



## Clanking Chains: “The Authoritarian Personality”: Frankfurt’s Guidebook for Revolution and Deconstruction of the West

- 88) Chapter 5 of this book presents the deductions reached from clinical material which they believed revealed trends toward prejudice:

**Adorno, et al. “The Measurement of Implicit Antidemocratic Trends.” Chap. 5 in *The Authoritarian Personality*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1982), 152-63 passim:**

It is clear that ... anti-Semitism and ethnocentrism were not merely matters of surface opinion, but general tendencies with sources ... deep within the structure of the person. (p. 152)

Adherence to conventional values came to be thought of as a variable in the person and shown to be related functionally to various manifestations of prejudice. Underlying several of the prejudiced responses was a general disposition to glorify, to be subservient to and remain uncritical toward authoritative figures of the ingroup and to take an attitude of punishing outgroup figures in the name of some moral authority. These variables are listed with a brief definition of each:

- a. Conventionalism. Rigid adherence to conventional, middle-class values.
- b. Authoritarian submission. Submissive, uncritical attitude toward idealized moral authorities of the ingroup.
- c. Authoritarian aggression. Tendency to be on the lookout for, and to condemn, reject, and punish people who violate conventional values.
- d. Superstition. The belief in mystical determinants of the individual's fate; the disposition to think in rigid categories.

These variables render him receptive to antidemocratic propaganda. (pp. 156-57)

Authoritarian submission was conceived of as a very general attitude that would be evoked in relation to a variety of authority figures—parents, older people, leaders, supernatural power, and so forth.

The attempt was made to formulate the items in such a way that agreement with them would indicate not merely a realistic, balanced respect for valid authority but an exaggerated, all-out, emotional need to submit. This would be indicated, it seemed, by agreement that obedience and respect for authority were the most important virtues that children should learn, that a person should obey without question the decisions of a supernatural power, and so forth. (p. 160)

The person who has been forced to give up basic pleasures and to live under a system of rigid restraints, and who therefore feels put upon, is likely not only to seek an object upon which he can “take it out” but also to be particularly annoyed at the idea that another person is “getting away with something.” It is to be expected that the conventionalist who cannot bring himself to utter any real criticism of accepted authority will have a desire to condemn, reject, and punish those who violate these values. (p. 161)

It is here hypothesized that ethnocentrism is but a part of a more general tendency to punish violators of conventional values: homosexuals, sex offenders, people with bad manners, etc. Once the individual has convinced himself that there are people who ought to be punished, he is provided with a channel through which his deepest aggressive impulses may be expressed, even while he thinks himself as thoroughly moral.

The authoritarian must, out of an inner necessity, turn his aggression against outgroups. He must do so because he is psychologically unable to attack ingroup authorities because of intellectual confusion regarding the source of his frustration.



Readiness to condemn other people on moral grounds may have still another source: it is not only that the authoritarian must condemn the moral laxness that he sees in others, but he is actually driven to see immoral attributes in them whether this has a basis in fact or not.

Conventionalism, authoritarian submission, and authoritarian aggression all have to do with the moral aspect of life—with standards of conduct, with the authorities who enforce these standards, with offenders against them who deserve to be punished. (pp. 162-63)

- 89- The culprit Adorno and his associates discovered was not authoritarianism but rather self-righteous arrogance. There are those who, after discovering standards designed for their personal guidance and direction, also seek to impose them on others by whatever means necessary.
- 90- Good examples of this are the proponents of Frankfurt philosophy. However, such types plague every aspect of society, both rich and poor, management and labor, clergy and parishioner, the law abiding and the criminal. Self-righteousness is a form of arrogance that can describe parents, preachers, politicians, and presidents. It is found in abundance among special interest groups, minority groups, and professional groups. It is evident among the successful in the cinema, the stage, broadcasting, art, music, and publishing. A high degree of it is often seen on the playing fields of the various sports leagues, and among their officials, owners, and announcers. It is extremely perplexing to discover it in judges, lawyers, and police officers. The crème de la crème of this ilk roam the campuses of the nation's universities led by their professors and following in tandem are their student legions who have bought into the lie of utopian democracy. And the most insidious and sometimes most dangerous possessors of this trend are children.
- 91- All of these areas are incorporated into a system of authority. There is a trend for people to submit to domineering leaders and charismatic personalities. There is always an ism, an ideology, or a philosophy that those who are submissive to authority are often lured into pursuing. These systems always promote principles, norms and standards, and certain concepts of moral order to which their followers submit.
- 92- When some follow trends that take them into a level of hatred that results in genocide, the problem is not with the collective culture or its systems of authority but with the individual who cannot control his own soul.
- 93- What is needed is an internal governor which restrains such a personality by means of absolute norms and standards that regulate the sinful nature and its lust patterns.
- 94- Since authority is essential to public order in a community but since also its misuse can lead to abuse it becomes necessary to discuss the sin complex associated with self-righteous arrogance.