

Building a Personality, FREE of violence

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From the “principle of violence” to benevolent cooperation, trust.
(also see: Minneapolis Police Department – [Policy, Regulations](#))

A “principle of violence” may be discussed as we agree on a common meaning of “violence”, call it “power”, “use of force.” The term is ambiguous in German, not so in English, as we can distinguish between “violence” and “force”. Power, force are likely to be misused, thus might gain the quality of violence. Violence can not be agreed on, while power can be based on democratic findings or culture, ethics or legislative based norms.

Violence is a phenomenon of action by dominance, in most of the cases illegitimate, thus penalized.

We, therefore, find dominance a fundamental term to describe both, the legal and illegal varieties of power (and violence). Dominance may be agreed on, for good reasons, or not. If not, submission will be expected from one party. If not submissive, the

mission will be expected from one party. If not submissive, the weaker party will face measures of correction, or will find itself defeated. – Anticipated freedom of choice will depend on the benevolence of the superior party. If no consent can be reached, both may refer to existing rules and regulations (Law), or the dominant party will execute power.

At this point, the call for freedom grows louder.

In a less theoretical meaning, people who tend to dominate others may refer to a so-called “natural law”: In the “free nature”, dominance behaviour has been a fact for millions of years, so that even in the present it could be considered legitimate to force others to be submissive to one's own will.

We have to take a look on that:

In fact, while there is dominance behaviour, this undoubtedly serves a desired, thus often accepted, order by all concerned: Dominance over someone or something means conflict, at the same time bears its solution. This must be clarified under previously agreed conditions. In most cases, rituals are used for this purpose. These rituals follow strict, given rules. Above all, mutually understandable threatening gestures, already symbolized, often replace actual hostilities. However, if necessary, an altercation is often ritualized. It ends up in a submission gesture, and the self-initiated removal of the weaker partner. Ritualized conflicts, in most of the cases, take place between male individuals. That points on a hereditary behaviour coordination. Hereditary behaviours, passed down over generations, can be regarded as vital to survival. What is innate, however, can only and exactly

be what is of benefit to the group, rather than a possible threat to joint progress. Therefore, we find far-reaching consensus in any dominance and subordination behaviour.

Dominance behaviour and ritualized struggles (even fights) are thus not opposed to the, as well, innate “principle of cooperation”, but fulfill well-defined purposes:

- 1st Granting order (ranking and status) within a group
- 2nd Securing the group against external hazards
- 3rd Ensuring the orientation of the group to each other and in relation to the environment
- 4th Complex mating behaviour: Here we find the principle of passing the very genes that are best adapted, thus promising the optimal success of the survival of species that fit best... [ref: “the survival of the fittest” – in: Charles Darwin (February 12th, 1809 – April 19th, 1882): “On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life”, published in London, on November 24th, 1859].

If we decide to acknowledge this – here only roughly outlined – “natural law”, we are obliged to acknowledge that we find ourselves *even* within this nature, *equal* to the observed animal populations. An exceptional situation of “the human” in relation to other animals and their behaviour, which might be theoretically implied or suggested, can not apply here.

If we find human behaviour clearly “atavistic”, we have to endure the consequences. In addition, if we find ourselves wishing, or being able, to transform this atavistic behaviour in cer-

tain ways, we are faced with the decision to re-standardize the animal behavioural patterns mentioned above, to seek and standardize new rituals for the settlement of conflicts, aiming more general consensus on new, differently reflected behaviour to be achieved and maintained. Wrong is a merely opportunistic, non-consensus-orientated choice between any atavistic or abstractly standardized conflict resolution strategies.

Such a choice will rarely be based on consensus, but will induce the violent party to make the inferior act, or tolerate actions not corresponding to the general wellbeing of the group, not even to the needs of the individual, but will – on the contrary – exclusively serve the violent perpetrator. In order to prevent this in particular, legal systems and legal acts were first created. To comply with this, is demanded by any general consensus, while offenses are penalized.

It is clear, however, that the so-called “atavistic” aspirations can not be eliminated by law in all cases in which our “being in nature” would be affected, as is our being-here and in-the-world, with all innate coordination of behaviour, the meaning of which has been formed over centuries, which shapes our feelings, including our thinking, until today. “Coordination of behaviour” is what we call those phenomena that are the expression of unconscious and preconscious categories of our body: neurological, neuroendocrine, biopsychic *action-reaction patterns*, the programs of which are designed in terms of developmental history – both, phylogenetically and ontogenetically. Thus, it is proven that stress hormones are released on certain olfactory and visual stimuli, but also in situations below the “escape distance”, which lead to an increase in the heart rate and activation

of skeletal muscle: Stressors are followed by an escape or aggression impulse.

So the question is less: Where do such impulses derive from?, but: How meaningfully can we transform them in the context of a so-called “civilized” society in such a way that even in the absence of suitable (atavistic) rituals, murder and manslaughter – including war – do not emerge from it?

In most of the cases, we may be aware of those rituals, but often the corresponding meaningful reaction has been lost: Lifting the eyebrows, the enlarging of pupils, frowning, pushing chin and forehead in the direction of the opponent, flicking the teeth (as a grin or grimacing, not smiling) are expressions of anger and violence.

Reacting on that with laughter, mockery, aggressive salutation must trigger the potential for violence. But even flight may not prevent violence in some cases.

This situation usually differentiates us from the ritualized threatening gestures and ritual battles in the “animal kingdom”. The killing inhibition does not seem to be effective, if artificially produced weapons come into play: knives, brass knuckles, firearms, and the like. These are usually more effective than any of the weapons available to the body itself, and we have not inherited any behavioural coordination that could enable us to engage in a purely natural inhibition.

If we now assume that a regular life is a basic social consensus, and that abuses and acts of violence are penalized, the legitimate question arises, how to handle behaviours, based on the

mixture of partly atavistic and/or acquired responses (e.g. by observing violence or suffering from acts of violence, faced in own, negative experience).

If a society rejects any non-consensual exercise of power, rules and mechanisms will have to take the place of atavistic impulses or trigger responses. Also reactions which do not conform to such rules will have to be observed and, if necessary, trained to be abandoned. Anyone who has ever been the victim of coercion, whether by penetrating another's personal well-being zone or aggressively driving-up and flashing on the highway (again: intrusion in the personal area), will probably agree that the following reactions will occur:

1. Fear
2. Rage
3. Counter-aggression or avoidance behaviour, frustration.

In the case of intrusion into personal space, such as in an elevator, a possible “atavistic” behavioural coordination would be to turn away and lower the gaze. This, however, can be interpreted as a submission gesture. Keeping eye contact and bidding on the forehead can lead to a fight – in an elevator, that would not be the reaction of choice. In road traffic, aggressive driving-up may lead to a defiance reaction: the own vehicle would be used as a weapon while stepping on the brakes, in the vague hope to impress the other, or being able to decelerate the counterpart (make the aggressor submissive), with the real risk to cause a fatal accident. A useful “submission gesture” would be to release the occupied lane and deal with the – again atavistic – frustration of involuntary subordination. This, again, “intellec-

tually” often works so badly, because in the meantime stress hormones have been released and are effective – which are metabolized only by body movement, means: appropriate activity and corresponding strain on the skeletal muscles.

For all other conceivable examples, whether justified or not, dominance behaviour has initially to do with the cohesion of the group, the harem, means: with sexuality (passing on the own genes in competition with others). From the perspective of behavioural biology, “comparative behavioural research” (Konrad Lorenz, Irenaeus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, Karl v. Frisch, Nikolaas Tinbergen, and others), there is no doubt about that. We are dealing with inherited behavioural coordinations that centrally focus on the somatic level. Consequently, all unwanted reactions on the level of body rather than psyche must be understood and – assuming consensus or judgment – be undergone a corresponding training.

Violence can be carried out by brutal or subtle actions. Regardless of the multiple expressions of violence, these are identifiable, nameable, therefore to be made responsive to each individual, as well as to the group or society.

Here, also “role models” are to be considered, which can become formative, during early childhood to adolescence, in different ways. Those who experience or suffer violence within the primary group will develop appropriate modalities of behaviour that sometimes deviate strongly from the “atavistic” behavioural coordination, and will result in sham adjustments and inconsistency between felt correct and actually saving behaviour, which may again differ from the intended and quite purposeful,

consistent behaviour. Such patterns will result in situations of well-founded mutual mistrust, which, in turn, favour recourse to “ancient” or “innate” behaviour: That, however, remains hardly controllable. The effect on the outside is that of a dishonest, insidious, at least non-coherent person. That impression again promotes exclusion and dominance behaviour. At present, we find such developments in world politics among apparently mentally stigmatized individuals celebrating their survival in leadership positions, many of whom reaping the enthusiasm of those who identify, and reject those who see through the destructive mechanism. Unfortunately, such public display of dominant behaviour that seduces large groups (“masses”) is often based on an untreated mental disorder – a problem with over-estimated self-esteem – and can be understood as “histrionic” (theatrical) or “borderline” (limitations ignoring) disruption. Such role models easily mislead unstable character structures, which are themselves affected by violence, into uncontrollable imitation, a development that can become dangerous.

It is therefore necessary to tackle the following items:

1st Parents – caregivers within the primary group

Parents should, for their part, be tested for traumata and false role model experiences, advised if necessary, or be freed from such role patterns by means of targeted training. Only then can they fulfill their duties as legal guardians properly, and in the best interests of the child. They themselves are, then, benign, beneficial role models, who never illegally “demand the impossible” to be fulfilled by the child.

2nd Prenatal phase and early childhood

The initial phase of “early childhood” dates back to the prenatal world of the unborn child. Here, the first, very important imprints take place, namely on the body level: Via placenta-passing messenger substances, the unborn child learns everything about the mother's state of mind, the senses are trained to taste, to hear, to feel. Stress hormones, an agitated tone of voice, tension, high heart rate and short breath form significant stress situations in the unborn child. These are later internalized as patterns of standard stimulus responses.

Postpartum, eye contact and mother-child interactions (bonding) develop. Disruptions at this stage often lead to socialization and communication deficits. Such can be compensated from the second year, by manipulative behaviour or dominance strategies. Compensation, however, always represents an emergency resolution. It is not the means of choice, in order to, for example, facilitate prosperous cooperation at eye level, but is intended solely to ensure the survival and well-being of those affected. Aspirations of that kind are strenuous within a group, and the individual is marginalized, which often leads to the repetition and fixation of the mentioned strategies.

3. Childhood and puberty

In childhood, between the 5th and 12th year, we find imitation as the predominant strategy. It is easy to know who is the model for the child in question. In puberty, among other aspects, the entire central nervous system is transformed, reconstructed, under the increasing influence of the gonadotropins and the actual

sex hormones. In this phase, we find an individualization tendency, characterized by the rejection of former role models and the search for new models in contradiction. This can lead to counter-dependencies: means the phenomenon, to seek exactly the opposite of what I have known so far, but do despise: *Thus, my assessments, decisions, “(as-if-) positions” refer to and, in consequence, depend exactly on the ones eagerly rejected by myself.* These points are to be considered, if we want to understand individually and socially unwanted dominance behaviour, and react adequately to it.

In most cases, “dominant” personalities are not these stable, grounded, calm characters, whose claims and actions derive from an intellectual, and at the same time character-strengthened, authority that should be conducive to the group in question.

In most cases, such “authoritarian” personalities – imprisoned in malignant behavioural patterns – themselves are victims of violence and subsequently follow, quite logically, the urge to save their own survival through learned strategies of domination and violence. – A society is well advised to protect itself from them. Such victims of violence, who, in turn, perpetrate violence, are indeed perpetrators, but for reasons that are due to an unsuccessful premature psychological imprint. Therefore, such people are initially to be freed of their own traumatization. This succeeds in many cases through the use of well-founded therapeutic techniques with the goal of aptitude for self-control – in any case by building a sustainable, benevolent, authentic relationship. The liberating effect, finally, is known as trust:

...not “blind”, but “open-eyed”, mutual trust.

GEWALT – FREI | FREE of VIOLENCE



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