the super powers through much of the cold war, and even more so now with American interests more entrenched than ever in the Middle East, after a humiliating war. The failure of Egypt under Nasser and of pan-Arab secular nationalism to provide leadership, and the general Arab failure to pressure the West to force Israeli compromise on the Palestinian issue have also contributed to the appeal that Islam holds as a source of dignity and autonomy in the face of what is perceived to be successive defeats in the hands of an omnipresent, controlling West in their midst. These points are familiar by now. I stress them here in order to say that if Islam is a "fundamental" commitment today, in the sense I had characterized earlier, it also has recognizable historical sources, and has a vital defensive function in a people's struggle to achieve a

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1. Here I should add that, despite my opposition to Cohen's point, which is advertised by him as a point inspired by Hegel, the view I am promoting is perfectly in consonance with that aspect of Hegelian doctrine which precisely emphasizes historical conditioning of self-definitions. My complaint, then, is that Cohen's essay fails to think through the implications of the fully Hegelian doctrine. The idea of the "self's irreducible interest in the definition of itself" which Cohen is stressing in this essay is at odds (in the way I argue below) with a historically conditioned conception. What I below describe as the "rock-bottom" attitude to what I call the "surplus phenomenology of identity", an attitude which Cohen, for all he says in that paper, can claim as his own, is just the attitude which is made unnecessary by the historical conditioning. It is just the attitude which makes the phenomenology unHegelian.

sense of identity and self-respect in the face of that history and the perceptions formed by it.[1] Hence the "strength and durability" of Islamic identity has a much more situated and local explanation than Cohen offers.

To be fair, it is not that he thinks religion (or nationalism) are irreducible needs, it is rather that he thinks that the need for a sense of identity is an irreducible need, and a fundamental commitment to religion (or nation) often fulfils that need. But my objection is that once one sees that these identity-constituting commitments have specific functional roles in particular historical circumstances, the very idea of an underlying, explanatory, irreducible need for identity that they fulfil is undermined as superfluous and misleading in the study of identity. That different fundamental commitments constitute different identities under different historical circumstances does not at all imply that there is an irreducible need for identity that is anyway there, and that is fulfilled by some sense of identity or other at different times. There is simply no such irreducible need. To posit it is to posit an explanatory dangler.

The issue between us is so large that it would be surprising if there were not problems remaining for my functional account. Though I cannot deal with them all here, it would be evasive not, at least, to mention the most obvious. A central problem with a functional treatment of identity, such as the one I'm proposing, is the tendency of some social and cultural phenomena (in the present case, conviction in a religious doctrine) to exceed what is required by their functions, and thereby to attain an independent phenomenological status in the communal psyche. Islamist sentiment, like many nationalisms, in this way impresses an identity on many Muslim communities which outruns the sort of function we have diagnosed it to have. The source of the commitment may lie in its historically local function, but the commitment then acquires a momentum of its own which may survive even after the function has lapsed. I will call this phenomenon the "surplus phenomenology of identity". It is a surplus quite literally in the sense that it is more than the functional analysis can account for. It is an excess, a residue; and it is properly described as phenomenological precisely because it has no functional role in the psychological economy of the community. It is an experience without a point.

Now it is possible for Cohen to step in right here and claim that this is

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1. I am not suggesting that this defensive function exhausts the functional explanation of Muslims' fundamental commitment to Islam. But it is the <u>central</u> function to fasten on when the task is to diagnose the failure to think one's way out of the present conflict.

precisely what he intends by the idea of the sources of identity as being in "the self's irreducible interest in the definition of itself. He says as much a little after the passage I have quoted: "...people engage themselves with people and institutions other than to secure an identity, and then the engagement persists when whatever its original rationale was has gone, so that it becomes an identification ungrounded in further reasons". (p.157) In saying that the surplus has phenomenological rather than functional status, I may have given the impression of a concession to this claim. But that impression would be wrong. It's not so much that I want to deny that these engagements might persist. I want to say rather that if they persist in a form that genuinely confers identity in the sense that I have defined above, if they persist in terms of authenticity and fundamental commitment as I have sketched them, then it cannot be that they are ungrounded in some further reasons in the way that Cohen allows. Conversely if they are now ungrounded, then they have lost their blue-chip, identity-imparting aspect and they no longer count as fundamental commitments in the sense that this paper is concerned with. If they really are ungrounded in any important function, relinquishing these engagements and commitments (due to pressure from conflicting values and commitments) would no longer have the traumatic, authenticity-destroying or integrity-destroying effects on the psyche which is special to fundamental commitments, as I defined them earlier.

So, if these engagements persist as fundamental commitments and confer identity in the sense that is relevant to this paper's theme, then, I would argue, that it is only in appearance that this surplus commitment is ungrounded, it is only at first sight that it has a self-standing validity. In emphasizing the functional explanations of identity-forming fundamental commitments, in refusing to treat them as flowing from a primitive and unanalyzable need in our consciousness, I am insisting that this slide from the requirements of the function to a residual surplus phenomenology of identity is, from the point of view of one level of functional explanation, a form of communal irrationality. And like all irrational phenomena it demands another level of functional explanation. Neuroses, for example, are often identified as neuroses only because at the level they are being identified they do not seem to have a function, they do not fit in with the normal assignation of roles to mental states. This does not preempt there being another level of functional explanation of the behavior identified initially as neurotic. Indeed all of psycho-analytic theory is founded on this assumption.

Perhaps a better and closer analogy is with the phenomenon that Eliot located in much Romantic poetry and other writing, and which he scathingly described as lacking an "objective correlative".[1] The sentimentality he noticed in such poetry --missing, in his opinion, in the finest examples of what he and others called "metaphysical" poetry-- was the product of a surplus emotion, emotion which exceeded the demands of its ground or object. Here too it is possible for someone to reply that such excess sentiment is a primitive and irreducible fact in the poetic consciousness and in readers' response, but that again seems to me to misdescribe the facts. Eliot's negative evaluation of the phenomenon depended precisely on its not having this sort of rock-bottom justification within poetics, i.e., the phenomenon demanded another level of explanation in the poet or reader's person, which Eliot considered an irrelevant, egotistical intrusion into the poetic and critical tasks at hand. So also, what I have called the "surplus phenomenology of identity" is to be seen as an irrational tendency in the life of cultures and communities because it too outpaces the level of functional explanation we have offered, and similarly demands a further, extrinsic level of functional investigation.

It may be helpful to move from these analogies to an example. Take the survival of Hindu nationalism in India today. Its sources are usually analyzed in terms of the function it served in mobilizing the Indian masses against British colonial rule, but it is evident everywhere that the communal sentiment has survived that function since colonial rule ended. This would, from the point of view of that level of functional analysis, be correctly viewed as a form of irrationality. And I'm saying that it would be quite wrong to claim that, whatever its functional sources, once the sentiment comes into existence it meets a self-standing rationale in the subject's irreducible need for self-definition. There are clearly other functions it now serves, which would require another level of functional investigation, thereby explaining the irrationality. (I have elsewhere analyzed the most recent wave of Hindu nationalist feeling in terms of the function of creating a mythological Hindu unity in the face of recent efforts to expose the deeply divided nature of Hindu culture by the implementation of affirmative action policies in favor of backward Hindu castes.[2])

I conclude, then, that there is no reason to take a theoretical stance which would deny the irrationality of these surviving or surplus phenomenologies of identity and glamorize them with obscure, unanalyzable philosophical notions

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1. See: Eliot, 1933. Obviously, I am only invoking Eliot's general idea here not his particular literary-critical judgments.
2. See: Bilgrami, 1991.

such as the subject's search for irreducible definition of itself. It is true that it is not a form of irrationality which has been much studied by philosophical anthropology or the theory of culture.[1] But that may well be just because it is too often relegated to some rock-bottom need for self-identification, which then absolves these disciplines from further diagnostic work.

<div align="center">IV</div>

Let me return to how the identifying of the specific historical and functional sources of the commitment to Islam opens things up in the study of the conflict under discussion.

It is because their commitment to Islam today is to a large extent governed by the highly defensive function that moderate Muslims find it particularly difficult to make a substantial and sustained criticism of Islamic doctrine; and this, as I said, leaves them open to be exploited by the political efforts of absolutist movements which exploit the doctrine for their own ends. Their defensiveness inhibits them with the fear that such criticism would amount to a surrender to the forces of the West, which have for so long shown a domineering colonial and post-colonial contempt for their culture. Thus it is that the historically determined function of their commitment, the source of their very self-identity, loops back reflexively upon Muslims to paralyze their capacities for self-criticism.

That a fundamental commitment could be further diagnosed along these lines --something that Williams's theoretical framework has no particular place for or interest in-- opens up various other lines for thinking about its unsettle ability in the face of conflict. For it gives us space to examine whether there might be aspects of the commitment and its function in one's psychological economy, which are superfluous or even incoherent. It thus gets us beyond the stultifying idea of being locked in a tragic and irresolvable conflict between such commitments. Let me pursue this general point further with the specific issue of Islam.

I think that it is possible to argue that critical reflection on the inhibiting effect of the defensive function of their contemporary commitment to Islam should lead Muslims to the conclusion that there is a simple but deep philosophical malaise at the heart of it; and that, in turn, should open a path to

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1. Writings in these disciplines, to their detriment, do not mix it up enough with historical and political studies, to develop theoretical (philosophical) treatments of this phenomenon of "surplus phenomenology".

distinguishing between different aspects of their faith in a way that allows for its doctrinal reform, and so eventually allows for the conflict they find themselves in to be resolved in favor of a more determined opposition to Islamic absolutism than they have been able to produce so far.

What do I mean here by a philosophical malaise? I have already granted that the contemporary re-assertion of Islamist sentiment in many countries as well as a good part of the moderate Muslim's own commitment to Islam is the product of a certain history of subjugation and condescension, which continues today in revised but nevertheless recognizable forms. Why, then am I not showing the appropriate sympathy towards these defensive stances? It is in answering this question that the specifically abstract character of the malaise is revealed.

The answer is that Muslims themselves have taken the wrong attitude to this historical determination of their Islamist sentiments. Their own observation of the role of colonialism and the West in shaping their commitments and identity ought to --but alas, does not-- have a strictly limited and circumscribed role in their own self-conception. The acute consciousness of and obsession with the historical cause of their commitment has made them incapable of critical reflection about the commitment itself. For too long now there has been a tendency among Muslims to keep saying: 'You have got to understand why we are like this', and then allow that frame of mind to dominate their future actions. This has destroyed their capacity for clear-headed, unreactive political thought and action.

There is an air of paradox in my claim: one's coming to an understanding of the historical source and function of one's commitments can put one in an unreflective and uncritical state of mind about those very commitments. But the paradox is only apparent. Understanding a phenomenon is something that occurs in the third person. And, of course, we do often take such a third person stance toward ourselves. But, to allow such a stance to develop into defensive and reactive commitments is to rest with a third person conception of ourselves. It is to deny the first person or agent's point of view. Thus (when considering the spread of absolutist sentiment in their countries) moderate Muslims are often heard to say, 'This is how things are with us because of colonial and neo-colonial domination'. Or, to take another closely related recent example (when considering Palestinian support for Sadaam Hussein), moderate Muslims are often heard to say, 'This is how things are with us because of Israeli intransigence and America's refusal to come through with serious pressure on Israel'. And

so on. These remarks are impeccable. But they are bits of knowledge that one has when one takes a third person stance toward oneself. And that stance, I'm saying, cannot be allowed to exhaust one's self-conception. on the lips of sympathetic others ('This is how things are with them ...') these remarks are the only stance to take. But on our lips, on the lips of Muslims, they cannot be the only remarks we make unless we treat ourselves as objects, unless we think of our future as we think of our past, as something that we cannot make a difference to. The philosophical malaise is quite simply that in allowing the third person point of view to dominate our political responses we are failing to live up to the basic conditions of free agency.

This point echoes, in a much more specific and political context, a point made famous in the third section of Kant's Grundlegung.[1] In the form that it occurs in Kant, the point's relevance to politics is not obvious, indeed its relevance to anything outside the very general conditions for the possibility of agency is not obvious. The idea of seeing ourselves primarily as objects, the idea of taking an exclusively third person point of view upon ourselves, in that very general Kantian setting, should have the effect of making us altogether passive; extreme versions of the eponymous figure, Oblomov, in Goncharov's novel. After all if one did not think that the future was any different from the past, why would one act at all? Though that is the extreme and logical end of taking such a perspective on oneself, my claim is that, when the concerns are not as purely general and metaphysical as they are in Kant's discussion, there are less extreme effects of adopting such a perspective --or at any rate of being dominated by this perspective-- which consist, not in passivity, but in reactive and defensive actions, rather than fully autonomous actions.

A failure to see through the implications of their opposition to the absolutists, a failure to press for the reforms that will undermine the ground upon which which the absolutists stand, is just one among the many examples of such reactiveness and defensiveness on the part of moderate Muslims. Their sulking, censorious response to Salman Rushdie's book in which there was a complete blindness to the book's own anti-absolutist polemic and importance is another example, as is the constant disposition of moderate Muslims to lend silent support to third-rate, vainglorious leaders such as Qaddafi and Sadaam Hussein, who offer instant autonomy and dignity in the face of Western domination with ineffectual war-like stances. Their understanding of themselves as the victims

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1. See: Kant, 1983.

of a history of Western domination constitutes the third-person perspective which then perpetuates just these sorts of defensive actions. If this third-person point of view did not so overwhelm their vision of themselves, it would leave space for the first person point of view, essential to the very idea of agency. The first person point of view would not allow the context of understanding the colonial past to breed the defensiveness that weakens their opposition to the absolutists, it would not allow the Palestinians to give up the moral high ground by their self-destructive support of such leaders as Sadaam Hussein.[1]

I should add that this philosophical fallacy informs a great deal of defensiveness not only in the more obviously political arena, but in the academy as well. Recent powerful, trenchant and much-needed critiques of Orientalism have forced scholars to shun the essentializing tendency in studies of Islam and the third world, and they have taught them to pay attention to the detail and diversity of their subject.[2] This effect is laudable. But they have also created a bandwagon effect that inhibits self-criticism in the fear that one is playing into Western and 'Orientalizing' caricatures of Islam and the third world. Criticism and reform does mean abstracting from diversity and detail in order to identify a core doctrine or tendency to which one is opposed. Indeed, as I argue in 'Intrinsic and Extrinsic Explanations of Islam', it is not merely criticism and reform but even the very idea of explanation of social phenomena which requires such abstraction. This methodological ploy does not amount to essentialism or caricature and we cannot afford to be tyrannized into thinking so by bandwagon intellectual trends. It is not essentialism because quite simply no social science, no historical understanding, no agenda for social and political change, can afford to ignore this simple methodological canon. Moreover every scholar in this bandwagon has (quite justly) abstracted from the diversity of the West to explain the West's colonial and neo-colonial domination of these regions. It then seems methodologically inconsistent to discourage such abstraction from the diversity within the Islamic people and nations for particular contexts of explanation and of Islamic reform.

So, speaking initially in the third person moderate Muslims might correctly say: 'In the face of colonial history and in the face of recent frustrations and

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1. Incidentally, it should go without saying, but perhaps it will not, so I will say it: it is not a matter of the moral high ground for its own sake. The point is straightforwardly one of self-interest. If Machiavelli was given to advising displaced people rather than princes, he too would have said: Don't give up the moral high ground unless you are absolutely certain that this man in this real world of US military domination will deliver you from displacement.

2. The *locus classicus* is, of course, Said's, 1978.

defeat, Islam has an appeal for us, it is grounded in a doctrine we embrace and which has comprehensive pretensions and claims on us, including - crucially - on our polities, and this gives us a sense of autonomy and identity.' If I am right that this defensive attitude reflects a predominantly third person perspective on ourselves, it will do no violence to the use of 'us' and 'we' here if we replace them with 'them' and 'they'. This is, after all, the voice of a community's understanding of its own condition and its causes. It is the voice of the subject that takes itself to be an object.

But then, if I am right, there should be place and possibility for the switch to the first person, for the voice of the subject as agent to say: 'This appeal of Islam is something we have uncritically and indiscriminately embraced out of demoralization and defeat, often allowing it to dominate our political actions, and it has gotten us nowhere; it is up to us to assess the relative merits of its diverse doctrinal commitments, up to us to work towards its reform, up to us to oppose the inviolability of the *Sharia*, to fashion a depoliticized Islam so that its appeal and relevance is spiritualist and universalist rather than to the polity, so that it does not remain perpetually exploitable by the fundamentalist political factions, whom we oppose'. This is not merely not the passive voice, it is not the reactive voice either. It is, bending language a bit, the active voice.

<div style="text-align:center">V</div>

These are of course very general things to say about the need for reform and they require detailed and specific study and analysis, as well as a systematic and strategic agenda for reformist political action. That is beyond the province of this paper.[1] But certain general lines of direction should flow obviously from points I have made so far. The idea of reform in the particular context of the conflict we have been discussing apply only to those portions of the Quran, which are exploited by the absolutists for ends which moderates oppose, those portions which speak to questions of the polity and to personal and public law. Reform thus can leave intact all the verses with the more purely Universalist and spiritual claims and commitments. It is a well-known and highly significant fact that the early verses written in Mecca are all of the latter sort. It is only some of the verses which follow upon Muhammad's arrival in Medina which make detailed claims about the state, the economy, inheritance, marriage, divorce, the status of women in the home and society, and so on. Once they

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1. I have written in more detail about the methodology and substance of this reformist agenda in 'Intrinsic and Extrinsic Explanations of Islam'.

have shed their defensiveness, it is possible for Muslims to argue that after the initial, deep, spiritual, defining pronouncements of the new faith in Mecca, the post-Medina verses were intended to address a very specific historical context in which conversion was paramount in the concerns of the prophet. Conversion was bound to be more effective if the faith addressed itself to a variety of social and inter-personal themes so that Islam could present itself as offering the (often nomadic) regional populations a hitherto unavailable sense of belonging to a unified community. It should also be possible for Muslims, therefore, to argue that since that historical context of seeking conversion has lapsed, the verses to be emphasized now are the Mecca verses which have no specific political commitments. This would indeed constitute an Islamic Reformation. It would re-open the gates of *ijtihad* (re-interpretation of Islamic doctrine) which have been closed for centuries in the rigid readings of the *Sharia*.[1]

Notice that this conception of Islamic reform, and this argument for it, will not be overturned if it turns out that I'm wrong about the functional analysis of Islamic identity. That analysis was intended to counter an unnecessarily limited notion of fundamental commitment and an unmalleable notion of conflict that it generated. But the actual conclusions and argument about reform are independent of the analysis. Even if my functionalist claim (that a good deal of the moderate Muslim's fundamental commitment to Islam is out of a historically determined defensiveness) is exaggerated, even if one emphasized the view I have downplayed (that their commitment is primarily out of the need for some purely spiritual basis for self-identification), the point of this reformist proposal for a depoliticized Islam, which stresses precisely the universal and spiritual commitments in the early verses of the Quran over many of the later verses, would still retain its validity.

My use of terms like 'universalist' should not be made to carry more weight than is intended, so let me make the intention a little clearer. It may appear that in asserting the primacy of the Mecca verses and their 'universalist' appeal, I think of reform as requiring an abandonment of what is specific and unique to Islam, leaving some deist core which is hardly recognizable as relevant to the subject of this paper, viz., 'Muslim Identity'. That appearance is not only not intended, but I would argue that it is conjured up only within a framework of thinking about communal identity which thoroughly misdescribes a community's

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1. In "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Explanations of Islam", I discuss more fully the place of the *Sharia* in our understanding of Islamic doctrine, and I disentangle the different aspects of doctrine (*Quran*, *Hadith*, *Sunna*,) which are relevant to the question of the sort of reform that I have briefly gestured at here.

psychology of identity. It is only if one saw communal identity as a highly codifiable phenomenon, as a list or code of necessary and sufficient principles, that one would even be tempted to say that a relaxation or abandonment of some set of principles would have the effect of changing the subject. Though, I won't argue for it here, I think it is an egregious misconception of religious identity to see it as a codifiable phenomenon. The idea that without the specific doctrinal commitments of public and personal law, Islam would be indistinguishable from all other universal and spiritual claims would be, in the spirit of this codificatory misconception, to divorce the message of the Mecca verses from their origins and history, as well as the abiding set of specific Islamic institutions and practices of prayer (*namaz*), pilgrimage (*hajj*), fasting (*rozah* or *sawm*), funerals (*janazah*), various religious feasts (*id*) --to name just a very few-- which they have spawned. No such idea underlies my use of terms like "universalist" and "spiritualist" to characterize the message of these verses. Their use is meant merely to mark a contrast with the specific political and legal commitments that should be the targets of reformers today. Depoliticization, however, does not imply deracination. Thus, though such a transformation in Muslims' fundamental commitment to Islam would now leave no particular doctrinal element that absolutists could invoke, it would all the same be a transformation within a commitment to Islam. It would, therefore, still constitute an answer to the question "What is a Muslim?"

In a recent work,[1] Fazlur Rahman, who wrote with learning and acuteness on these subjects, seems to have been struggling to make this point as part of a plea for modernization, but botches it somewhat by describing the Quran as a unity. The suggestion of Quranic unity is precisely what intellectuals of the absolutist movements themselves invoke to resist reform, arguing that reform would violate such a unity. The revealed word of God may tolerably be reformed precisely because the revealed word is not a unity. Different revelations can now be seen as indexed --even qua revelation-- to different historical contexts. It is really the non-codifiability that Rahman should be stressing rather than unity, and not of the text but of the sense of identity in which the text has a place among other identity-shaping practices and institutions. This point about non-codifiability of identity should allow one's religious identity (of even a highly devout moderate Muslim) to take within its stride the idea that some revealed verses may be stressed over others as historical contexts lapse.

But to return now to the larger point, for such reform not to seem to themselves

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1. See: Malik, 1982: 159-161; also the introductory remarks on pp.2-3.

a total surrender to longstanding, hostile, alien, cultural and political forces, Muslims will have to take the first step in resolving the present conflict by overcoming their acute defensiveness which, as I said, comes from taking an overwhelmingly third person perspective on themselves. How a community acquires the alternative perspective (of autonomy) in specific historical contexts is a subject that I cannot address in this paper,[1] whose aim is merely to uncover the malaise that makes a conflict seem irresolvable. But I will say this. A failure to overcome the defensiveness, a failure to acquire the first person perspective, will prove a point of the bitterest irony. A failure to come out of the neurotic obsession with the Western and colonial determination of their present condition will only prove that that determination was utterly comprehensive in the destruction it wrought. That is to say, it will prove to be the final victory for imperialism that after all the other humiliations it has visited upon Muslims, it lingered in our psyches in the form of genuine self-understanding to make self-criticism and free, unreactive agency impossible.[2]

VI

An underlying theoretical point of this paper has been that if fundamental commitments and the questions of cultural identity that they bring with them (What is an X?) are understood in terms of functional analyses of the kind I have tried to give in the case of Islamic identity today, then there is scope to see these commitments as susceptible to various criticisms in the particular context of a conflict in which they might figure. All this seems to me to offer far more scope and interest to moral philosophy than Williams allows it, even after granting to Williams the validity of the central role he gives to the idea of fundamental commitment and the validity of his critique of traditional moral philosophy.

The paper has studied the question "What is a Muslim?" in the dialectic of a conflict arising out of a concern for Islamic Reform. The conflict is one that arises because of moderate Muslims fundamental commitment to a doctrine which contains features that are often effectively invoked by the absolutists

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1. A first step would be to acknowledge the conflict itself, which for the most part lies hidden; such an acknowledgement might lead to the processes of reflection that are necessary. The specific forms of reflection that underlie the first person point of view is a large and important philosophical subject. See Chapters VII and IX of Nagel, 1986, and Chapter IV of Levi, 1987, for interesting discussions of this problem.

2. My emphasis on the requirements of the perspective of free agency and the philosophical malaise underlying the moderate Muslim's failure to acquire it fully may seem as if I have, after all, introduced a purely philosophical argument in favour of reform and of the secular ideal. But that is not quite right. I am happy to grant that the adoption of this first person perspective is itself to be justified on grounds that are internal to other values and commitments of moderate Muslims, thereby keeping faith with the point of Williams's initial critique of the philosophical ambitions of traditional "Ethical Theory".

whom moderate Muslims fundamentally oppose. If a full analysis of the commitment reveals its defensive function which have disabled Muslims from a creative and powerful opposition to the absolutists, and if, moreover, this function of the commitment is diagnosed as itself based on a deep but common philosophical fallacy, it should be possible then for moderate Muslims to think there way out of this conflict and to transform the nature of their commitment to Islam, so that it is not disabling in that way.

The question of identity, "What is a Muslim?", then, will get very different answers before and after this dialectic about reform has played itself out. The dialectic, thus, preserves the negotiability of the concept of identity and the methodological points I began with, at the same time as it situates and explains the urgency and fascination that such questions hold for us.[**]

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