

# Review of: "Carl Friedrich's Path to "Totalitarianism""

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Harvard professor Carl Friedrich's publication was birthed from a conference that was held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1953. Over twenty papers were presented during this three-day event. The conference was divided into seven main parts, each dealing with various aspects of totalitarianism. The topics included political, ideological, social, and economic developments. George Kennan, William Henry Chamberlain, Bertram D. Wolfe, and Harold D. Lasswell were all present. It should be noted that the conference did not attempt to reach absolute conclusions or practical applications; rather it was designed to reveal the complexities and diverse interpretations of the totalitarian regime in general. At the time, no clear definition of totalitarianism existed, and it was often called the "totalitarian mystique [1]. Because of this, Turner's paper appears to have the same aims. This explains why no clear conclusion is present in Turner's work; although the inclusion of one might strengthen the work.

As Turner points out, the topics discussed at the conference involved a historical look into the nature of civilizations to determine if forms of totalitarianism previously existed. The other important question asks if democratic governments fall into the same category as totalitarian regimes. As Turner points out, Friedrich argues that "the contemporary mind has made the "state" into a golden calf of misplaced concreteness. The next step is to make it into an absolute. Indeed, the concrete symbol in front of which the intellectuals indulge their hapless desire to fall on their bellies before some mysterious something, may even take the more extreme form of a "constitution." However, the constitutional republic that the founding fathers created in America is a far cry from a deified state because the power was placed in the hands of the people. As Turner points out, there is a difference between a "responsible elite" and an "accountable elite."

Although Turner's paper offers insight into obscure topics that receive far too little attention in today's academic community, his paper could be better organized. Turner provides a detailed account that intertwines history and politics throughout the content, but these two topics might be better understood if they were placed under their own headings. A clear and concise explanation of the conference in the introduction of the paper would provide a stronger foundation to build from. He offers an overview of the conference in the abstract, but he includes supporting details much later in the content. Turner might also offer more background information about the other presenters at the conference to develop his case further. This information would likely require changes to the overall structure of the paper, which potentially might result in conciseness and clarity of some of the concepts. Turner seems prone to redundancy, which is distracting at times. Some minor errors in grammar and formatting are present, but overall, they are negligible.

**References:**

- [1] Anthon, Carl G. Friedrich, Carl J. (Ed.). *Totalitarianism: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, March 1953. (Book Review). Vol. 297. Philadelphia: A. L. Hummel for the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1955.
- [2] Nary, Ralph W. Friedrich, Carl J.; Barber, Benjamin R.; and Curtis, Michael. *Totalitarianism in Perspective*. (Book Review). Vol. 132. Washington, D.C: American Peace Society, 1970.