

# Is a New Value System Emerging?

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UTILIZING the teaching of past leaders in psychiatry, which would include the work of Masserman, Horney, Robbins, Bonime, Salzman, as well as a host of less significant contributors, I have felt that, as human beings, everyone operates from a base of characterological value systems. This is somewhat different from the original conceptualizations of Sigmund Freud, whose work reflected the value systems of his own time. He evolved a theory of understanding human behavior from a purely biological standpoint. Freud, however, did state that all "truth" is man-made. Freud personally was not nearly as rigid as many who followed him.

In no way denying that as human beings we all have a biological nature, most recent authors place much more value on the fact that, differing from other living creatures on this earth, *man* has been blessed (or cursed) by having the capacity to develop a magnificently complex organ called the human brain. The result of this complexity is that, differing from other creatures, man can *reason*. Man can also have a sense of time, and that which occurred yesterday as well as that which is happening today is not forgotten. Also, man can psychologically project himself into the future. The one important fac-

tor, then, that distinguishes man from other creatures is his capacity to have *ideas*. Consciously or not, he operates from the power of these ideas. From his perceptions and experiences he is able to reflect in his solipsistic world and develop conceptualizations. The sum total of these conceptualizations constitutes his unique system of characterological value systems.

Further, one must consider that each individual lives in a series of systems and subsystems which reflect his particular cultural milieu, or social environment. It is from these environmental influences that each of us evolves his own particularly unique value system. This system may differ slightly from one individual to another, but it is surprising how similar all human beings are to each other, including those we label as being mentally ill, especially in the Western World.

Although the fields of psychiatry and psychology can be bewilderingly complex, they can also at times be comforting and simple. Our cultural milieu is in many ways

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very constricting. To most human beings (even the so-called radical youth and other "minority" groups), there is much more need for harmony and conformity rather than disharmony, in spite of external superficialities in dress, hair styles, and the like.

## Evaluation of Changing Values

Is it then true that value systems are really changing? We see and hear of many changes about us. We see our youth, at times, flaunting our rigidities back at us. They at times see their parents and other elders for what they think they really might be. All too frequently they cry, "You are a hypocrite!" Most "adults" who attempt to be genuinely honest with themselves must in part agree. Some adults also have been so "turned on" that they constitute a threat to the more staid. We have to a certain degree been hypocrites.

Yet first of all we feel frightened because we know not what to teach our young. (After all, we too have been caught up in the value systems of our own times.) Second, when in real trouble, most of the youth turn to us for guidance in spite of the fact that they enjoy calling us "names."

Many of those who are calling for new values tell us, for example, that the family unit as we have striven for it is no good; that it must be changed. Why should people marry when marriage is at best difficult for anyone? Why not have sperm banks to perpetuate the human race if this is what marriage has as its main function? Why not have homosexual liaisons if human relatedness between the sexes is so difficult and at times gives rise to plays for power rather than a sense of genuine rapprochement? Why not have communes as well if a person is heterosexually inclined? Let us find alternatives to violence before the human race annihilates itself. Any number of innovations have been proposed and suggested. Some people believe that within a generation or two there will be a completely new human environmental structure. But will there be one?

I personally do not feel that changes

such as those described above will take place. I fervently hope with all my soul that we as humans will find an answer to the question of violence, yet I do not feel that the family structure as it now exists will change too much. I can understand the disillusionment of those who are crying for a change in human relatedness, and to a certain degree I understand their overreaction—even though this overreaction may at times be very destructive. On the other hand, I believe that the behaviors we observe are superficialities. I feel that if one looks quite closely at what some "constructive malcontents" are saying, he will hear them state, "Let us keep the same value systems, but let us do a better job of it—or, at least, let us deal with these problems more honestly and fairly."

## Basic Human Values

Now we must determine what are the basic human values that, ideally, man has striven for since the beginning of his existence. Also, we must ask, "What are the basic drives of each human being?" I speak not of one sex or another, but rather of the human being who just happens, by accident, to be of a particular sex.

I would fall back on the philosophical thinking of one of my first mentors who, I feel, has proven himself to be a giant in his field as well as an inspiration in a host of other fields—the humanities, sociology, anthropology, etc. It has been Jules Masserman's conviction that since Paleolithic times man has striven for three basic human faiths and beliefs to bring him a sense of security and comfort. For want of a descriptive phrase he has labeled these beliefs the "Ur defenses" of man (Ur being the city from which Father Abraham was supposed to have emanated).

These defenses are: first, man must have, in spite of the dangerous and hostile world in which he lives, a basic belief in himself. He must genuinely believe in his own invincibility. Second, he must be able to make friends and believe in man's kindness to man—he must have the ability to trust his fellow man enough to love him. Last, each person must evolve for himself

some basic philosophic, scientific, or religious faith, a faith that is bigger than himself in order that he can not only derive surcease, but a genuine sense of humility.

From these basic values man can have the strength in his own individualism, he can learn to love others as much as he loves himself, and, last, by believing in a force stronger than himself, he can develop a sense of humility, reliability, and dependability. The purpose of the conglomeration of these values is manifold, but they all demonstrate that that which is most valuable to all of us is life itself and its preservation. The problem is how each person can best protect himself as well as have the courage to bring others into the world so that life will be preserved. How can man be creative and have faith in the future? The one answer that man has evolved has been the family, and in my opinion it will continue to be so.

## Conclusions

In a conversation with a most creative, intelligent, but delightfully human fellow colleague, I took issue with a recent paper he had written. The paper dealt with what he considered changing human values of the future. In it he spoke of communes, homosexual liaisons, as well as the dissolution of marriage and the family.

My colleague was honest enough (or at least trusted me enough) to reveal that when he was three-fourths through with his manuscript he became markedly depressed. He could not understand why.

To me, objectively, the reason for his

depression was very simple. He had, without realizing it, literally destroyed the human race and any reliable substitute for its perpetuation. Parenthetically, he finished his paper, but did not completely resolve his own depression.

I would feel that those who must carry out the work of the future, who take the same tactic, will have the same fate. Our youth and others who are demanding change are in a state of experimentation. They have as yet to reach the maturity of my colleague, and, in spite of all, do not as yet realize the investment or commitment they must make in order to preserve the essence of humanity that my colleague intuitively knew.

The time will come when they do, and when this happens, much of their destructiveness will stop! Some (who at present are the most rabid) may paradoxically become staunch conservatives. Others will go on being destructive because they are, unfortunately, mentally ill in any case. Hopefully, the majority will realize their destructive, albeit enthusiastic, nature and settle down. A few will be able to engender genuine advances. It is upon these few that our future will rest.

I therefore predict that humanism and family life will never cease to exist, and out of the present turmoil will emerge a few genuine leaders who will show us a better way for the future. This future, however, will not destroy the essence of humanism. No matter what its form, human life and its protection will and must continue to exist. We must never forget that being is becoming. □

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