HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN AN EMERGING
TOTALITARIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

This paper, in viewing the spread of totalitarian regimes since World War II, suggests that the Western world may be already embedded with the essential ingredients leading to totalitarianism. Since normal behavior is often perceived in terms of the existing traditions, attitudes, customs and values of the society in which it is observed, a "new society" would promote new perspectives of human behavior and a new concept of psychological health.

In a totalitarian society the self-actualizing individual might be seen to be eliciting unproductive and unacceptable behavior, and a new measure of normality congruent with new political structures might evolve.

Résumé

Cette étude, en considérant l'extension des régimes totalitaires depuis la deuxième guerre mondiale, suggère que le monde occidental peut être déjà enfoncé dans les éléments essentiels du totalitarisme. Puisqu'un comportement normal est souvent perçu en fonction des traditions, attitudes, coutumes et valeurs existantes de la société dans laquelle on le trouve "une nouvelle société" devrait produire de nouvelles manières de voir du comportement humain et un nouveau concept de santé psychologique.

Dans une société totalitaire, l'individu actualisé en lui-meme pourrait être vu comme donnant lieu à un comportement improductif et inacceptable, et une nouvelle mesure de normalité,conforme aux nouvelles structures politiques, pourrait se produire.

Totalitarianism is a term "denoting a single party, a dictatorial system of government, based on the totality of the state" (Elliott, 1975, p. 464). Characteristics of totalitarian regimes include the following: an official ideology; a dictator; police terrorism; control of communications; control of the military (Friedrich and Brzezinski, 1956). Totalitarian political systems are generally considered to be in the process of evolving and may eventually become a predominant force affecting all mankind. Arendt (1958) contends that, "totalitarian movements aspire to conquer the globe and bring all countries on earth under their domination" (p. 415). The implications of such a possibility obtain a certain degree of importance as man rapidly approaches the twenty-first century.

Since World War II totalitarianism has been increasing at an alarming rate. In underdeveloped countries of East Asia, Africa and Latin-America the rise of totalitarian governments is most evident. In these countries political organization of the masses has been realized, for the most part, by means of revolution, terror, violence, warfare and force.

However, a totalitarian regime may be established through a systematic and evolving process, rather than a *coup d'etat*. For instance, under the disguise of democracy a form of authoritarianism may be achieved through political and diplomatic maneuvers. Tactful implementation of government policies, which escape the awareness of the masses, may severely narrow the power of certain social and political institutions. The unfolding of a carefully designed plan of this nature could lead to the centralization of power. If this is the case, then controlling agencies in the democratic Western world may already be embedded with essential ingredients leading to totalitarianism.

The influence of social, political and economic systems which interact upon the individual is a major concern related to human behavior. This concern is derived from the realization that the human being is significantly affected by characteristics of his environment. The influence of sociological factors in determining adaptive behavior is of vital importance (Buss, 1975; Brandt, 1970). Normal behavior is often perceived in terms of the existing traditions,

attitudes, customs and values of the society. A "new society" would promote new perspectives of human behavior, reflecting the ideology of the socio-politico-economic system. If, indeed, the philosophy of the future political system differs from that of today, then it may be logical to assume that a new concept of psychological health may be required.

Within the past decade a predominant force in psychology has been the Human Potential Movement. Recognizing the limitations of traditional psychological theory, which stressed the individual's adjustment to society, supporters of this movement countered with the view that man was capable of actualizing his potentials. Advocates of this position have included Allport (1965), Bonner (1961), Bugental (1965), Ellis (1973), Frankl (1963), Fromm (1969), Jourard (1968), Maslow (1962), May (1953), Moustakas (1967), Rogers (1961) and Perls (1969). Each proponent has described characteristics of the healthy personality. The emotionally stable individual, for the most part, is perceived as being inner-directed, authentic, spontaneous, creative, integrated, rational, productive and transparent. These personality attributes may have a certain congruence with current trends apparent in today's society, characterized as being open, liberal, permissive, immoral, loving, transient, complacent and pragmatic. According to Goble (1971), the rise of the Human Potential Movement has been strongly affected by the *Zeitgeist*.

Historically societies are never static, but rather are continually in process, shifting with the fads and fashions which become embedded within the social structure. In our present society, for example, there is an emerging trend toward centralization, state ownership, population distribution, disorganization of the family and dissolution of religious sects (Marchak, 1975; Porter, 1967). Major social changes of this nature reflect, at least in part, those characteristics commonly found in totalitarian movements (Arendt, 1958; Friedrich and Brzezinski, 1956). The ideology of future political systems then may have antecedents in the societal changes of today.

The nature of our future society has been well documented (Orwell, 1949; Skinner, 1962; Huxley, 1939; Bellamy, 1967; Richter, 1971; Wells, 1967). Future societies have been perceived in terms of ruling intelligentsia, behavioral engineering, regimented industrial armies and genetic mutation. The foundations of these utopian societies are often based on the underlying principles of conditioning theory. If, in fact, the prospective society is totalitarian, and there is reason to believe such a contention, it would then be consistent with the principles of conditioning theory. On the other hand, however, a totalitarian system would be in all likelihood incongruent with the concept of the Human Potential Movement. Appropriate behavioral patterns established by a totalitarian regime would for all intents and purposes reflect Classical and Behavioral learning theory.

Those characteristics advocated by the Human Potential Movement as leading to psychological health may be inappropriate in determining normative behavior in the future. For instance, individuals experiencing "wholeness", "oneness", "being" and "becoming" would be capable, at least according to the theory, of recognizing the dehumanizing conditions of the new society. In an attempt to remain "human" these individuals may reject the enforced codes of conduct, and become frustrated, hostile, aggressive and rebellious. Non-conforming behavior of this nature is usually attributed to the psychologically disturbed and in all likelihood would not be tolerated by the governing institutions. Extinction of non-conforming tendencies would result and reconditioning would ensure adaptation. It may be reasonable to conclude then, that in the future, individuals functioning from the underlying premises of the Human Potential Movement may, in fact, be eliciting unproductive and unacceptable behavior. As the twenty-first century rapidly approaches Harrington (1975) believes, "that the dream for human self-emancipation will turn out to be man's noblest deception." (p. 9).

The dilemmas facing the self-actualizer in the future may be foreseen by examining those experiences of self-seekers functioning within totalitarian regimes. For instance, individuals searching for personal freedom under authoritarian rule are often perceived as being outspoken, rebellious, and non-traditional. Hence, they are considered dangerous and threatening to the state. Behaviors of this nature are suppressed with the individual eventually being removed from the political and social spectrums. The atrocities committed by Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini and Lenin are cases in point. Victims of these dictatorships were often executed, exiled or imprisoned. More recently, many dissenters are sent to labor camps while the "psychologically disturbed" are placed in mental hospitals (Solzhenitsyn, 1973). Subversive action in many totalitarian countries consists of a variety of measures. For example, in Cambodia, political activists are beaten to death; in Romania radicals are forced to take allegiance to the flag; in Vietnam vast numbers are re-educated; in Turkey, dissenters are shot; in Angola, rebels are publicly hung; and in Mainland China dissidents are brainwashed (Wurmbrand, 1976). Action of this nature reflects the very roots of totalitarian ideology. If the Western society moves in this direction, then certain expectations for the individual seeking self-expression may already be apparent.

Another area involving the effects of a restricting environment on human behavior may be found within certain social institutions. Similarities in structure and design may be observed between totalitarianism and the penal system. Prisons and correctional institutions tend to operate from a framework that limits the productive growth of many individuals. For instance, some prison inmates react negatively to their forced adaptation to the regulations of the correctional institute, and become rebellious. The rebellious inmate is characterized by his anxiety, frustration, dependency, hostility, impulsivity and aggressiveness (Gough, 1960; Smith, 1973; Stewart, 1972; Eysenck and Eysenck, 1971). These personality traits have been related to the inmate's unwillingness to accept the dehumanizing conditions of the institution (McGrath, 1965; Glaser, 1964; Cohen, 1966). Inmates who reject the institution are, for the most part, considered emotionally disturbed. Evidence to the contrary, however, has indicated that non-conforming inmates are more psychologically healthy than conforming inmates (Morris, 1974). Furthermore, emotionally stable inmates possessed many of those characteristics attributed to the self-actualizer (Morris, 1976). The non-conforming prison inmate may, in fact, exhibit self-actualizing tendencies, however, such behavior is often viewed as threatening to the institution.

Other examples of the dilemma experienced by self-seeking individuals can be found in Laing's (1965) interpretation of schizophrenia and Dabrowski's (1964) conception of positive disintegration. In both cases, abnormal behavior is perceived in terms of higher stages of human awareness. There is a strong belief that such behavior represents an advanced form of personal integration. Nevertheless, social agencies typically view such behavior as pathological and treatment is advised. Similar experiences may be found among individuals of certain subcultural groups. Political, ethnic and racial groups are tolerated only insofar as their activities remain within established norms. Activities which endanger social institutions are suppressed and legal action is often pursued.

In the future, new dimensions of psychological health may be defined. Appropriate behaviors may require that the individual be conforming, structured, emotionless, receptive, unthinking, outer-directed, mechanical, functional and rigid. In today's society these characteristics are readily recognized as leading to personality deterioration. Nevertheless, in a disciplined society adapting, accepting and adjusting to these traits in the pursuit of normality may be a major task for man. The need to adopt new modes of human behavior will reflect the ideology of the new political order.

Agreement can be found to support the view that there is a general movement toward total world unity (Laszlo, 1975; Beitz and Washburn, 1975; Sakamoto, 1975; Mendlovitz, 1975; Meadows, Meadows, Randers & Behrens, 1972). Futurists believe that the concept of the global village is essential for the survival of the human species. However, the political structure of the Western society will need to change in order that global equilibrium be achieved (Harrington, 1972; Toffler, 1970; Heilbroner, 1974; Revel, 1974). Advocates of this position strongly believe that democracy in its present form would be incapable of effectively maintaining the cohesive structure required for world unity. By the turn of the century democracy may be considered only as a step in the developmental process of mankind and perceived as an idealistic vision of the past. The nature of the New World Order according to Allen (1976) will be:

> . . . a dictatorship. Conservatives will call it Socialism or Communism. Liberals will call it Facism. The label will make little difference; it will be a Gulag Archipelago on a world wide basis. (p. 9)

With the failure of democracy as a future political force and the increasingly rapid rise of totalitarianism, the question remains: Why?

Heilbroner (1974) believes that the movement toward utilitarianism is necessary in order to ensure the survival of the human species. This position is derived from considering essential components found in the nature of man. Man is perceived as being innately predisposed toward the seeking of direction, guidance, management, structure and regulation. These characteristics suggest that man has a need to be governed and controlled by external forces. Man is conditioned from childhood to accept authority as a part of his socialization process. Analogously, political leaders are often symbolized as "parental" figures. In times of crises and unrest man seeks strong leadership and becomes politically obedient to those forces that best provide safety and security. There is therefore a natural tendency in man to align himself with an authoritarian system and thereby, reduce his existential anxieties. Independent of the political ideology presented, all leaders utilize this essential ingredient which is found in man when obtaining power. The present apocalyptic period is one of exceptional tension and man may be expected to grasp those political systems that are most congruent with his basic nature. Accordingly, man's struggle for survival "may be possible only under governments capable of rallying obedience . . . such governments may be unavoidable, even necessary" (Heilbroner, 1974, p. 10).

In sum, many authorities predict that the twenty-first century will issue forth a new era of mankind. Radically changing political styles may be responsible for new definitions of human functioning. Traditionally a corresponding relationship has existed between the trends of society and acceptable modes of human behavior. A measure of normality in the future may be expected to be congruent with the political, social, economic and cultural structure of the society. An advancing totalitarian society would in all likelihood replace such concepts as self-actualization, self-understanding, and self-awareness with acceptance, adjustment and adaptation. The need for fundamental changes in the perception of human behavior may be related to man's basic nature. Essential components in the nature of man may be instrumental in determining the rise to power of totalitarianism. There is reason to believe that a new concept of psychological health may need to be derived in the future. A concerted effort by members of the helping professions in determining new patterns of behavior for the future might be seen as a most productive step.

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