

SOCIAL DETERMINISM AND SOCIAL DISOBEDIENCE: A REPLY TO FRALEY

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The building and managing of places of confinement—whether for paupers, felons, or the insane—has always excited reformers, including social scientists in the contemporary period. What most gives reason for excitement is that these institutions appear to offer the possibility of imposing total social control.

Total social control is a vaulting idea. It has inspired generations of reformers to think that they can create the perfect social order, and that the perfect social order will rehabilitate those subjected to it. Little wonder that institutions give rise to utopian dreams and projects. Indeed, it was various utopian dreams that led reformers to create institutions in the first place. And when each system of social control failed to rehabilitate, new utopian projects were undertaken, leading to periodic shifts in the architecture, the social structuring, and in the managing of places of confinement. Before the invention of institutions, offenders were pretty much treated as by nature incorrigible, which justified killing them. Or they were viewed as just enough in control of their natural impulses to obey the rules if whipped, branded, or maimed. Institutional movements, by contrast, define social behavior as less a product of human nature and more a product of societal arrangements: perfect social arrangements, perfect social obedience.

Chronology of Institutional Confinement To Solve Sociobehavioral Problems

Utopian correctional projects thus express critiques of society. Each critique explains what is wrong about prevailing societal arrangements, such that disapproved behavior, whether indolence, madness, or crime, results. Each critique, therefore, suggests a model of how society should be organized. Institutions are where reformers try to bring their models into being. They are social experiments. And what fires the imagination of reformers is that by showing how offenders can be made over, they will have succeeded in showing how society itself can, and should, be made over. This is what Professor Fraley means when he says that our society as a whole lacks a "coherent, general, applied behavior technology," with the result that we have a "discredited educational system, an unchecked population expansion,

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and an increasingly insolvent government." He proposes to design social arrangements, behind the walls, involving the perfect manipulation of reward and punishment, thereby converting that institution in to a societal showcase.

Places of Confinement

Reform movements (and behaviorology qualifies as one) generally rise up in the midst of real or imagined societal crises, and they propose solutions based on some model of social control. The history of reform movements shows that this always involves looking backward to some earlier social order said to be more perfect. More often than not, the older social order turns out to be the contemporaneous one, except that it is undergoing decay and no longer commands obedience. Reformers are thus typically oriented toward restoring the past. This may be seen, at times of growing secularism, in efforts to use the institution to revive religious ideals as the organizing principle of society. It may be seen in efforts to revive ideals of stability at times of rapid social change. And it may be seen at times when the structures of incentives and disincentives underpinning socialization malfunction.

The Society of God

Early 19th century Quakers are generally credited with inventing the prison as a way of dealing with felons. The causes of crime were rooted in the decline of religious values. The whip, branding iron, stocks, and gallows, as well as other methods of corporeal and capital punishment in vogue in the colonial world, did nothing to induce true penitence, much less religious conversion, nor anything to restore religious values to their proper place in the social order. An institution called a penitentiary was to be the answer, a place conducive to religious revelation through enforced meditation. Eastern and Western penitentiaries were soon built in Pennsylvania. These consisted of solitary cells, allowing no communication with the keepers, other inmates, or relatives. The sole exception to this imposed solitude were visits from the Quakers on Sundays to distribute religious tracts. These penitentiaries were established to create a society of solitude, a monastic society—the Society of God.

The Society of Order

Early 19th century reformers rooted insanity in social decline, although not so much in the failure of religion as in the failure of order itself. They looked on with anguish as the old colonial social system disintegrated under the impact of rapid population changes, urbanization, the expansion of markets and financial speculation, and other forces that destroyed social stability. The causal link was clear: Disordered social life produces disordered minds. The solution was equally clear: To restore ordered minds, subject them to ordered environments. Hence, the asylum was invented, establishing an environment wherein every moment of daily life was scheduled, regulated, predictable. And where could the asylum best do its work? In pastoral environments with their coherent folk communities—The Society of Order.

CLOWARD'S REPLY

Would I be wrong to say that I see glimmers of Fraley in Maconochie (1848; 1857), the mid-19th century English penologist who originated a rehabilitative system based on incentives. Maconochie called it the "mark system." A prisoner's liberation, he thought, should "depend on the subsequent conduct and character evinced by him, rather than on the quality of the original offense" (1848, p. 3) This philosophy of incentives was embraced by prison reformers in the United States, such as Wines (1895) who told New York State legislators in 1867 that rehabilitation could best be achieved "by placing the prisoner's fate, as far as possible, in his own hands, by enabling him, through industry and good conduct, to raise himself, step by step, to a position of less restraint" (1895, p. 196). And so the reformers changed the balance of carrot and stick by inventing provisions such as time off for good conduct, parole, and indeterminant sentences.

Professor Fraley would go much further. He would create a system of total social control based on behavioral principles within the institution itself, and subject every inmate during every waking moment to it. Perhaps, Professor Fraley would call this The Society of Behaviorology. I cannot begin to say how absurd all this is. Professor Fraley assumes that a perfectly functioning complex social order can be engineered, with behavioral technicians staffing control centers aided by electronic monitoring of behavior, when in truth social scientists have only the most tenuous understanding of how complex societies work in the first place. Professor Fraley's purposive society-building will not be as free of dysfunctions as he expects it will. Social engineering never is. True believers are false prophets, that much social scientists do know.

It is not that such prophecies lack any element of possible truth. Who knows? The Pennsylvania Quakers, thinking that inmates were meditating in their isolated cells, soon found that they were going stir crazy, and the experiment in religious transformation was abandoned. But the Quakers were not wrong that the human mind can be gripped by ideas that change lives—one only has to remember Malcolm X, and other prisoners like him.

Surely there is also something to be said for some minimum stability in peoples' lives. Bedlam in any part of the social order, be it in the structure of family, community, work, does not seem to be good for people. A striking feature of current penal populations is the degree to which they are drawn from groups that have become marginalized from all parts of the social order, not only from occupational roles, but also from family roles. They are of the society to be sure, but to a remarkable extent they are no longer in it. And there is surely truth in notions about the ways different systems of reward and punishment influence socialization.

What is at issue in all of these experiments is the narrowness of each perspective as a theory of human behavior and social life, as well as the certitude with which all are put forward. Professor Fraley and others associated with the reappearance of an updated behaviorism insist that it is the one true science, and that it can manipulate "behavioral phenomena long considered indefinite". Alas, another social movement of false prophets.

Perhaps the single most important reason Professor Fraley and his associates suppose they can control and transform prisoners, and just about anyone else for that matter, is their unqualified social determinism. "Behavior is elicited or evoked by

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independent variables in the environment of the behavior organism. Therefore, *all* behavior [Fraley's emphasis] is functionally controlled or determined," and "in no instance can behavior be free, autonomous, spontaneous. . .". Professor Fraley even thinks his scientific elite in the role of keepers can impose a hegemonic ideology based on behaviorological principles on the institutional community, and by implication, on society at large.

My, oh my, oh my! Behaviorologists are in for some shock when they discover, as they will in the course of their continuing projects, that men and women have an unfailing capacity to evade and resist independent variables, even to challenge and change them. Efforts to impose hegemonic ideologies is a constant goal of elites in human societies, for example, but they never succeed. Subordinate groups always manage, at some times and in some ways, to generate competing ideologies which lead to dissent and disobedience.

Behaviorologists are fooling themselves by supposing that their mechanistic schemes, or any scheme for that matter, can extirpate the human capacity for dissent and disobedience. And they are fooling themselves to suppose that extirpating this capacity, were it possible, would be a social good. Despite its various social costs, which can sometimes be considerable, social disobedience, from crime to riot, also contributes to the quality of human life in manifold ways. Above all else, dissent and disobedience demonstrate that freedom from authoritarian social control is always possible.

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