

# **‘FOOD FOR THOUGHT’ SERIES**

## **SOCIETAL CONDITIONING**

The concise Oxford Dictionary intimates that the process of ‘conditioning’ refers to : ‘....agreement by stipulation ; impose conditions upon ; bring into desired state or condition....’, and thereby ‘societal conditioning’ implies the control factors and stipulations which human society inflicts upon its members.

Ancient ‘tribalism’ is directly responsible for the perpetuation of all forms of societal conditioning. Man-kind (for one must acknowledge that the human race continues to subscribe to paternalistic and male-dominated mores and principles), is seemingly obsessed with an outdated need for mass human conformity. ‘Individualism’ is not encouraged by the megalomaniacal men who rule this planet, although they do tend to indulge their individual selves by exercising and invariably abusing their own personal individualism through self-claimed seats of power; usually at the cost of society as a whole. Throughout the recorded history of the human race, the controlling of the masses has always been one of the greatest challenges for tribalistic leaders. Anyone who rejects conformity, from within the masses, is perceived by those frail leaders as a direct threat to the stability of the existing societal construct. The ‘status quo’ must be maintained at all costs.

One of the most blatant forms of societal conditioning is the continued perpetuation of the concept of generalised ‘normality’. It insists that such a syndrome should exist within the human race, for how else would men know whether they are right or wrong; whether they are acceptable or not; whether or not they actually fit in to any given society? Humanity has long since subscribed to this dubious concept, and the pressure it places upon the need for individuals to conform to stipulated codes of thought and behaviour patterns results in the negating processes of the ‘us-and-them’ attitudes which prevail within such a limiting group-consciousness. In ancient times, such team-spiritedness was highly beneficial to the security and longevity of any given ‘tribe’, but does tribalistic group-identity-consciousness still benefit the human race, which

now consists of a multitude of individuals who jointly inhabit the present global village?

Zenophobia, Homophobia, Facism and Racism are all products of this ancient societal conditioning; not forgetting the most offensive of all prejudices, Sexism! The latter yet exerts a destructive force of power and influence upon the general mind-set of the human race, as does any form of prejudicial thinking, and it is surprising that humanity allows its continuance even now, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Of course there exist certain forms of conditioning (dare one call it 'brain-washing'?), which are seemingly less destructive or harmful to human nature. For example, the fashion industry. Putting aside the fact that the manufacture of clothing has always been a most lucrative process for some individuals, fashion-consciousness carries with it an immediate entrée to social acceptance; a socially acknowledged stamp of approval. Males and females are required to dress in two very distinctive ways, for sexual identity must always be easily identifiable; colours and fabrics carry certain connotations and unspoken messages; particular styles and garments infer specific social status; etcetera, etc. And thereby, the majority of the populace succumbs to these pressures; insidious pressures which in themselves often wreak havoc upon the insecure human psyche, invariably causing all manner of deep-seated psychological repercussions.

Closely linked to the above is the matter of motor vehicles. What one drives apparently reflects who one is; one's car, like one's clothing, is the identity badge which is proof of one's status and social acceptability. Then there is also the vital address where one chooses to reside, for one's home is the most outspoken of all identifiable statements. First World inhabitants are continually bombarded with icons related to these symbols of capitalism and materialism, and they vulnerably succumb to the societal demands that they should 'fit in'. Of course the money-making fat-cats who are responsible for the creation and promotion of all such symbols for societal acceptance are the only beneficiaries from this insidious manipulation of the masses. As long as they continue to receive their 'pound of human flesh', they care nothing at all for the resultant financial and psychological chaos that remains rife within the human populace.

Now with societal conformity as the focussed purpose behind all social conditioning, and with the discouragement of self-expression and

individualism as an accepted given, the manipulators of the masses do very occasionally allow certain individuals to emerge from amidst the greyness of mass-conformity. Humanity is provided with so-called 'heroes'. In days gone by, such role-models took the form of actual heroes; brave, noble men (seldom women, of course!) who were responsible for great feats of courage, valour and achievement, and who were duly placed upon pedestals for justifiable admiration and adoration by the general populace. The masses aspired to such publically recognised individualistic glorification, although there was very little chance of them ever attaining such heady heights of fame for themselves.

However, with the subsequent disappearance of life-threatening dragons and their like, and the absence of that old-fashioned need to fight off dangerous enemies in hand-to-hand battles, latter-day 'heroes' now take the form of precocious football stars, pop-music-performers and professional golfers. These role-models are invariably devoid of any truly heroic qualities and only become notable through their flamboyant, if not flagrantly temperamental performances within the confines of their specific areas of expertise. And as a result of this, the mass consciousness has been conditioned to believe in and aspire towards ethical and behavioural standards that invariably lack the more noble heroic qualities of old. The men who control societal conditioning have made a grave error by allowing these new anti-heroes to emerge at all, for if nothing else, such role-models actually encourage self-expression of the individual, which is of course the very last thing world leaders would wish to occur on this planet.

Human beings must essentially remain dis-empowered in order to make this world more easily governable by the few self-proclaimed controllers of it and the most obvious method for achieving such powerful control over the mind-set of the masses is through their control of the media, of course. In days gone by, formalised religions served this self-same purpose. The structure of strict laws, rules and regulations within the dogma of every religious organisation has always guaranteed that the masses are suppressed and thereby limited with regards individualism of self-expression. However, apart from the religious fanaticism that still presently prevails within certain war-mongering groups, religion no longer holds the power of influence it once exercised over humanity at large. And the power of the media has replaced it.

Newspapers and ‘news’ broadcasts abound with negative information, all of which is naturally designed to depress and oppress the populace, and thereby keep it imprisoned within its constantly maintained position of fearful servitude. The propagation of fear through various forms of emotional blackmail is definitely one of the most insidiously powerful devices known to the human race. For as long as human beings fear for their livelihood, their health, their peace, security, and their very mortality, they will continue to look to their so-called ‘leaders’ for guidance and protection. Therefore a child-like dependence upon the decision-makers who paternalistically and often patronisingly control their particular society is the obvious outcome.

Of course the media is also renowned for its habitual tendency towards sensationalism, the existence of which apparently passes for ‘entertainment’. People are simultaneously uplifted and disgusted upon reading or hearing about the despicable goings-on of specifically publicised individuals, the off-shoot of which is a confirmation of mass group-identity. The ‘us-and-them’ syndrome is perpetuated. On the other hand, the sensational reportage of crime and violence naturally enforces the continuance of general fearfulness amongst the masses, but it also serves another purpose, that of entrenching ancient tribalism by reminding the populace of those old ‘us-and-them’ principles. And thus a form of falsely manipulated human comfort and complacency results.

Until the human race, en masse, fully understands and thereby overtly rejects the continuance of the controlling of its mores and freedom of choice by the miniscule group of men whom it allows to rule this planet, this insidious conditioning will continue to exert its negative power over all humans.

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