Article

Islam Is Not Bad, Muslims Are: I'm Done with Islam

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Abstract: The present paper addresses the motives that make some inhabitants of the Spanish province of Granada that converted to Islam leave it after some time. We have approached this reality using grounded theory and conducting nineteen in-depth interviews. Two of the main conclusions are that all interviewees were under great pressure due to the expectations that Muslims they interacted with—partners, family, people from Muslim associations or internet groups, etc.—had of them, and that said expectations were based on interpretations of a fundamentalist nature. Additionally, the fact that these people left Islam makes it evident that their existence is grounded in a 'self' under constant construction and open to the possibility of starting to be, continuing to be, or changing depending on their personal choice.

Keywords: converts; ex-Muslims; fundamentalism; haram; Islam; self

1. Introduction

We live in a world that changes at breakneck speed (Giddens 1994; Beck 2019), a liquid world (Bauman 2013), a world in which the main political and theological institutions, along with great certainties, have been diluted and have given way to provisional truths to which we cling in order to overcome the sometimes-unbearable lightness and fragility of being (Kundera 1986; Derrida 1995). Our 'self' (Mead 1972) is characterized, according to Beriain (2011, p. 50), by having an open purpose, by being in constant construction and having a significant degree of freedom that, ambivalently, is sometimes experienced as a burden.

In this context, we are also witnessing the breakdown of some institutions (Zeraoui 2000; Lipovetsky 2006), and our fate is subject to the myriad of choices that we must make on a daily basis (Beck 2019). We can perfectly alter Descartes' famous motto and charge it with validity and legitimacy by saying "I choose, therefore I am." We make choices since the very moment we wake up until we go to sleep, and those choices range from bland and trivial to transcendent, from the brand of shampoo we buy—one in a thousand, and influenced by advertising and mass media—to the god we pray to (Moores 1993). In this way, even faith is presented as an option among many others (Moores 1993). Our commitment to God, its creed, its values and even its community become liquid: sometimes very intense, but in many cases changing and/or provisional (Ainz-Galende 2020). As Weber (2012) pointed out, beliefs, as a result of a process of rationalization and secularization, and due to the immense variety of existing alternatives to explain the meaning of life, have also become, like so many other issues, a matter of subjective preference. Thus, it may well happen that today I feel good following a particular creed and that three years ago I defined myself as an atheist. And in this continuous transition, in this continuous construction and deconstruction of our identity, sometimes the phenomenon of conversion occurs (Ainz-Galende et al. 2021).

Regarding this phenomenon and paying attention to the literature about this issue, we can see that historian Arthur Nock (1933, p. 7) points to the first Christians as those

who came up with the concept called 'conversion'. Then, they understood conversion as "the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right". At the time they referred to "the new" as Christianity, charging the definition with a strong ethnocentric content, or in the words of Edward Said (2020), with a strong "orientalist" bias.

Likewise, William James (1985, p. 157), fascinated by the phenomenon of conversions, talked about this turning, referring to the process by which "a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy." Extrapolating the definitions, seeing them objectively, leaving aside which religions would be referred to as "good" or "correct" and applying said definitions to any type of religion or "non-religion" that one could leave or convert to, the truth is that these definitions are quite useful to approach the specific characteristic that defines the people who are our object of study—converts, and more precisely those living in the Spanish province of Granada—as well as our specific subject matter—the reason that makes Muslim converts leave that faith.

Islamophobia, various controversies involving Islam, women and homosexuality, or issues such as the 9/11 and M-11 attacks, among others, have given and still give Islam a very bad press (Yazbeck 2006; Chen and Dorairajoo 2020; Doerr 2021). However, in spite of all that, it is well-known that non-Muslim countries have experienced a growing wave of conversion to Islam in recent years (Köse 1996; Jawad 2006; Sarrazin and Rincón 2015; Amiano 2020).

More specifically, in the case of Spain, the country has experienced over the last thirty years a marked increase in the number of immigrants, especially Muslim North Africans (Izquierdo 1992; Cornelius 2004), with the result that the Muslim population has multiplied exponentially. Similarly, since the end of Franco's regime, a trend of conversion to Islam has been observed among native populations in cities such as Cordoba and Granada (Dietz 2004). After carrying out a theoretical review of publications linked to our subject matter, one can find several studies on why people are converting to Islam worldwide, as well as in the particular case of Cordoba and Granada (Ventura 2012; Lupiáñez 2019). There are also studies on Muslims leaving Islam and the consequences that decision can bring them (El Saadawi 1982; Kugle 2010; Manea 2016; Nazemian and Azizimorad 2019; Syahrivar 2021). However, there are no studies on the reasons that make Muslim converts leave Islam, a faith to which they had voluntarily chosen to convert, taking into account the problems that, in many cases, said conversion brought them—social rejection, family rejection, difficulties in finding a job, etc. (Ainz-Galende et al. 2021; Ainz-Galende and Rodríguez-Puertas 2020; Ainz-Galende 2020). This may be so because the study of contemporary conversion to Islam is relatively recent in Spain in general and in Granada in particular, and even more so is the abandonment of this religion. Thus, as a consequence of this non-existent literature, this article aims to be an empirical contribution that sheds some light on this subject as well as on the incipient phenomenon of the abandonment of the Islamic faith.

Focusing on the structure of the article, below are the materials and methods used, data on who participated in our research and their reasons, and the way in which we delimited the object of study. Likewise, we explain the methodology we used and justify our reasons. Subsequently, in the results section, we present fragments of the interviews conducted and their analysis, followed by the conclusions section.

2. Materials and Methods

This article is the result of a research stay at the University of Granada whose purpose was, at first, to study the varied ways of living as an Islam in that province. However, after beginning the research and interviewing several people who had converted to Islam, we casually noticed through their discourses that there were some people that, like them, had converted to Islam, but left that religion after spending some time following the precepts

they interpreted it to dictate. It was interesting for us to open the possibility of approaching the reality of these people and to see and study what reasons they had for leaving Islam, and that is precisely the question we address in this article: why do convert Muslims leave Islam? We started by posing this research question and not a hypothesis because, in order to carry out the research, we have used the grounded theory, which employs the inductive method to discover theories, concepts, hypotheses and propositions starting directly from raw data, and not from a priori assumptions, from other studies or from existing theoretical frameworks.

2.1. The Grounded Theory as Method for Data Analysis

As we said, we have carried out the analysis of our data using the grounded theory, a general method of comparative analysis which is greatly apt for matching theory and empirical research. This method offers procedures whose objective is to order the information and develop analytical categories that reveal the most relevant patterns within the data. The software Atlas.Ti6 was used as a tool for managing the creation of different codes, to which we applied the constant comparative method, which consists of the search for similarities and differences through the analysis of the incidents contained within the data. In this way, we established three significant categories with which we could explain and answer the question we posed above. These categories are what in grounded theory is known as in vivo coding: the codification is carried out based on the literal language and expressions used by the participants given their relevance to the study.

The first category, which we have decided to call "self," refers to the fact that, in their discourses, the interviewees used "I" and "me" when talking about Islam. Two of the expressions they repeated the most were "Islam says . . . but I . . . " and "Islam says . . . but for me . . . " Thus, we established this category using the concept given by Mead (1972), defining 'self' as that space where the 'me'—the conventional aspect or the organized set of other people's attitudes that one consciously and responsibly assumes—and the 'I'—the creative aspect that brings out the 'me' and at the same time gives an unpredictable response to that 'me,' that set of other people's internalized attitudes—converge.

The second category, which we called "Muslims," refers to those people adhering to Islam that the interviewees constantly mention during the interviews—spouses, partners, associations, people with whom they interact on the Internet, etc.

The third and last category, called "haram", refers to all the things and acts that this faith considers unlawful and as such are forbidden to the Muslim community, in opposition to those considered lawful (halal) and thus are allowed.

2.2. Participants

Consistent with the grounded theory, we did not initially know the final sample size (Glaser 1992; Coyne 1997), since we configured it according to data collection (Coyne 1997). As it is known, the final credibility of the theory generated depends less on the size of the sample than on the quality of the data collected and the analytical skills of the researcher; this is called theoretical sampling. The sample used for our study was finally composed of nineteen people, and, at first, our approach to it was accidental, since it was after interviewing a group of Muslims for other purposes, as we mentioned above, when we noticed our specific population and object of study: converts living in the province of Granada who had left Islam.

Apart from this, we want to emphasize that we decided to study specifically a group of converts who leave Islam because, despite having been in contact with nine people who were born and raised in a Muslim family and who had also left Islam, none of them wanted to participate in the study. Their reasons were, as most of them said, that their voluntary renunciation of the religion they have grown up with has brought them many problems with their families and the community to which they belong. All of them, without exception, said that they were afraid to participate. Seven of them have never declared publicly that they have left Islam, constantly avoiding talking of religious issues with Muslim people,

especially with their families. Additionally, all nine of them declared during our interviews that they pretend to be good Muslims sometimes when talking to other Muslims, saying that they pray. They are especially prone to lie about their observance of precepts such as fasting during Ramadan, for the sole reason of "avoiding trouble" and not having to explain themselves. We are saying all of this because, although we do not deal with it in our article, we find it significant and consider that it can be very interesting for future studies, since everything points to the fact that people born in Muslim families have many more problems than people who convert to Islam and then leave it. Moreover, everything seems to indicate that the problems they face are different. One of Cioran's (2018, p. 35) key principles, which could be extrapolated to this question, says that the spirit that cares for its distinct essence is threatened at every step by the things it refuses. This premise could be a starting point on which to ground a hypothesis for future studies.

Having clarified this, the size of the final sample with which we worked is, as we have previously said, nineteen people (see Table 1).

Table 1. List of participants.

Name	Age	Reason of Conversion	Time in Islam (years)
Violeta	29	Faith	1.5
María	19	Faith	2
Ainoa	23	Faith	2
Sonia	27	Faith	2
Nerea	24	Faith	3
Eva	33	Muslim boyfriend	3
Natalia	23	Faith	3.5
Lorena	53	Faith	3.5
Tania	24	Faith	5
Raúl	35	Faith	5
Sarai	44	Faith	5
Mario	27	Faith	6.5
Laura	35	Faith	7
Francisco	55	Married to Muslim	7
Sofía	49	Married to Muslim	9
Juan	57	Faith	9
Elena	61	Married to Muslim	9
Gerardo	58	Married to Muslim	13
Enrique	49	Married to Muslim	15

2.3. Instruments

The instrument used for data production was the in-depth interview. A total of nineteen people who declared that they had converted to Islam and then left it were interviewed. All of them live in the Spanish province of Granada. The interviews were based on a semi-structured and flexible script, having in mind the specific goal of our research: answering the question of why do converts leave Islam.

Interviews were conducted both in-person and virtually. Thirteen people were interviewed face-to-face and the other six were interviewed via Skype. All interviews were conducted during the month of June of the present year, 2021. The average duration of the interviews was intended to be one hour, although some were longer and lasted up to two hours. The interviews were conducted and transcribed by one of the authors of this paper; however, the analysis was carried out by both authors.

As for the number of interviewees, the strength of this research lies in two key factors. The first one is having managed to find people who meet the characteristics we have already mentioned: finding the first four was easy, but then we had to carry out a thorough search to find more. The second factor that gives strength to our research is that it is significant and interesting that they agreed to be part of the study: we understand that for some people it has not been easy, and it could be said that it was not pleasant, to talk about this topic that many of them declare to have "closed". With the group of Muslims who

were born in Muslim families and have decided to leave Islam, as we pointed out, we were not so lucky and we were only able to have informal conversations which, although they shed a lot of light, do not fall within the scope of this article.

We would like to point out that this study does not intend to extrapolate the results to the realities of other converts who leave Islam in other geographical areas, especially outside Europe, but it is true that the reasons given by the people under study are very significant given the great homogeneity of their answers.

The interviewees asked us to keep their identity anonymous as a condition for participating in the study. That is why we have changed their names and omitted personal data that could lead to their identification.

3. Results

Regarding the nineteen people interviewed and with the purpose of giving some context, we find it appropriate to briefly point out that, with respect to the reasons for their conversion to Islam, there are three different groups. We make this point because we think it marked, somehow, the evolution of their stay in Islam as well as the reasons that drove them to leave said religion.

Six of the nineteen interviewees declared that they came into contact with Islam through their Muslim partners, and stated that this fact was crucial for them to finally choose to convert to Islam. All of them, without exception, declared to have freely chosen to convert to Islam. However, two women explained that, should they have not converted to Islam, their husbands would not have married them, even though they could have done it, since Islam does not forbid it. When we asked men if they had to convert to Islam to marry their spouses, they answered that it was indeed an indispensable condition, giving an absolutely essentialist, gender-focused view:

> "We men must convert. We are stronger and we can drag a woman out of Islam. That is the argument. Thus, a Muslim man marrying a Christian woman is halal [licit], because she will convert sooner or later, or that is the idea; but a Muslim woman marrying a Christian man is seen as opening the possibility for her to leave Islam, do you understand? Then there are some Muslim men I have met who did not want to marry Christian women until they convert because they are afraid that their children will not be Muslim and all that". (Gerardo)

The other thirteen interviewees declared that they entered Islam because of faith, understanding Islam as a revelation of destiny:

> "I saw my arrival to Islam as qader [destiny], as if … it had to be like that, as if Allah had chosen me. Now I think I was a lost asshole, but at the time, I felt very grateful for having been able to see what I thought was the way, the way of Allah. That was blind faith". (Elena)

Those thirteen people who understood Islam as destiny or revelation could be divided into two subgroups: nine people converted after discovering Islam through new technologies—especially through Facebook groups—and the remaining four declared having discovered Islam through daily contact with Muslims. However, all thirteen of them coincided in two things: the first is that they declared that they in a situation of what we could call personal search, stagnation and, in some cases, depression; and the second one is that all of them looked for a community, a group of like-minded people to rely on outside of the virtual world. The following two excerpts represent this issue very well:

> "For me, at that time, Islam was a revelation. I was very sad, my grandmother had just died, she was like my mother, she raised me, so when I say my grandmother I could say that my mother had just died, and I don't have much family. On top of that I didn't have a job, so I got on the internet. One thing led me to another and I started to like what I read about Islam, I joined a Facebook group and they helped me a lot, until I made the Shahada [testimony, a declaration of belief] and then I looked for people here in Granada and I felt very supported". (Violeta)

"Maybe then, Islam and what I saw as brothers and sisters saved me. I was in a kind of depression because I couldn't find the right partner and they welcomed me very well. What then came to me as a salvation turned into a nightmare. It was like a cult. There was always someone who knew more than you and who gave you directions. They were like nuns, but those from the movies, evil nuns [laughs] who would make your life miserable by telling you what was halal or haram. In the Face group [she refers to Facebook], it was entertaining, even I corrected the others, maybe at some point I was the evil nun [laughs], but then you get burned, especially when you see that those who preach, don't do as they preach". (Sonia)

Regarding the question that concerns us—why did they leave Islam—most of the interviewees' answers have to do with one of two reasons: either because the practice of Islam itself constrains them; or because the Muslims and Muslim collectives with whom they interact—partners, family, peer groups, people with whom they share common spaces like Muslim associations or the mosque—burden and pressure them with issues related to the practice of Islam, demanding from them "more and better commitment".

The following excerpt summarizes and represents very well the views of people who have left Islam after separation or divorce:

"My partner was kind, loving, until he started hammering away at me with Islam: 'become Muslim', 'the Jannah [paradise] this, the Jannah that' . . . And I, foolishly in love, went and believed it, you know? The problem is that, in the eyes of his family, I was the muskina [poor thing in Moroccan dialect], to them I was dumb, the one who believed everything. And the worst thing is that they were partly right [laughs]. The thing is, I couldn't take it anymore, my marriage was falling apart and he was getting more and more religious, more and more demanding. He liked less and less what I was doing, my family, my friends. Everything was haram, everything was forbidden. Following what Islam said was becoming more and more difficult to me. He wanted me to pray and to be only with Muslims, because that's what Islam says, period. It was horrible. So I got divorced and freed myself. Islam has been kind of a process because, as I said, I swallowed it all. They told me 'Islam says that . . . ' and there I was, doing it. But since I disassociated myself from Islam, and especially from Muslims, I live much calmer, or as I would have said before, 'much calmer Wallah!' [I swear by Allah] [laughs]". (Sofia)

The interviewees' discourses show that their way of living Islam was mediated in one way or another by fundamentalist conceptions aimed at radically changing their lives based on the parameters of Islam that are considered 'correct.' The exception to this were Francisco and Enrique, who openly declared that their lives did not change much after converting to Islam—in Francisco's words, "my life was the same, I didn't pray, only Ramadan and the lamb [he refers to *Eid 'al' Adha*, the 'Festival of the Sacrifice'] and little more." According to Kepel (2000), we understand fundamentalism as a universal phenomenon in the context of the global mutations and changes that contemporary societies are undergoing. From this perspective, fundamentalism should not only be seen as the fruit of unreason and fanaticism, but also as a testimony of a profound social disease that our traditional categories of thought are unable to describe.

All fundamentalists propose to reconstruct the world based on sacred texts and rise up violently against secular society. Marty and Appleby (1991) enumerate the main characteristics of fundamentalism: religious idealism; extremism, whether rhetorical or real; idealization of particular historical moments; dramatization and mythologization of their enemies; and proselytism.

As we pointed out, the pressure exerted by the Muslims with whom our interviewees interacted was based on achieving the fundamentalist ideal. However, in these cases, fundamentalism, far from fostering greater adherence to religious practice, had the opposite effect.

Thus, we find some people like Natalia and Sarai, who felt that their family members or the group of Muslims with whom they interacted were pressuring them with their fundamentalist impositions:

"Look, I could not, how to put it, I could not read something and understand what I wanted. Because I read *hadith* [discourses] from the Prophet that were precious, but no, where I read one thing they explained me another, and if not, wrong, haram. I read one thing and they told me that Islam said the other thing. If I put on the cloth [she refers to the hijab] and some of my hair could be seen, wrong, haram, Islam says that's not right. Without the cloth, as I say, haram too; but if my clothes fit me, haram. It didn't matter that my family had stopped talking to me because I had become a Muslim or because I wore hijab, the important thing was that the clothes fit me and it invalidated everything else because Islam says that one's figure should not be seen and my clothes were tight. And I wanted to fulfill everything, one hundred percent, no, two hundred percent. They told me 'don't listen to music,' and Natalia didn't listen to music because it was haram. And day after day more and more alone, in my room, because you isolate yourself, it's like disconnecting from the outside world, and I couldn't take it anymore. Now I go to a psychologist and everything. It's not easy to leave Islam". (Natalia)

"It got to a point where everything was haram. I was touched by a dog, haram; praying while wearing the clothes the dog had touched me with, haram; listening to music, haram; sharing a table with my friends or with my family if there were alcoholic drinks on it, haram. Everything was haram, and I wanted to be a good Muslim, you see? I did, until I saw that people around me did not do everything as they preached, so to speak; I was busting a gut to be the perfect Muslim, I swear. It was crazy, but I never achieved it because I was always doing something wrong. It wasn't Islam that was bad. It was the Muslims. So today, I'm done with Islam!" (Sarai)

There are also people like Ainoa and Mario who, through the Internet and through what they read in Facebook groups, in forums and such, constrained themselves in order to reach that ideal of an 'accepted' Muslim. According to their interviews, they sought that acceptance because they wanted to follow Islam correctly; they did it 'for Allah's sake,' but at the same time, it could be said that it had an important social component, such that they were seeking intra-group acceptance:

"The thing is that I wanted to do everything for Allah, but I realized that, in the end, who I wanted to please was the rest of my brothers and sisters, I wanted their likes, their approval, their hearts, you know? When they reproached me for any minimal error in my behavior I would partly get down in the dumps and I would start performing voluntary salat [prayers] like crazy. All of this gave me a lot to think about. That, and the fact that later I saw that many people pretended that their life was islamically perfect and I saw that they were not, that they were lying, that it was a façade. That led me to a great disillusionment". (Ainoa)

"I'm going to speak very clearly, we are very 'malafollá' [expressive character trait typical of the inhabitants of Granada which is often perceived as sarcastic, rude or pessimistic], but I left Islam because there was always some dickhead that came to tell you that something was haram, that you were doing things wrong, that your posture was not right or that something could not be done with the left hand. What the fuck, I am left-handed. I was fucking sick of the word haram. At the beginning, it was fine, but after a couple of years of putting up with it I ended up totally crazy. It's not the religion itself, the din or whatever you call it, it's the fucking Muslims that don't let you be". (Mario)

On the subject of social and self-constraint, Wunenburger (2006) notes that the sacred sometimes blends closely with the more prosaic and insignificant activities of our existence,

not only for what he calls a kind of disproportionate contagion, but also to provide an individual's elementary actions with coherent and persuasive models. This idea is clearly seen in this excerpt:

> "When I hesitated about doing something as Islam says, I was always told 'think that it is quite logical. Allah is not going to order you to do anything bad, bad for you.' And then I said 'it's true', and I would leave my previous thought and acquire the new one. I didn't want to disappoint Allah, but neither did I want to disappoint the Muslims who had helped me so much. I wanted to do everything perfectly, and that was impossible. I was under lots and lots of pressure. I didn't want to fail, I wanted to remove everything haram from my life, all at once, and there were things that were very difficult because they involved a lot of . . . renunciation. I didn't even know who I was anymore: the more I got into Islam, the further away I was from myself. Yeah . . . it's crazy. I was like Pac-Man. I abandoned myself, I lost myself, in order to be the perfect Muslim. Now I'm in the process of searching for myself, trying to find myself. I go to a psychologist. I put on a lot of weight, I look bad . . . Sometimes, I still feel guilty for things I do wrong, Muslim things, and I don't consider myself a Muslim anymore, but it touched me very deeply. It hurt me a lot". (Tania)

In summary, we want to emphasize that one of the most significant statements that best summarizes the context that converts experience when renouncing Islam are some words that all the interviewees have used throughout the interviews: "Islam says that . . . " This shows that Islam is one and only, unchangeable, that it cannot be constructed since it is built beforehand, that it does not adapt to people, in the same way that people cannot adapt it to their lives. This approach to understanding and living Islam takes for granted that Islam is like that, as formulated by some Islamic schools such as the Salafi or Wahhabi—obviating that this is just one more interpretation, among others, of the Islamic religion—which clearly seek to be the hegemonic interpretation and which, in this case, has served as a driving force for the rejection of Islam by the interviewees. At a certain point in their lives, the interviewees had to choose between being Muslims and following 'what Islam says'—thus elaborating a completely closed, hermetic 'me' with no possibility of any change outside the parameters dictated by the concrete interpretation of the fundamentalist Islam they professed—or following the path of being themselves and continuing with their clearly constant, changing and creative process of continuous construction of the 'I'.

4. Conclusions

In one of his articles, Bauman (2013) says literally 'in skating over thin ice, safety is in our speed.' That sentence sums up perfectly the sentiment expressed by most of our interviewees, for whom Islam has been a stop within an amalgam of harbors of beliefs in which they chose to stay for some time. Maybe for a while when they were converts, before the conversion or afterwards, Islam was a support, but after some time it became thin ice from which to escape, a yoke—a yoke that was the vertebral axis of their lives and which was based on a fundamentalist conception of Islam to which our interviewees clung, either by choice or by pressure from the group of Muslims around them, and which even led some of them to depression.

Thus, the protagonists of our paper went from having their own interpretation of Islam as an important basis for the meaning of their existence, to its fundamentalist version becoming an oppressive element from which to escape in order to be free again and rescue their 'self.' More specifically, they rescued themselves from some very specific, closed and hermetic beliefs, as well as from the group that produces and reproduces said beliefs—in some cases it was their family, in other cases they are groups of Muslims, and sometimes both. Samuel Huntington (1997, p. 116) points to fundamentalist movements as a way of confronting chaos and the loss of identity, meaning and social structures. According to him, these circumstances have been generated by the rapid introduction of modern social and political models, secularism, scientific culture and economic development. However, Islam

in this format is precisely what has disenchanted our interviewees and what has made them flee from fundamentalist religion. This leaves open many questions that undoubtedly could serve as a starting point for further research: what happens to those who do stay in Islam? Will all of them adopt a fundamentalist conception of Islam? For how long? Will they spread it, too? What current of Islam is spreading in Europe in general, and in Spain and Granada in particular? Moreover, it is important, significant and clearly imperative to unravel who is behind this recurrent affirmation of "Islam says that..." From where is this knowledge exported? Which people construct it, and, above all, who spreads it and with what intention? Are these people who spread it or adapt it to their daily lives aware that Islam can be lived in this way, but also in many other ways based on the hermeneutics and the free interpretation of the so-called sacred texts? Or without going that far, are these people aware that there are other, more lax and permissive interpretations of Islam to which they can adhere?

Following Simmel (1986, p. 34), we can say that the interviewees, after leaving Islam, have become once again frontier beings, but without a frontier. Thus, the people under study, divesting themselves of Islam—or continuing with the metaphor with which we opened the conclusions, escaping from the ice—begin once again the same search that led them to that religion in the first place.

We see that the lack of something definitive in the center of our lives pushes us to look for a momentary satisfaction in excitements, in satisfactions, in new activities or even in religions and beliefs (Simmel 1986). Said lack can manifest itself in various ways and we can end up transiting, more or less momentarily, as in this case, a melting pot of beliefs. Musil (1961, vol. 1, p. 149) pointed out in one of his books that ideals and morality are the best means to fill the great hole one calls the soul, but which ideas and which morality are used for that purpose matters very little. Well, it seems that this is not entirely the case, and that ideas, made facts, do matter after all. "Thank God".

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