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Evolution of Worldviews

Every human being grows in stages of psychological development, operates at levels of consciousness and makes decisions based on his or her worldview. A worldview is a set of lenses (beliefs) that enable someone to interpret (give meaning to) what is happening in the world around them and make decisions that they believe will enable them to get their needs met within the physical, environmental and cultural framework of their existence.

Communities and nations also have worldviews. In democratic regimes, the worldview of the collective—the community or the nation—reflects the worldview of the majority. This worldview dictates who gets elected to office and the way in which the community or nation is governed: its structures, policies, systems and procedures. Other higher or lower order worldviews are tolerated in democratic nations to the extent that they do not break the laws of the community or nation or upset the social cohesion of the community or nation.

In autocratic regimes, the worldview of the collective—the community or nation—reflects the personal worldview of the leader. Seldom are other worldviews tolerated. Thus, on the spectrum of democracy from highly autocratic to highly democratic, the worldview of a community or nation will either be highly influenced by the personal worldview of the leader or highly influenced by the worldview of the majority.

In past times, before communities and nations became democratic, worldviews evolved or regressed when the governing elites could no longer get their needs met. In modern times, after communities and nations became democratic, worldviews evolve or regress when the conditions experienced by the majority of the population or specific large population groups can no longer get their needs met.

The needs that people have are always a reflection of the needs of the stage of psychological development they have reached in their lives or the needs of the stages of development they have passed through that they have not yet mastered. Thus, when a significant proportion of the population begins to operate from a higher stage of psychological development, there will be mounting societal pressure to shift to a higher order worldview. This mounting pressure shows up as social unrest; a lack of social cohesion.

Recent examples of this type of social unrest include the Arab Spring, which began in 2010 and continued throughout 2011, and the political and economic restructuring of the Soviet Union, which led to the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1991. Other examples of mounting societal pressure, which are linked to unmet needs and a shift to a higher order worldview (stage of psychological development), include the antislavery campaigns of the eighteenth century, the suffragette movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011 and the LGBT¹ marches and demonstrations in recent years. Most, but not all these campaigns and movements eventually led to changes in laws reflecting a higher order more inclusive worldview.

¹ LGBT = Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.

Conversely, when there is a significant increase in the proportion of the population operating from a lower stage of psychological development than the collective stage of development—when a large population group can no longer get its needs met (gets left behind or overlooked)—there will be mounting societal pressure to shift to a lower order worldview: a worldview that is less inclusive of outsiders or strangers. Examples of this type of shift include the Brexit phenomenon and the election of Donald Trump in 2016.

We can conclude from this that all forms of social unrest are a sign that people are: a) not getting their needs met, and b) calling for an upward (more inclusive) or downward (less inclusive) shift in the dominant worldview of the community or nation. In other words, social unrest can be an indicator of a desire for an advance to a higher order worldview or a desire for regression to a lower order worldview.

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