

Discipline as Fear and Love

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Power must be continuously enforced to exist¹, and like private property, it depends on a system of violent control. This violence, even before the recent invention of “discipline” as control which Foucault describes, cannot be used at every moment and place where power or property are contested. To avoid an unsupportable amount of bloodshed and political instability, all members of a society must have respect for the dominant ideas (ideas of the dominant²). The mafia understands that respect may originate from either fear or love, but that commanding both simultaneously is the most effective way to rule. Our respect for the social arrangements that we call power and property clearly derives from both the fear of violence and a form of familiarity which causes us to generally resist change.

The dual nature of this respect for power is almost perfectly reflected through mechanisms used in the family, in school, in justifying the position of those wielding power, and in the maintenance of conformity. We

¹Foucault, 174.

²Marx, sec. 2: “The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.”

are both threatened and enticed, and the form in which the power appears barely matters—we learn to obey the manifestations of power itself, and I believe that the form of this obedience is crucial to how we in turn become instruments of this power.

Nowhere are fear and love more apparent than in the family. As the first civilizing influence in our lives, it is significant that violence has been traditionally been not only accepted, but encouraged. Beating children is used as a behaviorist training tool to either punish someone who has “misbehaved” (preventing a behavior), or less often to compel them to do something. In both cases the expectation is that the beating will be remembered, and will result in better action in the future. A child who has not been properly disciplined and disobeys their parents and others is “spoiled”, so has presumably become useless to society as well as the family.

A modern way to look at parental violence is as a pathological condition, something unhealthy for the entire family. Its roots are often attributed to the “cycle of violence” in which the child suffering from being beaten later beats their own child. Violence indeed replicates itself through us, and becomes a strategy for interacting with the world, in which case its use on us becomes rationalizable.

To be revoltingly cynical, while the violence in families is directed at creating or modifying behavior and habits, the love in families is what reproduces ideology. These four facets overlap in several ways, but in the scope of our reading, it is most important that a) behavior is rationalized after the fact by ideology, b) ideology creates an internal form of monitoring and control which discourages many actions and encourages others, c) learning

occurs largely through imitation, therefore love and closeness cause our behavior to be like that of those we love. None of these relationships are at all deterministic, and the bidirectional nature of each is crucial to understanding social stability.

As with the family, violence in the school has only recently become unfashionable. Donzelot, in *The Policing of Families*, writes that this happened in the family largely because the functioning of the modern state, as it transitioned to control through discipline (Foucault-style), required more direct control over the intimidation and punishment of youth. To deviate only slightly from his main argument, jail displaces the role of the father in changing behavior through intimidation and punishment, and in exchange the family is judicially strengthened.

Violence in schools has performed the same primary function as in the family, to discourage misbehavior. Direct physical violence in schools has disappeared in its overt form of corporal punishment, but has been replaced by forms like imprisonment. The decreasing reliance on direct violence parallels the shift in Foucault from direct control to an internalization of control, and is exemplified in the rhetoric, “think of duty rather than of the policeman.”³

The projection of familial love onto one’s nation is the perfect representation of state coercion. Inculcation of Protestant morality and a strict work ethic in schools was encouraged by industry⁴, and this morality was balanced on the pillar of nationalism. In other words, the duty that we each must fulfill is to become useful to our nation.⁵ We must be useful to the nation because

³Bowles and Gintis, 170

⁴Bowles and Gintis, 169 and Nasaw, 46

⁵An interesting historical reference for of this form of nationalism is Smith’s *Wealth*

we respect it out of love—and fear.

What is the significance of the similarity between this process of conditioning (maybe it is acculturation?) that is employed in schools and the process employed in families? It seems to be a strategy which reinforces itself as we become accustomed to it: we want others to respect and love our family and its extension of nation, and we learn that violence is an acceptable way to prevent or punish injury to either of these entities. In this way we instill fear and love in others.

My strange reading of Bowles and Gintis through Foucault indicates that social reproduction is a game that we must all be participating in. It is difficult to see where we break clear of power and the fear/love strategy, since many political alternatives *rely on state violence* by positioning it as an “or else”, the logic being that the system must be defeated, or we will continue to suffer its violence. However, there are locations where we reject and resist power by stepping outside of both the dominant ideology and its mechanism of indoctrination, the bait and switch. When this happens, do we become merely instruments of liberation or anti-power? Or does escaping the self-perpetuating mechanism prevent us from being an instrument, and make us an agent? For Marx, the overthrow of structural relations of production is an end in itself; embracing cliché, could the overthrow of this post-structuralist idea of discipline free us, or is the people’s control of bread (means of production) the ultimate priority? Is freedom only attainable when all coercion is *of Nations*, where it is the *proportion* of productive citizens which determines a nation’s wealth. Therefore, the state has a compelling reason to ensure the proper utility of each person.

ended, or is breaking free of the coercive technique and acting freely within a system of coercion truly being free? As we recognize and dismantle (disrobe) the content of our ideological education, which largely derives from the way we are educated (the hidden curriculum), can we make this liberation social?

Considering the socialized structure of oppression, freedom can only come about through breaking the chains of others—and considering the structure of socialization of oppression, a tactic of fear and love will only strengthen our bondage. State violence only ceases to coerce us when we cease to fear it: is it possible that ceasing to fear power will keep us from instilling that fear in others?