

Where does come the force that enables this “little big woman¹” to defy the federal court’s authority?

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“The Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It’s an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us, and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together.” Star Wars, A New Hope. Obi-Wan Kenobi (Jedi).

“Say, He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent.” The Noble Quran, 112. Surah Al-Ikhlaas (pure monotheism).

« No one should ignore the Law. » Adage (international)

For anyone familiar with human behavior in modern bureaucracies, the behavior of this “little big woman” is exceptional: alone, with few words, she responds politely but negatively to several violent interpellations. Of course, she might be used to this kind of situation, and the power of law is precisely what authorizes her to give a positive or negative response. This force of law surrounds and penetrates people, things and walls, so usually also, few of them are able to resist and disobey even when this force turns evil (Arendt, 1963) and commands us to hurt someone else (Milgram, 1965). Resistance to authority never comes from nowhere: behind resistance always lies another (conflicting) authority. Here, the Law of the Supreme God is opposed to the Law of the Supreme Court and, even if this woman is the only one to speak, numerous other forces are with her are at both side of the desk (voices can be sometimes heard in the recording). What is exceptional is not this successful resistance in itself, but the way this resistance is enacted by this little big woman. Why is she so calm while her opponents are so hysterical? Why doesn’t she simply dismiss them and tell them earlier to take their complaint to the governor? Why does she come back after initially leaving? In other words, what gives her the force to return the ring and to maintain her position despite the extraordinary tension around her?

Of course, and even if it seems paradoxical, the new law delivers her from a moral dilemma. Refusing something to someone always causes pain. If you are the only one to refuse something that is easy to get elsewhere, you cause no other pain than time lost. If you refuse something that is also refused everywhere, you cause pain directly until someone else refuses. So if we admit that she is consistent with herself, it might be the first time she can refuse with joy in heart, since that couple can get married anywhere else (“If what you all are trying to accomplish ... is to get a marriage license, you can go anywhere in the surrounding areas”, lines 155-158). This is maybe why she can smile. The

¹ This Little Big Woman (reference to the movie « Little Big Man ») is Kim Davis a Rowan County, Kentucky clerk who refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples despite a federal court order to do so <http://www.usatoday.com/videos/news/nation/2015/09/03/71527640/> Full transcript : <http://www.authorityinteraction.org/API-Transcript.pdf>

contrast cannot be higher with the persons in front of her, more excited than ever with their new force at hand but forgetting that there is no force without politeness. Speaking in the name of Law cannot be done furiously: even kids know that. Obviously, no dialogue is possible with them. So why does she come back? Nothing obliges her. Furthermore, what did she do during the short time off-record in the back office?

The paper advances the following argument: her force comes from love. Love for God, love for people, love for earth, love for everything, and indeed even love for angry men. So she comes back because she loves them enough to be hurt by them (e.g., "I'm not saying your lives or not worth...", line 129). Only she can tell, but before coming back with a smile, she might have murmured a formula such as "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they do. Give me force to love them." And so she did: she came back with love in heart and without fear. This decentering of the interaction (Caronia & Cooren, 2013) makes the difference: she is not talking in order to refuse something, but in order to listen to their fear and to calm their anger ("Do you believe passionately in what you are doing", line 103). It is not only her authority or her ways of speaking (Cooren, 2010) that help her to take this new start but a third force that nobody should ignore, namely, love.

Why love? The reason is simple. If authority is the last thing that matters when organization fails (Taylor & Van Every, 2014), who can deny that love should also matter equally? If we want to approach authority with a relational view – i.e., if we exclude coercive authority – which better symmetrical concept could we find than love? What is more relational, communicational than love (Morin & Wolton, 2011)? Authority is often the last thing to stay alive when everything collapses. But love is also often the first impulse that starts life back. Love in social sciences is like the "Stolen letter" (Poe & Baudelaire, 1979) : hidden in evidence. Social investigators do not see love (as a central social concept) because love is right in front their eyes (as a central social concern), without any of the masks, of the artifacts or of the reifications they are used to deconstruct (Cooren, 2010). Interestingly enough, the words "authority" and "love" are said by White (line 32, repeated by Kim line 33-34) and by David (with "banging hand against the counter", line 47).

This article will try to find love and authority together, contrasted yet related and equal in communication and conversation despite this discursive absence in text and words. If one of them is not here in the collective mind, talk tends to fail. In this extraordinary case, talk cannot be said to be failing. It comes to its end. That's all. Without anymore banging hands on the counter. So is it just a matter of authority? If only one and only one concept was to be chosen for a symmetrical contrast with authority, why love should be excluded? If we admit the interest of this frame of analysis, what do we learn by running the analysis of how untold love and authority are toggled or shifted in dialogue that could interest organizational communication scholars?

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