

INDOCTRINATION AS A MECHANISM OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MANIPULATION IN THE PROCESS OF INVOLVEMENT IN DESTRUCTIVE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The article considers the mechanisms of influence on human consciousness in the process of destructive indoctrination. The classical manipulative model of influence is given. General tactics for destructive religious organizations, used in the framework of indoctrination are presented in the article.

Keywords: Indoctrination, psychological manipulation, informational deprivation, sensory deprivation, religious doctrine, totalitarian sect, religious cult, destructive religious organization, neophyte, adept, verbal manipulation, group pressure.

INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Over the centuries, in the process of development of society, humanity has repeatedly experienced a transformation of thinking, which was caused not only by the technical and cultural revolution, but also by the emergence of new political doctrines and religious ideologies that led to the unification of thinking and behavior. The necessity for development a certain, clearly defined and if it is possible - uniform picture of the world among the members of society, as well as the achievement of control and management of the masses dictated the need to develop mechanisms of manipulation that facilitated the passage of certain ideas into the people's minds.

For many decades, enough knowledge has been accumulated to successfully manipulate on the one hand, and to avoid these manipulations effectively on the other. It should be emphasized that the word "manipulation" in its original meaning meant "to manage" in a positive sense, that is, to assist competently, to guide in the right direction. In modern literature, manipulation refers to the art of controlling people's behavior and thinking through a targeted influence on public consciousness [1].

The analysis of existing methods and means of influencing a person, allowing to make him obedient, guided, and controlled, indicates that this process is based on the mechanism of indoctrination.

Indoctrination is a special state of the human psyche in which non-critical appropriation of other people's ideas or doctrines is realized, as well as the result of various methods of so-called mind control. Indoctrination acts as one of the tools for identifying of individual with a group through the adoption of group values, ideas, or doctrines.

It should be noted that indoctrination is not always destructive. Positive examples are cultural imprinting, when a child learns the basics of culture through uncritical perception of them. Or, for example, the assimilation of the dogmas of religious faith, which occurs without coercion,

deception and psychological violence in the process of interaction with adult family members. In these examples, the agents of influence are close people (parents, members of the primary and secondary family), as well as people who have authority in the eyes of the child (kindergarten teachers or teachers at school).

Indoctrination, which is based on the attitude towards the development and improvement of personality, is carried out correctly and smoothly. This process, as a rule, is recognized by a person as his own choice, and that being characteristic not only for conformists, but also for creative and externally social-autonomous people. Such indoctrination is constructive in nature, does not injure the psyche and promotes personality's growth.

However, negative examples of indoctrination can also be demonstrated. This mechanism is the basis of psychological manipulation used by destructive religious organizations, which take into service quite serious mechanisms of influence on the human consciousness. Let's consider the basic elements of destructive indoctrination.

Monologicality. This aspect is paramount and, for the purpose of unidirectional influence, it requires categorically unacceptable ("sinful", "vicious", "diabolical", etc.) any other sources of information (mass media and communications, parents, friends). However, in the process of indoctrination, not only information deprivation is applied, but also sensory one - that is, isolation from the usual social environment, a ban on one's own thoughts, expressing doubts about the religious doctrine of the cult, requests for argumentation and evidence of the truth of the doctrine [2].

Counter argumentation is used along with monologicality and presents itself a priori avoiding of any "uncomfortable" questions regarding the doctrines of a destructive religious cult. Recruits, neophytes, or adherents are given pre-counterarguments to possible questions and objections that call into question or discredit the authority of the cult. Members of destructive religious organizations, responsible for involving neophytes in their ranks and realizing so-called "ideological work", undergo special training in this direction. In addition, for such situations, special brochures, booklets, video and audio clips with beforehand prepared answers to standard questions are published.

Reducing of resistance is an action upon the physiological level, which requires the rejection of protein foods (partial or complete starvation), reduction or deprivation of sleep due to the obligatory presence at church services, reading of prayers or other ritual practices, prolonged being in one static pose during the ceremony (standing or sitting), which significantly increases suggestibility.

Verbal multiplication. This element is implemented in two versions. The first one is the frequentative repetition of meaningless phrases that can be part of a certain religious ritual ("purification of the spirit", "union with brothers and sisters by faith", "reaching the next level" of something, etc.). The second version is repetition an unlimited number of meaningful prayers. Verbal multiplication in both cases leads to prohibitive inhibition, which dramatically reduces the criticality of perception of reality and resistance.

Approval mythology. Leaders of destructive religious organizations (in particular pro-Christian sects) quite often declare themselves to be new prophets or even the next coming of God to Earth, which "switch on" the already verified mythological schemes that exist in the human mind. The success phenomenon of this indoctrination element is based on the particularity of

information perception. It is always easier for a person to understand and accept something already familiar, similar to what he knows, than completely new one, which has no analogues in his personal experience. Regardless of ethnic and religious affiliation, all people, starting from childhood, encounter myths and legends, where there are “light” and “dark” forces, Gods and Deities, the struggle between good and evil. That is why during the creation of the doctrine of a religious cult, a new religious movement or a totalitarian sect, images that are similar to the heroes and characters of folk art and therefore proven and already inscribed as familiar in the individual’s perception system, are used.

“*Mimicry*”. The strategy of today's destructive religious organizations (unlike their predecessors, propagandizing various sectarian doctrines in the 90s) has its own particularities. If the first preachers of pro-Christian sects or recruiters of pro-Islamic movements spoke quite directly about the propagated religious doctrine and publicly agitated to become a member of a religious community, then modern recruiters use completely different tactics. At present time a clear and understandable for everyone formulation, including such words as “faith”, “God (Allah)”, “religion”, “religious”, etc. is absent in the organizations’ names. In order not to “frighten away” the candidate for involvement and successfully accomplish indoctrination, destructive religious cults and new religious movements mimic under organizations that at first glance have nothing to do with religion, because of using abstract concepts in their names, for example, “Seminar on Mental Perfection”, “Federation of Families for World Peace”, “Philosophy of True Love”, “The study of Arabic script”, “Modern women of the East” and others. People did not immediately understand that they have become members of a religious cult, and when indoctrination and involvement were realized, it is often too late.

Emotionality. All destructive religious organizations always exploit the emotional component - both the existing modern reality and the religious segment. Any psychologically traumatized person or those, who is under the yoke of many problems is always emotionally disoriented and seeks solutions. Unable to get out of the personality crisis, sooner or later he turns to God, as to the last “instance” not only in hope to receive “miraculous help”, but also consolation - using scientific terminology - emotional stabilization. The emphasis on emotionality in the religious component is also not accidental. Emotionally depressed people or ones with broken social relationships are close to the suffering, described in religious subjects.

Collectivism is a very essential element of indoctrination. Impact, carried out in group, is always realized much faster and has a more lasting effect because person automatically starts to copy the required behavior with the help of other members of the destructive cult.

Speaking about collectivism, we must not forget that verbal multiplication and regular systematic repetition of cult actions cause and then fix in mind certain emotions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, leaving deep and stable systems of excitation and inhibition focuses in the Central nervous system, which form a singular habit. And when such a religious stereotype of behavior is formed not at one person, but in a group, the laws of collective psychology come into effect. That is why in destructive religious organizations the ritual side is given such attention.

In American Psychological Science, there are several basic models of the destructive effect of indoctrination. The classic one is the model of R.J. Lifton, described in his work “Thought Reform” [3]. This study brought to a more exact understanding of how mentally healthy, educated, and idealistic people can quickly become fanatics of movements whose ideology and

activity directly contradict their initial outlooks on the world. R.J. Lifton identifies eight elements that bring total change in consciousness during the process of indoctrination:

1) control of the situation (environment) - a rigid structuring of the environment in which communication is regulated, and access to information is strictly controlled;

2) mystical manipulation - the usage of a planned or arranged “spontaneous”, “immediate” situation to give it a meaning that is beneficial to manipulators (for example, physiological and psychological changes in the transition to a vegetarian diet are explained by the “descent of the Holy Spirit”);

3) the requirement of “purity” - a sharp dividing of the world into “clean” and “impure”, “good” and “bad” to position the totalitarian sect as “good” and “clean”, and everything that is outside it - as “bad” and “dirty”;

4) cult of confession - the requirement of never-ending confession and intimate acknowledgments to destroy the boundaries of personality and maintain a constant sense of guilt;

5) “Holy Science” - the announcement of their own dogma as absolute, complete and eternal Truth, and any other information that contradicts this “absolute truth” as false one;

6) language loaded with cult meaning - the creation of a special clichéd dictionary of intra-group communication in order to eliminate the very foundation for independent and critical thinking;

7) doctrine is more important than the personality - the doctrine is more real and true than the personality and its individual experience;

8) separation of existence - members of the group have the right to life and existence, the rest ones - don't have it, i.e. “The end justifies any means”.

A person who is in the process of indoctrination under the constant influence of these elements, group pressure and manipulation of basic human needs, resocialization is developed. First this process represents itself dividing the “I” self-system into two independently functioning entities - the “previous I” and “new I”. This is due to the fact that at a certain moment a member of a cult group is faced with the fact that his new behavior is incompatible with pre-cult one.

The behavior, required and rewarded by the totalitarian group is so different from the “previous I”, that the usual psychological defense (for example, rationalization) is not enough. All thoughts, beliefs, actions, feelings and roles, associated with destructive cult presence, are organized in the “new I” system, which is completely consistent with the requirements of this group. However, this does not happen according to the free choice of personality, but as an instinctive reaction of self-preservation in almost psychologically unbearable conditions. Subsequently, the “new I” personal formation ceases to confrontate with the “previous I”, completely erasing it, and becomes a complete “I”, eliminating internal psychological conflicts.

One of the most common explanations for the success of indoctrination is the desire for identification with a chosen standard, in the role of which in the process of involvement is the leader of a destructive religious organization. All destructive religious organizations are led by charismatic leaders. This, by the way, is one of the main features of such communities. In contrast to the confessional direction of World Religions, with the “priesthood institution”, where compassion and non-use of violence are recognized as basic values, leaders of destructive religious organizations profess, as a rule, a rigid authoritarian leadership style. They intuitively and at the same time very effectively use the mechanism of destructive indoctrination. The essence of their activity - is to influence the followers as much as possible, “infecting” them with their fanatical ideas. Such behavior is an integral feature of any religious cult; it is a general rule that is strictly executed [4].

The leader of a totalitarian sect obtains unlimited power and tries in various, often ethically condemned ways, to deprive his followers of their individuality and free will, establishing absolute, destructive control over their consciousness. To this purpose, they either directly proclaim themselves to be Gods, or convince others that the will of God consists in following them.

It should be noted that the goal of indoctrination in destructive religious organizations is the unconditional acceptance of the doctrine by the recruits, as well as the behavior and personality traits that are prescribed to all followers of this religious doctrine.

Although specific tools may vary in different destructive religious organizations, there are a number of common tactics used in the indoctrination process [5].

Control of time and activity (behavior), that is, the submission of potential neophytes to a strictly calculated time schedule, within which every moment is associated with intense physically and emotionally activity. This leaves little or no time for solitude and reflection. Such a schedule may include: a lecture marathon, long seminars or meetings of organization members, intensive individual consultations, hypnotic exercises, meditations, prolonged monotonous singing, prayer meetings. At the same time, sleep and eating are subjects to strict control and deprivation. Time of sleeping is reduced due to obligatory individual prayers or collective worship, ritual practices, household chores to clean the area and rooms, production of propaganda materials, etc. Food restrictions are justified by the need to refuse protein food. Deprivation of sleep and food intake can be not only partial. In some totalitarian sects to “purify” the spirit complete fasting and daily vigils are used. As a result of such physical, physiological and psycho-emotional stress, psychological defense is reduced, attention volume is abridged, physical and emotional exhaustion occurs, the ability to critically evaluate the group decreases, trans-like states arise that are often distracting and make a person highly suggestible.

Information control that is, “cutting off” or slandering external sources of information, such as television, radio, newspapers and communications with people outside the group. Simultaneously with the blockade of external sources of information, a “bombardment” of the recruited by cult literature, records and lectures on ideological processing is carried out. Information about the cult is also controlled and classified into several categories depending on the hierarchy. “Secret” information is available only to the leader and some of his especially trusted assistants. This information segment includes rationing the lives and activities of followers (for example, what donations they should make, who may be encouraged and who punished, what changes in the lifestyle of the cult will be made, what financial obligations are required, where the money is spent). Another category of information is distorted data that is instilled into followers (for example, “We gather money for orphans”, “Our donations will be spent for the purchase of medicines for cancer patients”). The third category of information is an open lie, which is forced to demonstrate to all followers (for example, “None of us snitch each other”, “All members of our group have the same duties and privileges”). The main purpose of information control is to prevent informed decision-making and a critical valuation of a destructive religious organization.

Verbal manipulation involves several separate tactics.

One of them is the attribution of new or additional meanings to ordinary words. For example, the word “knowledge” in one of the cults means the methods of meditation, the word “mind” is given the meaning of “bad” thoughts and forces inside people who lead them away from God

and the Truth, “world” refers to everything which is outside the cult and therefore is unenlightened.

Other tactic includes using a special vocabulary (for example, artificial words and phrases), put into conversation and singing a foreign language (or languages). This tactic is aimed at reducing and then eliminating conversations about pre-cult and non-cult activities, interests and ideas to limit the expression of “unnecessary” personal thoughts and feelings.

Certain tactics of verbal manipulation are developed in destructive religious organizations for those who involve in missionary, proselyte, and recruiting activities. They, in particular, are recommended to speak expressively, but moderately emotionally so as not to make the impression of an “obsessed” one, paying special attention to a “psychological pause” in speech.

Serious demands are made on the substantive side of their “sermons” and agitation: to adapt to the level of involvers’ personal development, their interests, moods; be able to arouse interest; give modern examples from non-religious life, refer to Philosophy, History, Psychology, Genetics, Mysticism, Astrology, Literature; know the features of perception and thinking of men, women and children, ways of influencing them.

It won’t be superfluous to note that in special trainings ideologists are taught some psycholinguistic techniques, for example, verbal manipulation using a critical temporal value - the “t temporal memory volume”. In accordance with the peculiarity of perception, a complete message should fit in the interval from 4 to 10 seconds. In order to perceive a reasoning that does not fit in 10 seconds, a person will have to make a significant effort, which means that the message will simply be discarded by memory. Therefore, the text for verbal manipulation should be brought to the primitive, logic and coherent meaning should be excluded from it and replaced by associations of images, puns, even stupid metaphors.

As a result of verbal manipulation, those to whom it is directed, feel themselves initiated into the secrets of new knowledge. They communicate more comfortable with members of a destructive religious organization and less comfortable with people outside the cult. This makes its contribution to the “we-they” polarized mentality, moreover potential neophytes begin to identify themselves more with the cult and less with the non-cult world.

Weaning from critical, rational thinking consists in the fact that, for example, many destructive religious organizations get rid of doubts, criticisms and questions of their followers by statements like “Everything will become clear in time”, such threats as “Satan (Devil, Shaitan) is foundation of all doubt” or instructions like “If you want to know God, you must go beyond your previous experience”. The result of this tactic is a deeply felt guilt over doubts, questions or the usage of one's intellectual abilities to evaluate a cult. Many followers even begin to consider their minds as “troublemaker”, “generator of poisonous doubts”, “weapon of Satan” and so on.

Teaching causing trance methods, which may include meditation, monotonous singing, speaking in languages (glossolalia, i.e. pronouncing incoherent and meaningless sound combinations in a state of individual or group ecstasy), self-hypnosis, creating of vivid mental images (visualization) and controlled breathing exercises that lead to depletion or supersaturation of blood with oxygen and altering the process of brain activity. It should be noted that these techniques (especially if they are demonstrated to the neophytes during intense “special” initiation ceremonies) often make the recruits feel themselves involved in special and

/ or divine forces. For example, stimulation of trances can be very effective in suppressing doubts and increasing suggestibility for further ideological indoctrination. Usage of such techniques with some particularly emotionally-sensitive people can cause to mental breakdowns.

Confessional sessions, during which followers are forced to give out extremely personal information about past and present misconducts and sins, which can be real or imagined ones. As a result, recruits who disclose such information may feel an initial sense of guilt and shame, and then a relief after confession. They may even become addicted from this self-blaming activity as a way of alleviating guilt. However, those who want to leave the cult are often afraid the information they have disclosed may be used to blackmail them.

Group pressure, that is, positive reinforcement of “right” behavior, thoughts, statements, which is expressed in approval, manifestation of sympathy and affection, raising the status and negative reinforcement of “wrong” actions, when members of a destructive religious organization “punish” those who speak or act contrary to religious regulations. “Punishments” are realized in the form of collective demonstrative expression of regret, disappointment, anxiety about “wrong” behavior, reduction or partial blockade in communication, condemning kinesics, prosodic and extralinguistics. As a result, victims of such manipulation, succumbing to group pressure, completely accept all the rules of a destructive religious organization, despite strong beliefs that contradict cult beliefs and practices. The reason for the unconditional acceptance is, on the one hand, that the doctrine, dogmas and code of behavior are indivisible, united and binding on all members of the cult and do not allow any compromises. On the other hand, having experienced the “bombardment of love”, which is practiced in all destructive religious organizations, and then got under the emotional and communicative blockade for “bad” behavior, almost all involvers experience great discomfort and fear of rejection.

Thus, it can be stated that modern destructive religious organizations are able to create a kind of “psychological concentration camps” for adherents recruited into their ranks. A serious concern is that in the process of indoctrination, radical personality changes occur that are almost invisible to the involving victim.

The main problem of destructive indoctrination, in our opinion, is activity of destructive religious organizations as a generator of new behavior, changing in this process the matrix of friends and enemies, impose not only behavior scenarios, but also experience ones, as a result of which adherents even perceive their own death as a religious privilege.

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