



THE DANCING STAR

Volume 2
A Consistent Basis

Free Market Capitalism, Socialism, Communism - these concepts are both idealized and idealistic. Though not always obvious when pitting one system against another, these structures all attempt solutions to common societal problems. Somehow these strategies never live up to our expectations. Why is that?

We are all wondering. As simple ideas become complex, quite typically ideals of freedom or cooperation turn into structures of domination and manipulation. Ultimately, the question of 'which system' may not be the most pivotal. That the world we make rests upon the ethical decisions of individuals is a basic yet crucial observation. The search for a consistent ethos is perhaps the most important project of human society.

So how might we begin to assemble a consistent ethical structure which both allow freedom and encourage collaboration? Consider autonomy as a starting point. Autonomy is a practice, not a system, and it works in two directions. One is an individual's active engagement in the pursuit of their own self-sufficiency. This is essential if anyone is to enter into collective action by their own choice, rather than by decree or because of weakness. In the other direction is the recognition of an other's autonomy. To practice autonomy is to understand that autonomy is antithetical to control over others. Ethics are not consistent if the same principles applied to oneself are not available to everyone else.

As a basis for society, these simple norms constitute a framework for a consistent ethos, one in which we move away from the notion of rulers toward self reliance. Living in such a system is sometimes called Anarchism, a scary word to some who find its equivalent in abject chaos. However, life without rulers does not necessarily mean life without rules, or an excuse to destroy and abuse. One of Anarchy's greatest contributions is the exploration of this set of ethical guideposts.

Through autonomy we find one starting point for an ethical system not based upon greed but rather upon agreement. Instead of forced control, autonomy teaches us to make space for each perspective and contribution. There will always be inequality, competition, and suffering - we aren't going to be able to create a cushion for every struggle. Nevertheless, that doesn't mean that our, or any, lives should be pathetic or stunted, or that this is an excuse to privilege oneself above others. In every interaction, there is always room to be equitable with your fellows. The problem in all systems comes when a small set inflict their perspective - be it financially, socially, or politically - on everyone else. This is the moment when idealism turns to domination, the single rule that has defined most if not all human political systems in our history. Continual return to uncontrolled spaces germinates the discussion that leads out of this trap.