

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

Marina Lopez Lopez<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

"Totalitarianism", as a category of philosophical analysis and of the so-called "real politic", is elusive. Clarifying its content, its real dynamics, its theoretical foundations and the differences with other previous and contemporary regimes of government is problematic. Probably because those who have tried to do so have lived closely the institutional, social, economic and psychological developments of that peculiar form of government that acquired its most outstanding characteristics in the 20th century. Perhaps also because the network of academics that have shaped the category have resulted from that inalienable closeness.

Stephen Turner's text, "Carl Friedrich's Path to Totalitarianism", is an illuminating effort to elucidate on the agents, discussions, concrete real situations, and theoretical debates that allowed the development of the notion of "Totalitarianism" in Carl Joachim Friedrich's thought. A German-American intellectual who was unknown to me at least until I read the article. The author takes pains to highlight the features of Friedrich's thinking on totalitarianism, but he does so in a rather vital way: they bring readers into an academic, intellectual, and political context that is not common in studies on thinkers involved in cultural organization. He skillfully shows that Friedrich's considerations on totalitarianism moved together with the events that marked the 20th century since the 1930s. The normal in this kind of article is to find a conceptual and historicist "reconstruction" of the influences that the authors had to think the concepts.

That has usually been the case with Hannah Arendt, the great theoretician of totalitarianism and, according to contemporary tradition, the creator of the category in philosophical terms. Arendt represents the most illuminating postwar vision of politics. And she is studied from her belonging to the philosophical tradition, despite her public resignation from philosophy. She is never seen as one of the most controversial intellectuals, and active in the American academic world where Friedrich and other scholars are reflecting on the events that led them to change countries, cultures, languages and families. She is treated as the idealized Aristotle of the history of Philosophy and not as someone who dialogues with and dissents from her contemporaries.

Turner's text is original in this regard. It does not hide the thorniest issue of theoretical construction: the most intimate disagreements brought to light by a living thought, which is configured with the passing of events, when the definitive meaning of what happened does not reach its maturity. Exposing this is the most remarkable aspect of the article, in the midst of its author's effort to disseminate the difficulties of building a concept and analyzing reality from there. With this, he contributes to the enrichment of analyzes around totalitarianism and brings a fruitful vein of understanding to the academic life of our days.

