
Conflicting Value-Orientations and Intra-Personality Conflicts

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Attention will be directed initially to a description of value-orientations. Value orientations as objects in a cultural situation may be distinguished from value-orientations as internalized components of the individual (7). Value-orientations at any given time in a particular society implicitly indicate what dimensions of choice and preference are of decisive significance in the organization of behavior. The value-orientations define the patterns of reciprocal rights and obligations which constitute the role-expectations and the sanctions that society may impose. On the other hand, these value-orientations may be internalized to become part of the structure of the individual's personality. When, for example, the individual cannot violate a moral rule without intense feelings of guilt, the rule is functioning as a part of his personality. These internalized value-orientations may become part of the superego structure of the personality, of institutionalized role-expectations, of life goals, and of preferred subjective states.

Value-orientations within the social system may be thought of as modes of organizing conduct, and as meaningful, affectively invested patterns of principles that guide human action (11). Internalized value-orientations refer to those aspects of the individual's orientation which commit him to the observance of certain norms, standards, and criteria of selection, whenever he is in a situation which allows him to make a choice.

There are three value-orientations which in the interiorized form have been regarded as crucial for the healthy personality. These value-orientations within society are external conformity, individual personality, and secular rationality (science) (11). Within the individual personality, these value-orientations have become known as adjustment to the environment, unity of the personality, and correct perception of reality (the self is included) (5,9). (This was treated in last year's meeting of the Academy of Science when attention was called to levels of knowledge of personality structure).

External conformity has been defined as sheer adherence to conventional group patterns without consideration of their worth and their meaning. The emphasis on upward mobility, combined with mass communication has resulted in widely conforming socio-psychological attitudes (10). Rigid control over the expression of sexual and aggressive impulses, over consumption patterns, over the uses of time and resources has become vital to attain economic and social success. In addition, the dependence upon acquisition of power and possessions as signs of personal excellence has furthered contributed to the devaluation of the individual personality, our second value-orientation. The marks of the individual personality are personal worth; an autonomous responsible person with an internal center of stability; and a unitary social personality possessing qualitative uniqueness, that is not merely a reflection of external pressures.

The third value-orientation is secular rationality. Significant here is the premise of an ordered universe with rational human beings devoted to the continued improvement of their conditions and themselves. It may be further characterized as a mode of thinking and a system of procedures for the interpretation of experience so as to allow in part for the creation, prediction, and control of the conditions of experience. This value-orientation, however, has been linked, to some extent, with efficiency, practicality, and purposive technical mastery of the environment. Secular rationality has become expedient rationality because it is concerned chiefly with the goals of and the solutions for immediate situations, to the neglect of long-range conditions.

Most persons in our society have internalized the above described conflicting value-orientations, and thus have not been able to escape intrapersonality conflicts. Because of overt regimentation and invisible compulsions of conformity pressures, we may hypothesize that the individual in our society attaches most importance to the value-orientation of external adjustment, usually of the passive type. As a consequence of external, passive adjustment, an arrangement is established between the environmental conditions and the individual's impulses that results in rigid repression of these impulses. Such passive adjustment to the environment has been noted as common in our society, and has been believed to be furthered by the individual's overwhelming feeling of powerlessness and insignificance (4). This curtailment of the individual's impulses conflicts with the value-orientation of individual personality or unity of personality in its internalized form. Unity of personality is marked by a relative freedom from conflicts among the constituent elements of the personality, with its full energies free to be mobilized in the service of a central purpose rather than being devoted to the handling of unintegrated strivings. But ordinary social interaction of our society has reinforced conformity in personal morals, and in emotional-intellectual endeavors, at the expense of individuality. The individual suppresses, represses, or at best sublimates those impulses dissonant with cultural standards. This curbing of impulses reflects a personality in state of conflict. When this situation continues for any time, unity of personality is sacrificed for external, passive adjustment. The unity of the personality suffers further if the curbed impulses could have resulted in a higher level of personality integration. What happens frequently is that apparent unity of personality is attained

at the expense of correct perception of the self. As a consequence of apparent personality unity, the individual is at peace and has no conscious conflict simply because he has repressed all deviant sexual and aggressive impulses. Nevertheless, he is in conflict since he must maintain the reactive alterations of the repressive impulses in order to ensure their continued repression. The affective life, hence is poorly controlled, has little possibility of conscious assimilation, and is reactively modified and distorted. Correct perception of the self is distinctly impaired (3).

External conformity presupposes that the social order is basically good. Because the conforming individual fits into society with little discomfort, he draws the conclusion, usually unformulated, that he, too, is basically flawless. The other internalized value-orientation, unity of personality, implies that society should be changed if its elements deny the expression of impulses necessary to the fulfillment and integration of the individual. The individuals' impulses, too, may have to be modified. But for the individual who is largely conformist and who is passively acceptant of society's elements and of himself, the fact of change inevitably disrupts his informal and formal arrangements in family and work groups, and disrupts as well his established ideological systems, all exceedingly important to his security and stability (6). Where the individual has internalized scientific rationality as correct perception of reality, the desire is strong to recognize and to discriminate his own impulses and to see reality clearly. But if external, passive adjustment is dominant, cultural patterns become unassailable and the perception of one's impulses unimpeachable. By a process of subtle and profound distortion, the individual in his passive acceptance of society and himself, has eliminated the ambivalences arising from the discordant elements of society and from within himself. What follows from the resolution of this conflict includes loss of spontaneity, greater dependence upon others for standards of behavior, and the lack of reliable direction (1).

Objective yardsticks are largely absent to determine whether the perception of reality is valid. When these objective yardsticks are lacking, dependence is placed upon reference groups to determine correct perception of reality. An opinion, attitude, or norm becomes correct and/or stable if the members of the individual's reference groups hold a comparable opinion, attitude, or norm (2,8). The greater the feeling of belongingness or the need to belong, the more passively acceptant of the group's opinion, attitude, or norm is the individual. The individual's perception of social reality reflects the group pressures for conformity. If the group has deviant perceptions of reality and coercively prescribes the content of such perceptions as proper, the individual will be faced with the conflicts between the value-orientation of adjustment and that of correct perception of reality. It must be noted here that this conflict may not always be part of the individual's subjective awareness. If the group abruptly demands standardized adjustments inconsistent with individual's past experience and stifling of individual initiative and expression, such adjustments will not only distort reality but will impair personality integration. This external passive adjustment will play havoc with cognitive adequacy and will externalize the control of behavior.

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