

Bay Area Skeptics Information Sheet  
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Editor: Yves Barbero

## THOUGHT REFORM PROGRAMS AND THE PRODUCTION OF PSYCHIATRIC CASUALTIES

by Margaret Thaler Singer, PhD and Richard Ofshe, PhD

The term "thought reform" was introduced into the psychiatric literature by Lifton and the term "coercive persuasion" by Schein. Both described the organized "ideological remolding" programs introduced by the Chinese Communists after their 1949 takeover.

Thought reform programs were used in the "revolutionary universities," other educational settings, and prison environments. Lifton, Schein, and other authors wrote about psychological effects in military and civilian prisoners, as well as in individuals exposed to thought reform programs in nonprison settings. These authors called attention to the manipulation processes that had been organized into effective physiological and social influence programs aimed at changing the political beliefs of individuals.

As early as 1929, Mao Tse-tung was waging a "thought struggle" to achieve unity and discipline in the Chinese communist Party. Following the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, hundreds of thousands were exposed to thought reform programs to achieve "ideological remolding." "Group struggle sessions" convinced individuals to denounce their past political views and to adopt the new state-approved political outlook.

Neither mysterious methods nor arcane new techniques were involved; the effectiveness of thought reform programs did not depend on prison settings, physical abuse, or death threats. Programs used the organization and application of intense guilt/shame/anxiety manipulation, combined with the production of strong emotional arousal in settings where people did not leave because of social and psychological pressures or because of enforced confinement. The pressures could be reduced only by participants' accepting the belief system of adopting behaviors promulgated by purveyors of the thought reform programs.

There have been two generations of interest in extreme influence and control programs. The first generation of interest was in Soviet and Chinese thought reform behavior control practices that were studied 20 to 30 years ago. The second generation of interest is in thought reform programs either currently operating or that have been in existence during the last decade in the United States and the Western world.

Far more of these program exist than most nonspecialists realize, and these newer programs are more efficient and effective. They also may be more psychologically risky for individuals exposed to them than research suggest first-generation programs to have been. Second-generation programs use influence techniques long recognized as essential elements of thought reform programs, as well as a variety of new influence techniques. Such programs can and regularly do produce psychiatric casualties.

Psychiatric casualties appear to result from errors in the application of these attitude-change programs. The subject person's motivation to adopt the manipulator's position and to become obedient is manufactured by inducing extreme anxiety and emotional distress. Lifton reported that the managers of first-generation programs attempted to closely monitor subjects so that when they reached the brink of decompensation, pressures could be reduced. The goal was to hold the subject at the point of maximum stress without inducing psychosis. Second-generation programs have increased room for error because subjects tend to be less well monitored, the techniques used to induce anxiety and stress are more powerful and less predictable in the magnitude of their effects on an individual, and often these programs attempt to induce conformity more rapidly than did first-generation programs.

Second-generation thought reform programs also pose psychological risks to subjects because of the sophistication of the influence tactics employed. Attacking a person's evaluation of the self is a technique present in both older and newer programs. However, in first-generation programs, primary attack was made on the political aspects of an individual's self-concept -- a peripheral aspect of more people's sense of self.

In the newer thought reform programs, attacks appear to be designed to destabilize the subject's more central aspects of the experience of the self. The newer programs undermine a person's basic consciousness, reality awareness, beliefs and world view, emotional control, and defense mechanisms. We suggest that attacking the stability and quality of evaluations of self-concepts is the principal effective technique used in the conduct of a coercive thought reform and behavior control program.

Second-generation programs induce changes in expressed behavior and attitudes such as the earlier versions did by manipulating psychological and social influence variables within a format that generally follows a symbolic death and rebirth theme. Second-generation programs often included techniques similar to those found in first generation programs, eg, group pressure, modeling, accusations, and confessions.

Additional sophisticated techniques to destabilize a person's sense of self and to induce anxiety and emotional distress are also employed. Second-generation programs often incorporate technical advances in influence production, such as hypnosis to intensify recalled or

imagined experiences, emotional flooding, sleep deprivation, stripping away of various psychological defense mechanisms, and the induction of cognitive confusion. Second-generation programs are illustrated by certain cults, in therapeutic communities gone astray, and in some large-group awareness programs.

## WHAT IS A THOUGHT REFORM PROGRAM?

In essence, a thought reform program is behavioral change technology applied to cause the learning and adoption of an ideology or set of behaviors under certain conditions. It is distinguished from other forms of social learning by the conditions under which it is conducted and by the techniques of environmental and interpersonal manipulation employed to suppress particular behavior and to train others. Six conditions are simultaneously present in a thought reform program

=> Obtaining substantial control over an individual's time and thought content, typically by gaining control over major elements of the person's social and physical environment,

=> Systematically creating a sense of powerlessness in the person,

=> Manipulating a system of rewards, punishment, and experiences in such a way as to promote new learning of an ideology or belief system advocated by management,

=> Manipulating system of rewards, punishments, and experiences in such a way as to inhibit observable behavior that reflects the values and routines of life organization the individual displayed prior to contact with the group,

=> Maintaining a closed system of logic and an authoritarian structure in the organization, and

=> Maintaining a noninformed state existing in the subject.

The last two conditions work because there is no effective way for the subject to influence the system and because the program moves along in such a way that the subject is unaware of being changed for a hidden organizational purpose. In a closed system of logic, criticism or complaints are handled by showing the subject that he or she is defective, not the organization. Observations may be turned around and argued to mean the opposite of what the critic intended.

When a subject questions or doubts a tenet or rule, attention is called to factual information that suggests some internal contradiction with what the subject has been told; the criticism or observation is "turned around" and the subject made to feel he or she is wrong. In effect the subject is told, "You are always wrong; the system is always right." The system refuses to be modified except by executive order. In addition, by keeping a subject in a noninformed state, he or she functions in an environment to which

he or she is forced to adapt in a series of steps, each sufficiently minor so that the subject does not notice change in him- or herself and does not become aware of the goals of the program until late in the process (if ever).

The tactics of a thought reform program are organized to destabilize individuals' sense of self by getting them to drastically reinterpret their life's history, radically alter their world view, accept a new version of reality and causality, and develop dependency on the organization, thereby being turned into a deployable agent of the organization operating the thought reform program.

## TYPES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSES

Not everyone who is exposed to a thought reform system is successfully manipulated nor does everyone respond with major reactive symptoms. Some authors described the psychological responses and casualties seen in the first-generation. No definitive figures about casualty rates for second-generation programs can be offered. However, scattered anecdotal reports in the psychiatric literature, the number of people seeking treatment, counseling, and other forms of help after leaving thought reform programs, and the growing number of persons seeking compensation for damages through litigation suggests that many experience different degrees and durations of distress, disability, and a dysfunction following such programs.

Actual rates of damage may be far higher than estimations made from the sources cited above. The sole experimental study of the destructive potential of encounter groups reports psychological casualty rates higher than 10% for those groups that use intrusive and high confrontation techniques with aggressive leaders. These damaging techniques have much in common with the destabilizing techniques of second-generation programs. The full range of personality and situational factors that predispose individuals to become psychological casualties are not known at this time.

Second-generation thought reform programs expose participants to exercises and experiences that disrupt psychological defense systems, causing some individuals to be flooded with emotions and others to dissociate and split off parts of their awareness. Psychological decompensations and the onset of other symptoms appear related to the combined effects of features described earlier, especially to rapid, intense arousal of adverse emotional states and to dissociation-producing techniques.

## CASE EXAMPLES

Both of the following cases illustrate the production of psychiatric casualties in individuals exposed to thought reform programs. Neither individual described below had a history of personal or family mental disorder.

## KIRK

Kirk illustrates the splitting or doubling of the self that occurs when one drops an ordinary world view and accepts the alternative world view trained through exposure to a thought reform program. Professionals who treated Kirk diagnosed his condition as relaxation-induced anxiety that evolved into panic attacks and atypical dissociative states.

He affiliated with a mantra meditation group initially attempting to "empty the mind" of all reflective thoughts for a few minutes each morning and evening. The mantra, supposedly a meaningless word, is the Sanskrit name of a Hindu deity.

Kirk has an advanced degree in a physical science from a prestigious university. A friend took him to a free lecture on how to reduce stress in one's life. Kirk was not stressed, but responded favorably to the lecturer's charts and graphs alleging scientific proof that meditation was accomplishing feats unknown to mankind -- except through the group leader's methods. Because of its seemingly scientific basis, Kirk paid his fees and began meditation lessons. These lessons began with short periods of meditation, which soon lengthened and were combined with prolonged periods of chanting and hyperventilation.

After a few months he began to have bouts of chest pains, fainting spells, palpitations, and lassitude. When he complained at the meditation center of his symptoms, he was assured these were normal signs of "unstressing" and evidence that he was reaching a higher state of consciousness. Hence, Kirk discounted his distress, accepting it as the price he had to pay to reach the leader's promised goal. Had Kirk not been following the meditation practice with simultaneous involvement with the group, he probably would have abandoned the practice as soon as he started having adverse reactions.

During one panic attack, he was taken to an emergency room where a physician attributed his condition to "stress and pressure." He stopped meditating for a few days, and the symptoms disappeared. However, the group instructed him to increase the time he chanted, hyperventilated and mediated. Over the years, his condition worsened. Panic attacks continued, he reported he felt "space out" and forgetful, and he began to let his career, social life, and intellectual development decline. Upon advice from the group leader, to help his deteriorating condition, he frequently spent 8 hours a day for an entire week, chanting hyperventilating, and mediating. He spent several individual months on such a regime.

His distress increased. He was markedly dizzy and objects seemed to swirl, float and waver in the air. He felt nauseous, disoriented, distraught, and confused. At work he began to lose confidence in his abilities and worried that he had slipped into insanity.

He soon found himself unable to focus on his surroundings; when he

did, things appeared distorted, obscure, and foreign. He felt overwhelmed by anxiety, depression nausea, and debilitation. He took a week off from work and sat crying in his apartment in an apparent state of depersonalization and derealization, accompanied by a multitude of odd sensations and mental contents. He visited several general practitioners who could not diagnose his symptoms.

One day while driving he lost his memory. He was unable to recall who he was or where he was going. He parked and went into a restaurant. When he left, it took him 2 hours to find his car because he had forgotten where he had parked. Soon after this transient but alarming amnesic episode, he resigned from his job because he could no longer instruct workers as part of his technical job. When he had to speak he felt faint, lost track of what he was saying, and was unable to function.

## BEVERLY

Beverly, now 27, was in a cult from ages 15 to 24. For 2 years after leaving the cult she was too frightened to seek help or to tell anyone what had happened during the 9 years she was in the group. Finally, she saw a psychologist over a prolonged period. Initial symptoms were severe depression, anxiety, multiple phobias, and identity diffusion. After story unfolded during therapy, a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder was made. The following is abstracted from a report written by her therapists.

The group Beverly joined was started by an immigrant who conferred upon himself the titles of guru, yogi, and teacher after reaching the United States. He began to collect a small following by advertising himself as an exercise and diet specialist.

A relative of Beverly's had lived for some time in the commune he developed. The relative asked 15-year-old Beverly to spend the summer in the commune; she remained in the commune for 9 years. Beverly was an easy mark for the leader and his assistants to completely dominate. His indoctrination and influence program led her to believe all his claims -- that he was the most learned man alive, that he knew hidden health and living secrets which he would reveal to her. The group practiced bizarre and ever-changing diets. Beverly came to think the leader was omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. He treated her as his protege, subjecting her to endless sessions of indoctrination and withdrawing alternative sources of social support until she became totally dependent on him.

She believed that he knew all the secrets of the universe. She believed that he held the power of life and death over her and her family because he claimed that he was above the law and that he could order the execution of anyone who displeased him. He repeatedly stated that he would have her and her family put to death if she ever left him. Eventually when she did attempt to leave after almost 9 years, he put her under armed guard and prevented her from leaving. The most traumatic episodes which the

leader began after Beverly had been in the group several years. He told her that he was going to cure her of what he termed her sexual neurosis. He proceeded to rape her while she became stunned, depressed, withdrawn, and suicidal.

For nearly 3 years, she was anally and genitally raped repeatedly and given gratuitous brutal beatings by the leader. She became pregnant twice; each time the leader ordered her to have an abortion. Hours after undergoing one of the abortions, he raped her. Beverly eventually ceased to regard him as divine after she developed herpes and chronic kidney and bladder infections; she saw him only as a violent, brutal rapist. At this point, the leader assigned armed guards to restrain her from escaping. She remained a virtual prisoner for over a year. She finally escaped several years ago still believing the leader or his helpers would find and kill her and her parents. This fear continues.

Beverly has a driving phobia. This appears related to the leader telling her that if she ever left him she would die in an automobile crash. After a year of treatment, she is able to drive short distances, but only at the expense of considerable anxiety.

Beverly becomes excruciatingly anxious over what she calls "flashbacks." She vividly reexperiences how she felt when she had to sit for endless hours listening to the rambling, nonsensical lectures given by the leader. During those lectures, she resented having to sit for so long, yet she was unable to move or leave. She feared that the leader had magical powers and that if she incurred his disfavor, she would come to harm or even die as he claimed happened to those who defied him. Because of these negative associations with prolonged sitting, she has been unable to attend classes, church services, or similar events. Thus, her educational level remains as it was at age 15 when she entered the cult.

She has panic attacks with agoraphobia in which she has to abandon whatever she is doing and return to her apartment to feel safe. These attacks have prevented her from maintaining employment and reliably enjoying recreational activities. She has an ever-present, free-floating sense of foreboding and dread.

Beverly has trouble going to sleep, as fearful images of the leader intrude, arousing fear. When she does sleep, she has nightmares involving his attacks on her. She sleeps fully dressed because she fears she may have to flee the leader's guards. This is not without foundation as such happened before she escaped from the commune. Her numbed, stunned state seen at the start of therapy has declined, but the rest of the posttraumatic stress syndrome remains. She feels her life is ruined and suffers generalized anhedonia.

## SUMMARY

The techniques used to induce belief, change, and dependency by various thought reform programs appear to be related to the type of

psychiatric casualty the program tends to produce. Large-group awareness training programs appear more likely to induce mood and affect disorders. Groups that use prolonged mantra and empty-mind meditation, hyperventilation, and chanting appear more likely to have participants who develop relaxation-induced anxiety, panic disorder, marked dissociative problems, and cognitive inefficiencies. Therapeutic community thought reform programs appear more likely to induce enduring fears, self-mutilation, self-abasement, and inappropriate display of artificial assertiveness and emotionality.

Many people subjected to thought reform programs of sufficient duration report transient to longer lasting cognitive inefficiencies with impaired concentration, attention, and memory. Most are self-reported observations; others come from family and friends who note the inefficiencies either were not present prior to the thought reform program or are exacerbations of preexisting tendencies.

There is an interactional-transactional interplay between a program's philosophical contents, exercises, and practices, and each person exposed to it. The thought reform program impinges on cognition, defenses, affects, values, and conduct. Additionally each person's genetic-biological makeup, life experiences, personality, and mental make-up interact with the stressors induced by the interface of the person's old value, belief, and behavior codes with the new beliefs and behavior promulgated by the program.

Prediction of any one person's responses to anyone thought reform regime is difficult, if not impossible. However, as with all stressful, conflict-inducing, and intense negative emotionally arousing situations, certain forms of behavioral pathology are more likely than other types to occur among individuals exposed to certain combinations of stressors.

[DR. SINGER is Adjunct Professor, Dept. of Psychology at UC Berkeley and our November speaker. DR. OFSHE is Professor, Dept. of Sociology, UC Berkeley and an advisor to BAY AREA SKEPTICS. Used with permission.

Please Note: The purpose of reprinting the above article is to give our readers an overview of "Thought Reform Programs." The article has been substantially edited and cut. The footnotes are missing. Those interested in the material for clinical or legal reasons should refer to the original. Reprints may be obtained by writing to Lester J. Robeson, SLACK Incorporated, 6900 Grove Street, Thorofare, NJ 08086. Published in Psychiatric Annals 20(4):188-193.]

Review  
LIFE THROUGH TIME  
by Tom Woosnam

In the unlikely event that you've ever needed an additional reason to visit the California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park, the latest exhibit, "Life Through Time," more than serves.

The purpose of the exhibit is to present the evidence for evolution based on fossils and comparative anatomy and to give a brief history of life itself. A short videotape presentation in the antechamber gives the visitor an overview of the ideas of evolution but the fun really begins as the visitor almost literally walks into a wall of rock strata, a geological column of fossils stretching to the ceiling.

As if to emphasize the entire revolutionary jump, the facing wall features "Lifemap," a bank of eight computers linked to interactive laser video disks, each showing a different major group of closely related organisms. The paths to the computers are marked by lights embedded in the floor whose colors demonstrate the shared features of the groups. Red lights, for instance, stand for DNA so all the computer stations are connected by red. (One small quibble here -- there was no indication that I could find out what the other colored lights really stood for. Since this part of the exhibit is still under construction, I imagine that this information will be added later.)

From Lifemap, one follows the evolutionary trail from room to room -- "Early Life in the Sea," "Transition to Land," "The Age of Dinosaurs," "The Age of Mammals," and "Lines of Evidence." Highlights for me included the full size flying dinosaur, quetzalcoatlus, with its enormous beak, the full scale allosaurus attacking a camptosaurus (both are skeletons) and the largest and most stunning hologram I have ever seen -- the full size skull of the tyrannosaurus rex.

A favorite attraction for the kids in the crowd was the "Fish out of Water" interactive video, which involves the viewer in deciding which evolutionary paths a fish should take to survive as a land creature complete with consequences for the wrong decisions (keep eating bugs dude and you're not going to have the energy to escape that big guy on your tail who wants you for lunch). One subtle feature that I appreciated throughout was the placement of rotating globes showing the relative position of the Earth's land masses due to the continental drift at each evolutionary transition.

Some questions came up during the tour concerning what could be added to make this a solid educational experience for those kids who tend to spend little time at each area before they rush to the next attraction. It would be good to see a worksheet of some kind that school groups could use to ensure that some pattern could be extracted out of the mass of information that is presented.

As to the ongoing struggle with anti-evolutionists, it also might have been useful if typical creationist arguments could have been posted along the way with evolutionist rebuttals. This would have

fitted in the overall reason for the exhibit and could have provided concise, valuable and much needed information for parents and teachers who are often stymied by the convolutions of creationist logic (an oxymoron?)

But these are nitpicks. The whole presentation is visually stunning, superbly organized and a treasure that is unique to the Bay Area.

[Tom Woosnam teaches physics at the Crystal Springs Uplands School.]

THANKS!

Our thanks to Eugenie Scott, Raliegth McLemore, and John Taube for their efforts in making this tour work!

"LIFE THROUGH TIME" TOUR A SUCCESS  
by John Taube

How fortunate we are that Bay Areas Skeptics has EUGENIE (GENIE) SCOTT, PhD as one of its directors. Genie was our tour guide September 22nd for the California Academy of Sciences' breath-taking exhibit of evolution, LIFE THROUGH TIME. The exhibit is organized so artistically and professionally, that you can see life passing through time with all its fascinating evolutionary changes. The exhibit makes it obvious that life is evolving.

Acting as guide, Genie was put to a great disadvantage. There was plenty of distraction from the noise of the over-flowing crowd. But Genie's pauses in talking and her use of an ingenuous home-made megaphone, made the very best of a difficult situation.

Combining her thorough understanding of physical anthropology with an exciting manner of teaching, Genie came well prepared for this tour. She had made a special pre-tour trip to the Academy to familiarize herself with all of the exhibit's details. First Genie took the group to a video demonstration of evolution and, after the group viewed the video, she outlined the main points of evolution. Her comments on the inconsistency of creationism showed the problems that the pseudo-science holds. She guided the group through the various rooms, spelling out the highlights that the visitor should look for in a particular exhibit. The group was then on its own, to explore details. As questions arose, Genie was there to answer them.

The tour was unfortunately limited to 40 and some subscribers had to be turned down. No arrangements have been made, as yet, to do another tour, but those who are interested in one, should make their requests known.

Letter to the Editor  
SECULAR RELIGIOSITY  
by Walter R. Hearn

In a letter to "BASIS" (Oct. '90), Thomas H. Jukes responded to an exchange between William Bennetta (Apr. '90) and myself (July '90) concerning the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA) and ASA's booklet, "Teaching Science in a Climate of Controversy". Jukes could see no difference between ASA's statement of faith in God as "the Creator of the physical universe," and the "scientific creationist" position that God created everything some 6,000 to 20,000 years ago. To me the degree of difference is roughly analogous to the difference between concluding that Walt Hearn and Tom Jukes must be genetically related and asserting that Walt Hearn and Tom Jukes had the same grandfather.

True, the ASA and "creationist" positions are both statements of religious conviction, which may be what Jukes meant by lumping them together: "I do not agree that real scientists will sign such statements." Yet he couldn't see why Cornell biologist William Provine was bought into the discussion. Surely the personal credo that Provine signed HIS name to ("No inherent moral or ethical laws exist, nor are there absolute guiding principles for human society. The universe cares nothing for us and we have no ultimate purpose.") is as much a "frankly religious construct" as ASA's theistic credo. Professor Provine is one "real scientist" who has used his name to back a religious position.

Opponents of theism sometimes resent having their positions designated as religious, so I referred to Provine's atheistic credo as IDEOLOGICAL, a broader term that includes the "secular religiosity Langdon Gilkey warned about in "Creationism on Trial" (Winston Press, 1985) after testifying for the ACLU in Arkansas "Balanced Treatment" trial. Gilkey urged members of the scientific community to become clearer on the "limits" of science ("the kinds of questions it asks and those that it does and can NOT ask"), lest "in witnessing to their own secular religiosity," they "breed creationists as fast as they encourage humanists" (pp. 135-6). That's the kind of non-scientific point Robert Root-Bernstein said must be learned by both sides to end the educational battle.

Jukes called ASA's distinction between evolutionary science and evolutionary naturalism, "double-talk." But ("in the words of Judge Overton"), "Evolution does not presuppose the absence of a creator or God." When it DOES, it has become scientism. The real double-talk consists of using the same word, EVOLUTION, for scientism as well as science, a confusion that lies at the root of much of the current public controversy. To me, "taking evolution seriously" as science includes defining the term carefully and guarding it against misuse.

That CERTAINTY Jukes wants to claim for a common ape-human ancestry is neither mathematical nor forensic. As I understand it, in tracing "disappeared" children in Argentina, molecular evidence of descent is not "overwhelming" beyond a couple of generations. At present what scientists have, thousands of generations back, is an INFERENCE or HYPOTHESIS of ancestry. To avoid offending the ideological certainty of people like Jukes, however, in 1989 the ASA authors changed the question in "Teaching Science..." to "What is known of the Earliest Hominid?" and restated our conclusion: "Too many problems remain unresolved and too many pieces of evidence are missing to say that the search for human origins is over." As Jukes says, "in the days of Darwin, T. H. Huxley and Bishop Wilberforce," many people thought evolutionary biology had settled the basic questions. But they also thought that of Newtonian physics.

[Walter Hearn is a former biochemistry professor who now edits the "ASA NEWSLETTER". He is a coauthor of "Teaching Science in a Climate of Controversy".]

## A HUMBLE SUGGESTION

by Yves Barbero

As "BASIS" was headed for press, the TV news announced that a museum and its director had been absolved of obscenity for displaying photographs, some of which depicted homosexual acts and naked children.

I wondered what the fuss had been about in the first place. Such an exhibit has no attraction for me so its unlikely that I'd ever go (except from morbid curiosity due to the notorious publicity). But if someone else wants to see it, what business is it of mine? I probably wouldn't listen to "rap" lyrics, whether sexually explicit or not. That's not my idea of poetry. But then again, I love folk music and have been known to listen to some pretty lewd lyrics from Merrie 'Ol England. Why shouldn't others listen to that metronome nonsense if they want to.

Borrowing paper and pencil from Einstein, I decided to conduct a short thought experiment and asked myself three questions.

=> What is a community standard (or more accurately, how is it measured)? A community standard is whatever a prosecutor or police agency says it is until modified by a judge or jury if it comes to that. Ultimately, one to twelve people decide after having to listen to "experts" and the accused. It's possible that some people think there is a group mind but as skeptics, we would require some extraordinary proof to accept that.

=> At what point would I allow the government to act as censor? Giving this grave thought, I decided that I would allow the government to prohibit the publication of ship schedules in time of

war.

=> What is obscenity? Obscenity is whatever the dominant group says it is. Japan does not permit the publication of pubic hair. Imported "Playboy" magazines are individually airbrushed by teenaged boys on the theory that they're too young to be affected by such a sight. A minority (Fundamentalists) with a heavy influence on local police agencies had members of a another minority group (African Americans) arrested for "dirty" lyrics in Florida. In San Francisco, where African Americans hold more influence, it could not have happen.

The conclusion is that community standards are not really measurable (a legal guess at best) but that community interests are (a ship schedule in war time) and that the concept of obscenity is meaningless since it differs from society to society and groups within society.

Add to this the problem of having influential groups (minority or otherwise) using their political strength to put down other groups or more probably, to build up their own groups for control and/or fund raising purposes by an appeal to internal prejudices.

The solution is really simple. Drop the concept of a community standard and settle for a multiple of individual standards. I, as an individual, can decide what I will tolerate for myself. In the name of community interest, I would have no problem with an arbitrary legal requirement that a museum exhibit specify that some of the material portrayed might offend some people. We already give the government power to tell us cigarettes are bad for us. Common sense will make such a system work. I don't foresee a runaway situation whereby the government would warn us that certain color schemes don't work for obese persons.

So long as Big Brother does not put us in jail for expressed ideas.

## CENSORSHIP

To censor is to imply that one person's judgement is somehow better than another's. It is a fear that information will somehow corrupt the character of the person absorbing it. The censor, however, is somehow immune.

In this country, censorship has usually taken the form of controlling emotion rather than politics. Erotica is usually the subject of censorship. A legal fiction has made a distinction between erotica and pornography. This allows art, which is erotic by its very nature, to exist while allowing the prosecution of "non-art" pornography, usually defined as the "commercial" use of sex.

This is all complicated by the notion by some ethical and/or

religious groups that their vision of "natural law" is somehow universal.

Since Americans do not trust each other to behave "morally" without a law and cannot accept that sexuality in all its diverse forms is somehow part of the human condition, censorship will plague us in one form or another for a long time. -- Y.B.

## LOOSE ENDS

The AUSTIN MILES June 26th talk, sponsored the BAY AREA SKEPTICS, has been shown on San Francisco Cable, channel 25. If you subscribe to cable outside San Francisco and would like to have it shown locally, call your cable company. Paul Bernadino, (415) 673-4609, will arrange the loan of a copy of the tape.

Pictures were taken at the BAY AREA SKEPTICS' Gala Barbecue/Picnic. These photos will be at the upcoming November meeting. If you are in a picture, you may take a copy (on a first claim basis).

## THE SKEPTIC'S ELECTRONIC BULLETIN BOARD

=> 2400 Baud, 415-648-8944

=> 24 hours, 7 days a week

=> Rick Moen, Sysop

## ANSWERS TO HALLOWE'EN PUZZLES

[In last month's issue, we printed puzzles published in 1594 by Shillaber Montabue. Since we could not locate the following issue of the chronicle in which they were published, we do not have Dr. Montabue's answers. We have asked Bob Steiner to psychically project over the centuries and come up with the answers. Despite an overheated crystal ball and psychic exhaustion, Steiner came through again. -Ed.]

## ANSWER TO PUZZLE NUMBER ONE

The probability is one in THREE that his children are both girls. Following are the four possibilities when one has two children:

Possibility Number	First Child	Second Child
1	Girl	Girl
2	Girl	Boy
3	Boy	Girl
4	Boy	Boy

The speaker at the party is not possibility number four; that is, he does not have two boys. Anyone whose children were born under

possibility numbers 1, 2, or 3 could make the statement spoken in Dr. Montabue's puzzle. Therefore, there is a one in three probability that the speaker has two girls.

ANSWER TO PUZZLE NUMBER TWO

You ask either witch: "If I were to ask the other witch which is the door to the party, what would she answer?" Enter the door NOT indicated in the answer.

OR you may ask either witch: "If I had asked you an hour ago which is the door to the party, what would you have told me?" Enter the door that IS indicated in the answer.

I hope you all enjoyed the party and the puzzles.

-- Bob Steiner

## MODERN BRAINWASHING TECHNIQUES

If you isolate an individual long enough, have complete control over what that individual hears and sees, and the individual has weak self-esteem, you have all the ingredients necessary to mold him or her to your will.

But do you?

Maybe it's not the individual with weak self-esteem. Perhaps it's the individual who is sure, so sure that a mere doubt has to be planted. Maybe there's more than one way to change a person.

How do modern cults do it?

What is the history of political brainwashing? How do they relate? Are certain people marked for brainwashing by their personality? How are they spotted?

Can YOU be brainwashed? Is intelligence and/or skepticism a shield? Is sense-deprivation necessary? Starvation? Sexual abuse? Beatings? Maybe not!

Dr. Margaret Singer will discuss both the myths and realities of thought reform. Be prepared to have illusions shattered.

BAS advisor and co-founder Wallace Sampson, MD, will introduce Dr. Singer.

## CALENDAR

November meeting...

## GULLIBILITY, GUILT, AND CULTS

by Margaret Thaler Singer, PhD

Tuesday, Nov. 20, 1990, 7:30 pm  
The Planetarium, College of San Mateo  
1700 W. Hillsdale Avenue  
San Mateo

Directions: From US 101 or 280, turn onto Hwy 92. Go to West Hillsdale Blvd. to CSM Dr. and go to Parking lot #15 or #2. Have 75 cents in exact change for the machine.

Watch for coming events in the BAS CALENDAR, or call 415-LA-TRUTH for up to the minute details on events. If you have ideas about topics or speakers, leave a message on the hotline.

WARNING: We STRONGLY URGE that you call the hotline shortly before attending any Calendar activity to see if there have been any changes.

#### CALENDAR

December meeting...

#### POT LUCK PARTY

Kate Talbot's House, 479 Ebken, Pacifica, 359-5555

Sunday, December 9, 1990, 5 pm

Bring a "pot" of salad, main course, or dessert, and optionally BYOB.

Directions: From CA Rte. 1, west on Fassler and first left on Ebken.

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