

Rulers and Leaders

"You shall judge, Crito, if you are willing to hear what followed; for we resumed the enquiry, and a question of this sort was asked: Does the kingly art, having this supreme authority, do anything for us? To be sure, was the answer. And would not you, Crito, say the same?"

"Yes, I should."

"And what would you say that the kingly art does? If medicine were supposed to have supreme authority over the subordinate arts, and I were to ask you a similar question about that, you would say—it produces health?"

"I should."

"And what of your own art of husbandry, supposing that to have supreme authority over the subject arts—what does that do? Does it not supply us with the fruits of the earth?"

"Yes."

"And what does the kingly art do when invested with supreme power? Perhaps you may not be ready with an answer?"

"Indeed I am not, Socrates."

– Plato, excerpt from Euthydemus

A consistent error made by statist is the classification of their rulers as leaders. The consistency of the error can be observed by the common use of the word "our". Our president, our election, our war, and so on. The use of such a word implies a form of common ownership of the government and its directives among the people. In the United States, the opposite is true; the elite have common ownership of the people.

Surprisingly, statist still use the term "ruler". To them, it is a foggy caricature of decadent kings and iron-fisted dictators. Approved rulers are exempt from the label of course; otherwise some would become averse to the statist cause. These statist-approved rulers are symbols of the collectivist ideal, whose noblest quality is self-sacrifice for their nation.

The exaltation of past rulers is completely logical from their perspective. To them, the state is both the producer of order and the insurer of public welfare, which is good and desirable. Therefore, the head of the best state would be the most noble position in society and be praised accordingly.

Unfortunately, many people have been fooled by this definition trick. There are others who

have seen the ruler-leader conflation and have rejected hierarchy altogether. They say, “If your king is my leader, then I do not want your leader either.” To them, all hierarchy is considered unnatural and immoral. At this point, they are mistaken. Leaders are under attack. From the left-libertarians, they are reviled as slave-masters and manipulators, and from the supporters of coercive hierarchy, they are called domestic terrorists and enemies of the state.

Equality of Man?

Despite the vapid assertions made by many egalitarian philosophers, man is not born inherently equal. This is, of course, plain when briefly considered. What is the likelihood that acting individuals, with varying biological characteristics and environments, have the potential to reach the same level of proficiency in all things? It is near impossible. People are not as malleable as to be made into geniuses by proper schooling, or star athletes by proper training. Breaking through the edge of human knowledge is not easy, nor is it possible for anyone. If it was possible for anyone, what then would explain the chronic underdevelopment of genius and creativity today? If everyone who became a musician had the same musical potential as Mozart, why are so many betraying their talents?

Many of the “malleable-man” theorists argue that each individual has equal potential but they exist in different environments, resulting in unfair disparities between individuals and groups alike. This deterministic theory is effortlessly discredited by the admission of free-will and the empirical evidence given by people in equivalent situations acting differently (e.g. twins). It is obvious that the environment that someone is brought up in will affect their development to some extent, but to say they are not in control of their actions is a serious error.

The undeniable fact that men are unequal is in fact a cause for hope. If all men were equal, that would imply a knowledge barrier which none could cross, unless it is believed that everyone enjoys unlimited potential. The quality of music, literature, and art would plateau. Athletes would reach the limit of their potential and all sports matches would be drawn in the long run. Scientists would eventually reach the point of static knowledge. The flow of new ideas would stop completely. Genius is rare, but because it exists, there is hope for improvement. The biggest problems facing humanity will only be solved as long as there is inherent inequality. Humanity’s achievements are far from their peak.

Hierarchy and the Benefits of Social Organization

Hierarchies form as a consequence of man’s social nature and because men are naturally unequal. In a social context, a hierarchy is a system of organization where people are arranged either by coercive authority or ability. When there is a good voluntary hierarchy, everyone involved benefits to the fullest degree possible. Those with the greatest ability

will rise to the top, benefiting everyone else—even the common man. This is because skill and efficiency are rewarded, allowing for vertical movement.

There are two categories of hierarchy: voluntary and coercive. The two of these have been often confused, especially by the left-anarchists and communists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who classified all hierarchy as coercive. This was a consequence of their primary assumption that all men are naturally equal, and therefore hierarchies are unnatural.

Because the state is coercive by definition, a consistent error made primarily by right-authoritarians is the conflation of voluntary hierarchy with meritocracy. The mistake is honest but serious, for even in meritocratic states there is rigidity and coercion to be found. A meritocratic society, as opposed to a meritocracy, can be described as synonymous with voluntary hierarchy.

A voluntary hierarchy is one that is not imposed by force. The fact that it is voluntary justifies it. As a consequence of owning his own body, man has the right to associate with anyone he pleases. When individuals voluntarily take part in a hierarchy, who is to say it is unjustified? A higher power that has a master plan for them? A ruler who really has their best interests in mind, because the cattle are too weak to defend themselves or know what's best for them?

Coercive hierarchy is opposite to voluntary hierarchy in nature. Physical force is required for its maintenance. A coercive hierarchy exists solely for the maintenance of itself, which means the subjugation of one group or individual for another's advantage. Coercive existence is slavery, and slavery only benefits those holding the whip.

The Art of Leadership

Because there are two fundamental categories of hierarchies, voluntary and coercive, there must be two distinct apexes. The apex of the voluntary hierarchy is characterized by the leader(s), while the apex of the coercive hierarchy is characterized by the ruler(s). If voluntary hierarchies can be good, then it must be possible for leaders of such hierarchies to be good. What is the good leader like, and what do they produce?

It is tempting at first to say that a good leader will have many followers. However, this does not hold up upon closer scrutiny. A leader is someone who has followers and provides direction to them. Therefore, the skill of a leader is not to be judged based on the number of followers they attract. This is even more apparent because the good can be unappealing to some, and a charlatan could easily exploit that fact and have more appeal. If combined with rhetorical skills, the fraud may find themselves with a larger following than the good leader ever thought was possible.

In any art, there will always be those few who possess a greater understanding than most as a result of man's unequal nature. There will always be remarkable individuals who are masters in their field, such as master craftsmen, writers, artists, etc. An important question is this: Does the prerequisite of being a master in their field exist to be a leader? In other words, do all leaders need to be masters? Obviously, not all masters are leaders. If a leader is one that provides direction to others, it is possible that one could be masterful in their art but not be a leader. In this scenario, instruction, direction, or a general commanding nature are absent.

It is possible that a leader can exist without being a master in their art. For example, a popular orator may have a large group of followers but may not be a master in the art that they are speaking of. The orator could claim that the sun is really purple, not yellow, and as long as the followers assent or at least continue to support the orator, he is still their leader. If he is not completely foolish, the orator is still a master, but not one in the art he professes. He is really a master of deception.

The purple-sun cult may be an extremely popular movement, thus making it accurate to call the original orator a good salesman. But he is a bad leader. He is deceiving his followers and probably using them for another more nefarious purpose.

In fairness, the question "Do all leaders need to be masters?" should be reformulated into a better question: Do all good leaders need to be masters?

Good leaders must be masters in their art, or otherwise they would not be able to direct others. For example, how could a conductor lead an orchestra without knowledge of music? It is also true to say that this conductor would be a better leader of their orchestra if they knew more about conducting and music. The master is better able to guide others in their art because they are knowledgeable in it.

Because they are masters in their art, they necessarily produce goods, just like anyone else who has a certain skill. The good musician makes good music, the good bricklayer makes good walls, the good general will have good strategy, and so on. The good leader provides good direction to others, making it possible for the follower to live in a way they could not have before. The good leader will guide followers in the right direction, thus improving them. Therefore, the good that a good leader provides is the improvement of others in the specific art that they are masterful in.

The Leader's Acquiescence

As we have proved earlier, merit-based voluntary hierarchies benefit all those involved in them. They are also extremely fluid (unlike coercive hierarchies), meaning that there is potential for individuals to move vertically in the hierarchy. This necessarily means that the apex position of a voluntary hierarchy, the leader, can move down (it is obviously

impossible to rise even further). Because of this recognition and our previous conclusions, there are two facts to consider: 1) The best leader may not always be at the top of the hierarchy at any given time, and 2) there is some natural accountability due to the structure's voluntary and merit-based aspects. These two facts are related in an important way.

Some supporters of coercion (coercionists) argue that it is necessary to "ensure" through force that the best leader is at the apex. They argue that because men are not equal, hierarchies are necessary for social organization, but the majority of people should not choose who resides at the apex position of the hierarchy. An organized elite (the royal family, the ruling party, etc.) should decide because they are better able than most. It is true that sometimes people will not always follow the best leaders, man is obviously capable of error. But in a merit-based voluntary hierarchy, the best leaders are the most likely to rise to higher positions. A rigid social structure is deleterious to everyone involved, but especially those at the bottom. In this case, the exceptional are not allowed to rise naturally, and merit is substituted for allegiance to the system. The benefits of the exceptional are lost, and the detriments of the average are gained.

The fatal flaw of the coercionists is that they do not recognize the differences between leaders and rulers. To them, the words are interchangeable (for example, the German word "Führer" means leader. This was Adolf Hitler's official title from 1934-1945). In reality, the relationship between the leader and their followers is one of acquiescence, not superiority. The leader is accountable to their followers, and their position in the hierarchy is due to the fact that other people find value in them. The case of the ruler is the opposite; their subjects are accountable to them and live to serve them. How is it possible that coercionists think the best leaders will come through force? It is absurd to think that force will ensure that the best leader is placed at the apex. In fact, the opposite is more likely. A ruler would be incentivized to keep their position through any means necessary, squashing all opposition. Is this what leadership means to them?

Only through the consent of the followers is the leader's position given, and this consent is only given if the leader is believed to be good by them.

The hierarchical coercionists have one strong point, however. The majority of people are incapable of choosing the best leader. Maybe only the upper fifth (this is pure speculation) of the bell curve of intelligence is really capable of this choice if forced to make a blind vote-it could be even less given that there is likely a lack of information and incentive. How is it possible that the right people can ever be chosen? And if the right people are never chosen, then how can the interests of the many be represented in a hierarchy?

The problem with this argument made by the hierarchical coercionists is that merit-based voluntary hierarchies do not rely on the blind votes of the many. Does a cashier get a vote

on who the next CEO is? No, a board of chief investors decides who will best represent the company into the future. In a merit-based voluntary hierarchy, concrete results will prove the value of someone's position, not the majority will. A lack of results can end with the change of the leader, meaning that they are held to some level of accountability.

Rulers, on the other hand, answer to no one. Their position in the hierarchy was not given to them by others, and as a consequence, their authority is utterly illegitimate. There is very little, if any, accountability for rulers. The only thing that can constrain them is the physical limitations of reality.

What Rulers Really Are

Perhaps the best way to know the ruler is to know what he produces. For example, we would know someone as a painter because they make paintings, or a horseman because they ride horses. A ruler is called a ruler because they rule, but what does ruling really consist of? Once it is known what the ruler produces, it will be possible to judge the ruler for what he really is.

Hierarchical coercionists argue that the ruler produces order. Without him, the masses are left blind and helpless. But if this is true, then all voluntary hierarchy must be bad, because to them, coercion produces order. Does this mean that the business must force the customer to buy their product? Should the teacher force the student to agree? Should the extended family force parents to remain married? In all of these cases, it is clear that force does not create order, but conflict. If the initiation of force does not create order on a small scale, then why should it be different on a larger one? In reality, the larger scale would only amplify the effects. Large-scale coercion leads to large-scale conflict.

So, if coercion produces conflict rather than order, then what the ruler produces is not a good at all. The ruler produces only bads, the only good consequences seem to result when coercion is used but not needed, and that means they are not producing anything. For example, an imaginary state where no one drinks alcohol has just ratified an anti-drinking law. This law would at this specific time produce no conflict because nobody drank alcohol to begin with. The law does not have any good effects and is irrelevant, but at least it does no harm. However, the time spent expanding the bureaucracy and legislating such a law would be wasteful because it is not needed, so even in this scenario, the ruler has produced only bads. So it seems that the only law that could be imposed that would not result in conflict would be one that is not only unnecessary but also unenforced.

If the ruler produces only bads, then it is appropriate to categorize the ruler as base. If the ruler is base, then why is it so often that they are revered?

The unskilled ruler is a tyrant only, and it is easy to see their effect on society. The skilled ruler, however, is an envious manipulator and slave master in disguise. They want to

emulate the real position of the leader by using false means, mainly by deception of the majority. Even the most well-liked rulers did not have full approval at their peak in popularity. The methods in which rulers gain the support of the many are vile and reprehensible. The most abhorrent of which is the indoctrination of children, who are innocent and weak compared to their adult counterparts. Another method is by fomenting intergroup conflict by promising great wealth to one group at the expense of the other.

The repeated lies are necessarily a consequence of the foundation of their rule. Because the ruler's position in a hierarchy is illegitimate, the means by which they must sustain their position will also be illegitimate. The worse the violation of rights, the more lies are needed to justify the violation to preserve the coercive hierarchy. Without the bigger lie, the perceived legitimacy is lost. The worst lie is the idolatry of the ruler. It is easiest for the ruler to keep the subjects in line if they step into their own chains. In this way, the subjects are unaware of their own oppression.

An Unlicensed Prognosis

Today, the structure of the western world is marked by the abundance of "liberal" democracies. The structure of these governments has been raised on philosophically-fractured foundations, leading to the general perversion of morality, the growth of monolithic bureaucracy machines, and the attack on capitalism that is characteristic of these states. The subjects of these states are universally chained (to varying degrees). This isn't surprising, however; the true, unmasked nature of the state is institutionalized coercion.

Rulers use coercion to maintain their position in the hierarchy. When the use of coercion is justified by rulers and in turn carried out, the rights of the individual's self-ownership are nullified, and they are merely property to be used by the ruler.

In a world of coercion, good leaders are of the utmost importance. As was noted earlier, the natural inequality of man means that some extraordinary people can change the world. Without them, there would be no hope for a better future.

It is also true that some very skilled, advantaged, and intelligent people have betrayed the lottery given to them to build the modern machines of coercion. Some of them may have been oblivious to this fact, but most are without vindication. The obscene cruelty-or from the coercionists' perspective, the "virtuous suffering for the greater good", as a result of the state's actions does not go unnoticed. It is, of course, inevitable in a world filled with acting individuals that some people use their power for good, and others for evil.

There are at least two bright beacons of hope for a world without rulers, both of which are foundational in nature.

The first is the more obvious one, which is the nature of good against evil. The things that are good are also rational, and the things that are evil irrational. It is not rational to be evil or irrational to be good. If the good is rational and evil irrational, and reason is connected to objective reality, then the good is in tune with reality. If the good corresponds to objective reality, then good leaders will always have an advantage over rulers. The war of rationality vs. irrationality is played on the field of reality, giving the good a clear advantage. If I was to put my money on one of these teams, I'd choose the good in a heartbeat.

The second cause for hope lies with the ultimate flaw of coercionism. Coercion, unlike persuasion, causes conflict and is unsustainable in the long run. A society that philosophically accepts coercionism will create too much conflict for itself and will implode. So long as there are good people, there is a possibility for improvement, and only a few are required.

It is absurd to say that there will ever be a world without rulers. Rulers are everywhere in our lives: they are childhood bullies, abusive parents, egotistical educators, controlling spouses, and all other violators of property. There will never be a world where such people do not exist. But a world without institutionalized coercion can exist, and the evidence is in our everyday lives.

The overwhelming majority of regular daily activities are performed without coercion. If every human interaction involved coercion, then all communal bonds would cease to exist. Trust, friendship, love, and beauty would all be lost. Every person would be the slave of someone else, and this would concretely advance the destruction of humanity.

We already live in a world where most people's everyday lives are free from coercion. Is it so absurd that institutionalized coercion can also be abolished?

Anarchy is the answer.