

# **TRUST AND SELF GOVERNANCE**

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## **THE FAILURE OF RULES TO RESOLVE ALL DISPUTES**

A Greek city had arrived at a point of despair. Competing city states had vied for military and political control for years and there were enough disputes over borders and trade that even inside the tribal lands the people called their own were killings, thefts, and arguments, theoretically over peoples' right to the limited resources of the region, which constantly dominated the community's interaction. Often, we humans' agreements and loyalties that people organize amongst ourselves met at odds, with many interests unable to be satisfied without the dissatisfaction of others. Eventually, to counteract this, the leaders in the community agreed to create shared rules, shared protections against agreed behaviors, and appropriate punishments for violations. From this position they built a system, and thousands of years later we reference this invented mythology as Democracy.

Demos-Kratia are two ancient Grecian words. Democracy is a French word. There is no reason to judge or assume how ancient Greeks considered their actions, but to look at the words themselves and know their meaning is essential. Demos; taken at its literal translation means "The people of/the village." Kratia; derived from the god Kratos meaning "power," and then later "to rule/to sway/to have power over" in the context of governance. If understood in the contexts of the French Revolutions and the American Experiment, the modern meaning of demos kratia could reasonably be "the people rule" or "power of the people;" virtuous and populist and predicated on millennia of unrest against rulers. Incidents such as the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence, and indeed an entire evolution of political theory is predicated on this interpretation, historically validated by the ardor of revolutionaries, and now by voting.

## **WHERE IS THERE VIOLENCE AND FORCE IN YOUR LIFE?**

For the sake of the virtue and history that drives us, I will posit that there is an ideal co-existence and that its possible in our families, our communities, and our world. As of this writing, democracy has not solved all problems. In a way, democracy might be a manifestation of the Authoritarian dilemma, a

system produced to address the symptoms but not effective or adaptable enough yet to address all of our grievances. But where does Authoritarianism begin? Trying to pinpoint where in history a pattern of authoritarianism began would only serve to ascribe responsibility and enormous momentum to the phenomenon. Instead, might we consider the reality of Authoritarianism beginning in one's immediate experience. In each moment of force or violence is an intention and examining the process of an individual's experience of 'authoritarianism' can be more revealing than macro-system or societal approaches.

Authority is a concept built on pretext and precedent. Authority is considered valuable particularly in the organizational structure every culture on the planet participates in – the family. From the family model larger community structures are built, entire paradigms of management, and analogies through which people's psychological approach to understanding, action and personal significance form. Ignoring the relevance of the family in politics, business, social society, or the family itself is impossible. Without the rest of modern community surrounding it, the family or a relationship between two people is the remaining sustainable unit.

Such a unit can be considered healthy, with no incentive for anyone to hurt each other or any individual in the family. Normal behavior allows for some forms of 'authority' between family members – agreements about how to spend money, time, and resources, rules to be enforced that protect children and the family's future. Decisions regarding everyone are made and sometimes not everyone gets what they want or a choice. Such behavior I consider healthy and natural. The family's core position in social role models makes it a universal lens for understanding the process of how authoritarian behavior manifests.

## **WHAT ARE THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN FORCE AND AUTHORITY?**

Let's say a family is a minimum of two people. These people consider themselves in relationship and with mutual self-interest. They could hypothetically be a parent and child. Without external forces that could be blamed for causing dispute, say with the two people living on an island or in the middle of an unpopulated forest, the opportunities for violence and force aren't just limited, they are very clear. There is violence that one person acts on another – violence and force directly applied, to achieve one person's will over the preference of the other. That violence is present in the macro authoritarian

society - the gestapo, the SS, the KGB, the CIA, ICE, and many would say most of modern policing, but that violence is experienced one individual at a time. Clearly that kind of direct force is not subtle, but it is fundamental to fascism and authoritarianism. Without the mental prioritization that allows for it, force of any kind would not occur. In the absence of one person's priorities there are both people's priorities, which on an island or alone in the forest predicate limited choice and a necessity for an agreement. In a healthy family there is no way for ego to hold on forever because the family is "us," and not "me" by definition.

Why is it not okay universally, in any family unit, to sustain by violence and abuse? Where is the distinction between relationships predicated on survival-focused agreements and unfair power dynamics based on the same? There's the motive, and then there's the effect. But the effect in fascism or abusive authority follows from the fact of unfair power leveraging over another. Without the implication or assertion of force and violence, it isn't fascism but sycophancy. When someone with power in a situation uses it without consideration for others, it is fascist and the motive is what matters. Say a child was running into a street chasing a ball, and a car was speeding down the road towards the running child. Would it be fascist to stop the child by grabbing his arm or getting in his way? Yes, definitively. However, it is also love and the motive was relevant to the demanding situation.

## **WHEN DOES FORCE NOT CAUSE RESISTANCE?**

When does that instance of forceful action, that moment of tearing between individuals that causes conflict, change from a temporary breakdown and become an institution, unchangeable and consistent over time? When one situation calls for forceful response and another clearly doesn't, why can't we tell what is 'just' and what is a slippery precipitous slope towards unfairness and authoritarian reality?

When I was authoritarian in my deepest relationship, I was trying to control the way time was spent. I wasn't violent – I believe fascists and authoritarians rarely get by on violence alone in this society. I've been fascist in my speech and conversation with my friends, and I'm still learning how to live without defining terms by colonial and self-validating measures. There are truths I tell myself almost every time I feel confronted or wrong about my preconceptions, that are based on those preconceptions. In my experience the most painful moments are when I'm holding on to my preconceptions, my ego, and I start telling others what those preconceptions are, in effect trying to make them believe what I am

holding on to. I am not in a position of power and am not in an environment where fascism is validated or where rules are made up arbitrarily. But say I did have power. Suppose I was the dictator of a country or in control of a massive corporation – would not my position by nature have undeniable access to force and violence as an option?

The position of the individual in a situation is the position they have. Without action, the position won't change. So, circumstances are irrelevant in understanding to the dynamic of forceful action and authoritarian institutions. If an individual in a position without any access to force or violence tries to succeed against the will of another, the one without access might be foolish or even be attempting to be a dictator, but the reality is they are not being fascist or authoritarian. If an individual with power chooses to use it against the will of a 'weaker' party, that is fascist. Authoritarianism is distinct from fascism in a few ways, the relevant one being the occurring concept of Authority to validate the fascist abuse. The difference between fascism and authoritarianism is that fascism is a choice, while authoritarianism is a good excuse.

## **AUTHORITARIANISM PRESUMPTION DENIES TRUST**

Classic examples of authoritarian governments and societies are ALL about the culture of the state or the institution. Or the Leader. Each soldier and loyal citizen have a powerful culture of organization and validation that enables the violence and the force that the institutions cause. Without the uniform or the authority of the culture, most instances of rape, murder, theft, displacement, abuse, and slander are neither accepted nor serve a valuable purpose. The implicit rewards of a system with institutional authority creates safe havens for entire classes of people. Indeed, the implicit rewards of institutional authority might be the root and source of classes of people. In American democracy we have different definitions and classes, referenced by degrees every day by popular media – “the poor, the middle class, the tech giants, the swamp.” There are more, but these classes are each predicated on a reality and a society where there is disagreement, disharmony, and specific grievances regardless of explanations.

Some behaviors the laws criminalize, some methods are not allowed, and some actions are rewarded by institutions that are not just civil, they are facets of the sovereign authority of the Country. There is fascist action in the system, but more importantly there is authoritarian motivation and reward in direct connection with the government. These rewards however come with a deep break in belonging and trust with the entire community, with the priorities of the authority superseding inherent trust.

This relationship of Authority to Institutional operations has been impossible to separate since it was formed, but unless people are happy with an analysis of what is wrong, we must find a new paradigm. To understand the order of operations that leads to authoritarianism, there isn't room for mitigations. Cognitive dissonance will set in. Unless we acknowledge the dynamic of authoritarianism in our society, we are complicit, in agreement, with each iota of force and abuse the system justifies. The roles people take on can exist without predicated authority and with the sense of belonging and trust that comes with living in a free community.

### **WHAT MIGHT A FAIR FREEDOM-BASED SOCIETY LOOK LIKE?**

In healthy agreement, you are there to help the other person do what they do better. From that place the two create standards that are true for each of them. Healthy relationship versus unhealthy relationship is a binary reality, where in one there is a focus on the present that is immediate and reactive, and the other is a predicated understanding that is also immediate and reactive. The implicit agreements necessary for our society are best made by the people involved now. Responsibility and individualism aren't compatible with a system that refuses to give individuals responsibility. Americans are regulated into categories, and people are free so long as each category operates within its' sphere. Often jurisdiction and precedent take priority over even leaders in positions of power, let alone over people asking for exceptions to the rule. In this way ego is supported by the authoritarian construct.

We can identify meritocracy as the problem with democracy and provide equality. Fairness however would be impaired by the authority implicit in an equalization process. The standards a totally equalized society would impose on everyone could not be fair, considering the motivation of the change and the differences between all people. Things like Universal Basic Income would allow for massive transformations in spending and planning in the federal government, yet it is an idea of another system that validates the need for taxation and would not exile authoritarian or fascist requirements from a family's external society. Macro-manifestations like Hitler's Germany consist of impositions that ultimately occur for individuals, and even in America the macro-manifestations of authority are not ideal.

Let's go back to a small scale. The family must certainly have existed before the city, state, or any form of institutional authority. Patriarchy as an example is cited as a historical and modern phenomenon, and is often experienced most clearly at home, with parents and children. Imagine the consequence of even

subtle disenfranchisement of a mother as it affects the family. Rules for the father affect everyone, as do rules for the children. Standards are agreed in any healthy relationship, and those standards and responsibilities evolve as more people are included. Fair resource allocation in a family is by the standards. With double standards there is patriarchy and other problems. Authoritarianism at home regards the father or leader of the family as both in charge and forceful with his will over the family. Authoritarianism at large regards responsibility as held by an external validating authority, versus not being responsible ourselves.

Does trust extend far into your life and community or, in your view, in the aggregate? The issues of fascism, totalitarianism, and authoritarians did not arise with the Greek states, but it didn't begin to end there either. Slavery, the disenfranchisement of tribal rights and native cultures in the Americas and around the world, profitable wars -- each is an imposition or matter of will and force. In a situation where working together, living on a prairie or field, simply the real virtue of things is trust and sharing the things we would rely on, like a cave in winter where your family stays. The replacement system of precedent and consequence create an authoritarian framework. Modern agreements predicated on that system can be called free, but in context are authoritarian, with the impositions of our society accepted and profitable.

What is the point of a relationship, an agreement, or a pact? Where is each person coming from and is the priority going to have repercussions for how we react and treat each other? Is the meaning of society to help each other, or to create precedents, classes, and categories for understanding authority? Some might say both, but to seek a world without authoritarianism is to eliminate it entirely, not to live inside it comfortably. Looking to where in our personal social agreements we have given a tacit approval to less responsibility is the guide for what threads of authoritarianism exist in our lives.

## **IS JUSTICE POSSIBLE WITHOUT AUTHORITARIAN VIOLENCE?**

The pridefulness that bolsters our modern society is no greater a guarantee of safety or security from violence or abuse like financial destitution. We do have a punishment infrastructure, which works for some things everyone agrees on, like murder, and which does not work for other things, like lobbying and money in politics, the massive expense and political framing around what a military is, the continuing policing and jailing of free people, educational resources, resource sharing writ large, etc. Are there any grievances we could not address if each person had the self-governance to choose freely

without violating others with force? Is such a world possible that does not implicate anarchy, chaos, or even anti-federalism? It has been before.

A family without authoritarian institution or unhealthy unfair fascist action does not have classes. No son or daughter is tiered above or below the other, parents don't insist on impossible standards with each other or the kids. Requirements for survival are known and agreed on, and imposition is based on reality, not on historical precedent. Is the answer to authoritarianism in the family a transactional relationship and equal exchange, dollar for dollar? Or are the standards set by a measure without monetary value, considering the people and where they are in their lives?

Disputes between strangers would certainly come from differences in standards. Disputes between family usually comes from the same. Disputes in American history related to authority are robust; slavery, suffrage, discrimination, dog-eat-dog business, military involvement. Ideologically the difference between democratic and republican parties are two sides of a Darwinian interpretation of power -- that an animal has the capacity to eat something and survive in nature "justifies" its' survival. That is not foundational. It is absurd, but it is the logical ground both parties stand on.

Republicans postulate freedom and the good is to be found in individual responsibility for not being eaten by each other. Democrats postulate freedom and the good is in our fair responsibility to each other as a rule, and to not participate is to become faithless and to become food to validate the authority. Each party is incentivized to create laws based on these requirements, and the laws express that. Property rights in relation to evicting people from generational homes, government's right to collect and spend taxes without individual choice, the right of police and the justice system to kill and punish by precedent, and privileged access to elected representatives have to impose precedents universally over supposedly free people. Each is an example of the authority winning in the balance between Order and personal Freedom.

Respect, compensation, justification, efficacy, and creativity need to be priorities that override precedent, and the journey towards individual solutions can be constructive. Yet, the motive and method of most federal representatives is bound towards law and authoritative position regarding people's freedom, restraint, and behaviors. The assumption is people don't trust each other without the laws. The reality of today is there is evidence of both authoritarianism, distrust, and an ineffective use of resources and cooperation despite the democracy.

It's apparent that "family" today and observations on family unit numbers as they reflect the breakdown of the societies, are at their highest levels in recorded history, which in English means there are more separated families, divorced people, and poor role models than maybe ever. Is this because people are getting worse? Or is it possible the Authoritarian dilemma grows with the institutions that validate it?

## WHO ARE WE?

Is it true that today's democracy is a band-aid not sufficient to the challenge? The fundamental question for each of us seems to be, "Who AM I?" The version of America without authoritarianism is the version of the family without it. It's a version where parents don't kick children out of the house, children don't abuse their parents in old age, parents empower their children to their best ability, children are not ashamed by agreements they made freely, and breakdowns create listening and the chance for new agreements, not grudges.

Before the conceptualization of it, what was authoritarianism? The reality is one thing and modern considerations are different. Latin etymology says the word authority is derived from the word "Auctor," meaning "Master," "Leader," or "Author." These words have natural opposites; "Slave," "Follower," and "Reader." With institutional authority on trial, the implied roles and positions of people, even in a democracy, become our dilemma. The enshrinement of elected representatives is neither noble nor corrupt, but the position of the disempowered is certainly significant. If authority predicates the role of Father, no wonder so many fathers with authority feel like they are in master-slave relationships. Authority is not natural. The natural model is leadership - pulling a child back to avoid danger is force, yes, according to physics. But again, it is also love. The difference between that and a punishment-based society is there for us to see and choose.

When thought and ego, let alone concept-based authority and self-justification take precedent over the priority of forging new agreements that are ethical for everyone involved, factions are going to vie for resources and exploit each other with the authority's as a capitulation. People are born without signing a contract of responsibility for their parents' agreements. When they grow up new agreements are made or there is a perpetual breakdown in the family. The same perpetual breakdown dominates American political dialogue, with old stereotypes being used against each other in profitable media, to the advantage of the factions. Yet remarkably, people in still find ways to work together.



Can you imagine what might be possible if people were freer to form new mutual agreements and not be bound by old disempowering ones? A continuously empowering democracy is possible without much of the control infrastructure that's been built as an authority to validate it. My proposal is to decentralize responsibility, only create laws that make all forms of slavery untenable, abandon aspects of democracy and compromise that diminish peoples' choices and replace them with standards people agree on actively.

And trust people to have authority over themselves.