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Social Factors Impacting Child and Adolescent Development, Part I*

Dee Apple, Ph.D.

Abstract

Reich incisively noted that the very future of our planet depends on the bioenergetic health of the generations of children yet to be born. Nothing was more important to him than protecting the health of infants, children and adolescents—the prevention of chronic armor. Social organomy provides an essential and unique understanding of the social factors that either support the bioemotional health and development of children or disrupt or destroy their health and thus humanity’s hopes for the future.

This article reviews those social factors that protect children’s health and ability for self-regulation. It then considers some of the many social phenomena that disrupt healthy functioning. These include, among others, the effects of the current social transformation from an authoritarian to an anti-authoritarian social order, each with unique and destructive forms of social armor and compulsive morality, and various social manifestations of the emotional plague as they adversely impact the development of children.

The Social Basis for Healthy Development in Childhood and Adolescence

The fate of the human race will be shaped by the bioemotional health of the children of the future.

While all parents want a good life for their children, even the most well-intentioned, organomically informed parents struggle sometimes in vain to prevent life-destructive events from damaging their children, to protect them from the process of armoring which occurs over and over, generation after generation. They are frustrated by their own limitations and the mistakes they make with their children. They are disturbed by their inability to influence or control the destructive

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they perceive in the social environment in which their children live and grow. Sometimes they may not even see the dangers that are pervasive and yet subtle. These days most people are also so busy. In addition, sometimes parents are “out of it,” out of *emotional* contact. They, along with their own parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, have tried admirably to build a wall against social destructiveness, with all sorts of social theories, political and educational reforms, more or less useful suggestions from “the experts” on how to raise children, with resolutions and even revolutions. However, in terms of the ultimate goal of preventing armoring, parents have failed, sometimes miserably. As Wilhelm Reich implied, and we all sense, we have tried to swim to freedom with our legs shackled, and many have been lost or even drowned along the way. Yes, there has been progress here and there, though most times it is one step forward and one step back, or the progress is a drop in the bucket. It may seem that there are no simple answers to the world’s problems. In truth, there are simple answers, but no *easy* answers, and there certainly are no shortcuts.

Yet, there is hope. Every day thousands of healthy, unarmored children are brought into the world. With the birth of each child, there is a new lease on life for humanity. As we will discuss, this hope is foreclosed by humanity’s lack of contact, by social armor, and by the emotional plague. While this hope can only be realized if people muster the bravery and the decency to realize and face their limitations, bravery and decency, even if not in short supply, would not be enough. There is a need for a more thorough, scientific understanding of the emotional plague and other forces that cause the armoring of infants and children. Then and only then will people be able to see where and how they can step in and help.

As Reich stated, “There is little more detrimental to the cause of healthy functioning in children than child therapists who are strutting around boasting about what they can accomplish in a few sessions with a few manipulations; or parents who react to misery in their children with hurt pride, fearing what public opinion will say about them (Reich 1983, page 54).” As Dr. Whitener made clear in her social

orgonomy presentation, “No Man Is an Island,” we are all in this together (Whitener 2007).

This article is concerned with social factors that support the preservation of health in children, and those factors that disrupt and destroy the opportunity that begins with each and every human birth on this planet and that continue throughout the lives of children and adolescents. If even one-quarter of the public opinion devoted to the anxiety over global warming could be transferred to awareness of the destructive effects of armoring, what a different world we would experience. Moreover, it would no doubt end up benefiting our planet’s environment as well.

I am going to discuss the social basis for the orgonomic criteria for health, and what happens when things do not continue developing healthfully in individuals and their surrounding social culture. I will then illustrate these orgonomic principles by discussing a few of the many current social factors that affect children and adolescents, and parents, as they try to do a good job raising children or as therapists, working with them. I will end with some thoughts about the parents’ role in protecting the health of their children.

In one way it is all very simple. In each newborn infant, profound natural functions and the health of the child are entrusted to social institutions created by humans. Everything then depends on whether these institutions support and protect natural functions, or whether they frustrate and even attempt to destroy these basic functions of life. For example, caring for the newborn infant requires natural social skills and abilities, the most important of which is the ability for genuine emotional contact, which I will define shortly. These abilities are energetically and biologically rooted, and can be supported but not replaced in any way by artificial cultural measures or training programs, even the most scientifically designed. Moreover, social institutions and customs that are destructive to contact can all too easily thwart them.

We cannot intelligently discuss the social forces that impact child and adolescent development without first considering what healthy

development is. What does the healthy child look like? How does he or she function? What criteria and characteristics does organomic psychiatry and sociology provide in defining healthy development? How can we possibly know what is unhealthy, or how to help, without knowing what health looks like?

Health

As has been stated before, the organomic perspective is based on *bioenergetic functions* and leads to clear criteria for healthy functioning. This is unlike the traditional medical model, where health is basically defined as the “absence of disease.” Having clear criteria for health is very helpful, specifically in raising children, and distinguishes organomy from other perspectives.

Healthy functioning originates from the biological core, meaning that healthy impulses of love and appropriate aggression are allowed expression in relationships, work and various interests in life. Healthy functioning is characterized by the capacity for full bioenergetic pulsation, the capacity to tolerate both biophysical expansion, experienced as pleasure, and contraction, experienced as anxiety. In health, expansion predominates over contraction.

However, in our society today, the vast majority of children and adults have some degree of what Wilhelm Reich called “armor”—chronic rigidity of the musculature and corresponding rigidity of the character—and to that degree cannot tolerate spontaneous emotional life. Early armoring forever alters the natural primary expressions and impulses, including those of love, that originate from the biological core. When they finally do break through the armor, these become secondary impulses that are distorted, more inhibited or harsh, and are necessarily irrational and destructive to the individual and/or society. Individuals who are more significantly armored are constricted and remain relatively fixed in chronic contraction. Or, they may react with a false expansion to counter the underlying contraction.

As Reich noted, health consists not in the absence of disease, but in the ability of the organism to overcome sickness and to emerge

basically unhurt; in whether the organism is capable of pulling out of unhappiness and illness. The difference between healthy and sick children is the capacity of the healthy child to get out of acute, potentially damaging emotional entanglements and not to be “stuck” for long.

What would a child be like if, from the very start, the only consideration was protecting the health and the development of the child? To not only allow, but also support the development of all her natural-born functions? Not just those currently “approved of” or those adults are comfortable with, but all the functions that the child is born with as part of his biological and energetic heritage. What would that child be like if all other interests (the church, nationalism, current education theory and practices in medicine and psychiatry, the in-laws’ wishes, the neighbors’ opinions, politics, worry about the future—getting into college, etc.), if all such interests took a back seat?

It is important to realize that even now, some sixty years after Reich began research on infancy and childhood, we do not really know what a “healthy” child would look like in our society. Many of the *ideas* we have are, largely, an expression of our current social paradigm, which is heavily burdened with obsolete, armored ways of life and with irrational rebellion against those ways of life.

To the degree that a society is armored, corresponding armored social institutions and processes define “normality” according to interests outside the sphere of the child’s natural needs. They all start with some *conception* of what the child *should* be like, not what they *are* like; how they *should* grow, not how they *would* naturally develop if allowed and encouraged. These conceptions are distorted, mechanistically or mystically derived ideas, just like the notion that “the Earth is flat” or “the Earth is the center of the universe.” They dictate goals to be achieved, or beliefs to be maintained. And as we will soon discuss, when we consider the effects of the emotional plague in raising children, woe to those who try to challenge these ideas, like Copernicus, or Reich. Rather than adapting understanding to actual

observations made with fresh eyes, the tendency is to adapt the child to conceptions that run counter to what is true and natural.

In addition, most observations of children that contribute to notions of what is “normal” are of armored children. Most research is of the “statistically average,” armored person. Thus, secondary drives are not distinguished from primary ones and are mistaken for “normal” behavior. Such observations, although “accurate,” are of limited value where the natural health of children is the concern.

We do know that to the extent that parents are able to protect the natural healthy development of infants, children and adolescents, their healthy functioning is characterized by what we call “self-regulation”—the natural capacity of the individual, if not significantly damaged emotionally or biophysically, to govern themselves according to inborn, healthy, natural biological needs.

Self-regulation includes the developing capacity to modulate *between expression and restraint* in both the biological and social realms. I think of this ability as somehow akin to the old term “instinct.” It is there from conception, develops organically, can be encouraged in contactful social relationships, or disturbed in their absence, but cannot be “taught” or “programmed” later in life. There are certain periods along the continuum of development where there are special opportunities for advancing and strengthening the capacity for self-regulation, perhaps even opportunities for reorganizing the skills, abilities, and processes that are involved in the process of self-regulation. At each of these critical periods there are new tasks that confront the individual that must be mastered in order to move forward to the next opportunities and new challenges. This has important implications for parents—truly effective, contactful communication with the child or adolescent best begins with a foundation laid in infancy. It cannot easily be “added on” later in life.

One increasingly hears the term “self-regulation” used these days, and even more often, “self-control.” However, these terms are usually found, for example, in the context of kids learning time management skills so they can get their homework done and get into college. If there

is talk of more profound natural functions, such as sexuality, there may be talk of restraint, or of expression, but rarely of the ability, or the natural right, for both full expression *and* restraint of this function.

This is probably a good time for a warning: While it is invaluable to have some idea of health to serve as a guide, as a lighthouse to steer by, the ideals of “absolute” health and an “absolutely healthy” child contradict the reality of the world in which children grow up and function. Even healthy life processes are not “perfect” in some mystical sense, and our society and culture are far from healthy. Thus, we have to watch out for becoming mystical about “health,” lest it become just another compulsive “goal” parents mechanically and moralistically push on themselves, and their children.

Parents and Family

As Dr. Whitener demonstrated so wonderfully in her talk (Whitener 2007), no man or woman is an island. This is particularly true early in life. To be sustained, the energetic aliveness of the newborn infant requires the aliveness of its surroundings, most importantly in the social relationship with its mother. When Reich speaks of the “wholeness” of the biosystem, he is not just referring to the totality of the organism, but to the complete harmony of the child with its environment. The infant starts to self-regulate if the mother is *capable*, and *supported* by the contactful social environment, in self-regulating herself in relation to the infant. It is nearly if not completely impossible to have healthy, self-regulating children growing up in a sick environment.

Similarly, because health develops and is encouraged and protected in a relationship, it makes little sense to talk about the relative health of children without considering the relative health of the parents. For example, the parents’ reactions to the child’s first exploratory touching of his or her genital are crucial moments when culture, represented in the individual character structure of the parent, may impose itself on the child’s natural biological and energetic functioning. The parents’ reactions during the early periods

of development have a lasting, health-preserving or traumatic influence on development, including sexual development and the ability for self-regulation.

The basic tasks of all contactful parenting and education are directed by the interests of the healthy infant and child and not by any other interests, agendas or appearances. The goals are to nurture and protect the natural plasticity of the new or young organism's bioenergy, and to remove every obstacle in the way of its movement and development.

Uninhibited bioenergetic pulsation, the essential criteria of health, is a function thoroughly dependent on stimulation from and contact with the environment for its fullest expression. Whether we consider infant and mother, adolescent and parent, or loved one and beloved, it really does take "two to tango" in order to achieve the fullest illumination of healthy development or engagement with another person. The parent who has established good bioenergetic contact with the infant can best encourage its healthy functions.

In a healthier family, the parents are in contact with all the energetic and biological needs of their children and adolescents and support their appropriate gratification. There is tolerance of the child's healthy emotional expression and such children are free to develop and direct their lives according to their unique nature and core impulses. In these circumstances the Oedipal ties to the parents, a cultural artifact specific to armored society and families, do not develop, at least not intensely.

Occasionally you will hear someone basically state that self-regulation consists of letting children do whatever they want, with the idea that eventually they will figure something out and arrive at health. *Nothing could be further from the truth.* In addition to allowing the child the freedom of self-expression, genuine love also requires that the child be taught restraint, the root of responsibility, and not to interfere with the lives of others. Genuine contact is required to know how much freedom and independence to "give/allow" any given child/adolescent at any given time, or how much and what degree of

restraint is necessary. Contactful family interactions include neither deprivation nor overindulgence, so the child develops without forming chronic inhibitions and rigid, distorted attitudes and becomes an increasingly independent member of the family and society.

In addition, the parent must provide a protective function. In order to raise relatively healthy, functional children, parents must be able to accurately perceive the neurotic world clearly for what it is, to sense the presence and effects of rigid social armor, and to tactfully oppose the accepted norm where it hampers the health and well-being of their child. Sounds straightforward enough, but, of course, it is often not so easy. Nonetheless, *nothing could be more important*. It turns out that the child's inborn and continuing natural health provides the most effective inoculation against sickness of all kinds throughout life. Its effectiveness can never be replicated later in life by mystically or mechanically derived tactics or strategies, no matter how well intentioned or packaged.

Social Disruption of Healthy Development and Functioning

What are the social factors that undermine the health of children and the best efforts of parents? On the broadest level, they are the same ones that disrupt adult health and pleasure in life: any social factor or process that leads to a chronic disruption of pulsation. Muscular and character armor disrupt pulsation, healthy development and pleasurable functioning in the individual. The social structures and processes that armored human beings create reflect these disruptions, and they continue the armoring process and cause further disruptions of healthy functioning, both socially and individually. These constitute social armor and reflect the mechanical and mystical distortions of individual functioning and thought processes, and rigid forms of compulsive morality.

There is a direct relationship between the characteristics of society, or the societal character type (Crist 2007), and the structure of the individual. In the family, which is the basic unit of society, these societal characteristics are represented by the individual character

structure of the parents, and then in the type of armor and character structure that develop in the infants and children in that family. The social relationship of the child to the armored and frustrating parent(s) is one of the critical factors in the formation of armor in the child. As children mature into adulthood and parenthood, they bring these armored patterns of interaction with them, and these tend to be acted out in the society. These conflicts are displaced onto the social realm and result in social pathology that takes two basic forms: authoritarian or anti-authoritarian (Konia 2008). As we will see, each has characteristic types of social armor that disrupt healthy development in children in unique ways.

But first, in the most deep and immediate sense, when considering social factors that impact the healthy development of children, parents must first consider their own functioning in relation to their children, to take that good hard look at themselves as possible representatives of what is sick in the culture from which they grew. What is there in their personal structure that is for, and what is against and cannot tolerate, the health of the child and its developing capacity for self-regulation? *Taking this hard look may be the only thing more emotionally difficult than raising healthy children.*

However, to work with children or to parent them effectively requires more than intellectual knowledge. As Reich once put it, one does not walk according to the principles of gravitation. If one is paralyzed, knowing the principles of gravitation will not help. It requires of adults some degree of emotional health, contactfulness and the ability to self-regulate as an individual, and as a parent.

In order to discharge the rational functions of parenthood—to protect the child's natural life and to remove every obstacle in the way of the plasticity of the bioenergy as the basis of his or her health—parents must also be able to make contact with the social environment around them and their children, and know what in the social structure and social interactions are for, and what are against, the natural functioning and health of children.

The Repressive Authoritarian Form of Social Order

Most of Reich's work regarding the relationship between individual armor and the surrounding social environment was concerned with authoritarian culture, which, until relatively recently, has been the prevailing form of Western society. He stated:

In brief, the goal of sexual suppression is that of producing an individual who is adjusted to the authoritarian order and who will submit to it in spite of all misery and degradation. At first the child has to submit to the structure of the authoritarian miniature state, the family; this makes it capable of later subordination to the general authoritarian system. The formation of the authoritarian structure takes place through the anchoring of sexual inhibition and sexual anxiety. (Reich 1946, page 24)

To the extent that a society is healthy, parents are supported in using their natural authority to support the child and adolescent's healthy expressions. However, in the authoritarian form of armored society, rational authority is replaced by rigid authoritarianism, which promotes life-negative and sexually restrictive attitudes with little awareness or concern for the child's health or happiness. Here, while authority may allow expression of some core impulses, it represses others, most notably healthy sexual impulses, creating harsh secondary impulses. Authoritarian restrictions also curb a great deal of secondary destructive impulses, albeit in a rigid and moralistic manner. Thus, authoritarianism contains both rational elements (when it supports core impulses and curbs secondary impulses), and irrational elements (in thwarting core impulses). As Reich noted, the authoritarian social order, with its patriarchal family structure and mystical-moral underpinning, perpetuates armoring from one generation to the next.

The Permissive Anti-Authoritarian Form of Social Order

Reich also anticipated a key factor that would be responsible for the worldwide breakdown of the authoritarian social order:

The anchoring of a social order which frustrates the gratification of needs to a considerable extent goes with the development of psychic factors that tend to undermine this characterological

anchoring. Gradually, with the development of the social process, there develops an ever-increasing discrepancy between enforced renunciation and increased [energetic] libidinal tension: this discrepancy undermines 'tradition' and forms the psychological core of attitudes which threaten the anchoring. (Reich 1949a, page xxiii) [bracketed word added]

Today, we are witnessing the breakdown of these conventional, authoritarian social structures. Beginning earlier in the twentieth century but coming to a head, so to speak, during the 1960s, these traditions were undermined, and American society began to evolve—or devolve—from an authoritarian to an increasingly anti-authoritarian social system. Parents are living and raising their children in a society that has elements of both authoritarian and anti-authoritarian social characteristics, which presents its own unique challenges to raising healthy children.

One might wonder if this is not a good thing, the breaking down of authoritarian social armor that creates and perpetuates armoring. Unfortunately, *it is not*. Recall that early armoring forever alters the natural primary expressions and love impulses that originate from the biological core. Without the distinction between primary core impulses of sexuality and work and secondary destructive drives, it is not possible to determine whether any social action, be it legislation or a parental response, is a rational response to a given social problem.

Armor comes to have a very important function, albeit not one based on health; that is, holding back destructive expression. Reich found that when inexperienced therapists remove armor haphazardly, functioning breaks down suddenly, leading to disorientation and contactlessness. He called this phenomenon "freedom giddiness." This same phenomenon occurs in society. In 1949 Reich stated:

If today or tomorrow the authoritarian state organization were suddenly abolished so that people could do as they pleased, not freedom but chaos would result. Years of utter disorientation would have to pass before the human race would learn to live according to the principles of natural self-regulation. (Reich 1949b, page 107)

Like authoritarian ones, anti-authoritarian societies also reproduce themselves in the character formation of individuals through social armor and institutions, again in particular by the parents in the family. Here the family structure is not *overtly* sex-negative, but instead is chronically permissive. Anti-life and anti-sexual messages are cloaked by the general attitude of “Just do it.” Permitting and indulging the child’s wishes and a *laissez-faire* lack of parental guidance have replaced repression. This produces impulsivity. The parents who thus abdicate rational authority give license to all the child’s drives indiscriminately—primary healthy impulses, if there are any, but more often the secondary destructive impulses, of which there are many. This creates confusion and anxiety in the child, as well as an inability to sustain emotional charge or tolerate anxiety.

It is important to understand that frustration of the child’s healthy development is not just a result of “trauma” in the usual sense of the word, but may occur from coldness, emotional absence, preoccupation, or being in a constant rush. The contactless state can pervade every area of family life and takes different forms in authoritarian versus anti-authoritarian homes, although both are destructive. As we sometimes say, the parents have to be home in order for the child to successfully grow up and leave.

In the anti-authoritarian atmosphere, there is an emphasis on expression without much restraint. Dr. Konia has noted that:

Today, we are confronted with the breakdown of old, authoritarian social structures and the rise of an anti-authoritarian society. This trend began with a weakening of the authoritarian family and social order and was accompanied by a loosening of muscular armor in the masses and a corresponding increase in ocular armor...Because muscular armor has weakened and ocular armor has intensified, the destructive secondary layer is able to break through the social façade with the help of rationalizations of all kinds. This is expressed socially with an increase in pregenital sexual activity and irrational and destructive social behavior, including criminal behavior. (Konia 2008, page 211).

Much of this expression occurs under the guise of freedom and at the expense of individual responsibility.

Ocular armor consists of chronic contraction of the muscles of the head, and of the brain and its vascular network as well. It leads to serious and sometimes dangerous perceptual and cognitive distortions. This increase in the ocular armor of individuals parallels increased contactlessness in social interactions.

Contact occurs when the natural functions of excitation and perception are present and integrated—when there is accurate perception of bioenergetic excitation. Disruption of contact is at the root of all social disturbances, including those between parents and children.

Efforts to overcome the state of contactlessness—to feel something—result in what is called “substitute contact.” These behaviors are attempts to make contact when genuine relatedness is disturbed by armor. In an effort to break through their armor, adolescents are more likely to seek substitute gratification through behaviors that discharge tension and secondary impulses.

Much of the disturbing behavior we observe in children are contactless and substitute behavior. Examples include overtalking, overeating, acting out sexually and otherwise, such as in substance abuse, and passive distraction with various forms of electronic entertainment. Parents may passively allow or encourage and actively support their children’s substitute behavior.

Another current and widespread example of substitute contact is materialism and consumerism. A young patient had a meltdown when his parents would not give him thirty dollars for a pack of Pokemon cards that the child “just had to have.” Instead of exporting the core values on which our country was founded, today the United States to a great degree is exporting consumerism and materialism.

Along with the destructive effects of contactlessness, the child experiences a sense of alienation, emotional deadening, and a rise in anxiety, leading to increased hyperactivity and impulsive behavior. He or she also develops an anti-authoritarian character attitude, and

instead of being rationally obedient and appropriately behaved, will tend to be bratty, obstinate, and unrestrained. Sometimes, such children seem to behave as if they are begging for rational limits, although they would never admit to it. One finds aimlessness and inability of the individual to take charge of his or her life in a serious manner. With increased ocular armor there is increased intellectualism, smart-mouthed impudence, and “smart-ass” rationalizations to justify destructive behavior. For example, when I tried to confront his complete dependency on marijuana, a teenage boy said contemptuously, “Well, Thomas Jefferson grew 18 acres of pot on his farm, and he wrote the Declaration of Independence.”

In the absence of contactful parenting there is increased anxiety. In an effort to numb themselves against the anxiety and fear of real contact, or to try to make contact with the core, the child and adolescent are more likely to seek substitute gratification. However, substitute behavior can never be fully or deeply satisfying. In fact, it leads to increased anxiety over time, and is, as is clearly seen in the case of drug use, immediately and directly destructive. It leads to further contactlessness with both individual and social chaos.

Several years ago I had a very nice but very withdrawn and anxious 12-year old boy in therapy. His parents appeared to be, on first glance, remarkably beautiful and successful people, but their child was “a real mess.” After much work in therapy helping him to make and tolerate contact with his anxiety, my patient began to remember hours of mysterious, terrified and lonely times as a young child during the evenings, sometimes even with his parents physically present in the room with him. I subsequently learned that in his early years his parents smoked a lot of marijuana and actively experimented with hallucinogens. Both of them were physically present but emotionally unavailable for their son. He had no clue what was going on, but he felt it.

In summary, in both the authoritarian and anti-authoritarian social order and family structure, contactlessness prevents the accurate perception of the child’s needs and emotional state, and

both lack rational, contactful guidance based on a nurturing relationship. Both are unable to support and protect the development of self-regulation, and distinguish between core and secondary impulses in the child in order to provide an appropriate response to these impulses.

Social Armor: Compulsive Morality and its Effect on Children

Social armor is the equivalent of individual armor. It consists of rigid processes of distorted social functioning and the consequences of those processes in the social realm, such as social patterns of interaction, traditions, customs, rituals, laws and secondary layer impulses such as sadistic sexuality in advertisements, on television and in movies. Social armor preserves and perpetuates individual armoring and all of its manifestations such as distorted functioning and thinking.

One specific and important form of social armor are the “rules” or “moral guidelines” that are valued and govern the functioning of a society or social group. In healthier groups functioning is “governed” or organized by the natural, organic process of self-regulation. In the healthier society we find what Reich termed “natural morality,” which is grounded in the clear perception of sensations of energy movement unimpeded by armor. Natural morality develops from contact with the biological core and supports the core functions of life.

However, when energy movement is blocked by armor, natural morality becomes distorted and turns cruel and inflexible, resulting in the compulsive morality of armored societies. Each form of social order, authoritarian or anti-authoritarian, has its corresponding and unique form of compulsive morality.

These moralistic “rules” can be all but invisible—people are often unconscious of or not in contact with them. Nonetheless, they have a powerful effect on behavior. The repressive and more overtly sex-negative, compulsive moralism of the traditional authoritarian social order becomes a part of the character structure of the individual living within that social order. For example, the attitude that “one should

wait for marriage before having sex,” while in conflict with natural, healthy impulses, also “seems appropriate” to the traditional, repressed neurotic. Compulsive rules can sometimes be identified literally or figuratively by the word “should” or “should not,” as in: “Boys should not cry;” “Girls who really love their boyfriends should not have sex with them before marriage.”

While not as overt, there are also compulsive moralistic rules that are found in the anti-authoritarian social order. The moral edicts in the background might be: “If you want to, you should just do it; who cares? It’s ok, if you don’t get caught;” or “You shouldn’t trust anyone over 30,” “Everybody ought to get stoned—you should just try it;” or “You need to hook up with that bitch,” or “You should feel free to take what you want.” These are the messages that children see increasingly glorified in the media, and sometimes feel are the standard in their peer group interactions.

It appears that the compulsive morality of the authoritarian order overemphasizes restraint while the morality of the anti-authoritarian order overemphasizes expression with little appreciation for the rights of others, or the distinction between healthy and destructive impulses. The motto of the anti-authoritarian order seems to be “Just do it,” whereas the catch phrase of the traditional order is “Just don’t do it.” In sharp contrast, only when the individual is capable of expression of core impulses *and* restraint—when both are in contact and integrated in the individual and the culture—can there be true self-regulation and natural, healthy morality.

One example of compulsive moralism that most people readily perceive is political correctness (PC). Despite PC’s professed rationale—the encouragement of a just and fair system of social rules of conduct applied to one and all members of society equally—its effect is often that of restraining healthy expression, such as the suppression of the free flow of ideas and the spontaneous use of language in a free society. As an example, a psychologist once chided me in public for using the word “promiscuous” because it was old-fashioned, sexist and judgmental. On the other hand, PC often promotes secondary layer

neurotic expression, such as by equating homosexuality and heterosexuality under the wide flag of diversity while attacking anyone with a different opinion of ignorance and bigotry (“homophobia”).

(To be continued)

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