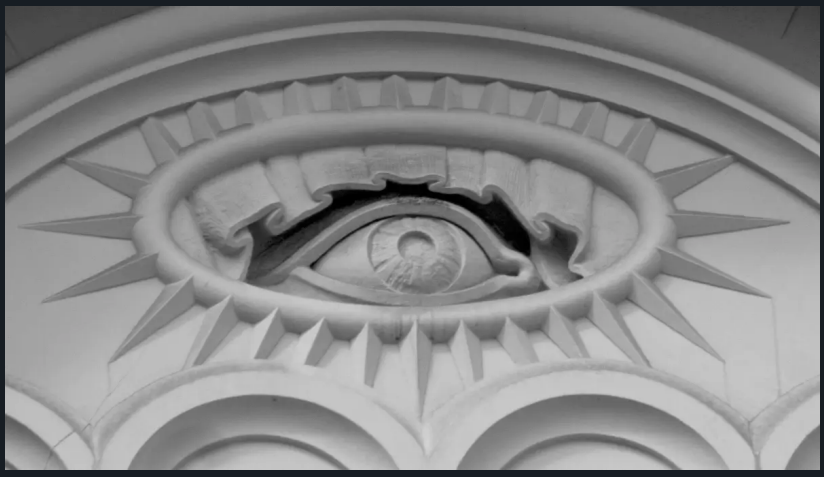
Hierarchism

Ton Haarmans · Wide Open Windows



The philosopher Michel Foucault saw it: look at the architecture of factories, hospitals, schools, churches and prisons. It has a central space from which the rest of the facility can be governed: a panopticon, the architecture of authority, of disciplinary power. The command structure comes from the top or from the center and has access to everything that happens. Disciplinary power need not always be exercised because much of the authority is (re)internalized.

But force will be used if the central leadership deems it necessary. Even in a modern, democratic country, you can, for instance, try not to pay your taxes and not give up, and eventually you will encounter violence. “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.” (Mao Zedong)

Violence is at the heart of hierarchism as an intensity of world-making. Hierarchism is a mode of thinking that is clearly being forced upon reality, upon ourselves and upon the universe, upon life itself.

Seen through the lens of Mindsets and Origins, hierarchism is not only a political structure. It is a way a world stabilizes. It takes the open field of experience and compresses it into a readable order: a top, a center, a principle, a command. In that move, uncertainty becomes manageable, but the cost is obvious: what does not fit the structure must be corrected, excluded, or controlled.

Hierarchism is also called "arborescent thinking" and this concept has its origin in the works of the French poststructuralists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. It is described as follows:

> "[arborescent thinking] refers to the shape and structure of a tree. It is used to characterize a certain type of thinking, exemplified by the western scientific model, where knowledge emanates from a single stem and ends in predetermined 'fruits'. The concept suggests a

> linear progress towards the truth, which they [Deleuze and Guattari] condemned as both unrealistic and stultifying to the imagination.
>
> It is contrasted with 'rhizomatic' thinking, which is open ended, has no central structure, and is constantly changing."

Another way of saying this is by the term "Unification", used by the theoretical physicist Marcelo Gleiser in his book 'A Tear At The Edge Of Creation'. Once a "Unifier" himself, Gleiser started to doubt the search for universal truth, for a "Theory of Everything", along the paths of symmetry and perfection, realizing that it is asymmetry and imperfection that is in fact fundamental for the existence of life and consciousness.

> “If we can never know all there is to know, we will always have an element of uncertainty about the natural world. There is no final unification to be attained. [...] The uncertainty of knowledge is as permanent as quantum uncertainty.”
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> Hard as this may be to accept, it is a fundamental limitation of human understanding. Only our intellectual vanity precludes us from seeing this clearly and moving on. Science will not be diminished in its grandiose task of explaining Nature if it doesn't have a unified dream to pursue."

> Marcelo Gleiser, 'A Tear At The Edge Of Creation'

In hierarchism, everything is ultimately reduced to One, the Fundamental Principle, the thoroughly authoritarian precept that is the Basis and at the same time the Top. It is Reason, the Family Tree and the Root. It is God, the State, the Crown, The Truth, the Theory of Everything, it is I, the Absolute Mind, Universal Consciousness, Brahman, Supreme Enlightenment, the Top of the Pyramid, the Root Race. The One Ring to Rule Them All.

It tends toward fascism.

The One splits itself into Two, a duality of opposites. The duality finally brings forth the "ten thousand things". But the trail can always be traced back to the Root, to the Holy Center. But only in thought, nowhere else.

Hierarchism is found everywhere. In science, mathematics, art and spirituality. It is also present in the mind/brain as the idea of 'I'. There we have internalized central authority and identify with it as being me. We have a dictator in our heads, a little general, which we call "I". "I" have the idea that I am in charge. "I" do all my actions. "I" am the decision maker. "I" get frustrated and angry when "I" don't get what "I" want.

It is this authoritarian structure that is the origin of centralized authority in society. It has been projected and successively (re)internalized since the beginning of human civilization. Hierarchism has literally built this

civilization. In fact, we need this structure now in order to function as social beings in this society. It is inevitable and inescapable. Losing it means the madness of depersonalization.

But this doesn't mean we have to believe this mindset orientation, or any orientation, as being objectively true!

Hierarchism is not only a way of (magical) thinking, a type of bias, it is also a motivational desire. It is like we want and need this type of order. Without it we feel out of control. Without the illusion of hierarchism, the universe, our life, appears as chaos, as anarchy, without any meaning. Hierarchism protects us from the wild and sometimes harsh reality of life.

And we all long for unity and symmetry. It feels attractive, beautiful and peaceful, especially in art.

But there is danger in this longing. It stultifies the mind, leading to a sort of tunnel vision. Life is not always pretty, it doesn't always obey our desire of nice and neat structures. There is imperfection and symmetries are broken. They need to be broken, otherwise nothing happens. Nothing would even exist without imbalance and mutation, without crime and war.