

FUTURE VOICE[®]



THOUGHT REFORM

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The Panther

*His gaze has from the passing by of bars
become so numb that it holds nothing more.*

*He feels as if there were a thousand bars
and beyond those thousand bars no world.*

*The sinuous gait of strong and supple strides
that turns the tightest, ever smallest round
is like a dance of strength around a centre
in which benumbed a greater will is bound.*

*Just sometimes quietly his pupils' veil
slides open. Then a view can enter,
goes through the flexing silence of his limbs –
and ceases, deep inside his heart, to be.*

Rainer Maria Rilke, 1902

THOUGHT REFORM

Now that the thin cloak of sham democracy, which was thrown over many states of this earth, has disappeared into nothingness in the course of the declared pandemic (2020/21), the structures that really move our world are becoming more and more clearly recognisable.

In the process, one thing is becoming clearly apparent to many. The ruler on this planet is not the people's sovereign or common sense. It is not the will of a peace-loving human family on the path to a more evolved world that sets the pace here.

Rather, the narcissistic, destructive will of a small group of self-proclaimed 'elites' imposes itself on humanity – sometimes subversive, sometimes more obvious; and always with the obstinate tenor and subliminal threatening gesture: Whoever is not for us, is against us.

Despite all the education and the memorable events of the Nazi cult, which led millions of people into misery and death – repeatedly the majority of humanity gets caught in the net of the dark soul catchers and willingly sells out their own sovereignty and soul and that of their children for free on top.

And even if a few parameters change from time to time in the external structure – currently, everything must be adapted to a global radius of action – in essence, it is the tried and tested methods of manipulating human thought and action that always come into play.

The whole pandemic seems like a huge field experiment on the subject of thought reform – because they want to make us believe something, sell us a concept where the fish already stinks from the head, and they want to make us co-perpetrators or at least followers, or rather cult members.

Cults have initiation rites, and what some have in the form of a tattoo or branding, this one has in the form of an electromagnetic signature (implanted directly into the genetic code) which confirms your affiliation and (perhaps) saves you from being expelled from the pack. Playing with primal fears is also an important part of the manipulation portfolio.

Over the centuries, and especially in the 20th and 21st centuries, an infinite amount of research has been done on the subject of manipulating human consciousness; honourable ones that have sought to inform man, as well as criminal ones that served to enslave the human mind forever. The techniques of influence have become more and more perfidious and subliminal over time and are now supported by the most modern technology.

In order to illustrate which mechanisms are currently being implemented on a large scale and why the so-called pandemic is **not** primarily driven by experienced physicians, but by psychologists, we are dedicating this issue to the topic of Thought Reform.

We focus on two classic pillars of this very broad field of research – the work of Robert Jay Lifton, M.D., and Margaret Thaler Singer, Ph.D., two psychologists who have spent a lifetime working intensively on this topic.

However, we would like to start with an observation on the current situation by Dr. Mark McDonald.

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Pandemic. OF. Fear.

*A Lecture from © Dr. Mark McDonald,
White Coat Summit,
AMERICA'S Frontline Doctors, July 27, 2021*

My Name is Dr. Mark McDonald. I am a child and adolescence Psychologist from Los Angeles, California. I have been working with children, adolescents and adults for over ten years in my practice. And what I've seen in the last year and a half has been an utter disaster.

I been speaking about the pandemic of fear not the medical pandemic, but the fear pandemic, for over a year now. It is still my belief today that fear is been the primary driving force of all of the destruction that is run our country since early 2020.

What I would like to talk about today is not just fear but where it leads.

What I believe now looking back over the last fourteen, fifteen months is that every person in this country to some degree has been traumatized by fear. When people individuals and collectively as a group suffer fear, day after day after day – being told that they are going to die if they leave their home; that their children are going to kill their grandmother if they don't put on a mask; if they step across the threshold at school that they are all going to infect their classmates – that creates a traumatized state, a traumatized state of mind.

Very importantly, what happens to people when they are traumatized is they lose their capacity to think, to process information and to expressed courage in the face of fear. They loose all of those capacities.

What happens when you lose the capacity to think, to reflect, to act on your own, to process information, to know what's true and what's not true, to differentiate between the two? What happens is you become compliant. And you start to follow orders because that is all you know how to do.

You don't think through what you are doing, you just do, you just act.



Wear. A. Mask.

I had a mother bringing a thirteen years old boy into my practice a couple of days ago who I have not seen for over a year in my office. They both came in wearing masks, and the first thing that they asked me was: “Dr. McDonald, are you vaccinated?” The very first thing.

I didn’t answer the question. I answered it with a question. And I said: “I’m willing to answer your question, but I like to know why you are asking me. Why does it concern you?”

And the mother, she was sitting there very anxiously, pulling on that mask; what I’m calling mask anxiety. She was pulling it down and right and left, just this sort of nervous tick. And the boy had his mask on and he had an iPad and he was tapping away on the iPad.

And she said “Well, I’m asking because – first of all, we are all vaccinated in our family, I just want to let you know, we are all vaccinated,” expecting me to her some sort of approval for getting vaccinated.

And I didn’t say anything, I just listen. “We are all vaccinated, but if you’re not I’m going to keep my mask on.” And I just paused and I just asked her: “Why do you say that? Are you not assured that the vaccination is protecting you, like it was promised?”

“Well you know, there are all these breakthrough cases, there are these variants.” And the little boy, he is typing on his iPad, and he looks up at me and says “Oh yeah, there is lots of variants and we have to be safe and we have to protect ourselves with our masks.” He was reading a line. He was thirteen years old.

And I kept asking questions. And she started to come down and said “I didn’t know this, I didn’t know that, really.”

I never answered the question about the vaccination. But what I discovered in talking to her was, that she was traumatized for a year. She had not left her home. She had not allowed her child to leave the home.

The child was only playing on computer games. He was afraid of going on sleepovers. He was afraid to play with his friends. The farther had not left the house. The whole family was traumatized. All because they thought they are going to kill their parents, the grandparents of the child.

They had gone in a zone of compliance. Complete mindless thoughtless compliance. And it was the first time, I think, that someone had sat with her in a room, face to face not through a stream, and actually challenge that.

She left feeling a bit better. Relieved. She had pulled her mask off. The boy took his mask off, and she didn’t correct him. And I thought, ‘All right, that was a small battle that I have won.’

But my goodness, multiply that over 330 Million people – what a task that will be.



JCDecaux

NHS

UK Government

LOOK HIM IN THE EYES

AND TELL HIM THE RISK ISN'T REAL.

Tony
Covid-19 patient

STAY HOME • PROTECT THE NHS • SAVE LIVES

A vertical outdoor advertisement for the NHS. The top of the ad features the JCDecaux logo and the NHS logo. Below these is the UK Government logo. The main visual is a close-up, high-contrast photograph of a man's face, identified as Tony, a Covid-19 patient. The text 'LOOK HIM IN THE EYES' is overlaid on the top half of the face, and 'AND TELL HIM THE RISK ISN'T REAL.' is overlaid on the bottom half. At the bottom of the ad, there is a yellow banner with the text 'STAY HOME • PROTECT THE NHS • SAVE LIVES' in black and red.

Beyond the compliance something else I noticed that is even more sick and hard to address is the identification with the abuse or the abuser I should say.

I had a patient, 26 years old, come in just a few days ago as well; delivering food from the store to his home. He got into the store, got his food, went to the checkout, didn't have a mask on, was reminded he didn't wear a mask by the cashier.

Calmly told the cashier that he didn't feel that was necessary. And a man behind him in line, a seventy something year old man with a cane, started screaming at him "Murderer, Murderer, Murderer"; screaming at him.

He does his credit, calmly turned to the man and told him "I don't think it's really your concern," got his groceries and walked out.

Another man in this store started arguing and yelling with the man who was screaming. They got into a brawl. All the employees came over. Everyone was rejected from the store.

As my patient drove out of the parking lot, he turned around through his mirror. He looked at the store door, and he saw the guy walking out of the store, the guy with the cane. And the first thing he did was he pulled his mask down.

The very first thing. So of course my patient couldn't help himself. He leaned out the window, and he said "Hey, looks like your mask slipped."

The man, the seventy something year old man with the cane, he began chasing him out of the parking lot, with the cane beating him, the car, with the cane.

This man has started to identify with his abuser which is really the state.

The state told him that all the people didn't get their vaccines, they didn't have their mask on, they are actually the enemy. And he believes that. And he actually wants to attack and kill people because of course they are murders. He also lost his mind.

So, this brings me to a larger question, I think, which is: “What exactly is the tactic here, that is being used to make this people feeling fearful, traumatized, compliant, identify with their abuser?”

I think that is a newer tactic, at least in this country which is one of turning groups against themselves; intra and intergroup warfare. And it is very, very effective.

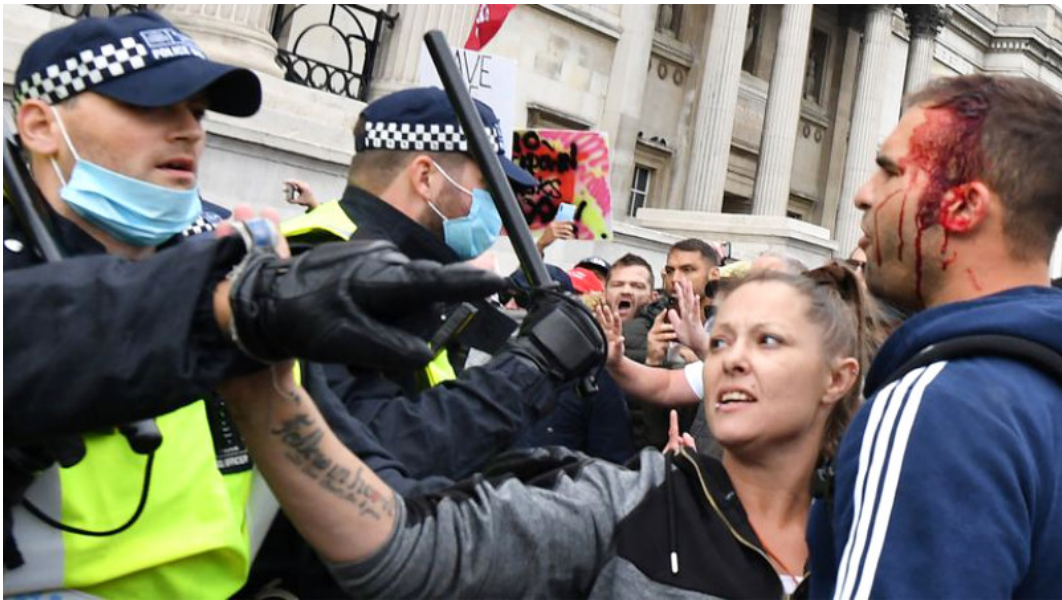
While I live in Los Angeles County and in a state of California all we hear, literally all we hear every day, front page news from the Health Department Director – I call her the fake doctor, Barbara Ferrer, because she is a Ph.D. in social work. She is never entered a clinic, never went to medical school. And yet has absolute dominion over 10 Million citizens of Los Angeles County in the very intimate details of their life. In what to put on their face, whether their children can go to school or not.

And she said repeatedly: “This pandemic is still ongoing and largely the fault of those who haven’t got the vaccines.

So what is that mean?

All the people that dutifully would got their vaccinations, they didn’t can take their masks off, they didn’t can send their kids to school are now suffering terribly, as are their children. Not because of the state but because of you and you and you – all of you that didn’t get your shots.

That’s what I mean by intragroup warfare.



There is also this insidious process what is occurring within families. I had another family come to my office, again just this week; these are all examples in the last seven days. I don't even have to go back six months or a year.

Wonderful family, two parents, three daughters. The father and one of the daughters got vaccinated. The mother and the other two daughters did not. Almost like a controlled experience. They all drove to Florida and came back in a car trip. The day they got back from the car trip all of them got sick, symptomatically. Then they got tested – all positive.

The husband and the daughter who reluctantly agreed to get vaccinated, because they thought that was the right thing to do. They are the compliant half of the family. Not like the wife and the daughters, who are the rebels.

All of them came to my office and all of them admitted that they have been deceived. But they won't fight amongst themselves. The fight was actually with the parents of the father who got vaccinated.

His parents live out at the East coast. They are very wealthy, they have a house in the Hamptons. And every year the family gets together to go to the mansion and they spend a month there.

Now guess who is not invited this year? The wife and the two daughters who didn't get vaccinated. Now, that would be bad enough if they hadn't already recovered from their infection and now have natural immunity, which everyone knows actually confirmed lifelong widespread immunity unlike this specific vaccine. But the parents won't allow them to go to the Hamptons because they haven't received their shots.

Now, I don't think they even believe it's dangerous. I don't think they are even afraid. I think that they are using the tactic of the government gave them a casual to beat the family members who won't comply with their wishes, because of political differences within the family.

So they have made this a political issue, and they have made them comply. At least they want them too.

It's cause this intragroup warfare within the family. And I have heard this story from many families. I'm sure you all have as well. All of you have heard one of these stories, if not more.

So these tactics, they are fairly new to the United States. But they have been in existence for quite a long time throughout the 20th Century, in all of the states of dictatorships throughout the world. And they are still going on in one very prominent country which is the Peoples Republic of China, the PRC.

We all have heard about the social point system. We have heard about parents turning on children, children turning on parents. That is the tactic is being applied here in the United States. It's a psychological warfare tactic and it is highly effective.

If you take something away from someone and you don't blame you or the people that you work for, you blame the others, then guess what happens. They start feeding on each other. And then you step back and watch the blood going in the ocean.

We are all eating ourselves up over it. Rather than turning our attention to the real enemy which is the state, which is the teachers unions, the pharmaceutical companies, the big tech cooperations. All of the collected interests that all igniting the fuel, so that we can all feed on ourselves.



I believe that this problem did not just start last year. The foundation had been laid thirty or forty years ago with fear tactics such as: 'The environment is going to destroy us, if we don't destroy all of our capitalist policies now. The country is infested with systemic racism. Everybody that doesn't have dark skin hate all of those who do. Men awful, toxic masculinity, rape culture.'

All of this has been just yelled, screamed at us. More so in the last ten years, but it certainly started thirty or forty years ago.

So, we are primed to be afraid. We are primed to feel like everybody is out to get us, particularly women. Women have been victimized by this much more than men have. And a lot of the women have become hysterical. And I'm not blaming the women; they are actually the victims here. The women had been victimized because the men have started to disappear and they started to fail to display courage.

When men step away, women try to fill the space and it is not their role to fill the space of making people physically safe.

That is not their role, that is the role of men. Men and women have different contributions. And that is wonderful, that is lovely. But they can't do it now because the women are hysterical, the men are emasculated and everybody is feeding on themselves. Until we address this problem, I don't think we are going to get any further.

In my next talk I'm going to describe this and explain it on a more systemic level in terms of institution and how we need to use those institutions to help support individual courage, individual displays, a bravery and how to counteract fear.

But we also, I think, really need to address some of the roots of this and it started way before 2020. It started with a really systemic attack on our culture. Similar to the attacks in the 20th Century from all of the dictatorships. And we have thought we have won that battle, but we hadn't. It just came back in a trojan horse form in a different way.

This is a very, very complex issue. This is not just about integrity of body and informed consent and masks. This is very important, I'm not minimizing it but these are all symptoms of a deeper, deeper problem that is really a psychological problem.

And a cultural one that we have to really attack if we want to win this current battle; this current battle of medical safety. And it is not about Safety-ism, worshipping on the altar of safety. Because life is not about being safe, life is about living fully.

So let's strive for that, and I'll explain how to do that in a bit. But I want to try to just leave with this thought that this is really more about changing your life rather than simply attacking a purely medical problem. It is a lot bigger than that, a lot bigger.

Thank you for listening.



THOUGHT REFORM

The concept of thought reform was developed by the American psychiatrist and author, Robert Jay Lifton, in the classic text, 'Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of 'Brainwashing' in China'; first published in 1961.

In that study, he identified eight key features associated with thought reform methods that were used in totalitarian prisons to change the identity, beliefs, and attitudes of prisoners, bringing them into harmony with the pro-social ideals that were valued by authorities during the Maoist revolution.

Lifton was among the first to mention a comparison of totalistic treatment methods in the United States and methods of ideological totalism in China.

TOTALISM, a word which he first used in Thought Reform, is Lifton's term for the characteristics of ideological movements and organizations that desire total control over human behavior and thought. Lifton's usage differs from theories of totalitarianism, as it can be applied to the ideology of groups that do not wield governmental power.

Robert Jay Lifton M.D. is an American psychiatrist and author whose subject has been holocaust, mass violence, and renewal in the 20th and 21st centuries. Lifton has written twenty-four books. His books include: *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* (winner of a National Book Award); *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (winner of a Los Angeles Times Book Prize); *Home from the War: Learning from Vietnam Veterans* (nominated for a National Book Award); *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China*; *The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation*; and *Witness to an Extreme Century: A Memoir*.

He has been a research psychiatrist and teacher at the Washington School of Psychiatry, Yale University, Harvard University, the City University of New York, and Columbia University.

IDEOLOGICAL TOTALISM

*Excerpts from 'Thought Reform and the
Psychology of Totalism', 1961
by © Robert Jay Lifton M.D.*

Chinese Communist thought reform has a psychological momentum of its own, a self-perpetuating energy not always bound by the interests of the program's directors. When we inquire into the sources of this momentum, we come upon a complex set of psychological themes, which may be grouped under the general heading of *Ideological Totalism*. By this ungainly phrase I mean to suggest the coming together of immoderate ideology with equally immoderate individual character traits – an extremist meeting ground between people and ideas. ...

And where totalism exists, a religion, a political movement, or even a scientific organization becomes little more than an exclusive cult.

A discussion of what is most central in the thought reform environment can thus lead us to a more general consideration of the psychology of human zealotry.

For in identifying, on the basis of this study of thought reform, features common to all expressions of ideological totalism, I wish to suggest a set of criteria against which any environment may be judged – a basis for answering the ever-recurring question: “Isn’t this just like ,brainwashing’?”

These criteria consist of eight psychological themes which are predominant within the social field of the thought reform milieu. Each has a totalistic quality; each depends upon an equally absolute philosophical assumption; and each mobilizes certain individual emotional tendencies, mostly of a polarizing nature. Psychological theme, philosophical rationale, and polarized individual tendencies are interdependent; they require, rather than directly cause, each other.

In combination they create an atmosphere which may temporarily energize or exhilarate, but which at the same time poses the gravest of human threats.



I. MILIEU CONTROL

The most basic feature of the thought reform environment, the psychological current upon which all else depends, is the control of human communication.

Through this milieu control the totalist environment seeks to establish domain over not only the individual's communication with the outside (all that he sees and hears, reads and writes, experiences, and expresses), but also – in its penetration of his inner life – over what we may speak of as his communication with himself. It creates an atmosphere uncomfortably reminiscent of George Orwell's 1984; but with one important difference.

Orwell, as a Westerner, envisioned milieu control accomplished by a mechanical device, the two-way 'tele-screen'. The Chinese, although they utilize whatever technical means they have at their disposal, achieve control of greater psychological depth through a human recording and transmitting apparatus: ...

For they look upon milieu control as a just and necessary policy, one which need not be kept secret: thought reform participants may be in doubt as to who is telling what to whom, but the fact that extensive information about everyone is being conveyed to the authorities is always known.

At the center of this self-justification is their assumption of omniscience, their conviction that reality is their exclusive possession. Having experienced the impact of what they consider to be an ultimate truth (and having the need to dispel any possible inner doubts of their own), they consider it their duty to create an environment containing no more and no less than this 'truth'.

In order to be the engineers of the human soul, they must first bring it under full observational control.

Many things happen psychologically to one exposed to milieu control; the most basic is the disruption of balance between self and outside world. Pressured toward a merger of internal and external milieux, the individual encounters a profound threat to his personal autonomy.

He is deprived of the combination of external information and inner reflection which anyone requires to test the realities of his environment and to maintain a measure of identity separate from it.

Instead, he is called upon to make an absolute polarization of the real (the prevailing ideology) and the unreal (everything else). To the extent that he does this, he undergoes a personal closure which frees him from man's incessant struggle with the elusive subtleties of truth. He may even share his environment's sense of omniscience and assume a 'God's-eye view' of the universe; but he is likely instead to feel himself victimized by the 'God's-eye view' of his environment's controllers.

At this point he is subject to the 'hostility of suffocation' of which we have already spoken – the resentful awareness that his strivings toward new information, independent judgment, and self-expression are being thwarted. If his intelligence and sensibilities carry him toward realities outside the closed ideological system, he may resist these as not fully legitimate – until the milieu control is sufficiently diminished for him to share these realities with others.

He is in either case profoundly hampered in the perpetual human quest for what is true, good, and relevant in the world around him and within himself.

II. MYSTICAL MANIPULATION

The inevitable next step after milieu control is extensive personal manipulation. This manipulation assumes a no-holds-barred character, and uses every possible device at the milieu's command, no matter how bizarre or painful. Initiated from above, it seeks to provoke specific patterns of behavior and emotion in such a way that these will appear to have arisen spontaneously from within the environment. This element of planned spontaneity, directed as it is by an ostensibly omniscient group, must assume, for the manipulated, a near-mystical quality.

Ideological totalists do not pursue this approach solely for the purpose of maintaining a sense of power over others. Rather they are impelled by a special kind of mystique which not only justifies such manipulations, but makes them mandatory. Included in this mystique is a sense of 'higher purpose', of having 'directly perceived some imminent law of social development', and of being themselves the vanguard of this development.

By thus becoming the instruments of their own mystique, they create a mystical aura around the manipulating institutions – the Party, the Government, the Organization. They are the agents ‘chosen’ (by history, by God, or by some other supernatural force) to carry out the ‘mystical imperative’, the pursuit of which must supersede all considerations of decency or of immediate human welfare. Similarly, any thought or action which questions the higher purpose is considered to be stimulated by a lower purpose, to be backward, selfish, and petty in the face of the great, overriding mission. ...

At the level of the individual person, the psychological responses to this manipulative approach revolve about the basic polarity of trust and mistrust. One is asked to accept these manipulations on a basis of ultimate trust (or faith): ‘like a child in the arms of its mother’, ...

He who trusts in this degree can experience the manipulations within the idiom of the mystique behind them: that is, he may welcome their mysteriousness, find pleasure in their pain, and feel them to be necessary for the fulfillment of the 'higher purpose' which he endorses as his own. ...

When trust gives way to mistrust (or when trust has never existed) the higher purpose cannot serve as adequate emotional sustenance. The individual then responds to the manipulations through developing what I shall call the psychology of the pawn. Feeling himself unable to escape from forces more powerful than himself, he subordinates everything to adapting himself to them.

He becomes sensitive to all kinds of cues, expert at anticipating environmental pressures, and skillful in riding them in such a way that his psychological energies merge with the tide rather than turn painfully against himself. This requires that he participate actively in the manipulation of others, as well as in the endless round of betrayals and self-betrayals which are required.

But whatever his response – whether he is cheerful in the face of being manipulated, deeply resentful, or feels a combination of both – he has been deprived of the opportunity to exercise his capacities for self-expression and independent action.



III. THE DEMAND FOR PURITY

In the thought reform milieu, as in all situations of ideological totalism, the experiential world is sharply divided into the pure and the impure, into the absolutely good and the absolutely evil. The good and the pure are of course those ideas, feelings, and actions which are consistent with the totalist ideology and policy; anything else is apt to be relegated to the bad and the impure. Nothing human is immune from the flood of stern moral judgments. All 'taints' and 'poisons' which contribute to the existing state of impurity must be searched out and eliminated. ...

The philosophical assumption underlying this demand is that absolute purity (the 'good Communist' or the ideal Communist state) is attainable, and that anything done to anyone in the name of this purity is ultimately moral. ...

Thought reform bears witness to its more malignant consequences for by defining and manipulating the criteria of purity, and then by conducting an all-out war upon impurity, the ideological totalists create a narrow world of guilt and shame. This is perpetuated by an ethos of continuous reform, a demand that one strive permanently and painfully for something which not only does not exist but is in fact alien to the human condition.

At the level of the relationship between individual and environment, the demand for purity creates what we may term a guilty milieu and a shaming milieu. Since each man's impurities are deemed sinful and potentially harmful to himself and to others, he is, so to speak, expected to expect punishment - which results in a relationship of guilt with his environment. Similarly, when he fails to meet the prevailing standards in casting out such impurities, he is expected to expect humiliation and ostracism – thus establishing a relationship of shame with his milieu.

Moreover, the sense of guilt and the sense of shame become highly valued; they are preferred forms of communication, objects of public competition, and the bases for eventual bonds between the individual and his or her totalist accusers. ...

Each person is made vulnerable through his profound inner sensitivities to his own limitations and to his unfulfilled potential; in other words – each is made vulnerable through his existential guilt.

That existential guilt is available to totalistic manipulators who become the ultimate judges of good and evil. Universal tendencies toward guilt and shame become emotional levers for control and manipulation. The reformers become authorities without limit in dealing with others' limitations. And their power is nowhere more evident than in their capacity to 'forgive'.

The individual thus comes to apply the same totalist polarization of good and evil to his judgments of his own character: he tends to imbue certain aspects of himself with excessive virtue, and condemn even more excessively other personal qualities – all according to their ideological standing. He must also look upon his impurities as originating from outside influences – that is, from the ever-threatening world beyond the closed, totalist ken.

Therefore, one of his best ways to relieve himself of some of his burden of guilt is to denounce, continuously and hostilely, these same outside influences. The more guilty he feels, the greater his hatred, and the more threatening they seem.

In this manner, the universal psychological tendency toward projection is nourished and institutionalized, leading to mass hatreds, purges of heretics, and political and religious holy wars.

Moreover, once an individual person has experienced the totalist polarization of good and evil, he has great difficulty in regaining a more balanced inner sensitivity to the complexities of human morality. For there is no emotional bondage greater than that of the man whose entire guilt potential – neurotic and existential – has become the property of ideological totalists.



IV. THE CULT OF CONFESSION

Closely related to the demand for absolute purity is an obsession with personal confession. Confession is carried beyond its ordinary religious, legal, and therapeutic expressions to the point of becoming a cult in itself. There is the demand that one confess to crimes one has not committed, to sinfulness that is artificially induced, in the name of a cure that is arbitrarily imposed.

Such demands are made possible not only by the ubiquitous human tendencies toward guilt and shame but also by the need to give expression to these tendencies. In totalist hands, confession becomes a means of exploiting, rather than offering solace for, these vulnerabilities.

The totalist confession takes on a number of special meanings. It is first a vehicle for the kind of personal purification which we have just discussed, a means of maintaining a perpetual inner emptying or psychological purge of impurity; this purging milieu enhances the totalists' hold upon existential guilt. Second, it is an act of symbolic self-surrender, the expression of the merging of individual and environment. Third, it is a means of maintaining an ethos of total exposure – a policy of making public (or at least known to the Organization) everything possible about the life experiences, thoughts, and passions of each individual, and especially those elements which might be regarded as derogatory.

The assumption underlying total exposure is the environment's claim to total ownership of each individual self within it. Private ownership of the mind and its products – of imagination or of memory – becomes highly immoral. ...

More than this, the sharing of confession enthusiasms can create an orgiastic sense of 'oneness', of the most intense intimacy with fellow confessors and of the dissolution of self into the great flow of the Movement.

...

The enthusiastic and aggressive confessor becomes like Camus' character whose perpetual confession is his means of judging others: "[I] . . . practice the profession of penitent to be able to end up as a judge ... the more I accuse myself, the more I have a right to judge you."

The identity of the 'judge-penitent' thus becomes a vehicle for taking on some of the environment's arrogance and sense of omnipotence. Yet even this shared omnipotence cannot protect him from the opposite (but not unrelated) feelings of humiliation and weakness, feelings especially prevalent among those who remain more the enforced penitent than the all-powerful judge.



V. THE 'sacred science'

The totalist milieu maintains an aura of sacredness around its basic dogma, holding it out as an ultimate moral vision for the ordering of human existence.

This sacredness is evident in the prohibition (whether or not explicit) against the questioning of basic assumptions, and in the reverence which is demanded for the originators of the Word, the present bearers of the Word, and the Word itself. While thus transcending ordinary concerns of logic, however, the milieu at the same time makes an exaggerated claim of airtight logic, of absolute 'scientific' precision.

Thus the ultimate moral vision becomes an ultimate science; and the man who dares to criticize it, or to harbor even unspoken alternative ideas, becomes not only immoral and irreverent, but also 'unscientific'. In this way, the philosopher kings of modern ideological totalism reinforce their authority by claiming to share in the rich and respected heritage of natural science.

...

To be sure, one can usually find areas of experience outside its immediate authority; but during periods of maximum totalist activity (like thought reform) any such areas are cut off, and there is virtually no escape from the milieu's ever-pressing edicts and demands.

Whatever combination of continued adherence, inner resistance, or compromise between them the individual person adopts toward this blend of counterfeit science and backdoor religion, it represents another continuous pressure toward personal closure, toward avoiding, rather than grappling with, the kinds of knowledge and experience necessary for genuine self-expression and creative development.



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VI. LOADING THE LANGUAGE

The language of the totalist environment is characterized by the thought-terminating cliché. The most far-reaching and complex of human problems are compressed into brief, highly reductive, definitive-sounding phrases, easily memorized and easily expressed.

These become the start and finish of any ideological analysis. In thought reform, for instance, the phrase 'bourgeois mentality' is used to encompass and critically dismiss ordinarily troublesome concerns like the quest for individual expression, the exploration of alternative ideas, and the search for perspective and balance in political judgments. ...

Totalist language, then, is repetitiously centered on all-encompassing jargon, prematurely abstract, highly categorical, relentlessly judging, and to anyone but its most devoted advocate, deadly dull: in Lionel Trilling's phrase, 'the language of nonthought'. ...

For an individual person, the effect of the language of ideological totalism can be summed up in one word: constriction. He is, so to speak, linguistically deprived; and since language is so central to all human experience, his capacities for thinking and feeling are immensely narrowed.

This is what one of my Chinese subjects meant when he said, "Using the same pattern of words for so long ... you feel chained." Actually, not everyone exposed feels chained, but in effect everyone is profoundly confined by these verbal fetters. As in other aspects of totalism, this loading may provide an initial sense of insight and security, eventually followed by uneasiness.

This uneasiness may result in a retreat into a rigid orthodoxy in which an individual shouts the ideological jargon all the louder in order to demonstrate his conformity, hide his own dilemma and his despair, and protect himself from the fear and guilt he would feel should he attempt to use words and phrases other than the correct ones.

Or else he may adopt a complex pattern of inner division, and dutifully produce the expected clichés in public performances while in his private moments he searches for more meaningful avenues of expression.

Either way, his imagination becomes increasingly dissociated from his actual life experiences and may even tend to atrophy from disuse.



VII. DOCTRINE OVER PERSON

This sterile language reflects another characteristic feature of ideological totalism: the subordination of human experience to the claims of doctrine. This primacy of doctrine over person is evident in the continual shift between experience itself and the highly abstract interpretation of such experience – between genuine feelings and spurious cataloguing of feelings. It has much to do with the peculiar aura of half-reality which a totalist environment seems, at least to the outsider, to possess. ...

The same doctrinal primacy prevails in the totalist approach to changing people: the demand that character and identity be reshaped, not in accordance with one's special nature or potentialities, but rather to fit the rigid contours of the doctrinal mold.

The human is thus subjugated to the ahuman. And in this manner, the totalists, as Camus phrases it, "put an abstract idea above human life, even if they call it history, to which they themselves have submitted in advance and to which they will decide quite arbitrarily, to submit everyone else as well."

The underlying assumption is that the doctrine – including its mythological elements – is ultimately more valid, true, and real than is any aspect of actual human character or human experience. ...

The individual person who finds himself under such doctrine-dominated pressure to change is thrust into an intense struggle with his own sense of integrity, a struggle which takes place in relation to polarized feelings of 'sincerity' and 'insincerity'. In a totalist environment, absolute 'sincerity' is demanded; and the major criterion for sincerity is likely to be one's degree of doctrinal compliance – both in regard to belief and to direction of personal change.

Yet there is always the possibility of retaining an alternative version of sincerity (and of reality), the capacity to imagine a different kind of existence and another form of sincere commitment (as did another of my Chinese subjects when she thought, "The world could not be like this"). These alternative visions depend upon such things as the strength of previous identity, the penetration of the milieu by outside ideas, and the retained capacity for eventual individual renewal.



VIII. THE DISPENSING OF EXISTENCE

The totalist environment draws a sharp line between those whose right to existence can be recognized, and those who possess no such right. ...

Being 'outside the people', the reactionaries are presumably non-people. Under conditions of ideological totalism, in China and elsewhere, non-people have often been put to death, their executioners then becoming guilty (in Camus' phrase) of 'crimes of logic'.

But the thought reform process is one means by which non-people are permitted, through a change in attitude and personal character, to make themselves over into people. ...

Are not men presumptuous to appoint themselves the dispensers of human existence? Surely this is a flagrant expression of what the Greeks called hubris, of arrogant man making himself God.

Yet one underlying assumption makes this arrogance mandatory: the conviction that there is just one path to true existence, just one valid mode of being, and that all others are perforce invalid and false. Totalists thus feel themselves compelled to destroy all possibilities of false existence as a means of furthering the great plan of true existence to which they are committed. ...

Existence comes to depend upon creed ('I believe, therefore I am'), upon submission ('I obey, therefore I am') and beyond these, upon a sense of total merger with the ideological movement.

Ultimately of course one compromises and combines the totalist 'confirmation' with independent elements of personal identity; but one is ever made aware that, should he stray too far along this 'erroneous path', his right to existence may be withdrawn.

"The more clearly an environment expresses these eight psychological themes, the greater its resemblance to ideological totalism; and the more it utilizes such totalist devices to change people, the greater its resemblance to thought reform (or 'brainwashing')."

Robert Jay Lifton

IDEOLOGICAL TOTALISM

THE 'EIGHT DEADLY SINS'

*Excerpt from: 'Losing Reality', 2019
von © Robert Jay Lifton M.D.*

"In my work I tend to look for possible generalizations that apply beyond immediate findings. Chapter 22 of my book on thought reform does that in connection with what I came to call the 'eight deadly sins' of ideological totalism. When I wrote about them I knew that the themes were in no way confined to thought reform, and I spoke of them as taking us to a larger terrain that I called the 'psychology of human zealotry'.

But it is one thing to make such theoretical generalizations and quite another to have them viscerally confirmed by people who had experienced them in the very different setting of American cults. Because of that important connection, I have retained the entire chapter for this excerpt.

I came to realize that having a critical grasp of cultist behavior is an important step toward undermining claims of owned reality, and that this was best done from observations on actual human behavior. In that way the 'eight deadly sins' became a kind of personal credo, both conceptual and ethical – a statement on where I stood on these elements of totalism and cultism."



THE PROCESS OF Brainwashing, PSYCHOLOGICAL COERCION AND THOUGHT REFORM

*Excerpts from 'Cults in Our Midst', 1995
by © Dr. Margaret Thaler Singer with Dr. Janja Lalich*

“The key to successful thought reform is to keep the subjects unaware that they are being manipulated and controlled – and especially to keep them unaware that they are being moved along a path of change that will lead them to serve interests that are to their disadvantage. The usual outcome of thought-reform processes is that a person or group gains almost limitless control over the subjects for varying periods of time.”

Margaret Thaler Singer Ph.D. (1921 - 2003) was an American clinical psychologist, Board Member of the Cult Awareness Network and American Family Foundation, hold numerous research awards, President of the American Psychosomatic Society, Senior psychologist at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and Author of *Cults in Our Midst* and *Crazy Therapies*.

"I have interviewed more than three thousand persons who have been in one or another - or in some cases in several - of the multitude of cults in the United States, as well as hundreds of relatives of cult members.

I've also studied dozens of persons who have been involved with other high Control groups and numerous individuals, usually women, who have had their lives taken over by a single individual who controlled them as much as if they had been in a cult.

From this life experience and more than fifty years of study, research, and clinical practice, I can only say that whenever I think I've heard it all, along comes new evidence that is even more outlandish than the last."

Margaret Thaler Singer

In 1949, George Orwell wrote about the negative utopia he feared would evolve, perhaps by 1984. Others before him, such as Daniel Defoe, Aldous Huxley, and Jack London, had also written about negative utopias in which political systems gradually curbed and eventually stifled people's most central capacities for reasoning creatively, scientifically, and compassionately. In these real or imagined centralized governments, torture, drugs, and mysterious, esoteric techniques were the feared methods by which people might be controlled.

Orwell's genius was in sensing that combinations of social and psychological techniques are easier, more effective, and cheaper than the gun-to-the-head methods of coercion. Social and psychological persuasion is also less likely to attract attention and thus is less apt to mobilize opposition early and easily from those being manipulated.

Orwell reasoned that if a government could control all media and interpersonal communication while simultaneously forcing citizens to speak in a politically controlled jargon, it could blunt independent thinking. If thought could be controlled, then rebellious actions against a regime could be prevented.

Not only in his book NineteenEightyFour but also in his essays on politics and the English language, Orwell emphasized the power of words.

Words represent thoughts, and without the capability to express thoughts, people lose access to their own thinking.

When the year 1984 arrived, various totalitarian governments were controlling and censoring the media and squelching dissenting individuals. And over the years, many versions of Orwell's Big Brother, Newspeak, and Thought Police, some more ominous and subtle than others, have appeared here and elsewhere throughout the world. Orwell's predictions may never come to pass completely because of the wondrous properties of the human mind when it remains free to reason. But his ideas still serve as a warning of the extent to which people's thinking can be influenced.



The wisdom of the ages is that most manipulation is subtle and covert. When Orwell drew on this wisdom, he envisioned the evolution of an insidious but successful mind and opinion manipulator. He would appear as a smiling, seemingly beneficent Big Brother. But instead of one Big Brother, we see hordes of Big Brothers in the world today. Many of them are cult leaders.

Without the citizens being aware of the power and control certain cults are wielding, democracy and freedom can be curbed one step at a time. Cults by their very structure and nature are not democratic, do not promote freedom of speech and freedom of expression, and are the antithesis of structures in which full human growth can develop.

There are cults in our midst, more than the average citizen realizes. And these powerful groups infiltrate many areas of our lives.

And I'm not talking about a problem that can be dealt with by a philosophical debate or a hot expose on a television talk show. The threat presented by cults goes much deeper than that. I'm talking about the very real threats to public health, mental health, political power, and democratic freedoms - as well as growing concerns over consumer issues – that become apparent as we learn how these manipulative and often unethical groups and programs have spread into not just the nooks and crannies but also the major sectors and institutions of our society.

cause for concern

What we see today is the continuing presence in society of either organized groups or individual persons who use intense influence on others in order to gain control and power – over money, people, and property.

Besides being describable as cults or groups using thought-reform processes, instances of this process are also sometimes called scams, confidence games, hustles, undue influence, improper influence, deceptions, and frauds, among other labels.

These names denote the reality behind the way the group or person induces others to go along with a plan that benefits the manipulator and exploits the manipulated, even though the latter may at first, or even for a long while, think that the venture is other than it really is.

A certain type of psychological con game is exactly what goes on in a thought-reform environment. A complex set of interlocking factors is put into place, and these factors, either quickly or slowly depending on the situation and the subject, bring about deep changes in the mind-set and attitudes of the targeted individual. Through the manipulation of psychological and social factors, people's attitudes can indeed be changed, and their thinking and behavior radically altered.

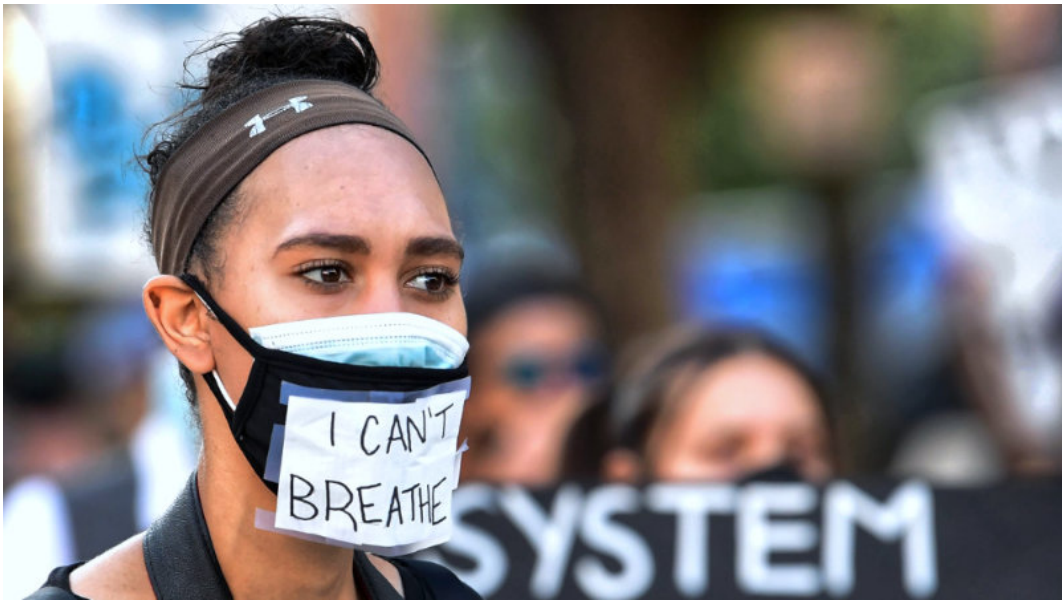
Interestingly enough, Orwell was perhaps the first to note that language, not physical force, is key to manipulating minds. In fact, growing evidence in the behavioral sciences reveals that a smiling Big Brother has greater power to influence an individual's thought and decision making than does a visibly threatening person.

As Orwell says of his brainwashed hero, at the close of his prophetic book: "He loved Big Brother."

How cult leaders and other clever operators get people to do their bidding seems arcane and mysterious to most persons, but I find there is nothing esoteric about it at all. There are no secret drugs or potions.

It is just words and group pressures, put together in packaged forms.

Modern-day manipulators use methods of persuasion employed since the days of the cavemen, but the masterful con artists of today have hit upon a way to put the techniques together in packages that are especially successful. As a result, thought-reform, as a form of influence and persuasion, falls on the extreme end of a continuum that also includes education as we typically see it, advertising, propaganda, and indoctrination.



ATTACKING THE SELF

What's new – and crucial – is that these programs change attitudes by attacking essential aspects of a person's sense of self, unlike the earlier brainwashing programs that primarily confronted a person's political beliefs.

Today's programs are designed to destabilize an individual's sense of self by undermining his or her basic consciousness, reality awareness, beliefs and worldview, emotional control, and defense mechanisms.

This attack on a person's central stability, or self-concept, and on a person's capacity for self-evaluation is the principal technique that makes the newer programs work. Moreover, this attack is carried out under a variety of guises and conditions – and rarely does it include forced confinement or direct physical coercion. Rather, it is a subtle and powerful psychological process of destabilization and induced dependency.

HOW THOUGHT REFORM WORKS

Brainwashing is not experienced as a fever or a pain might be; it is an invisible social adaptation. When you are the subject of it, you are not aware of the intent of the influence processes that are going on, and especially, you are not aware of the changes taking place within you.

A thought-reform program is not a one-shot event but a gradual process of breaking down and transformation. It can be likened to gaining weight, a few ounces, a half pound, a pound at a time. Before long, without even noticing the initial changes - we are confronted with a new physique.

So, too, with brainwashing. A twist here, a tweak there – and there it is: a new psychic attitude, a new mental outlook. These systematic manipulations of social and psychological influences under particular conditions are called programs because the means by which change is brought about is coordinated.

And it is because the changes cause the learning and adoption of a certain set of attitudes, usually accompanied by a certain set of behaviors, that the effort and the result are called thought reform.

Thus, thought reform is a concerted effort to change a person's way of looking at the world, which will change his or her behavior. It is distinguished from other forms of social learning by the conditions under which it is conducted and by the techniques of environmental and interpersonal manipulation that are meant to suppress certain behavior and to elicit and train other behavior. And it does not consist of only one program – there are many ways and methods to accomplish it.



The tactics of a thought-reform program are organized to

- > Destabilize a person's sense of self.
- > Get the person to drastically reinterpret his or her life's history and radically alter his or her worldview and accept a new version of reality and causality.
- > Develop in the person a dependence on the organization, and thereby turn the person into a deployable agent of the organization.

The following conditions create the atmosphere needed to put thought-reform processes into place. The degree to which these conditions are present increases the level of restrictiveness enforced by the cult and the overall effectiveness of the program.

The trick is to proceed with the thought-reform process one step at a time so that the person does not notice that she or he is changing.

I. Keep the person unaware that there is an agenda to control or change the person

Keep the person unaware of what is going on and how she or he is being changed a step at a time. Imagine you are the person being influenced. You find yourself in an environment to which you are forced to adapt in a series of steps, each sufficiently minor so that you don't notice the changes in yourself and do not become aware of the goals of the program until late in the process (if ever).

You are kept unaware of the orchestration of psychological and social forces meant to change your thinking and your behavior. The cult leaders make it seem as though what is going on is normal, that everything is the way it's supposed to be. This atmosphere is really forced by peer pressure and peer-modeled behavior, so that you adapt to the environment without even realizing it.

The process of keeping people unaware is key to a cult's double agenda. The leader slowly takes you through a series of events that on the surface look like one agenda, while on another level, the real agenda is to get you, the recruit or member, to obey and to give up your autonomy, your past affiliations, and your belief systems.

The existence of the double agenda makes this process one of non-informed consent.

II. Control time and physical environment (contacts, information)

Control the persons social and/or physical environment; especially control the person's time. Cults don't need to have you move into the commune, farm, headquarters, or ashram and live within the cult environment TwentyFour hours a day in order to have control over you. They can control you just as effectively by having you go to work every day with instructions that when not working – on your lunch hour, for example – you must do continuous mind occupying chanting or some other cult related activity.

III. Create a sense of powerlessness, fear, and dependency

Systematically create a sense of powerlessness in the person. Cults create this sense of powerlessness by stripping you of your support system and your ability to act independently. Former friends and kinship networks are taken away.

Another way cults create a sense of powerlessness is by stripping people of their main occupation and sources of wealth. It is one of the steps in creating a sense of dependency on the organization and a continuing sense of individual powerlessness.

Once stripped of your usual support network and, in some cases, means of income, your confidence in your own perceptions erodes. As your sense of powerlessness increases, your good judgment and understanding of the world are diminished.

At the same time as you are destabilized in relation to your ordinary reality and worldview, the cult confronts you with a new, unanimously (group-) approved worldview. As the group attacks your previous worldview, causing you distress and inner confusion, you are not allowed to speak about this confusion, nor can you object to it, because leadership constantly suppresses questions and counters any resistance.

Through this process, your inner confidence is eroded.



IV. Suppress old behavior and attitudes

Manipulate a system of rewards, punishments, and experiences in such a way as to inhibit behavior that reflects the persons former social identity. The expression of your beliefs, values, activities, and characteristic demeanor prior to contact with the group is suppressed, and you are manipulated into taking on a social identity preferred by the leadership. Old beliefs and old patterns of behavior are defined as irrelevant, if not evil. You quickly learn that leadership wants old ideas and old patterns eliminated, so you suppress them.

V. Install new behavior and attitudes

Manipulate a system of rewards, punishments, and experiences in order to promote learning of the group's ideology or belief system and group-approved behaviors. Once immersed in an environment in which you are totally dependent on the rewards given by those who control the setting, you can be confronted with massive demands to learn varying amounts of new information and behaviors. You are rewarded for proper performance with social and sometimes material reinforcement; if slow to learn or noncompliant, you are threatened with shunning, banning, and punishment which includes loss of esteem from others, loss of privileges, loss of status, and inner anxiety and guilt.

The more complicated and filled with contradictions the new system is and the more difficult it is to learn, the more effective the conversion process will be.

Approval comes from having your behaviors and thought patterns conform to the models put forth by the group. Your relationship with peers is threatened whenever you fail to learn or display new behaviors. Over time, an easy solution to the insecurity generated by the difficulties of learning the new system is to inhibit any display of doubt and, even if you don't understand the content, to merely acquiesce, affirm, and act as if you do understand and accept the new philosophy or content.

VI. Put forth a closed system of logic

Put forth a closed system of logic and an authoritarian structure that permits no feedback and refuses to be modified except by leadership approval or executive order. If you criticize or complain, the leader or peers allege that you are defective, not the organization. In this closed system of logic, you are not allowed to question or doubt a tenet or rule or to call attention to factual information that suggests some internal contradiction within the belief system or a contradiction with what you've been told. In cultic groups, the individual member is always wrong, and the system is always right.

The goal of all this is your conversion or remolding. As you learn to modify your former behaviors in order to be accepted in this closed and controlled environment, you change. You affirm that you accept and understand the ideology by beginning to talk in the simple catchphrases particular to the group. This "communication" has no foundation since, in reality, you have little understanding of the system beyond the catchphrases. But once you begin to express your seeming verbal acceptance of the group's ideology, then that ideology becomes the rule book for the subsequent direction and evaluation of your behavior.

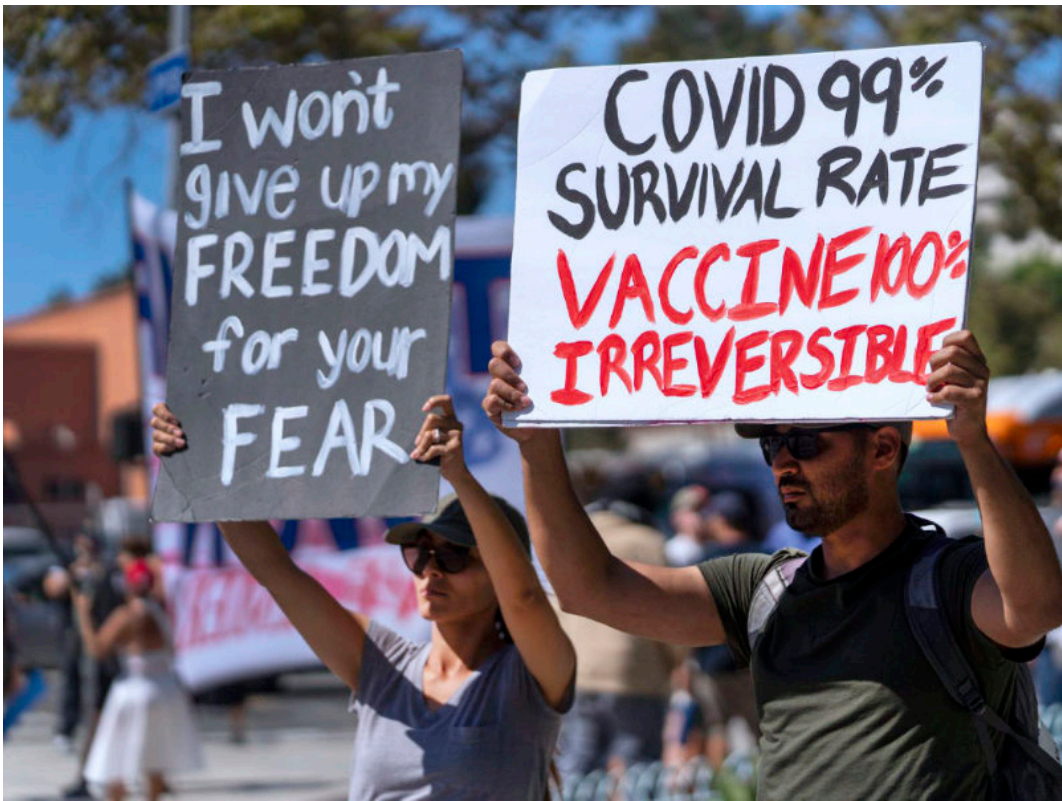
Also, using the new language fosters your separation from your old conscience and belief system. Your new language allows you to justify activities that are clearly not in your interests, perhaps not even in the interests of humankind.

We realize how fragile human social identity is when we see people caught up in today's cults and thought reform groups and when we see cult leaders and other manipulators formulate their brainwashing programs around almost any theme.

And through their new method of attacking the self, cults and other groups using thought-reform processes are pushing people to the brink of madness. In some cases, they push them over that edge. There are no controls on these snatchers of the minds and souls of our children, our friends, our relatives, our loved ones. Currently, the cults are without restraints and without consciences.

"It takes vigilance, stamina, and unending internal fortitude to live life and use our minds. We must pay heed to what humankind has learned about how free minds and free humans build better worlds cooperatively - something that does not occur under the dominion of a self-appointed exploiter who does not really have our welfare or the welfare of humankind as his central aim but merely his own temporal security and comfort."

Margaret Thaler Singer & Janja Lalich



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