

Lets briefly discuss total rule aka totalitarianism.<sup>1</sup> It can be rule by whomever – person, group, class – though the most common is rule by one or a very small oligarchy pretending to be one person. The only commonality is that the subjects, and the rulers who aren't chief, are subject to the total domination of the ruling person or body. The reason why it is sometimes considered rule by the masses is because the complete and total obedience of the masses is a requirement for its successful functioning, which is not so in authoritarian governments, for example.

Two things are especially highly valued and important in modern society: free access to sources of information and participation in power. Under totalitarian systems, both are denied to the overwhelming majority of the population and are strictly rationed out to small privileged minorities. Inequality in the distribution of material goods is, then, associated with enormously increased inequality in access to knowledge and power. And, the social inheritance of these privileges has an even greater effect than in societies where inequality remains purely quantitative, where it can be calculated in terms of money (Kolakowski 1990, 170).

I don't know why people ever find their way to this kind of rule,<sup>2</sup> but it happens all the time. It is a particular feature of modern societies as, in the past, we were only good at creating authoritarian systems.<sup>3</sup> This is a form of rule that, as the Philosopher notes, “belongs strictly among the egalitarian forms of government; the tyrant is the ruler who rules as one against all, and the 'all' he oppresses are all equal, namely equally powerless” (The Philosopher 1968, 99). It is the masses who put the tyrant in his place in our century. Coups change elites, but rarely are those new elites powerful enough to be full-on totalitarian. This is because, in order to totally dominate a society, one needs a help – a lot of help.

To beat my dead horse, all forms of government that focus on one supposed ultimate/eternal good (the true religion, power, financial success, other success, etc) are doomed to authoritarianism, if not totalitarianism, regardless of what type they fall under. The only thing standing in the way of totalitarianism at this stage is the internet. Of course, the internet is contradictory in this role, because

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1 Editor's Note: “The origins of authoritarian doctrines are partially nihilistic...To destroy everything [as revolution aims to do] is to pledge to oneself to building without foundations, and then to holding up the walls with one's hands. He who rejects the entire past, without keeping any part of it which could serve to breathe life into revolution, condemns himself to finding justification only in the future and, in the meantime, to entrusting the police with the task of justifying the provisional state of affairs” (Camus 1991, 159).

2 Actually I do, it's called politicized metaphysics

3 Editor's Note: The main difference is that authoritarianism seeks public obedience, totalitarianism seeks private obedience, even obedience while you sleep: total obedience. Hence the name.

it also provides one of the means of totalitarianism, which is the rewriting of history, via community/collective knowledge enterprises, such as Wikipedia. Well, I used to worry about Wikipedia, but now we have Conservapedia and everything is peachy. “In our predilections and interests we are all in some measure specialists. And we all think that our personal order of values is not merely personal but that in a free discussion among rational people we would convince the others that ours is the right one” (Hayek 1944, 61).