

The Stick, Carrot, and Sentient Pig

Since authority always demands obedience; it is commonly mistaken for some form of power or violence. Yet authority precludes the use of external means of coercion; where force is used, authority has failed. Authority, on the other hand, is incompatible with persuasion, which presupposes equality and works through a process of argumentation. Where arguments are used, authority is left in abeyance. Against the egalitarian order of persuasion stands the authoritarian order, which is always hierarchical. If authority is to be defined at all, then, it must be in contradistinction to both coercion by force and persuasion through arguments.

A homeless man helplessly shivers in the winter cold in complete solitude. He hasn't had any food since Monday, water since yesterday, and wraps his withering body with a torn blanket in an attempt to go to sleep. Just as his eyelids are about to close, he notices that the bakery shop across the street is open. Excited but nervous; desperate and almost convinced, he slowly drags his body inside and grabs a croissant which resembles Artemis above the night sky. Just as he is about to take a bite, two policemen appear and tie his arms. "Aha!"

Authority as defined by Arendt, is something hierarchical yet uncoercive. That is, true authority cannot assume a coplanar structure in which all entities involved have equal powers and hence can only commensurate through persuasion, nor can it assume a coercive means of obedience whereby the authoritarian body uses force, whatever form it may be. This essay will assess three aspects of authority:

1. The definitions and boundaries of an authority in juxtaposition to other relationships;
2. The compatibility and legitimacy of force and persuasion as a method of eliciting obedience;
3. Whether authority can truly exist in the real world.

1. Qualifications of Authority

In which situations does authority exist? Authority is a form of relationship and hence requires two or more parties. Given its "hierarchical" nature, authority cannot exist when all parties involved have equal power and status; I will refer to the party with greater power as the subject of authority, and that with lesser power as the object. In an authority, the subject of authority yields greater rights and often has the power to determine the courses of action of the objects. I will classify different forms of power as follows:

External/Physical	Internal/Mental
Fundamental units: Those such as mass, force, size, and energy which determine the outcomes of physical collision. For instance, if object A and B collide, the object with greater momentum and durability will receive less damage.	Knowledge asymmetry: When party A has greater access to knowledge in any form compared to the other. The asymmetric knowledge must be of use to party B also in order for it to qualify as a power determinant.
Quantity: Assuming previous criteria are equal, if two groups of object A collide, the group with more object As will have more objects with less or no damage received.	Technological asymmetry: When party A has access to more forms of technology that augment physical strengths. For instance, access to a rifle exponentiates the level of momentum available.

However, authority will not occur just by the mere existence of a power asymmetry. In other words, the power asymmetry must be above a certain threshold at which the subject-object relationship of an authority stands. I will label this threshold as the "inflection of power." To aid understanding, I suggest a thought experiment of two parties, A and B, with either equal power or a power asymmetry below the inflection of

authority. There will be two scenarios depending on the difference between their incentives. First, if A and B have conflicting incentives, (e.g. $I_B = \neg I_A$) their relationship will be a rivalry. In other words, given the existent yet insufficient power difference, the two parties will compete in a cold war-esque conflict where brute force is not used but they nonetheless have opposing goals. This is parallel to cases of mutually assured destruction, where neither party is willing to begin a physical conflict due to their incentive to self-conserve. Second, if A and B have compatible incentives (e.g. $I_A \approx I_B$), they will exist in a state of cooperation. This will most often be in economic forms, where the parties trade to maximize each of their comparative specialties, but it may also be in other forms such as mutually assured defense.

Authority can also coexist with other authorities; that is, an object of one authority may be the object or even the subject of another. If person A has a child, they will be the subject of authority in their relationship with their child, but the object in their relationship with the state.

Ultimately, I suggest that authority as Arendt discusses can be defined by the following parameters:

1. There must be a power difference which exceeds the inflection point, and the two parties need to be within a shared point in space and time such that their powers are comparable;
2. Incentives can exist in a spectrum, where the subject and object of authority either have conflicting objectives or means to achieve the same objective. If the subject and object agree on both the means and the ends, there will be no need for Arendt's discussion, although I will examine in the final section whether it is truly possible;
3. Multiple authorities can affect the same party, individual, or entity.

2. The use of Force

Arendt's claim holds that, if force is used, then authority has failed. In other words, while authority may fail in other conditions, the failure of authority is a necessary precondition for the last resort of force. The failure of authority is, in other words, the failure of the subject of authority to sustain a condition of obedience. I argue that, in this case, failure exists on a broad spectrum which cannot be restricted by a simple $P \rightarrow Q$ statement. It is unclear, according to Arendt's argument, what the actual indicator of failure is. There can be two interpretations: Either that disobedience itself directly reflects the failure of authority, or that the use of force in response to disobedience fails an authority. I will separately analyze both interpretations, assessing and adding nuance to the original statement.

2.1 Disobedience

Essentially, Arendt's definition of authority as one that "always" demands obedience risks being an unrealistic assertion that there should be full compliance from everyone all of the time. I will break down such conditions, analyzing why Arendt's argument is inapplicable to most authorities in real life.

2.1.1. Full Compliance

Compliance can only exist when there is a set of restrictions or rules that can be complied to (or comply with). In other words, if the subject does not instruct or demand anything from the object at all, there cannot be compliance. I suggest that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, it is unrealistic to expect full compliance from objects of authority. If there is a recorded set of demands, there are physical limitations to the extent to which objects can fully remember and apply such demands, due to memory or certain disabilities. It is also the case that there exist situations for which rules do not exist, as the subject of authority is neither omniscient nor omnipotent and hence is forced to constantly renew demands (e.g. laws) in accordance with changes in reality, like how new legislation has to be made when new technology is developed. It is also the case that many of such rules are, likewise, vague and can be interpreted differently, for the same reason that the subject of authority cannot outline the exact conditions of every possible situation and provide a guideline on how to act. Therefore, if the object of authority simply interprets the rule incorrectly and therefore acts in an unintended way, ultimately failing to comply with the subject, it is debatable whether the authority's demand was truly unfulfilled, as the neither the subject nor object cannot

be held at fault for having different interpretations and value systems as they are fundamentally different entities.

2.1.2. Everyone

Assuming the existence of more than one independent objects of authority, the failure to draw out obedience from one object does not automatically qualify that the authority has failed as a whole. There may be one citizen that disobeys the state and therefore faces backlash from the police, but if all other citizens willingly follow the legislations of the state, then it would be more realistic to consider the offender an anomaly instead of claiming that authority has failed. Ultimately, given the broad possibilities of failure, I suggest a hypothesis-evidence structure of assessing failure as opposed to a dichotomy. In other words, if there is a hypothesis that “authority has failed,” cases of disobedience act as independent statements of evidence that entail the hypothesis but does not necessarily prove it immediately.

2.2. Force

It is first necessarily to define the nature and parameters of force. I will begin by assessing whether force is used directly or indirectly. Imagine a criminal justice system where the threats of punishment are so effective that no citizen ever commits even the smallest offenses—such a state of maximum deterrence would be an indirect use of force, but given that the threat of force is sufficient, force will never actually be used. Although Arendt does not specify whether such a criminal justice system also reflects a failure of authority, I suggest that, in this specific instance, authority is being kept as there is complete compliance and no disobedience.

Then, we consider cases where force is directly used. For the sake of delineating with persuasion, I will define direct force in this section as any use of physical powers listed above. Then, does the use of direct force entail authoritarian failure?

2.2.1 Hierarchy of Authorities

I will clarify that the subject of authority is often not the subject of force. That is, in many cases, the subject of authority uses proxies, such as the police, to exercise force, who are also objects of authority themselves. Hence, when force is exercised, there is now a hierarchy of authorities. Consider a thought experiment: If the state orders the police to exercise brute force upon a citizen, the state does not “directly” exert force as the police obeys their orders. Then, the police becomes the new subject of authority in relation to said citizen, using force. According to Arendt, the police’s authority immediately fails as they use force upon the citizen. However, as soon as the citizen is punished, the police is no longer under the obligation and state-given right to punish the citizen, and their subject-object relationship of authority disappears. Now, only the original relationship of authority between the state and citizen remains. For Arendt’s statement to stand, there must be an additional rule in the parameters of authority, that when an authoritarian hierarchy exists, the primary (higher) authority is also responsible for the actions of the secondary authority.

2.2.2. Consent

Second, I suggest that the relationship between force and failure is largely ambiguous and dependent on the specific contexts of said object. I argue that, following basic notions of the social contract, if object A expresses full consent to subject A’s regulations and their consequences, it is permissible for subject A to use force upon object A as far as they are within previously agreed parameters. However, it is utterly unrealistic to assume that object A has the capacity to truly consent to all regulations imposed upon by subject A, for the very reasons mentioned above regarding how full compliance is often impossible. Therefore, in most cases, Arendt’s claim that the use of force notes a state of failure would be plausible. It is also true, however, that object B has indeed expressed consent as opposed to A. If object B is a parent who voluntarily gave birth, for instance, it is reasonable to expect that they have consented obligations to care for the child, and so direct force as a consequence of violations would be comparatively permissible.

3. Persuasion

Arendt defines persuasion as something that is only possible within an egalitarian system of power. This corresponds to my definition of a rivalrous relationship, where two parties have equal power yet disagree upon certain goals, and hence are required to engage in discussions through non-forceful means. However, I argue that persuasion can happen in any form of relationship, albeit in slightly different forms. Consider person A, who is about to jump off the top of a high building, which will certainly result in their death. Following the authoritarian hierarchy, police B runs to the top of the building to stop A's suicide. A and B have opposite incentives: A to jump, B to stop A from jumping. A threatens B, saying that they will jump if B comes closer. B, as a result, cannot use force as a means. However, as A cannot block their own senses at will, they can still see and hear B, and B hence begins to "persuade" A to reconsider their choices. A and B are still in an authoritarian relationship, as B possesses a gun, which is more than enough to qualify the inflection of power. With this analogy, I provided a counterexample to the premise that persuasion can only happen between rivalrous or cooperative relationships, which is already enough to disprove Arendt's conclusion that persuasion is another automatic indicator of authority failure. Going one step further, I will then assess whether persuasion is a legitimate and trustworthy method employable by subjects of authority.

First, it is important to clarify that persuasion in this section is completely separate of force. That is, if persuasion can be used with any form of force, that dilutes the actual definition of persuasion and hence will result in the same conclusions as force. If indirect force is applied, persuasion cannot happen as the object convinces themselves that a certain action is not worth the risks of punishment. If direct force is applied, there is not only the same affect as indirect force, but also an implication that persuasion failed as direct force was ultimately used. Persuasion, therefore, is when the object is free from the risks of forcible consequences and has conflicting incentives with the subject. Further, I will claim that persuasion is only valid when there is a trustworthy means of exchanging information and comparable potential gains for both parties. If information is delivered and received fallibly, then the conclusions reached after such exchanges cannot be considered valid as they are not a result of the intended persuasion but of incorrect data. Likewise, if only one party has the potential to gain from the persuasive process, or can gain significantly more, persuasion becomes inherently one-sided. I will assess whether persuasions in authority meet both of these premises.

3.1. Goal-orientated and Methodological Persuasion

What happens when the subject and object respectfully disagree on the goals they should ultimately pursue after? Can the subject persuade the object, and vice versa? Once it is deemed that the subject has perverse or opposed incentives compared to the object, the object may disobey and use direct force to overthrow the subject and subdue themselves to a new subject that shares a common goal with them. Democracy is an example of authority relationships born through such a mechanism, where subjects of authority are elected among objects, and objects have a basic right to indirectly participate in the legislation process through the ballot box. I will assert here that, in the majority of cases, constitutions exemplify broader goals of the state, whereas specific legislations exemplify means by which the state achieves said goals. Further, I will assume that democracy is the only known system under which there is any approved system of mutual persuasion, as other systems either do not recognize such rights or have been overthrown by the mentioned process. Then, are means of mutual persuasion in democracy valid? I will note that there is a fundamental flaw in the democratic system, as unanimity is not required for the creation of legislations, but such legislations have to be followed by everyone nonetheless. Unanimous agreement is impossible, as if every citizen had the exact same opinion on every goal and method, voting would only be regurgitating such opinions. Also, democracy is predicated upon the idea that elected representatives are viable mouthpieces for citizens. Once an unsatisfactory conclusion is reached, the only means by which citizens can continue to "persuade" is by voting out certain politicians after time interval, which already suggests a significant imbalance. Such difficulties are further augmented when attempting to amend constitutions, which often requires a decision made by the judiciary, which is not directly elected under most democracies. On the other hand, the subject can use any means possible to prevent this situation, as opposition to their goals can fundamentally result in threats to their subsistence as mentioned. The subject subtly and unknowingly "persuades" the object by

education, propaganda, and the media; the object, on the other hand, have significant limitations in exerting the same right upon the subject.

3.2. Questioning the validity of persuasion

Further, I will also question the means by which information is interpreted and exchanged. First, following the previous section, I will begin with the premise that there is a fundamental imbalance in information inputs between the subject and the object. That is, the subject has control over almost every subsection of life which translates into the five senses and hence information. The subject, or the state, can choose what to build, what to display, and what to teach, whereas the object can merely influence certain members of the subject, who are ultimately also objects themselves. Further, I question the fundamental validity of inputted or received information, as the only method to verify such information is by other information which is also received from an external source. From the invalidity of input follows the invalidity of output, as information that the objects output are confirmed by their own inputs. For example, if the object wishes to voice their opinions by speech, the only way they know what they're saying is by hearing, which is an input. From a more radical perspective, therefore, any means of information exchange and communication would be invalid, but I suggest a more moderate interpretation that the objects of authority will likely receive biased information tailored to suit the interests of the subject, and that this hence devastates the overall quality of persuasive communication.

4. Spectrum of Authority

If force and persuasion are both unfit means of instigating obedience from objects of authority, what are the possible means? I suggest a spectrum-oriented view:

→ Decreasing degree of independence		
Free, voluntary choice	Persuasion	Coercion by force

An ideal form of obedience would be a scenario where objects are able to make completely independent decisions based on their own values, unaffected by potential consequences such as force, and when such decisions happen to perfectly align with the subject's motives, hence sustaining a system of authority. I will question, therefore, whether such decisions can occur with perfect agency. It is important to clarify that certain incentives can be a subset of one another—for instance, if person A cares deeply about person B, then A's motives will likely be a subset of B's, as A will derive significant satisfaction from B's incentives being met. To assume full agency, therefore, we must assume a person C that does not have any meaningful relations with other objects such that their incentives purely result from their objectives and not others'. C must also be free from all forms of subject influence such that their decision-making processes are not subtly manipulated, as well as any relationships of authority. Then, at a random point, C is suggested an authoritarian relationship with an object D and is immediately asked if they are willing to comply with all the demands of D, which are written out in perfect, understandable, and unequivocal language. C is perfectly rational and fully understands their own interests. Even in this case, I argue that C does not make voluntary choices:

1. The interaction assumes the existence of free will, which can neither be proved nor disproved.
2. Obedience to an authority deals with situations when the object is already in an authoritarian relationship with the subject. C has not been in any and hence cannot meaningfully comprehend D's demands.
3. C's current incentives are irrelevant to those that are dealt with by D's demands, as D's demands assume incentives than an object within an authority relationship would have. C would therefore be ambivalent to the vast majority of D's demands except for those that concern biological needs, such as protecting C's right to life, and the conversation will therefore be an unending deadlock.
4. It is unclear whether C in the present is going to be the same person as C in the future. If C were to be perfectly content with D's demands and voluntarily becomes an object, any additional consent or

changes in C's opinion would be affected by all the aforementioned factors in an authority that blind C's decisions.

5. In order for C to make completely rational decisions, C cannot be affected by external physical factors. For instance, as the discussion becomes never-ending, C will get hungry and will feel the biological need to eat in order to survive. D may then be able to coerce C into obedience by offering C food. To prevent this situation, C must have no deficiencies. However, if C has no deficiencies, then a rational C would have no motive to accept D's demands, as there is no reason to risk having deficiencies. If D's society is perfect and absent of deficiencies, C would be choosing to live under the same conditions. It is also impossible for D to have constructed a society that is free from all limitations such as sleep, as time is an irresistible physical quantity.

Therefore, in any case, an object cannot make fully voluntary decisions, and even if they do, they will likely choose not to opt into an authority.

Conclusion

Systems of authority can exist and will always exist, as it is impossible for every actor to have equal power and incentives. Contrary to Arendt's argument, however, I argue that the use of force or persuasion does not automatically suggest the failure or nonexistence of an authority. Rather, both are methods that can be employed by a subject to achieve their motives.

However, both force and persuasion, as well as a third scenario of voluntary options made by the object, are insufficient to justify authorities. Actors that have the ideal capability to make perfectly free and rational choices will not be part of an authority. When authorities do exist, therefore, they exist at a state in which they can never internally justify their own existence. If the subject and object do not interact, it is not a relationship; if they do interact, the interactions will happen in illegitimate, invalid, and unbalanced means which disproportionately favor the subject. The only fully justifiable system of existence would be one in which no individual party is the subject nor the object of authority, but are rather cooperative, rivalrous, or completely unrelated to every other individual.