

**THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY
OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**
BY HANS TOCH



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THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS *by Hans Toch.*

HANS TOCH

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The social psychology



of social movements

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Preface

MORE than fifteen years ago, at a time when my academic involvements were limited to evening college courses, I developed an interest in social movements. I am no longer sure how it all started. I suspect that I found myself personally attracted to some movements and that I was somewhat alarmed by others. I infer that early experiences had left me with the feeling that society could be importantly affected—for better or worse—by particular kinds of groups. And I assume that I must have gained pleasure and excitement from the opportunity of exploring beliefs and practices at variance with my own.

In any event, I remember myself as a regular reader of sectarian publications. I remember attending all manner of meetings, rallies, convocations, and seances, and I recall browsing through dusty tomes dealing with religious and political movements of the past and searching out newspaper reports on the activity of contemporary groups.

In one of my undergraduate courses I read Cantril's *Psychology of Social Movements* and began to suspect that it was possible to combine business with pleasure. In 1952, when I entered Princeton as a graduate student, I was delighted to verify my assumption. With Cantril's support, I began to transform curiosity into questions and to change my concern into a framework for inquiry. The result of the transformation is recorded in these pages.

It is perhaps not surprising that the strategy of this book recapitulates the ontogeny of my own evolution. I have tried to present illustrations of sufficient diversity to convey a sense of the universality and import of social movements. I have tried to communicate some of the latent tragedy in membership and some of the finality of its impact. I have tried to capture some of the humor and pathos, some of the despair and urgency, and some of the inexorable logic of collective action. I have tried to spell out some human implications which make social movements important to all of us.

It is my hope that the student or lay reader will find this material of sufficient personal interest to join me in posing questions and considering answers. I further hope that some will advance beyond this book toward more intensive investigations of their own. My method of presentation assumes that good research starts with interest in the substance of one's concern. The opposite sequence—which begins with research indoctrination—appears to me to introduce the cart before the horse.

But then, I might as well confess that this book is deviant in a number of respects. For one, it is a relatively informal essay, and it is as free of technical terms as I have been able to make it.

Second, the exposition relies heavily on “folksy” illustrations—a method of documentation that has been in disrepute since the carefree days in which psychologists described, in touching detail, the funeral services of the black ant.

In justification, I shall not retreat into my role as a teacher. I shall also not claim that I seriously object to conventional forms of presentation and documentation. True, it is sometimes hard for me to distinguish instances in which the use of concepts increases understanding, from occasions in which it meets the demands of fashion. And in considering laboratory data, I have often felt that the transition from synthetic arrangements to full-blooded life was not convincingly bridged.

But such considerations were not paramount in determining the way I wrote this book. I feel that there are two legitimate ways to gain respectability for a new area of concern. One is to link it to an established body of knowledge; thus the new becomes a fruitful proving ground for available tools and familiar hypotheses.

An alternative method is to try to make a case for the new in its own right. This involves an accent on unique features, and the development of tailor-made concepts and tools. In this book, I have tried to make an informal start at demonstrating the potentiality of social movements as psychological subject matter, in a somewhat more systematic fashion than has been done

before. The premise of my efforts is that the strategy of defining a field on its own merits facilitates, rather than impedes, its assimilation into the ongoing stream of inquiry.

Thus my use of real-life illustrations represents an attempt to remain within one universe of data—to show that it is available for use. And I have tried to avoid directing the interpretation of these data, by keeping my own speculations on a first-order level. In other words, this book reflects a point of view but does not present a self-sufficient logical edifice. The type of intellectual architecture I have produced is more analogous to a compound of fragile huts that invites subsequent redevelopment.

My title contains the term “social psychology.” To the extent to which there are *social* psychologists and social *psychologists*, I probably fall among the latter. But I trust that this book is *neither* psychology *nor* sociology, and that at the same time it qualifies as *both*. I have presented a frame of reference, without worrying about its classification. *Some* psychologists and *some* sociologists may feel affinity for my viewpoint; others will not. Disciplinary affiliation should be irrelevant to this judgment.

None of us can lay claim to the exclusive legitimacy of our views. A cow has a right not to lay eggs, but cannot deduce from its limitations the intrinsic superiority of dairy products over the derivatives of the barnyard. This book represents one way of looking at its subject matter. I hope that it will not be taken to task because it fails to reflect the viewpoints of others.

Although I cannot blame anyone for my own failings, there are many persons whom I must credit with contributing to this book. My chief debt is to Hadley Cantril, whose influence on these pages will be obvious to anyone familiar with his writings. A more personal contribution has been his encouragement throughout these years, which has made me face up to my task. Another source of faith has been Albert Hastorf, who twice convinced publishers to lend credibility to my promises.

There are innumerable students and colleagues to whom I am indebted for stimulation and ideas. Among student term papers I have read, many have provided food for thought and a few have left a tangible impression on this book. I should like to express my appreciation to Walter DeVries, Ann Dixon, Henry Horwitt, James A. Ralston, Joyce Randall, George Royce, and Bruce Scorsome among those who have drawn my attention to particular movements, or provided me with source material which I have added to my collection. Many students have helped somewhat less directly.

One to whom I owe a special vote of thanks is Steven Deutsch, who has frequently served me as sociological consultant.

I am indebted to Gabriel Almond, who kindly permitted me to excerpt and quote interview transcripts from his monumental study of Communist defectors. Stanley Hoffmann supplied bibliographical suggestions related to the Poujade movement; Theodora Abell translated French newspapers and Assembly debates. Jack Block, Hadley Cantril, Gilbert Geis, Egil Fivelsdal, Sverre Lysgaard, Thomas Mathiesen, Milton Rokeach, Harold Walsh, and Dagfinn As were among Norwegian and American colleagues who read individual chapters of this book, and who helped me with criticism and suggestions.

The manuscript is a product of a sabbatical year that I spent as a Fulbright Research Fellow in Oslo, Norway. I am grateful to Michigan State University for allowing me the time, to the U. S. Educational Foundation for financial support, and to the Institute for Social Research (and Eric Rinde) for physical facilities. It is these commodities which have ultimately made this book possible.

Final votes of thanks must go to Ann Toch, who typed the entire manuscript and tried to tolerate me during the various stages of its inception.

H.T.

Oslo, Norway
June 26, 1964

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one



The nature of social movements

1 THE SOLUTION OF COLLECTIVE PROBLEMS

ONE summer afternoon in 1959, Elijah Muhammad stood before ten thousand followers in Washington's Uline Arena and said to them:

You have cried, wept, prayed, shouted, come to the back door, down the chimney, through the window. . . .

The church has failed you; Christianity has failed you; the government of America has failed you. You have not received justice from any quarter.¹

Mr. Muhammad was telling his listeners that they had exhausted the more common resources of the social order.

When people feel themselves abandoned or frustrated by conventional society, they can sometimes by-pass established institutions and create informal social organizations "on the side." Such grass-roots movements serve to provide otherwise unavailable services, to protest indignities, to escape suffering, to release tension, to explain confusing events, or in some other way to create a more tolerable way of life than is afforded by existing formal organizations.

It is these byways of social change that constitute the subject of this book. In Chapter 1 we shall show how groups can arise to satisfy needs

¹ E. Muhammad, "Justice for My People," *The Islamic News* (July 6, 1959).

neglected by society. We shall try to apply this psychological perspective in the remaining chapters of Part One.

Part Two of the book explores the fate of individual members. Here, the typical recruit into a social movement will be traced through the stages of joining (Chapter 6), belonging (Chapter 7), and defecting (Chapter 8).

More general issues are dealt with in Part Three, where we shall be concerned with questions of motivation, social change, and negative or positive evaluation.

The early view

Collective efforts to deal with deficiencies in the Establishment have throughout history amused, astonished, puzzled, irritated, challenged, and at times horrified unaffiliated spectators. When they were small-scale, they have been viewed as ridiculous amateur performances; when they turned the tides of history, they were perceived as illegitimate interferences with otherwise lawful change.

Until the advent of the field of "collective behavior" in sociology a few decades ago, spontaneous social phenomena have not been generally classed as deserving serious attention, but rather as curiosities or monstrosities in an otherwise rational world. And in the beginning, the formal study of collective behavior continued prescientific traditions. The attention focused on groups which could be viewed as social aberrations—as extensions or parallels of individual mental disease.² Even today, when social scientists speak of "collective behavior," they often refer to negatively valued group phenomena such as panics, mobs, riots, hysterias, and fads. Our field of inquiry, however, is no longer restricted to transitory events of an exotic or spectacular nature of which we disapprove.³

² G. LeBon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1879); C. Mackay, *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions* (Boston: L. C. Page, 1932); E. D. Martin, *The Behavior of Crowds* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1920); E. A. Strecker, *Beyond the Clinical Frontiers*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1940). For a position that contrasts with these "irrationalistic" approaches to collective behavior, see the belief-centered analysis of N. J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1963).

³ To qualify as exhibiting collective behavior—as the term is usually defined—a group must (1) be large; (2) act spontaneously; (3) be relatively unorganized; (4) try to promote change; and (5) develop unpredictably. Among the kinds of groups which this definition excludes are small groups, although it is sometimes hard to decide if a group is "large" or "small." Also excluded are most of the *organizations* or *institutions* of conventional society—that is, groups in which people occupy defined positions, and in which the main object is to perpetuate or promote the existence of the group,

Social movements

Social movements are usually comprised under the general heading of collective behavior. They are distinguished from other forms of collective behavior as being groups which are relatively long-lasting and which have a clear *program* or *purpose*. They are viewed as forms of collective behavior nevertheless, because they are *large* groups and because they arise spontaneously.

The key element in most definitions of social movements is the requirement that they must be *aimed at promoting or resisting change* in society at large. A social movement, in other words, is defined as a large-scale, informal effort designed to correct, supplement, overthrow, or in some fashion influence the social order.⁴

For the psychologist, these kinds of efforts must be motivated. They must stem from specific discontents of specific people with specific situations in which they find themselves. They must also represent the kinds of difficulties that people feel can be resolved through collective action, rather than privately. In accord with these premises, a psychological definition of social movements could read: *A social movement represents an effort by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem that they feel they have in common.*

This statement is not as simple as it sounds. In particular, the concept of a "problem" implies problems of its own. When can a group of people be said to have a problem? How is a "collective problem" to be described? What kinds of problems can be solved by resorting to social movements, and what constitutes a solution? The remainder of this discussion will address itself to these questions.

Problem situations

For an outside observer of any sort—whether he is a social scientist, journalist, welfare worker, tourist, or other kind of spectator—the indexes to the possible existence of a problem are usually a set of concrete, observable,

and of the social order that contains it. For definitions of collective behavior, see H. Blumer, "Collective Behavior" in A. M. Lee, ed. *Principles of Sociology* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1951); R. H. Turner and L. M. Killian, *Collective Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1957), pp. 3 ff.; K. Lang and Gladys E. Lang, *Collective Dynamics* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1961), pp. 11 ff.

⁴ Blumer, "Collective Behavior"; Turner and Killian, *Collective Behavior*, p. 308; Lang and Lang, *Collective Dynamics*, pp. 489–496. See also R. Heberle, *Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951).

“objective” conditions that comprise a personal handicap and/or an unfavorable environment. Old age, disease, low income, unemployment, physical suffering, and starvation are among such problem situations.⁵

Often, relevant information for the diagnosis of problem situations can be obtained in shorthand form in the shape of financial statistics, ecological tables, and other summaries of demographic data. Here the principle of *ex pede Herculem* (we infer Hercules from his foot) applies: a few dry items of statistic permit us to reconstruct the occasions for manifold human suffering. When we are told, for example, that three quarters of all land in Latin America is owned by two per cent of the population, and that despite abundant resources more than half of all Latin Americans eat below subsistence level, we begin to think in terms of social inequities and resulting hardships. Similarly, we may come to regard American farm wage workers as underprivileged when we discover that the average migratory agricultural worker earns \$5.00 a week and can usually find only 150 to 160 days of work a year. And we sense physical misery behind the data that one out of every three black South Africans never survives birth and that, if he does, his chances of reaching sixteen are little more than fifty-fifty and his estimated life span is about half that of his typical white compatriot.⁶

But statistics do little more than point up deficits in the social ledger. They cannot describe and define the world that actually faces various types of underprivileged people. The farm workers we have mentioned are a case in point. Volumes of statistics would not begin to convey the picture of patched hovels and stinking outhouses, overnight rides in crowded trucks, and heavy work under the midsummer sun. In order accurately to define an “objective” problem situation, more or less systematic observations must supplement demographic data. The following, for example, is an excerpt of an account by Dale Wright of the working conditions of migrant farm workers:

In the first hours of that miserable day, my hands became grimy and encrusted with the green insecticide they spray on tomatoes. It covered my

⁵ Although the components of a problem situation are objectively specifiable, the outside observer must exercise judgment in deciding what constitutes a personal or social deficit. The line between a “problem” and a “no problem” situation must be subjectively drawn.

⁶ For migrant labor statistics, see U. S. Dept. of Labor, *Farm Labor Market Developments* (January 1959), p. 8, covering 1951–58. South African mortality statistics are quoted from S. Abdul, *The Truth about South Africa* (Austria: International Society of Socialist Youth, 1963), p. 6; Latin American statistics are available in any standard source book, such as note 8 following.

khaki pants and ate its way into my legs. It collected under my finger nails, covered my shoes and socks and festered in the scratches I received from the tomato vines.

But picking the tomatoes was the easy part of the job. The hard part was lugging the heavy baskets to the end of the rows—often as far as 150 feet—to be loaded onto the trucks.

All around me were men and women—all ages—dragging themselves along the rows on their hands and knees in the near-90-degree heat.

Toilet facilities? There were none. . . .⁷

Similarly, Latin American statistics could be elaborated with descriptive data such as the following description of a Peruvian slum that stretches for several miles atop an old garbage dump:

El Monton is one of a dozen *barriadas* in and around Lima, and in them subsist 400,000 souls. Children, with festering sores on their bare legs, play in the exposed garbage, adults forage through it, picking out bits of cardboard or strips of metal to patch their shanties. . . . Occasional breezes carry with them the odor of decayed garbage, which comes to the surface and mixes with the dry earth spilling from the unpaved alleys and the excrement of the open sewage. . . . The walls help you shut your eyes to the haphazard jungle of paper shacks and the scrawny bodies of babies left untended by working mothers; it is difficult to close your ears to the moans of older folk dying of malnutrition . . . you can never get rid of the fetor, the stink that clings to your clothing and makes you want to retch and rush to your shower and send everything quickly, immediately to the cleaners or to the fire.⁸

The impact of problem situations

Even relatively vivid and detailed descriptions of conditions, however, no matter how pathetic and dramatic, only *provide clues to human problems*. The focus of a problem is not in the problem situation, but in its *impact* on individual people. The diagnosis of problems must therefore carry us to the *experiencing* person. In the case of South Africa, for instance, we must deal with the experiences of Bantus imprisoned for not carrying their 96-page pass, the impressions of laborers severely beaten by their masters, the feeling of wives living alone while their husbands serve as in-

⁷ D. Wright, *The Forgotten People* (reprinted by Consumers' League of New Jersey, Maplewood, N. J., 1961), pp. 3-4.

⁸ G. Clark, *The Coming Explosion in Latin America* (New York: McKay, 1963), pp. 7-8.

dentured farm workers, and the reactions of bright young natives who discover that education is reserved for whites.⁹ Among migrant farm workers, we must concern ourselves with individuals like Alonzo, described by Dale Wright as “an emaciated man of about 40 [who] coughed [blood] and spat incessantly as he bent over his task”:

Yeah, they say it's consumption. It don't make no difference. I gotta keep working. The doctor, he can't do nothing for me. I got no money for medicine, I gotta woman and a lotta kids. I gotta keep picking tomatoes. . . . Don't know nothing else. . . . This job is just like the last one. Next be just like this one. Never no different. Never will be.¹⁰

Even from this brief excerpt, it is obvious that Alonzo's problem is far more complex than low income and underemployment. It involves his health, the health of his family, his educational level, and feelings such as despair and resignation.

The impact of a problem situation can only be understood and predicted when data are available about the attitudes, feelings, expectations, and needs of affected persons. The following excerpt of a statement drafted in 1961 by a group of Alaska Eskimos may serve to illustrate this point:

We always thought our Inupiat Paitot was safe to be passed down to our future generations as our fathers passed it down to us. Our Inupiat Paitot is our land around the Arctic world where we the Inupiat live, our right to hunt our food any place and time of year as we always have, our right to be great hunters and brave independent people, like our grandfathers, our right to the minerals that belong to us in the land we claim. Today our Inupiat Paitot is called by the white man our aboriginal rights.

We were quiet and happy and always thought we had these aboriginal rights until last year when agents of the Fish and Wildlife Service arrested two Inupiat hunters of Point Barrow. They arrested these natives because they shot Eider ducks for food. They told these natives they could not hunt Eider ducks in 1960 because of a Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada and Mexico. The other men of Barrow, 138 hunters, all walked up to Fish and Wildlife agents to be arrested also; each man had an Eider duck in his hand. Each man said “we are all hunters, it is our right to hunt food, and if you arrest two you must arrest all.”¹¹

The problem in this case is no more a duck-hunting issue than the Boston Tea Party could be defined as a tea lovers' conclave. A piece of

⁹ P. Van Rensberg, *Guilty Land, the History of Apartheid* (New York: Praeger, 1962); N. C. Phillips, *Tragedy of Apartheid*, (New York: McKay, 1960).

¹⁰ Wright, *Forgotten People*, p. 3.

¹¹ “Inupiat Paitot,” *Indian Affairs*, No. 44 (December 1961), p. 1.

legislation that to outside observers—including officials of the Fish and Wildlife Service—might have appeared relatively trivial, to the Eskimo hunters represented a breach of faith without understandable justification, and meant not only a serious limitation of food supply, but also a curtailment of freedom of action, and an interference with one's basic right to live according to one's customs and traditions.

A second illustration of the subjective character of problems may be drawn from the 1960 teachers' strike in the city of New York. Issues like salary increases and collective bargaining rights were in the forefront of the reasons for the strike. The undercurrent, however, was provided by feelings such as those exemplified in the following interview excerpt:

"From the time we go to take the examinations for our license we are made to feel like dirt," he said. "The clerks at the examining board are surly to us, as are many of our superiors when we get the job. We are smothered in red tape and regulations and made to feel that we—the teachers—don't really count.

"[The Superintendent] treats us like children. He acts condescendingly and paternalistically towards us. He refers to us constantly as 'my' teachers. We are not his teachers, as he found out on Monday. Maybe this sounds like a quibble over semantics, but when it comes on top of so many other things, it is enough to set off the fuse."¹²

Here, obviously, it would have been difficult to extrapolate the problem from objectively specifiable conditions. "Surly" officials and "red tape" give the appearance of relatively mild inconveniences. However, when they impinge on strong needs, such as the desire to experience a modicum of personal dignity and self-respect, they may constitute the occasion for a serious problem.

Problems as predispositions

Social movements draw their members from the ranks of persons who have encountered problems. The Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, in his 1953 courtroom speech "History Will Absolve Me," referred to his prospective following in these terms:

The people we counted on in our struggle were these:

Seven hundred thousand Cubans without work, who desire to earn their daily bread honestly, without having to emigrate in search of livelihood.

¹² *The New York Times* (November 9, 1960).

Five hundred thousand farm laborers inhabiting miserable shacks, who work four months of the year and starve for the rest of the year, sharing their misery with their children, who have not an inch of land to cultivate, and whose existence inspires compassion in any heart not made of stone.

Four hundred thousand industrial laborers and stevedorers whose retirement funds have been embezzled, whose benefits are being taken away, whose homes are wretched quarters, whose salaries pass from the hands of the boss to those of the usurers, whose future is a pay reduction and dismissal, whose life is eternal work and whose only rest is the tomb.

One hundred thousand small farmers who live and die working on land that is not theirs, looking at it with sadness as Moses did the promised land, to die without possessing it; who, like feudal serfs, have to pay for the use of their parcel of land by giving up a portion of their products; who cannot love it, improve it, beautify it or plant a lemon or an orange tree in it, because they never know when a sheriff will come with the rural guard to evict them from it. . . .

Ten thousand young professionals: doctors, engineers, lawyers, veterinarians, school teachers, dentists, pharmacists, newspapermen, painters, sculptors, etc., who come forth from school with their degrees, anxious to work and full of hope, only to find themselves at a dead end with all doors closed, and where no ear hears their clamor of supplications.

These are the people, the ones who know misfortune and, therefore, are capable of fighting with limitless courage.¹³

Castro's listing is a long one, covering almost every segment of the Cuban population. Despite the heterogeneity of the list, however, there is a common denominator: Every one of the catalogued classes of persons was faced (in 1953) with an objectively specifiable problem situation. The speech implies that each of these groups also *experienced* its hardships. This being the case, Castro could justifiably view the people involved as *predisposed to join a social movement* (such as his own) *designed to remedy their difficulties*.

Even this type of "objective" predisposition, however, is not a sufficient condition for membership in a social movement. Although many of the persons referred to by Castro *did* become actively involved in his revolutionary enterprise, many others did not. There are also groups of persons, such as the migrant farm workers we have discussed, whose reactions to their problems ("ain't nuthin' you can do about it," "never escape," etc.) are clearly not conducive to involvement in remedial efforts. It may be

¹³ F. Castro, *History Will Absolve Me* (New York: Fair Play for Cuba Committee, 1961), pp. 34-35.

recalled, as an extreme case in point, that peasants in the Middle Ages saw their families die of starvation within earshot of orgies in the manor on the hill, or directly under the walls of feudal granaries, without even momentarily permitting themselves to question the assumption that such inequity had been ordained by God. Studies of concentration-camp inmates and of other persons subjected to extreme privation paint a similar picture. They show that people under very adverse circumstances can become preoccupied with their physical survival and with other short-term concerns, and may even fail to resist in the face of imminent and certain death.¹⁴

From predisposition to susceptibility

For a person to be led to join a social movement, he must not only sense a problem, but must also (1) feel that something can be done about it and (2) want to do something about it himself. At the very least, he must feel that the status quo is not inevitable, and that *change is conceivable*. This frame of mind is illustrated, for instance, in Martin Luther King's speech to participants in the 1963 civil rights March on Washington:

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with—with this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.¹⁵

A second stage in the process would be the feeling that a better world is *concretely attainable*. This is the realization that has recently evolved in underdeveloped regions, and that has been labeled the "Revolution of Rising Expectations." Halvard Lange, Foreign Minister of Norway, in a 1961 speech concerned with underprivileged people, put the matter in these terms:

Poverty, misery, illiteracy, chronic ill health are an integral part of their daily life. Until recently, they have endured these evils in passive despair because they had no vision of anything better.

But today they know and understand that hunger, disease, fruitless

¹⁴ B. Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart: Autonomy in a Mass Age* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1960).

¹⁵ *The New York Times* (August 29, 1963).

toil and early death are not inevitable, *that it is possible to create conditions in which they and their children can have a better life*. What has aptly been termed "the revolution of rising expectations" is under way.¹⁶

James C. Davies, a sociologist, has pointed out that people must expect an improvement in conditions before they embark on revolutions. Ultimately, he writes, "it is the dissatisfied state of mind rather than the tangible provision of 'adequate' or 'inadequate' supplies of food, equality or liberty which produces revolution."¹⁷

But even the "dissatisfied state of mind" is not enough. As a last step, there must be *a desire to become involved in the accomplishment of change*. The person must feel the need to seek clarification or "do something." He must embark on what has been called a "search for meaning" or for "symbols" that offer to resolve his problem.¹⁸ And he must look around for other people with whom he can join in attempts at a solution.

Susceptibility

When a person searches for meaning, he can be defined as "susceptible" to social movements, although susceptibility here is a matter of degree. A *mild* increase in susceptibility would involve a slight lowering of sales resistance to available solutions. The person would tend to listen with increasing care to proposals which he could view as relating to his problem. He would be less likely to reject them out of hand or to try to find flies in the ointment that promised him a cure.

A *strong* increase in susceptibility creates "gullibility" or suggestibility. It involves a tendency to jump at promising propositions, and a readiness to adopt them. A person in this condition may seem to go out of his way to make himself available as a prospective member. He may habituate street corners listening to speakers, or he may avidly read and discuss every available item of sectarian literature. Adolf Hitler, in his days as a disillusioned young man living in Vienna, provides a good illustration of susceptibility in this extreme form:

He buried himself in anti-Semitic literature, which had a large sale in Vienna at that time. Then he took to the streets to observe the "phenomenon" more closely. "Wherever I went," he says, "I began to see Jews. . . .

¹⁶ *The New York Times* (January 10, 1961, italics added).

¹⁷ J. C. Davies, "Toward a Theory of Revolution," *Amer. Sociol. Rev.* (February 1962), p. 6.

¹⁸ H. Cantnrl, *The Psychology of Social Movements* (New York: Wiley, 1941), pp. 53 ff.; H. Lasswell, *The Psychopathology of Politics* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1930), p. 188.

Later I often grew sick to the stomach from the smell of these caftan-wearers."¹⁹

On a behavioral dimension, susceptibility may range from *passive* to *active*. Many susceptible persons simply wait with an air of quiet expectancy for the Answer to present itself. Susceptibility, in these cases, is no more than a readiness to accept, or—in the words of William James—a “will to believe.”²⁰ This condition can be inferred, for instance, in the following autobiographical statement:

I had prayed that if there was a true church, God would lead us to it.

Within a few weeks after that prayer a series of articles appeared in the daily paper, taken from a national magazine, giving the beliefs of the great religions of America. We read them all. The one on Adventists was the last to appear and we could see right away that this church was truly according to the Bible.²¹

The other extreme is the type of active search exemplified by Flying Saucer Contact Weekend, in which interested persons try to establish communication with extraterrestrial friends. During this annual affair, Flying Saucer Club members all over the globe concentrate on telepathic messages, scan the skies, watch unassigned TV channels, and listen to unused radio bands in an effort to reach saucer pilots. Not surprisingly, Flying Saucer Contact Weekend does yield numerous “contacts” with Unidentified Flying Objects and their crews.²²

This type of result occurs because susceptibility, unlike virtue, is usually rewarded. The Winter of Discontent evokes the Summer of Faith—presupposing, of course, an intermediate season, in which new meanings become available for adoption.

Susceptibility and appeal

Although there undoubtedly exist some people whose personalities are so constituted that they become equally susceptible to almost every proposition they encounter, most people would feel responsive only to certain types

¹⁹ W. L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1962), p. 47.

²⁰ W. James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York: Longmans Green, 1902).

²¹ “Why I Became an Adventist,” *Review and Herald*, 138, No. 1 (June 8, 1961), p. 22.

²² *U-Forum* (publication of the Grand Rapids Flying Saucer Club, Michigan, September–October 1956), p. 18, as quoted in *East Lansing Michigan State News* (May 19, 1959).

of solutions at particular stages of their lives and in particular situations. This selectivity is partly related to the problems that create the state of susceptibility in the first place. A woman concerned with her failing health, for instance, would no more tend to throw herself into an agrarian reform movement than a Chinese peasant is likely to find himself involved in a health fad or in the Christian Science church. A Midwestern farm boy may be attracted to a 4-H Club, but is less likely to become interested in urban renewal.

A person's educational level, the social influences that operate on him, the kinds of past experiences he has had, and other factors that determine his outlook on life are also likely to enter into his selective susceptibility. An individual with a college education, for example, would be much less prone to adopt an oversimplified economic scheme than would a person who has not graduated from grammar school. An intensely religious upbringing can lead one to prefer religious to secular solutions (when these are otherwise equivalent). And younger men may be more likely to become involved in radical activities than are men of middle age.

Factors such as these restrict the range of social movements to which a person is attracted. Within this range, other influences may determine which movement he joins. For instance, a person may have the type of background that would increase his susceptibility to either left-wing politics or fundamentalist religion, but not to fascism, middle-of-the-road solutions, or liberal protestantism. For example,

In Holland and Sweden, recent studies show that the Communists are strongest in regions which were once centers of fundamentalist religious revivalism. In Finland, Communism and revivalist Christianity often are strong in the same areas. In the poor eastern parts of Finland, the Communists have been very careful not to offend people's religious feelings. It is reported that many Communist meetings actually begin with religious hymns.²³

With respect to the people in these areas, the Communist party and the Pentecostal Church may have been in a competitive position.

How are such competitions resolved? In some instances, simple personal preference or social pressure exercised by friends and relatives could easily turn the tide. In other cases, the decisive factor might be a trivial historical accident, such as attending a revival meeting *before* encountering a visiting Communist official, or vice versa.

The same relationship holds between social movements and institu-

²³ S. M. Lipset, *Political Man* (London: Mercury, 1963), p. 108.

tions that compete with them for the candidacy of susceptible persons. Many people, for instance, might shrink from participation in a communal venture, and instead opt for a course of action more within the accepted institutional framework. Social movements may in this fashion unsuccessfully compete against commercial offers to solve the same problems. The following advertisement, for instance, might lead a potential member of a lonely hearts club to take an extended vacation:

What's the matter with you, Everett Haygood? When you were 16 you had it all figured out. You were going to make a lot of money at something (you weren't sure what, but *something*) and you were going to marry Veronica O'Hare, go around the world in a sloop and then live on Park Avenue. But Veronica (who never went out with you anyhow) married Jack Dillon, the closest you got to a sloop was an afternoon on a friend's 12 footer, and you're still living with your mother, who's sure your boss is afraid of you. You're now 34 years old. You make 8,300 dollars a year and every summer you take your vacation in days so you can fix the screens, get rid of the crab grass, take your mother on one of these group picnics at the lake, and sunbathe in the back yard. Mr. Haygood, next year you'll be 35. In 5 years you'll be 40 and in 15 years you'll be 50. Aren't you going anywhere? Tickets by Astrojet to California are only \$145.10 one way, plus tax. . . . Mr. Haygood, we all get older, but you're being positively grim about it. Why don't you call . . . your travel agent?²⁴

A prospective member of a mystic group may instead respond to the following:

Just fiddle with your Fidget Stone and feel euphoria set in. Prettier than pills—more fun than a massage—soothing as a lullaby. Hand carved of genuine Jade (“Good Luck” stone of the Orient). You'll love to handle it. Carry it—rub it—²⁵

Commercial and public institutions of various kinds can duplicate the functions of social movements to a greater or lesser extent. Medical treatment and psychotherapy are alternatives to Alcoholics Anonymous; a revival meeting may have its attendance reduced by the Saturday night dance, and prospective revolutionaries may vent their spleen at the corner tavern. Social movements thus must compete with enterprises that can reduce or sidetrack the susceptibilities of prospective members. They must also combat habits that may favor individual rather than group action and must try to

²⁴ American Airlines advertisement, *The New York Times* (April 30, 1963).

²⁵ Advertisement for Marchal Jewelers, *The New York Times* (June 8, 1963).

counter the tendency of people to remain unaffiliated or inactive. In order to lure susceptible persons from alternative outlets, a social movement must advertise or promote itself.

Social movements—like other advertisers—must show that they can respond to the needs of their clients. They must demonstrate their ability to furnish solutions which make it worth expending time, energy, and dedication. They must publicize offerings which people can find useful and desirable.

Any aspect of a social movement that succeeds in “selling” the movement by attracting members to it becomes an *appeal*. Appeals are *psychologically relevant* commodities. They are features of the movement that tie into the susceptibilities of people. In other words, “susceptibility” and “appeal” can be understood only in relation to each other. A person must be susceptible *to* something, or he is not susceptible at all. In turn, appeals derive their appealing quality from the fact that someone is attracted to them.

As an illustration, consider the fact that many people harbor vague resentments against the telephone company. At times, these resentments may even be intense and specific. This may occur, for instance, after a telephone subscriber receives an announcement informing him that his telephone number has been replaced by a set of seven digits. If the subscriber becomes indignant, this fact could make him susceptible to a social movement, *provided there exists a social movement which is a vehicle for such resentment*. Consider the converse situation: A new group proposes to fight against the telephone company’s digit dialing system. Would the program of this group contain appeals? This depends, of course, on *whether there exist persons who are interested in entering the fray*. In sum, both susceptibilities and appeals would be defined by their encounter. In the case of our illustration, they are created as follows:

The Anti-Digit Dialing League started over a cup of coffee in San Francisco when the conversation, quite by accident, drifted to the new Digit Dialing system. Both coffee drinkers had found the new system extremely confusing and difficult to use. They also wondered whether the change was really necessary. As a consequence they inserted a tiny notice in the classified section of a newspaper inquiring whether other people had experienced the same thoughts. They signed the ad, Anti-Digit Dialing League.

The response was incredible. Over thirty-five hundred people responded within ten days in the San Francisco Bay Area alone. As word about ADDL spread throughout the country, people wrote in wanting to start chapters of

ADDL in other cities across the country. It quickly became obvious that ADDL was expressing a deep but previously unorganized concern of telephone users that the telephone company had somehow forgotten about them. This is the reason that ADDL started; it was an expression of widespread concern.²⁶

We are dealing here with the type of situation that the philosophers Dewey and Bentley have called a "transaction."²⁷ This means that two things may be shaped when they encounter each other to such an extent that one may view each as a product of the other.

Appeals acquire meaning because they address themselves to susceptibilities. Since susceptibilities arise out of human problems, appeals must contain offers to solve problems. Elijah Muhammad made such an offer to his Washington audience in 1959:

As to you, indeed so great an assembly of witness has not met here for foolishness. You are seeking something. You are seeking an answer to your four hundred year old problem of slavery, servitude and fifth-class citizenship. I am here with the solution to this problem.²⁸

It is this transaction that constitutes the crux of the social psychology of social movements. The task of the student is to isolate the psychological bond that ties appeals and susceptibilities to each other.

The appeals of social movements

Social movements in search of a mass following frequently follow a *saturation* method, and try to present a "cafeteria" of appeals, catering to a diversity of needs. Hitler's Nazi movement, in the days immediately prior to its advent to power, directed appeals at practically every segment of the German population. Industrial leaders, for instance, were promised a strong anti-Communist stand, and the guarantee that all revolutionary activities among workers would be crushed. Prussian land owners and officers were attracted through the prospect of remilitarization, and the assurance that land reform programs would be nominal. Middle-class Germans were appealed to through strongly worded attacks against large corporations, department stores, war profits, "international capitalism," Jews, and Communists. Youth was reached with promises of a bright future, with refer-

²⁶ *Phones Are for People* (San Francisco: Anti-Digit Dialing League, 1962, italics added).

²⁷ J. Dewey and A. F. Bentley, *Knowing and the Known* (Boston: Beacon, 1949).

²⁸ Muhammad, "Justice."

ences to the "inertia and indifference of your fathers," as well as with the glamour of the Hitler Youth and the "strength through joy" movement.²⁹

Finally, the bulk of the voting population, the workers, farmers, and small-business men, were each presented with promises of economic improvement, as illustrated in the following excerpt of Hitler's first speech as German chancellor:

The National Government will, with iron determination and unshakable steadfastness of purpose, put through the following plan:

Within four years the German peasant must be rescued from the quagmire into which he has fallen.

Within four years unemployment must be finally overcome. At the same time the conditions necessary for a revival in trade and commerce are provided. . . .

In economic administration, the promotion of employment, the preservation of the farmer, as well as in the exploitation of private initiative, the Government sees the best guarantee for the avoidance of any experiments. . . .³⁰

The tenor of this program stands in sharp contrast to the platform encountered in the early stages of the Nazi movement. The following excerpt from one of Hitler's earliest speeches (September 18, 1922) typifies this approach:

We in Germany have come to this: that a sixty-million people sees its destiny lie at the will of a few dozen Jewish bankers. This was possible only because our civilization had first been Judaized. The undermining of the German conception of personality by catchwords had begun long before. Ideas such as "democracy," "majority," "conscience of the world," "world solidarity," "world peace," "internationality of art," etc. disintegrate our race-consciousness, breed cowardice, and so today we are bound to say that the simple Turk is no more man than we.

No salvation is possible until the bearer of disunion, the Jew, has been rendered powerless to harm.

1. We must call to account the November criminals of 1918. It cannot be that two million Germans should have fallen in vain and that afterwards one should sit down as friends at the same table with traitors. No, we cannot pardon, we demand—Vengeance.

2. The dishonoring of the nation must cease. For betrayers of their fatherland and informers the gallows is the proper place. Our streets and squares shall once more bear the names of heroes; they shall not be named after Jews. In the question of guilt we must proclaim the truth. . . .³¹

²⁹ Cantril, *Social Movements*, pp. 233 ff.

³⁰ A. Hitler, *My New Order* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), p. 145.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

This early version of the Nazi appeal, proclaiming "the Glorious Fatherland has been stabbed in the back by Jews" and demanding retribution, was aimed at the shame, confusion, and pride *present to some degree in most Germans* at this historic juncture. The movement offered a coherent explanation for the problem situation, and a scapegoat for feelings of frustration and resentment.³² Whereas later the attempt was made to provide many appeals designed to cater to diverse susceptibilities, the early platform relied on a *catch-all appeal* aimed at *relatively general* predispositions.

A third type of appeal ties into specific susceptibilities of a particular type of person. Each of the following paragraphs, for instance, makes a *specialized* case for a social movement:

Been waiting years for happiness? Share the inner power of Mayanry for rich, new, vital living.³³

Have you outgrown gods, saviors and supernaturalism? Is all your concern for people? Then you're a Humanist. Welcome to the American Humanist Society.³⁴

The Proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have the world to win.

Workingmen of all countries, unite!³⁵

Chinese have now suffered under a foreign government more than two hundred and sixty years. The Manchus have done us enough cruelty. Now is the time to raise an army and overthrow the Manchu government and regain the sovereignty of our country.³⁶

In each case, the group specifies the state of mind it feels it can respond to, and outlines its brand of solution for the person's problem. When someone of the kind described comes to feel that the prescription could serve his needs, the movement's message becomes certified as an appeal.

³² The fact that the explanation forming the core of this appeal is incorrect has no more bearing on its appealing character than has the fact that in the subsequent cafeteria program many of the promised actions could not be carried out, and were probably not seriously intended.

³³ "The Mayans" advertisement, *Life Today* (April-May 1956), inside back cover.

³⁴ American Humanist Association advertisement, *New Republic* (April 6, 1963), p. 31.

³⁵ K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, The Bobbs-Merrill Reprint Series in the Social Sciences (Indianapolis, New York: Bobbs-Merrill) S-455, p. 44.

³⁶ Sun Yat-sen, "Revolutionary Manifesto" (1905), in N. Gangulee, ed., *The Teachings of Sun Yat-sen* (London: Sylvan Press, 1945), p. 31.

The enhancement of susceptibility

Although appeals themselves cannot create problems, they can call attention to problem situations, or reinterpret potential problem situations so as to create susceptibility. An excellent illustration of this type of appeal is the recruiting speech delivered by Pope Urban II to promote volunteers for the First Crusade, in which he said:

The invaders befool the altars with the filth out of their bodies. They circumcize Christians and pour the blood of the circumcision upon the altars or into the baptismal fonts. They stable their horses in these churches, which are now withdrawn from the service of God. Yea, the churches are served, but not by holy men—for only the Turks use them. And who else now serves the church of the Blessed Mary, where she herself was buried in body in the Valley of Jehoshaphat?

Even now the Turks are torturing Christians, binding them and filling them with arrows, or making them kneel bending their heads, to try if their swordsmen can cut through their necks with a single blow of the naked sword. What shall I say of the ravishing of the women? . . . The time may come when you will see your wives violated and your children driven before you as slaves, out of the land.³⁷

After resentment has been evoked by means of descriptive passages of this kind, a call for vengeance becomes more plausible. Joining the movement can then be made further attractive by appeals to feelings of pride (“you have the courage and fitness of body to humble the hairy heads”), justice (“ye who have been thieves, become soldiers. Fight a just war”), worthwhileness (“whosoever shall offer himself . . . shall wear the sign of the cross”), security (“your possessions here will be safeguarded”), guilt (“if any shall lose their lives . . . their sins will be requited them”), ambition (“wrest that land . . . and keep it for yourself”), and other prevalent values and aims, including that of relief from boredom (through the pursuit of adventure), which was a prospect highly prized in the Middle Ages.

Disguised or latent appeals

Appeals may relate to susceptibilities different from those at which they are ostensibly aimed. For example, a group may ostensibly engage in political action, while serving as a social outlet or as a means of expressing

³⁷ H. Lamb, *The Crusades: Iron Men and Saints* (New York: Doubleday, 1931), pp. 39–40.