

THE CREDATE SYNDROME:
AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSITIONAL NORMS

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Of necessity, all societies must set standards of predictable behavior. To adhere to these standards is "normal" and acceptable; to deviate from them is "abnormal" and rejected by society. To insure the continued adherence to these standards, society rewards the correct procedure with status and prestige; it imposes sanctions and penalties upon those individuals who would oppose them.

However, the existence of these standards immediately poses two questions. First, the existence of any type of rules, by their very nature, is restrictive. There are no "natural" or automatic rules. If there were, penalties and sanctions would be unnecessary, since every member of society would unthinkingly abide by them. Also, the rules of behavior differ tremendously from one culture to another. One society's conformity is another's deviance. Therefore, in the face of constant restrictions, how do most of the rules remain relatively unbroken?

Secondly, and possibly of even greater importance, if the rules of society come out of the structure of society and are an integral part of the general configuration of the culture, they must be subject to the same processes of dynamic change as all other aspects of society. Therefore, how can the rules change without resulting in chaos? One cannot change the rules without first openly denying their validity. But, this denial might well result in the imposition of sanctions upon the rebel. Who, then, would dare to make the changes? Yet, this aspect of society cannot remain forever static; change is obligatory. How then does the alteration proceed?

Traditionally, the pattern of norms in all societies is divided into two types: the FOLKWAYS and the MORES. The first are the standardized systems of behavior in daily life; the customs, habits and traditions. The second are the moral and ethical values which form the basis for systems of belief and morality.

The problem arises in their apparently total divergence. The folkways are commonplace, trite and seemingly virtually innocuous. Their influence is limited, their violation is not considered overly important and the sanctions imposed are minimal. The mores, on the other hand, are almost overpowerful. Even the suggestion of violation or the implication of questioning their validity brings sanctions which are swift and extensive.

Yet, these norms are so widely separated as to appear to be almost divorced from each other. One is relatively unimportant; the other is all important. There appears to be no middle ground or area of transition between them. In this vital social area, we are faced apparently with the possibility of an absolutely unrelated dichotomy.

However, upon analysis, this proves to be a fallacy. There does exist a large, structured body of norms, which stands intermediate between the folkways and mores. For purposes of reference, we shall refer to these as CREDATES.

Credates are norms in various states of transition and, as such, are highly dynamic. Both folkways and mores are relatively static; folkways are too unimportant individually to be worth the trouble; mores are too important to tolerate the slightest tampering. THEREFORE, ALL CHANGES IN SOCIAL VALUES ARE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF THE CREDATES.

A credate is an intermediary norm which may be basically derived originally from either the folkways or mores. The transition of the credates develops out of the intensification of the folkways or the degeneration of the mores; that is, the addition of certain moral or ethical values to a folkway or the loss of certain moral values by one of the mores. These attributes may have been acquired through accidental juxtaposition of ideas or by reinterpretation of ideas through social innovation. Folkways may acquire a credate value through magnification of the original concept or through persistence - what may be referred to as the "sanctity of antiquity." In other words, "there is something untouchable about this because it has always been done this way."

However, the interpretation of the moral values of the credates is very much an individual decision. An aspect of culture which may be regarded as a credate by certain persons may be regarded as having the highest moral values

by others in the same society. Indeed, it may be subject to reinterpretation by the same individual in varying sets of social circumstances. A person regarding the act with the highest moral connotations will impose the most rigid sanctions upon its violation. Another person, regarding the same act as a credate, will be much more lenient.

For example, it was traditional for males in American society to wear their hair short, while women wore it in a longer fashion. In the late 1960's, a male with shoulder length hair encountered serious penalties for his choice of style. Obviously, the comparative length of a haircut can carry no true moral values. However, it would appear that long hair carried with it the vague implication of homosexuality and, as such, was a deviation by implication from the rigidly puritanical American sex mores. Nevertheless, the style persisted and has now been more or less accepted.

It should be noted, however, that the same situation did not apply to American women. They have been permitted to bob their hair or wear tailored clothing of vaguely masculine type, such as pants, suits or slacks. (It should be noted that bobbed hair in the 1920's was considered prima facie evidence of political radicalism.) However, a man attempting to wear a skirt, unless it is an unusual and exotic article of dress, such as a kilt, would be immediately suspect. This permissiveness for women may be a holdover of the archaic belief that women are incapable of sexual violation and that there was no danger in their imitation of men, in this regard.

The credate pattern may be most easily recognized by comparing the reactions of society to the suggestion of deviation from the accepted norms:

In the case of a folkway, suggested deviation evokes the response: "You shouldn't do it but it isn't important enough to make an issue of it."

In the case of the mores, the response is "Don't even consider doing such a terrible thing, God will punish you."

In the case of a credate, the response is "You really shouldn't do it but we can't think of a reason why."

since there is always an area of potential question in a credate situation, it is highly dynamic, providing an area of potential change in the norms. The key to the power of the credate is that it provides ways in which apparently

untouchable norms may be circumvented. This is primarily accomplished by "pseudo-deviation:" the apparent breaking of the rules in a reasonably safe and more *ar* less socially approved manner.

For example, the rules concerning sexual behavior are perhaps the most rigid in American society. For years, no one would admit to the existence of anything but "normal" sexual activity and that only in a marital situation. Deviation was not only a moral but a legal matter. For that matter, sexual activity was not a subject for public discussion at all, leading to the invention of such mythical devices as the "stork" and endless circumlocutions. This did not prevent the existence of obscene humor or pornographic materials but neither was socially acceptable to the slightest degree.

Currently, this ban is being actively circumvented by the proliferation of "adult publications," both literary and pictorial; by "sexual realism" in literature and the performing arts and by the open discussion of formerly tabooed subjects in mixed company or the public media or the public arguments expressed for the liberalization of rules against pre-marital sexual relations, abortion, etc. The Supreme Court decisions on pornography and abortion did much to liberalize the situations, although subsequent decisions have again clouded the issue. However, the door had been opened.

However, to many persons in our society, these rules against sexual deviation remain so rigid that many of the circumventions are themselves expressly forbidden and there is still strong social pressure, although not total suppression, against their use. Nevertheless, they still continue to exist actively in society, indicating that there has been a breakdown, in certain groups, of the former total sanctity of these topics. This value system is in transition toward the credate.

It should be noted that Judge Ben Lindsay's advocacy of "companionate marriage" in the 1920's resulted in a national scandal. Margaret Mead's recommendation of the same activity in the 1970's was widely accepted and published.

More definitely within the credate syndrome is the ban against nudity in American society. Certain areas of the human body have been designated as publically unexposable, largely because of their sexual connotations. However, the reasons for this prohibition have always been largely subjective. Recall that in the 1930's, male bathers were

forbidden to go "topless." As a result of the implied question of validity, it has been circumvented constantly over the years and, in recent years, has achieved the status of a full ccreate.

The ban was earlier avoided by the use of theatrical performers, such as burlesque strippers, whose entire professional career depended on the existence of the ban, and so-called "cheesecake" or "pinup" photographs in publications - not to mention the time honored "French post card." Recent circumventions have become innumerable.

The fashionable acceptance of minimal clothing publicly, such as bikinis, extensive publication of magazines of the type of "Playboy," suggested nudity in advertising and the open use of the nude body in the performing arts are all presently acceptable. The fact that a case may be made for the apparent artistic approval of nudity in the example of the "old masters," provides an area of question as to the validity of the prohibition.

Other current ccreate areas include CHEATING ("It's not the same as actually stealing something"), or the USE OF CERTAIN DRUGS, such as marijuana ("It's no more dangerous than alcohol" or "Tobacco is known to be dangerous to health and it's still legal").

It is important to note that much of this deviation is vicarious and to a great extent, commercialized. It has long been recognized that a seller's market exists for the forbidden and, if this can be attractively packaged without danger to the consumer, it is a potential gold mine. Hence, the success of "Playboy" magazine. Publications of this type have existed long before the initial presentation of "Playboy" but "playboy" utilized every aspect of the ccreate pattern, at a time when that particular norm was under question.

"Playboy" is a well printed journal, on fine paper, with excellent color reproduction and easy to read print. There are interviews with famous personalities, articles and short stories by noted authors, articles on clothing styles, food, wine, jazz, sports cars, etc. The magazine labors to create a mystique of sophistication and savior-faire, which it generously bestows, by implication, upon its readers. However, in each issue of approximately 200 pages, there are about 12-15 pages of nude photographs of attractive young women. With these pages deleted, "Playboy" would not sell but the other material provides the consumer with the appropriate excuse for the purchase.

Furthermore, an examination of "Playboy's" publication policy, over the years since its inception, shows that they have become gradually more explicit in this regard, as society's tolerance for nudity was lowered. Early photographs were tastefully draped and very little anatomy was displayed. Later, publication became more explicit but direct frontal nudity was still forbidden. Gradually, however, even this was lifted. The success of "Playboy" spawned a host of imitators. For reasons of competition, they went even further in their exposure, until "Playboy" by comparison, has become relatively conservative. Farther back in time, one can recall the 'daring' Petty Girls of "Esquire."

Interestingly, long after standards for female nudity were lowered, they remained in force for male nudity. The famous Burt Reynolds centerfold in "Cosmopolitan" prepared the way for such magazines as "Playgirl," etc., where direct frontal presentations of male anatomy are now commonplace.

This is related to Douglas' "Playboy Effect" in connection to pornography that "material that looks 'classy' because it is put in the context of 'cultural' material is allowed, while non-classy looking works are forbidden." Or as Polsky has stated,

The stigma attached to pornography is lessened when the pornography is tied to some socially valued end, such as art or science. One important result is this: when the situation being defined by society is the naturalistic depiction of sex, the most real consequence of a definition that labels it something else than pornographic use in society by lessening the inhibitions on acquiring it. This is obvious from the libraries of countless souls who avidly buy highly erotic works that 'society' labels 'Art' or 'Literature' or 'Scholarship' but who take care not to buy 'real' pornography.

In this context, certain motion pictures which centered on the explicit and realistic depiction of a wide variety of sexual acts claimed that the reason for their existence was purely educational, since they were actually a type of marriage guidance instruction.

A related example is the travelogue type of motion picture, which shows various primitive peoples in various stages of undress. Since such pictures are "educational," such nudity is completely acceptable for showing to even young children, often on public television. (One might also wonder that another reason for its acceptability is the idea that these "primitive savages" are not completely human and therefore, may be viewed without embarrassment. In any case, they are too "uncivilized" to know any better.)

Television, of all media, remains the most notoriously conservative in this respect. A prime example was the introduction of the "TOMORROW" show. All advance publicity promised that this program would present adult and controversial subjects fearlessly and openly, due to the very late hour of its presentation. Yet, in presenting programs at the Eselen Institute and nudist camps, the cameras were carefully positioned to reveal little or nothing of the anatomy of the participants. However, the implication of the locale of the program was considered daring and was considered sufficient to suggest a controversial subject.

It should also be noted that nudist camps, while not a new concept in American society, go to extreme lengths to avoid any hint of sexuality. Their emphasis is on the health promoting aspects of "sunbathing", swimming and outdoor sports. But, physical contact is minimized, unmarried individuals are discouraged from attending and even the use of sunglasses is discouraged, lest there be an implication of "peeping."

The major point that has been demonstrated by all of these cases is that all credates require rationalization and, therefore, provide for it. MORES CAN NEVER BE RATIONALIZED: CREDATES ALWAYS CAN BE. (A bikini actually covers something; one purchases "Playboy" for its literary content; cheating on an examination does not actually take anything material from another person to his detriment, etc.)

Therefore, the vital line of demarcation between mores and credates is the ability to rationalize one's actions acceptably to the person involved. If a satisfactory rationale is not forthcoming, the matter remains in the realm of the mores. The moment any type of rationalization is possible, it enters the area of the credates.

since the credate pattern apparently permits deviation from a major norm, at least, vicariously, there is a certain challenge involved in its violation. The blood

pressure rises when one purchases a ticket to an "X-rated" movie. The result is an interesting psychological reaction to the successful deviation from a credate, which differs markedly from the reactions of persons deviating from the other norms and which is of importance in its structure within the social pattern.

In the case of deviation from a folkway, the personal reaction is non-committal. There is no particular feeling of achievement, since the entire matter is innocuous and any potential penalties are not particularly serious.

In the case of deviation from the mores, the reaction is definitely and at times, overwhelmingly negative. There are extensive guilt feelings, remorse, worry over discovery and even the possibility of divine retribution.

However, the reaction to the successful deviation from a credate is one of complete and positive achievement. At times, there is a sense of euphoria all out of proportion to the importance of the act. The person has successfully challenged the system.

The degree of satisfaction or remorse again will depend entirely upon the degree to which the act is considered to be more closely related to the credates or the mores. However, if a person deviates from a credate with reservations because of residual moral commitments and concludes the act successfully, the guilt feelings will be minimal. This again relates to the possibility of rationalization and the fact that the mores, once rationalized, are no longer mores.

Often the deviation may only be subjective, such as reading pornography, viewing an "X-rated" movie or boasting of imaginary sexual adventures but often the experience is satisfying enough.

The credate pattern functions very effectively in those cases where the individual is confronted by the paradox of apparently contradictory norms. Obviously, a person cannot uphold two moral values of equal validity, which are diametrically opposed to each other. In such a case, one of the mores must become a credate.

For example, one of the strictest moral values of our society states unequivocally "THOU SHALT NOT KILL." However, another norm states, with equal emphasis, "THERE ARE TIMES WHEN, FOR THE GOOD OF THE COUNTRY, IN THE NAME OF PATRIOTISM, AS A MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES, YOU MUST KILL."

Either the first or second of these mores must degenerate to a create, in order that the individual need not conform to it.

If the first norm is degenerated, it can be rationalized by at least one or more of the following arguments:

- 1) These are not really human beings that I am killing.
- 2) My country, my family, my beliefs and traditions are threatened and in jeopardy.
- 3) I will be strongly penalized in a variety of unpleasant ways for my refusal.

To subordinate the second norm, one need only stress the religious angle.

It is for this reason that American reactions concerning our country's involvement in Viet Nam were so different from American reactions in World War II. The Germans were depicted as evil, jack-booted robots, mindlessly committing atrocities to order; the Japanese were grinning, sub-human primates. In either case, neither were truly human and could be erased in good conscience. America had been directly attacked and was in danger. Although the attack had occurred 2000 miles away in the Pacific, it resulted in the organization of air raid wardens in American cities, which ran a greater danger of being hit by a meteor than by enemy attack. It permitted the use of euphemisms, such as "defense plants." Under the circumstances, few Americans required any coercion to get involved.

However, these opportunities for rationale were not forthcoming in the Vietnamese conflict. America was in no immediate or foreseeable danger of attack by either the North Vietnamese or the Viet Cong; there was no effort made to differentiate the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong from the ARVN troops. The atrocities of the Viet Cong were not differentiated from those of the South Vietnamese and the revelation that many Americans were equally responsible added to the confusion of values.

Under the circumstances, there were too many areas of question to permit a clear cut adherence to the norm of patriotism. Under these conditions, the stronger interpretation was either moral, religious or self-preservation.

The create pattern apparently plays two vital roles in the social system. FIRST: It provides the avenue of dynamic change in normative social values. If the normative value being questioned is still considered important enough

by the majority of society, the stronger value will be retained and the create will be rejected due to the severe penalties that will be imposed on the non-conformist.

However, the existence of the create patterns opens the door to the reinterpretation of values, if other aspects of the social system have changed and new social needs develop. The current problems of potential world overpopulation have brought out areas of discussion and activity on birth control and abortion which would have been inadmissible at an earlier time, even to the extent of questioning the infallibility of certain religious doctrines. Top religious leaders throughout the world have stated their case openly and publicly. In short, even the most basic norms cannot be permitted to remain static in a highly dynamic social situation and the creates provide an avenue of experimentation, leading to possible readjustment or change.

SECONDLY: and perhaps of equal importance, true creates provide a safety valve against the deviation of the most important social norms. Every person deviates from all types of norms, including mores, at least subjectively, at one time or another. But, subjective deviation, while safe, is unsatisfying. However, no one wishes to experience the personal negative effects of anti-social behavior because of urges to deviate from accepted social standards. If an individual can convince himself that he is violating one of the mores, albeit vicariously and subjectively through the avenue of active create deviation, the resultant sense of achievement will be enough to prevent him from actually challenging the more important norm. The core values of society, therefore, will continue to remain intact. Or, if change is indicated by the new demands of a changing social situation, the change will come about slowly, with opportunities for testing and readjustment.