Authority:
Understanding Social Interactions in The Modern World

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Senior Thesis for Religion

Submitted on May 5, 2000

"If the people are silent under oppression, it is lethargy—
the forerunner of death to public liberty."

-Thomas Jefferson

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Preface
Greed, Power for Living, and American Culture

The probing lights of "The Terminator" circle around the team of contestants on the game-show "Greed" as the ominously discordant music accompanies the tense expectation of the audience. The lights finally fall on one of the players, and the host announces that the contestant now has the opportunity to challenge any one of the contestants on his or her team (who have each helped in answering questions to advance the team level by level up the tower of Greed) to a one on one battle of wits with a single trivia question. If the contestant accepts, he or she receives $10,000 no matter what happens. If the person challenged loses, they go home empty handed, the winner takes any money the challenged person had, and the remaining team members continue up the tower of Greed. The show touts a stunning $2.2 million dollar top prize, but that sum is divided among the team. The more players who can be eliminated by "The Terminator," the larger each person's share becomes. The only downside, of course, is that the eliminated person no longer contributes their knowledge to the collective question-answering process of the team. But in the long run, what is one measly human brain when the payoff is better for everyone?!

What are the forces at play that make the majority of contestants opt to challenge the teammate to this sudden-death bout of elimination? A certain degree of "rugged individualism" has always pervaded American life, but is this ideology convincing enough for an individual to make a concerted choice against the good of his or her "team." America was founded around principles put in place to protect the individual and his (and later her) property from a repressive government. Is the popularity of "Greed"

simply an extension of this line of reasoning? Before I address this, let us examine another prevalent idiom of modern society.

The commercial goes something like this (with various celebrity spokespeople): "I thought I had it all: money, success, a loving and supporting family; but something seemed to be missing. I found that something after I read this book called *Power for Living*. It helped me learn to deal with all the problems in my life. *Power for Living* has opened my eyes to God's plan for me and given me a personal relationship with God. Call this number now for your copy. It is free and you will not be sent anything else ever. So what do you have to lose?"

Well, for one thing you lose the relationship with the Christian community that has been essential to the Christian faith since its earliest times and could become a very active part of your social support structure. Theologians from Paul[1] to Luther[2] to Schleiermacher[3] argue that the community is not only a nice benefit of Christians living together, but that it is necessary in order to live as Christians are supposed to. Many Christian churches and communities still hold strongly to this tradition and experience the benefits of mutual care and collective problem solving. Is the trend of individualized religion, easily seen in its mass-media portrayal, in the process of corrupting a church-centered, loving community based around mutual benefit into radical individual religious freedom from accountability to any structure of authority? If so, what does this mean for

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[1] Paul frequently refers to the Church of believers as the "Body of Christ" or "one body with many parts" (Ro 12:4-5; 1 Co 10:17; 1 Co 12:12-27; Eph 4:1-16.)

[2] Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority" in *Luther's Works*, Volume 45. (Muhlenberg Press, 1962), p 77-129.

[3] Schleiermacher argues that "The Religious self-consciousness,...leads necessarily to its development to fellowship or communion." Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), p 26 f.

the larger social structures that religion and religious communities have traditionally fostered?

Both of these are examples of a social phenomenon that can be termed individualist egoism. I believe that this is a very prevalent attitude engendered and emphasized in the relationship between the individual and the mass media. It is important to note that this phenomenon is not simply an expression of creative individuality, but is a choice made for the good of the individual that comes at the expense of the good of the larger group. For example, the contestants on "Greed" make a concerted choice—balancing the advantages of the intact team against the possibility of greater individual wealth. To make the choice of personal wealth is one of individualist egoism. The contestant knows full well that this choice is one of individual benefit at the expense of the common good of the team. The goal then becomes for each person on the team to win the maximum amount of money. If a player does not choose to play "The Terminator" at the expense of his or her teammates, he or she cannot achieve the maximum sum of money. Even though the team may win the game, each individual has failed to reap the maximum reward. The player settles for "second best." The game is structured such that the individual must eliminate his or her teammates in order to "win."

The same analysis can be drawn out of the concept of an individualized religion as presented in the mass media. Traditionally, some of the greatest benefits that religion has served and asserted regard the common good of the members of both the religious community and of humanity at large. (This is not, of course to understate the problems that have been caused by the religious institution and the brutality of its tactics at times.) The community has always been a central element to Christianity, it maintains social

order, it is a service for the betterment of humanity, and it is the relationship in which Christians (and human beings at that) were intended to live. So why all the modern outcry against organized religion?

Many people in modern times see the institution of Christianity as obsolete and harmful. A full sixth of Minnesota's adults believe along with their governor Jesse Ventura that "organized religion is a sham and a crutch for weak-minded people."[4] This trend is equally observable in the secular and religious spheres according to the survey of minnesotans. I think that this widespread disillusionment with the organization of the church is probably applicable all over America to a certain degree. People who reject organized religion in favor of personalized religion either see the institution as fascist controlling force or are not aware of the benefits that a church-centered community is meant to provide. I feel that the church community is different from the church institution and that separating out the benefits of the church community is not only possible, but is probably essential to a healthy understanding of the role of religion in the lives of believers.

Is this trend of egoist individualism limited to a few notable areas? I don't think so. I think that it is a concept that is widely pervasive, even if unconsciously so, to most Americans. Take for example the ubiquitous concept of the "American Dream." Though the exact meaning of this concept is not widely agreed upon, it usually amounts to something regarding owning a home, having a loving family, job security, financial security, and a comfortable life. All this is achieved by "pulling yourself up by the bootstraps," stepping on as many people as necessary in the spirit of rugged

individualism. This is in essence the formative value structure for many Americans. Nowhere in this ideology is the idea of the common good even touched on. While many people praise those who give of themselves altruistically, there is no basic understanding of altruism as any kind of responsibility for the average American, nor do many Americans even consider what the common good might be and how it would affect their lives.

So what of it? Is this not simply the way things work in America? Should we simply join this frenzy of selfishness to ensure that we don't end up on the bottom? This question deserves special attention, and I will seek to address it by striking what I see as the fundamental problem with this line of reasoning. By neglecting to consider the importance of communal involvement and the role of the common good, people neglect what is a key structure affecting their lives—authority. Authority is the social interaction that attempts to reconcile these difficult concepts, and by ignoring their importance, people ignore the importance of authority. No one can escape authority; it is a concept that must be considered by any human who is part of any social structure. How we are conditioned to respond to the concepts of community and common good affect how we will view authority. It becomes necessary, then, to attempt to achieve a working concept of what the often misunderstood and abused concept of authority entails. This will be the principle focus of this thesis.

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[4] Martha Sawyer Allen; Peg Meier; Staff Writers. "Ventura is far from alone in his views on religion, poll shows: The 17 percent who agree that 'religion is a sham' translates to about one-sixth of the Minnesota's adults. [sic]" *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. October 9, 1999: Section 1B.

Introduction
The Legacy of Authority

Yves Simon, who has formulated a fairly extensive theory of authority, begins by saying that; "it has a bad name."[1] It is traditionally thought of as some kind of controlling force, in conflict with many tenets fundamental to human life. To mention authority to an average person will conjure images of policemen, laws, army leaders, and despotic rulers. It carries many personal preconceptions and prejudices to many people, and so is often not considered seriously as a relationship inherent to our day to day social interactions. We can, however, find certain commonalties in people's understandings of authority by examining the cultural framework and how its conception has been shaped both by our history and by common usage of the term.

Let us begin with a thought experiment to set up the initial difficulty we will encounter in a discussion of authority. It stands to reason that a person in a position of authority would not be quick to speak badly or subversively about authority. This would undermine their social niche. This can be expanded to include those who challenged dominant institutions of power but hoped, by doing so, to gain authority—in other words, the process of conquest. Both rulers and conquerors benefit from a conception of authority as unquestioning, immediate obedience, and so would seek to foster that notion.

On the other hand, if we think very generally from the other side of the power/domination spectrum, we would conclude that there is probably little offered in terms of an unbiased understanding of authority. Those who are oppressed have been abused by "authority" all their lives and so naturally would view it only with the deepest

[1] Yves Simon, *A General Theory of Authority* (Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), 13.

cynicism. This is not surprising, but leaves a historical context for this discussion where the meaning of authority is seen as either essential or evil. Debate on the topic, has therefore often been divided into camps of the oppressed reacting against authority, and the oppressors trying to keep it in place. Those who seek to question or abolish all authority fight against those who attempt to assert the social danger of losing a conception of authority as blind obedience. These latter critics often use the phrase "crisis of authority" to describe the recent situation that challenges the idea of authority as unquestioning obedience.

The phrase "crisis of authority" has been used in many contexts from within the Roman Catholic Church, to within the family structure, to within the government. It seems to represent the idea that as of late, we are in a critical period in history where the very systems that the institutions which society is based on are beginning to fall apart. Several authors assert that history is marked by periods of authority followed by crises of authority followed by anarchy that is finally ended in the return to authority.[2] It is then argued that we are on the brink of a period of anarchy and chaos, or deep in a "crisis of authority." The general consensus regarding the crisis of authority seems to be that the structures of authority are no longer able to assert the dominance that they require. Two mutually exclusive conclusions can be drawn from this argument. First, that people in modern society must somehow fundamentally change and understand "their place" in the dominance hierarchies. This necessitates a return to a system of domination and subordination. A system of overt domination is not only seen as unacceptable to a modern

[2] For instance, Marshall Smelser, "The Reconciliation of Liberty and Authority in the American Revolution" in *Freedom and Authority in the West*, George N. Shuster. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 86.

audience, it is infeasible given recent historical development. The second conclusion is, then, that there is something fundamentally wrong with the understanding of authority as blind submission that either makes it a useless idea in a modern context or else necessitates that it be radically restructured to be appropriate.

In recent times, this is exactly what is beginning to take place, both philosophically and practically. The French Revolution arguably is a marker in history for new understandings of authority in which the people need not be blindly submissive at the hands of a ruler. This has opened the door to a vast new realm of thoughts and expectations regarding freedom and authority. People no longer are willing to be simply a tool of their master. Richard Sennet, Yves Simon, and April Carter are among the modern authors who seek to closely examine the role of authority, mindful of both its historical problems and essential features, and propose new understandings, theories, and definitions which are not only more applicable to the modern situation, but which, in my opinion, are critical to the healthy functioning of society.

The Semantics of Authority

As we can already begin to notice after this brief discussion of some of the problems we face when dealing with the concept of authority, the term itself becomes very obfuscated. In order to address this issue, throughout this thesis I want to be very careful regarding my use of the term to avoid confusion. "Participatory authority" will be the specific model of authority I will attempt to delineate, construct, and defend. This is contrasted with "a participatory model for authority" or "authority seen in a participatory sense" as "participatory authority" refers to the specific construct for authority I am suggesting. The other phrases will be used to assert the importance of a participatory

model of authority in general (regardless of whether it takes the form of the exact model I outline.)

These will both be contrasted with "coercive authority." I will argue that this is in fact a false type of authority that is better termed domination, but it is necessary to address it as a term since authority is so often misused in this context. Both of these terms will be developed as methods of dealing with another type of authority called "formal authority." "Formal authority" will be used to refer to the basic necessity of authority. Formal authority is the precursor to a developed understanding of authority. It is essential in order to mediate hierarchical social interactions and to address the common good in a way that in infeasible to the individual. (When I discuss the concept of hierarchy in this paper, I use the term only to refer to a social relationship in which there is a disparity in education, knowledge, skill or training regarding a specific issue.) Formal authority can lead to a system of domination or one of participatory authority.

When "authority" is used without any preface, I am referring to authority as it is popularly conceived. In other words, authority in a very general sense of the term, understanding that it is ill defined and can encompass many different conceptions. Whenever I refer to "an authority" I am discussing a person or group who is in a position of dominance in the interaction of authority. The context will make it clear which particular use of the term authority this refers to.

Finally I want to mention that I do this reluctantly, as I do not want to set up an understanding of participatory authority as separate concept of authority. It fact, I view it to be the correct and intended model for authority. By separating it I run the risk of "participatory authority" being seen as a concept altogether different from what is

generally or practically seen to be authority. I can only say that the semantic separation of the different types of authority is in place only to address the problems inherent in discussing a topic that can be understood in such different ways. Feel free to refer to the glossary for clarification of the uses of these terms during the reading.

Participatory Authority

Since I have already stated that I view participatory authority to be the correct mode of authority, we should begin with an initial understanding of what participatory authority entails. Participatory authority is a response to formal authority in which a system is set up where the authoritative source party and recipient party become partners in a relationship. It is evidenced by voluntary compliance on the part of the receiving party. This is a voluntary and informed decision. The recipient has the responsibility to hold the source accountable for any judgement, and the source has the responsibility to act in the interests of the good of the recipient(s). When any aspect of this fails, the relationship becomes one of coercive authority or domination. When people fail to recognize that they are willful participants in a system set up to address their common needs, domination prevails. This is exactly what I will suggest, in chapter 4, the mass media fostered attitudes of individualist egotism encourage.

Participatory authority has already begun to develop in many social interactions. To gain a better grasp on it conceptually, we can examine where it succeeds and where it fails in these specific situations. This will be the focus of the second chapter. In the third chapter, I will explicitly spell out the characteristics that are fundamental to participatory authority in some detail. For now, let us begin, by carefully detangling the often-confused concepts I have mentioned from the concept of participatory authority.

Chapter 1
What Participatory Authority Isn't

Many people would be surprised to find out that even many anarchist thinkers view authority as an essential and necessary part of society. At first take, this seems impossible; that there must be some contradiction. How could someone opposed to all government find authority to be a good thing? The answer to this question lies in an understanding of authority as participatory rather than coercive. Part of the problem is that there are so many connotations and terms that are loosely applied to authority that it can become so generalized as to be virtually meaningless. Participatory authority is a very specific understanding of how authority should act to mediate certain relationships. In order to examine it in any depth, we must examine come common preconceptions that people have regarding authority. Many of these assumptions regarding authority are really understandings of what I call coercive authority. Participatory authority as a realistic concept must be first stripped of all these associations and connotations if it is to be a helpful term to understand society. Only from this point can we establish how it works as a relational, contextual model for authority and how it can provide a hopeful vision of society.

First, the differences between power and participatory authority will be examined. These are clearly closely linked ideas, but they are fundamentally different and it is necessary to distinguish power when speaking of participatory authority. Second, we must assess and separate the very broad concept of domination from participatory authority along with its myriad forms and associations. These include totalitarianism, paternalism, sovereignty, and particular modes of control including

coercion, force, persuasion, and several others. Third, we will look at the political and practical nature of participatory authority by distinguishing it from government, legitimacy, and infallibility.

Participatory Authority Is Not Power

Authority is not synonymous with power. Even in its formal conception, it is inappropriate to use the two terms interchangeably. In popular, ephemeral understandings they are often equated, but a more detailed exploration will reveal that even much common usage of the terms can serve to delineate the separate functions of power and authority. For example, a court can be said to have authority, but can lack the power to implement its decisions. Likewise, the reverse is also true in that a robber who is forcefully restraining a victim can be said to have power, but certainly does not possess authority to do this action. The foundations for these common understandings of the difference between authority and power can be traced all the way back to the beginnings of the use of these terms in the Roman Empire. This can also help to elucidate their relationship further. The Romans first presented us with the concept of authority as a term, so it is helpful to begin to understand it in that context.

The Roman senate possessed *auctoritas* in its decision-making. April Carter describes it as follows, "*Auctoritas* implies the ability to command respect and voluntary compliance both by virtue of holding an authoritative position and by being qualified to give authoritative advice."[1] This is contrasted with *potestas* (power) which belonged to the popular assembly. Power was essentially the ability to implement the judgment of the Senate. The Senate was able to advise wisely, but the decision making

[1] April Carter, *Authority and Democracy*. (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), 17.

power ultimately lay with the popular assembly.[2] I will elaborate on the nature of the Roman *auctoritas* in Chapter 3, but for now it is important to note the essential difference in the function of power and authority in this framework. The Roman concept of authority begins not only by establishing that authority should be seen as participatory, but it also clearly establishes the semantic foundation of authority as a concept very different from power.

The separation of these two concepts is also unconsciously ingrained in our cultural fabric. In one sense, the idea of constitutional checks and balances is really a system of dividing power and authority. For example, the Supreme Court has the authority to make certain decisions, but lacks the power to enforce them. Carter notes that the same is true within modern trade unions. The union leader may be in an elected position of authority and speak authoritatively, but the union may chose to disregard the leader's recommendations.[3] Finally, in America there is an underlying assumption that giving the government the authority to make decisions is a power lying solely with its citizens. Smelser points out that this was key in the development of political theory in the United States since its very founding fathers.[4]

Participatory Authority Is Not Domination

The second concept that is necessary to separate authority from is probably the most difficult and nuanced: the concept of domination. Domination is in itself a very expansive and ill defined term with many practical manifestations. Essentially,

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[2] ibid.
[3] ibid, 44.
[4] Marshall Smelser, "The Reconciliation of Liberty and Authority in the American Revolution" in *Freedom and Authority in the West*, George N. Shuster (ed.). (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 101-105.

domination is a one-sided interaction where the party that is the source of the domination is able to exact submission from the other group by any of several means. These may include coercion, force, and persuasion. Some specific manifestations of domination are totalitarianism, paternalism, and sovereignty. In a general sense, domination is the ultimate threat to participatory authority. When the relationship of participatory authority fails (for any number of reasons which will be discussed in the following chapters) it turns into domination. There is no participation in domination, the dominant party control the submissive party like a puppet. As the term authority is often used to refer to this situation, I will be careful to use the term "coercive authority" in order to emphasize that I am not referring to an appropriate model for authority. Let us examine each of the specific manifestations of domination more closely.

One of the most obvious forms of dominance is the totalitarian state. Buchheim presents a helpful definition of totalitarianism and the philosophy that accompanies it:

> The totalitarian regime thinks it knows the course of universal history, and proceeds from the conviction of having arrived at the decisive turning point toward a state of final worldly happiness and hence feels the necessity of effecting this turning.... People are nothing more than building material, or "human material," that is, prefabricated parts for the new society. These parts must, of course be standardized if they are to be used at will. This is brought about through indoctrination, or if this is insufficient to create the needed type, by changing the spiritual substance through brainwashing.[5]

This type of dominance is in fact a polar opposite to participatory authority. We will see participatory authority to be intensely reliant on the relationship and cooperation of both parties. Totalitarianism is a helpful way to point out the one-sidedness of domination. Totalitarianism requires that a government do something to the people rather than with

or for them. The citizens are merely subjects to be used at the whim of the dominant party.

Closely related to totalitarianism is the concept of paternalism. This is a form of social organization that mimics the traditional understanding of a father in a family. It is the duty of the father figure to act in the best interest of those under him, even if they must be ignorant of or opposed to that action. This concept has been used in both the workplace and government to varying degrees. The model of the boss or administrator as a kind of father figure is seen quite regularly.

Richard Sennett focuses on the example of George Pullman and his company owned town. Pullman ran a car factory and provided all his employees with everything they would need to live in a community: houses, jails, schools, etc.—all owned by the company. On May 12, 1894, the workers went on strike. The method of control involved in this town was very similar to the totalitarian state, and the workers reacted not against any specific need that was being inadequately provided, but against the dehumanizing control of the Boss. Sennet cites two sources as cause for the rebellion. First, the workers found it very desirable to own their own home. Those who could afford to, lived outside the town. Those who could not, felt like "second-class citizens." The need for private property ownership was important for all and denied by Pullman. Second, Sennet believes that the work relationship of "I, your employer, care about you and will take care of you" is a dangerous mentality. Economic fluctuations forced several temporary layoffs, and there were several poor decisions made by Pullman's subordinates. The resulting misfortune for the workers not only gave Pullman as a very

[5] Hans Buchheim, "Authority and Freedom: The State and Man" in *Freedom and Authority in the West.*

focused point for unrest, but sparked a feeling of personal betrayal by Pullman.[6] Here we see an example where though intentions are good, the interaction is still one of domination.

This provides an interesting example as to the nature of means and ends with regard to social control. Even in a case where the intentions of the boss were to be nothing but as helpful and supportive as possible, the system failed. Pullman tried to provide everything the workers would need, but failed to provide them the ability to play a meaningful role in those decisions. Even when domination is not explicitly for bad intentions, the dehumanization inherent in such a one-sided interaction is the source of its failure. To contrast, we will examine a political system of domination where the goal of the leader is not necessarily to be the benevolent leader of paternalism.

This manifestation of dominance is seen in the example of the political concept of sovereignty. This implies that there is one supreme executive power that is able to assert its will over a certain group. This is used almost always regarding a monarch or God. Sovereignty developed as a purely political term which described a centralized ruler over a large territory which is "independent of other wills [and lies] above the law." (53)[7] Sovereignty is distinguished from participatory authority by its ability to use force or coercion, its totality of claimed control, and by its arbitrary judgments.[8] Like paternalism, even if the reasons for a decision are good, the people do not need to be aware of them. Unlike paternalism, there is not any expectation that these decisions conform to a certain standard. The sovereign decision is beyond question and challenge.

George N Shuster (ed.). (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 70.
[6] Richard Sennet, *Authority*. (New York: Alfred A, Knopf, 1980), 62-77.
[7] Carter, *Authority and Democracy*. 53

The concept of sovereignty is closely related to the American experience, as the control of George III was seen as sovereign and tyrannical. For the settlers (at least the propertied dissidents, who claimed to represent the feelings of the masses) the sovereign no longer possessed authority in any participatory sense because the relationship was completely one-sided. Chants of "no taxation without representation" cry out that while the people were certainly unhappy about their harsh treatment, they were more upset that they had no role in the decisions that affected their lives. This was not a revolution against government, but one for a participatory concept of authority to be involved in government. This idea is important to how the American philosophy of government was shaped. As distant or uninvolved in the political system as the average American may be, there is still an underlying assumption that the government must at least offer an explanation of its actions. Likewise, we feel that those who are in office should not be somehow above the law. This attitude, instilled in us by the founders through "sacred American documents," such as the Declaration of Independence, was conditioned by our revolutionary birth.

The final point I want to make regarding domination is related to the specific methods which dominance uses to maintain itself. This is essential, because we will see that participatory authority does not and must not use these devices to exact obedience. The different types of domination we have covered are only able to exert their influence through some kind of coercion, force, fear, or violence. Bear in mind that I am not saying that these concepts can never be used in a system of participatory authority, but that they are not synonymous or inextricably linked to participatory authority. Carter

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[8] ibid.

points out that "force is often necessary to supplement authority," but "it does not clearly show that force reinforces respect for authority."[9]

Carter's argument to separate coercion and force from authority is helpful in making our distinction between coercive and practical authority. "We can ask whether true willingness to obey can be influenced by the threat of force."[10] She answers this by saying that "the ability to enforce obedience may, up to a point, make willingness to obey authority square with self-interest, but it cannot make people believe that obedience is inherently right."[11] In other words, force or coercion may indeed be able to exact obedience even voluntarily so, but the response from the individual to this coercive authority is altogether different from that of a response to participatory authority. With coercion, the response is based purely on self-interest, whereas, the response to participatory authority is based on an understanding, acceptance, and recognition of the need to facilitate the common good. This will be discussed in depth in chapter 3.

Yves Simon also makes a good distinction on how self-interest relates to domination and authority. He paraphrases St. Thomas:

> Dominion over free men [sic] is exercised either for the sake of the governed—as in the case of children—or for the sake of the common good; but domination over slaves is exercised, at least principally, for the sake of the person or person in power. To call "authority" the latter kind of domination...is unwarranted, arbitrary, and altogether abusive.[12]

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[9] Carter, *Authority and Democracy*, 46.
[10] ibid, 46.
[11] ibid, 47.
[12] Yves Simon, 160.

The self-interest of the dominant party is a good distinction to make as we sort out what participatory authority is not. Participatory authority is not primarily concerned with its own interest. It is in place only as a form of social cohesion; once the interests the authority is in place for become second to self-interest, participatory authority becomes domination. The authority that slave owners in America can be said to have possessed then is only a coercive (and therefore illegitimate) authority rather than participatory authority, since the interaction was based on the self-interest of the slave owners. Without a common goal between the authoritative source and receiving parties, participatory authority can quickly become domination. This will also be clarified in chapter 3.

To address the seeming contradiction in these last few sections (namely, that paternalism is not seen as a form of participatory authority, but by inference, we can assume that the domination St. Thomas speaks of which relates to children or the common good can be called authority) we will consider the temporary and instructional role participatory authority can play. Simon deals with this topic thoroughly. She argues that any type of paternalism that can be categorized as acceptable authority must be both "provisional and pedagogical."[13] I will discuss this in more depth as we deal with the specific interactions this relates to in the next chapter.

Self-interest can also be dangerous when it is on the part of the receiving party. This attitude is both dangerous to society and to participatory authority. It is dangerous because the individual does not focus on the decision being made but rather on the immediate personal outcome. The type of decision made is not qualitatively different

[13] ibid, 134.

when a person is bribed to seat a customer earlier in a restaurant and when a person is bribed to remain silent about a crime. It is a decision of personal gain that involves weighing which option will result in greater individual gain. The same basic decision is made regardless of the significance of the command. This danger is clear when we consider such striking cases as Stanley Milgram's frightening experiments on obedience[14] or Nazi fervor in Germany. This topic warrants further exposition before we continue.

When a decision is made based on individual self-interest, the responsibility for the results of the action are easily shirked. The fault seems to lie with the authoritative mandate rather than the individual. To the person following an authoritative mandate, the decision can be reduced to a consideration of the personal benefit of compliance. Authority based on self-interest is capable of distancing the individual from the results of the action, allowing him of her to feel comfortable with actions he or she would never otherwise accept. (In a survey conducted before the Milgram experiments, 0% of the respondents admitted that they would be willing to shock a person into unconsciousness for a test. The experimental results speak for themselves.)

For this reason, we should also expand the discussion of coercion and domination to include psychological tactics such as persuasion, bribery or incentives. This is also worked out carefully by Carter. She points out that persuasion relies on some type of decision made out of self-interest of the receiving party, "persuasion may

[14] In the 1970's Stanley Milgram performed a series of experiments which were intended to show a cultural propensity toward willingness to obey authority. He set up a situation where the subject was asked to be a part of a study on learning and negative reinforcement. The subject was then directed to give increasingly large electrical shocks to the "student." With simple encouragement from the testers,

rely on reason or emotion, but whatever the motives and methods involved, persuasion means convincing someone solely through the strength of the arguments used."[15] Persuasion is on one hand a polar opposite of violence and on the other it is the form that must be resorted to when force has failed or will fail. (Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, in much of their work, elaborate on the idea that people must be persuaded by other forms of control, such as the media, in democratic societies where force is infeasible.)

Participatory Authority Is Not Government

Power and dominance are the two concepts that I have so far attempted to separate from participatory authority. The remaining ones will shed further light on the nature of some concepts commonly used regarding government that are often equated with authority. The first of these is that participatory authority cannot be equated with any particular political system, nor can it be equated with government in general. This is an essential distinction to make. Many people would assume that authority is not only inextricably tied to government, but would have to use a governmental example in a definition of authority. (Such as explaining authority in terms of laws or police.) First, to limit the discussion of authority to a discussion of government undermines the basic meaning of participatory authority. Government is a construct we use to address the issue of formal authority in large groups of people. Second, limiting authority to government can negate the importance of relationships involving authority that in no

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60% of the subjects were willing to shock the "student" into unconsciousness. Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1974), 35.

[15] Carter, *Authority and Democracy*, 14.

way involve government (for example the relationships of boss to worker, teacher to student, and professional to layperson.)

To continue to clarify the understanding of participatory authority in the political realm, we can also distinguish between participatory authority and legitimacy. Legitimacy is a very specific political term that means that the government that is in place is accepted by general consensus. A legitimate government may possess participatory authority, and may also be allowed to use a certain amount of force. Carter summarizes this distinction well:

> Legitimacy, like authority, ... implies recognition of a right to hold office and implies general consent to the rules of the political system, but whereas authority in its pure form is characterized by entirely voluntary compliance, legitimacy involves a right to enforce obedience, within certain agreed limits.[16]

There is also a more nuanced understanding of legitimacy that shows how it functions apart from participatory authority. Legitimacy is essentially the established form of government, while participatory authority is rooted in popular sentiment. There can be a legitimate regime that no longer possesses participatory authority. This can especially be noted in revolutionary periods, where it takes a certain amount of time before the revolutionary government is legitimate, yet it still carries participatory authority.[17] During the American Revolution, King George still was the legitimate ruler of the colonies, but the new leaders on the colonies can be said to have possessed more participatory authority. Joseph Raz asserts that authority can become legitimate only

[16] ibid, 51.
[17] ibid.

when the unbiased sentiments of the general population lie with it.[18] Obviously this is difficult situation to interpret, since all political conceptions are in some way conditioned by the system in which we live, but it is helpful to understand that legitimacy is a condition where people accept the rule because it is the way in which they would largely act anyway. Legitimacy feeds off participatory authority, but is a different concept, more specific in its political definition. (Be careful to note that I often refer to concepts of authority as legitimate or illegitimate, and that this is referring to the worth and appropriateness of that term for authority rather than the political definition. The two uses of legitimacy are separate.)

The final concept I want to pry away from participatory authority is that of its infallibility. This is central to establishing any participatory model of authority. First, many sources that claim to wield authority can be better called dominant or coercive. I assert that a coercive authority is illegitimate, and cannot be participatory. Second, no authority is ultimate. This will be discussed in chapter three, but for now bear in mind that every authority must refer to another in areas where the first party is not an authority, and no authority can be said to be ultimate in any single area. For example, every doctor must refer to an authority on plumbing or contracting when building a house, and no doctor can be said to have complete and unquestionable knowledge even in his or her area of specialty. Usually a source we call authoritative will have some element of true, participatory authority, but this is balanced by the threat of illegitimate, coercive authority.

[18] Joseph Raz, "Government by Consent" from *Authority Revisited* (Number29 in the Nomos Series) J.

Understanding where participatory authority ends and coercive authority begins is absolutely the crux of understanding how authority can play a positive role in society. The real hope for the future of politics and sociology is the search for what is true authority in society and what is domination or coercive authority. Only then can people begin to play a meaningful role in not only the decisions that affect their lives, but also the decisions they are responsible for. The next chapter will focus directly on how authority affects our day to day lives. We can now enter this discussion aware of the common preconceptions of authority, and begin to think of authority in terms of a participatory relationship rather than a one-sided interaction of dominance.

Roland Pennock, and John W. Chapman (eds.) (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 80.

Chapter 2
Participatory Authority Seen Practically

We must now begin to construct a practical, working concept of participatory authority. Since authority is a vital element in day to day life, integral to how human beings interact, it makes sense to begin by attempting to discern how authority affects the many human interactions it mediates. Now that the concepts of power, domination, and government have been separated from participatory authority, let us begin to build a more refined understanding of participatory authority by examining how it does or should work in several day to day interactions of authority. Before we can do this, however, we must examine why modern times uniquely require a new understanding of authority. We will begin with a brief justification for the necessity of a new, participatory understanding of authority.

Deconstruction of Coercive Authority and Reconstruction of Participatory Authority

There are at least three main reasons why authority cannot be seen as sheer domination with unthinking obedience (coercive authority.) First, modern technology and educational standards have put people in a better position to be able to understand the decisions that affect their lives. Communications channels such as the Internet have made information readily accessible. For example, Internet aficionados were able to access the Kenneth Star report on President Clinton's misconduct immediately upon its publication. People didn't need to rely on the judgements of Congress to determine if the President's actions were inappropriate. The general populace was able to make a judgement regarding the conduct of its elected officer. (Interestingly enough, it chose to accept these actions as acceptable for a President, which opens a whole new area regarding the involvement of

Americans in their political structure, but that is another topic.) Society no longer needs to rely on rulers who are in a unique position to understand a problem to address it. In short, the ability of authority to justify itself makes it necessary to do so. Since it is possible for most people to understand the decisions that affect their lives, those citizens must hold the people making those decisions responsible. This does not negate the necessity of professional or expert authority, but asserts that the expert is now in a situation where he or she is better able to justify his or her judgement. (This serves to purpose, in fact, of increasing the reliability and trustworthiness of the expert.) It was not acceptable for Kenneth Star to simply say that there was inappropriate Presidential action, he had to justify this with the extensive and publicly available report. Since people are able to understand the content of the report, and since it was possible to give them access to it via the Internet, it is necessary to do so.

The second main argument for a new understanding of authority is based on the idea that in modern times the possibilities for abuse of authority are more dangerous than ever in history. Technology at a leader's disposal could realistically make a holocaust happen virtually overnight. Hitler was limited in what he could accomplish by the technology of the 1940's. If Hitler came to power today, just think of the massive amount of technology that would assist his genocide. Compounding this is the reality in modern times that the mass media can in effect control the thoughts and attentions of the entire nation to suit certain interests. Here we need not even rely on conjecture as to the problems with this. The world has seen several genocides of Holocaustal proportions in the last twenty years, yet few Americans realize this. (East Timor, Rwanda and Iraq are just a few of these examples.)

The trird main argument for a new understanding of authority is that along with leader's access to technology of destruction, there is a distinct element of a greater willingness to use it on behalf of the person following an authoritative directive. This is due to the distance that is placed between the person following a command and the result of the action. Milgram's study demonstrated that this is a very powerful determinant of willingness to follow coercive authority. When the tester must physically place the "student's" hand on the electrode, he was much less likely to carry the experiment to completion (the maximum possible shock.) Likewise as people become more and more distant from the results of their actions in our culture, they become easier and easier to accept. Few Americans would admit fault for the massacres that are commonplace in Central America, yet they also give roughly one third of the money they earn to the government so it can continue its many campaigns of terror. Military advances have allowed bombs to be fired from far away; eliminating the necessity of contact with the actual death that ensues. Rulers no longer have to worry about soldiers getting "fits of morality" on a battlefield when confronted with the results of his or her action. This distance from the results of an action is a scary prospect for the future if people continue to submit to systems of coercive domination. It also provides a powerful case for the development of a different concept of authority, which do not accept authority to be purely domination. This said, I think it is safe to say that practically a concept of authority as blind obedience is outdated and dangerous.

The basic model for participatory authority is made clear by the preceding examples. For authority to function in modern society, we must adopt a model of participatory authority where the people demand accountability from the source and

responsibility from themselves. This relationship is established to address the necessity of social hierarchies, and to be able to implement the common good. This is the foundation for formal authority. The foundation for participatory authority is in the understanding of this as a relationship where each party has certain responsibilities to the other. Each party shares a common goal, and that goal must be the common good of the receiving party. Participatory authority exhibits itself by voluntary compliance from the receiving party—this means that there must be a very real option not to follow a judgement from the authoritative source of it is not justified or insufficiently justified. There is a lot to explore in this concept of participatory authority, so I will begin by examining how authority does (or should) function in several relationships that exhibit participatory authority to some extent. After we have a practical understanding of how participatory authority works or should work, we can examine in greater depth the characteristics of participatory authority.

Relationships of Participatory Authority

There are many relationships in modern society that involve participatory authority. I want to begin by examining the relationship of the professional to the layperson, focusing especially on the doctor/patient relationship. I think that the way this relationship is coming to be seen reflects the practice of participatory authority quite well. We all understand that a professional in a certain field has a certain amount of authority when speaking about that field due to a greater level of knowledge and training. To put this in terms of formal authority, first we can say that the professional must relate to the layperson on a hierarchical level, and second must addresses a certain common need (such as health care.) The professional's judgements are voluntarily followed because the

layperson understands their greater training, and expects the professional to be able to explain or justify his or her judgement. It is, however, essential for the layperson to understand this, because as soon as the professional becomes beyond criticism, there is no more participatory element in the relationship, it becomes an interaction of domination.

The Doctor/Patient Relationship:

The example of the doctor patient relationship is an excellent outline of this relationship, and I think it is one of the best-understood relationships of participatory authority. The relationship deals with the hierarchy that the doctor knows a great deal more about the human body than the patient. The common need that is met is that of a community's health care. The patient asks the doctor to use his or her extensive knowledge of the human body to attempt to diagnosis the problem. The diagnosis is authoritative because the doctor is able to give physiological justification for the conclusion. The patient may not understand every aspect of the explanation, but expects the doctor to be able to justify it. If unsatisfied, he or she is able to seek a second opinion to compare to the first doctor's judgement. The patient understands that the doctor is in a position of authority giving "more than advice, but less than a command"[1] and can push the doctor to justify the decision. The doctor also recognizes this relationship, and is prepared to justify the diagnosis. The concept of the second opinion is a key element in viewing this as a relationship of participatory authority. The patient does in fact have a very real option not to follow the advice of the doctor.

Another aspect of the doctor patient relationship is the cooperation and communication that must take place if the relationship is to be beneficial. As already

argued, there is no absolute authority, therefore the doctor cannot be said to unilaterally command authoritative respect in the relationship. The doctor is an expert on the human body—its anatomy and physiology. He or she must, however answer to the authority of the corpus of medical knowledge that we regard as the truth regarding medical practice. This is still a relationship of participatory authority, as the doctor expects the medical literature to be able to justify itself through experimental evidence.

There is a second limitation also placed on the authority of the doctor. When an authoritative judgement has been made, an appropriate course of action must then be taken. Here the line between the authority of the doctor and the authority of the patient becomes more gray. While the doctor may be an authority on the course of action most people have benefited from, the patient is clearly a better authority on his or her own individual experience and emotional needs. The doctor's authority at some point becomes less important than the authority of the patient speaking about his or her needs, and the doctor must be able to draw on this as an authoritative source in order to make a judgement. Each participant in the relationship possesses authority and expertise in different areas. For the relationship to flourish, as one of participatory authority, each participant must recognize and act on these understandings of authority.

To be fair, this example is not without its problems. Some doctors do not justify their judgements and make the patient feel uncomfortable to assume a meaningful role in the relationship. This is a type of coercion, and when this relationship prevails, participatory authority has been lost. When the doctor is no longer held accountable, his or her diagnoses are dominant, no longer authoritative. The danger in this is that without

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[1] Carter, *Authority and Democracy*. 17.

accountability, as discussed with domination, and especially paternalism, the doctor has the option to abuse that relationship (regardless of whether the doctor actually does.) This is when cases of sexual harassment and patients feeling lack of control over their bodies occur. A relationship of domination gives all the power to the doctor, and none to the patient, an authoritative one divides it according to the role of each (the doctor has the power to council, and the patient has power over the final course of action.)

A second and very profound challenge to participatory authority in the relationship of a doctor to patients is the difficulty of dealing with HMOs in modern medical practice. Medical insurance companies are becoming more and more difficult for patients, doctors, and hospitals to deal with. Cost cutting measures are forcing doctors to give less than appropriate health care, and hospitals to refuse care to certain patients. This is a very important problem for medical ethics to address, and poses a serious threat to the participatory nature of the doctor/patient relationship by asserting a system of domination over the entire relationship. I don't want to dwell on this too much, since an entire thesis could be written on this alone, but the threat must be addressed if the doctor patient relationship can survive according to a participatory model.

The Teacher/Student Relationship:

In the relationship of teacher to student, the same concept of participatory authority can be applied. The teacher has a greater amount of knowledge that he or she is attempting to convey to the student. Yves Simon outlines the three ways that a student can respond to this as "those who are perfectly submissive because their only interest is to get a credit, those who are said to have powerfully critical minds, and those described as

intelligently teachable."[2] He also points out that the role of the teacher is to allow the students to learn about the specific area that he or she is specialized in. In areas of non-specialty the teacher is just as much a student as those in the class. For a relationship of participatory authority to function in the classroom, Simon argues that either of the latter two types of students are able to take part. The critical student will find it more difficult to advance, and will probably do so more slowly, but by the end, he or she generally will have a better understanding of the material and the process by which it was discovered. The intelligently teachable student is willing to suspend a certain degree of skepticism and trust the teacher up to a point. In short, the student must recognize the role of the teacher and the limitations of that role. Authority can function as a participatory relationship in the classroom only as long as it is understood that the teacher's authority is provisional and pedagogical. In other words, the authority the teacher carries is only effective until the student has mastered that material. It is a short-term authoritative relationship. Like the previous example, however, the student and teacher must each recognize their role in the relationship. Also, the students have a very real option to not follow or believe the judgements of the teacher, another class can be taken, or the student can simply choose to fail. When students are of the first of Simon's types they are merely being dominated. The material they learn is mitigated by the fact that they never thought about the process or questioned its origin. This is a major problem in many school systems, I believe, and the role of participatory authority in schools is the topic for much further examination.

[2] Yves Simon, 95.

The Parent/Child Relationship:

Another relationship that evidences participatory authority to some degree is that of the parent to the child. This is an interesting and special authoritative relationship in that it is often times necessarily a dominant one. This is one of the few areas where this can be seen as appropriate and necessary. The child must be told not to put his or her hand in the fire or play with matches simply for his or her own safety. There is certainly a progression, however, to a relationship of participatory authority where the parent is expected to justify the decision. Eventually the response when the child asks "why?" cannot simply be "because I'm the boss" anymore. On the other hand, up to a certain point, explanation or rationalization will simply fall on deaf ears. Similar to the teacher, the parent's role is provisional and pedagogical. It is able to provide direction only for a certain period of growth, and its purpose is to teach the child how to live appropriately. The shift from domination to participatory authority is essential for a parental relationship to be meaningful and to prepare the child to live in the world. If it remains one of domination, like the student who simply works for a grade, the child will be lost in the world, unable to make decisions effectively within an authoritative structure. The person will be forced to accept the comforting domination of other sources.

The Prison/Prisoner Relationship:

To understand the special relationship society places prisoners in, we must think in broader social terms. Society recognizes a common need to ensure safety and (especially in America) property rights. To do so, society recognizes that some citizens will be unable to live within this framework, so we set up a system of incarceration. This is clearly a dominance interaction, but the hope of society is that eventually those people

will be able to live within society again. Society takes care of prisoners *in loco parentis* and as a protective measure for the rest of society.[3] Society agrees to care for the as the parent who simply needs to tell the child that he or she cannot drink Drain-o by telling the prisoner that he or she cannot kill people. The goal is that the prisoner will learn not to kill people and be able to assume a role in the structure of societal authority, assuming the responsibility inherent in this relationship. I think that the prospects for reforming our countries prison systems lie in recognizing that the goal of prisons should be largely provisional and pedagogical. It is really no surprise that many ex-convicts are unable to live in society effectively anymore when they have been trained to accept a permanent interaction of domination rather than the responsibility of participatory authority.

The Church/Churchgoer Relationship:

I think it is also essential to address the issue of authority within the church. I think that this topic requires a special attention to clarification of terms. The church is perhaps the largest source for the concept of authority as infallible domination. When the authority of the bible or the authority of the pope is spoken of, it is generally meant to be the ability to exact blind obedience. This is even more problematic than considering issues of political or other social authority, because the usage is so entrenched in the language of the church that the meaning of dominance goes without question. In the church, authority is often equated with proof or absolute correctness. This can be seen as various traditions call certain sources uniquely authoritative. For example, Methodists

[3] In practice, I am not convinced that this is, in fact, the primary role of prisons, considering that America has one of the leading handgun death rates despite the fact that we boast 25% of the worlds population of prisoners and only 5% of its general population. 60% of federal prisoners are drug offenders with no history of violence. (Z staff, "For Justice and Against Prisons," *Z Magazine* 13(3) March, 2000, 4.) It seems that (Continued on next page)

rely on the authority of the bible, the authority of reason, and the authority of experience. Authority is seen as a sort of unquestioned reference point for church life. The same is true of papal or other church authority. I feel that this is such a gross misuse of the term authority as I see it that I am tempted to simply not use it in reference to church issues.

On the other hand, I think that the church can benefit immensely from a participatory understanding of authority. Many theologians are also recognizing this role of authority within the church. For authority to become participatory in the church, the church must recognize that this implies a relationship of accountability and willing obedience. The church has been one of the institutions where historically we can see some of the greatest misuses of authority. The crusades, the inquisition, and missionary conquest are all examples of the problem of equating authority with domination. When people carry out directives by some mandate that cannot be questioned, the individual loses his or her ability to make rational decisions and judgements. Authority must be seen as participatory within the church if it is to play a compassionate and meaningful role in people's lives.

The Government/Citizen Relationship:

Now I will attempt to begin to sort out how participatory authority relates to government. I think that the true prospects for democracy lie in a better understanding of how authority relates to people's lives and how coercive and participatory authority enter into the relationship. To even begin to address this issue in a concise way, we should begin by summarizing the elements that are necessary for a government/citizen

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the issue of incarceration lies outside standard "protection of citizen" mentality. In this thesis, however, I want to deal with the consequences of the interaction rather than the philosophy of incarceration.

relationship of participatory authority. The government's primary purpose must be implementing the common good of the people it seeks to represent. In doing so, it must be accountable to the people, and must act solely in accord with their wishes. The government has no outside abilities or duties. The government and the citizens must then have the common goal of the good of the people. The government must be able to justify all of its judgements, and the people must demand that it do so. As soon as either party fails in its obligations, the government (legitimate though it may be) becomes an institution of domination. The citizens of a government evidencing participatory authority must willingly comply with the directives of the government (without force or coercion.) This means that there must be a very real option for the citizen to reject the authority of the government if it fails to live up to the requirements of participatory authority.

Much has been written regarding where our government lives up to these requirements and where it fails. Just from a cursory analysis, however, I think it is safe to say that even our government leaves much to be desired regarding its role as a true participatory authority, though there is some attempt in modern times to make government more accountable for its actions. Voting has become so distant and meaningless an action that few Americans turn out to the polls. Involvement in politics has been trivialized to a point where the plight of one Cuban refugee boy carried more public attention than any issue that will actually affect their lives. The media is complicit in this role of the government, so a further dimension of difficulty is added when we attempt to address the question of participatory authority in politics.

It is debatable whether there is a real option to fail to comply with the directives of government in modern times. One option is to give up and leave the country. In fact

much of patriotism as I see it is based on nothing more than fear of living somewhere worse. We have seen over and over again that when individuals or groups attempt to stand up to certain governmental policies, the effects are usually unnerving. For example, it took over 50 years for dissident women to receive voting privileges. Native Americans were exterminated as policy for years, and many other dissident groups have had to pay the ultimate price for their defiance. Many authors have covered the area of political authority and where we stand, yet even from a cursory analysis, we can see that we still have a long way to go to make a participatory concept of authority a reality within government.

The Mass Media/Masses Relationship:

The final relationship that I want to examine the role of authority within is that of the mass media to a "mass media culture." In chapter 4, I will elaborate on the role that the attitudes presented in the mass-media play, but for now, I want to address the role of the mass media to the viewers as an authoritative relationship. The role of the media is to entertain and inform. Niel Postman argues that the entire purpose of television is to entertain, and that everything is presented according to this mold, resulting in a society of frivolous people incapable of carrying out any logical thought or rational discourse.[4] This argument is compelling, but for now I want to address the role of the news in general (including papers, radio, television, etc.) as a real way that people seek to become informed.

[4] Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business,* (Penguin Books, 1985).

As an authoritative relationship, the media attempts to address the difference of information or ability to convey certain information and meet the common need of information. The problem is that this is seldom seen as a participatory relationship. People too often view mainstream news as the ultimate source for unbiased information and fail to recognize its inherent bias. In fact, the news that is determined to be fit for mainstream consumption is the news that certain influential newspapers see fit to print. These choices are also not made arbitrarily. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky argue that news passes through several distinct filters before it comes to a person's paper or television in *Manufacturing Consent*.[5] Unless the individual chooses to force the news media to justify the stories and attitudes it conveys, he or she gives into its domination. At the point the media is in a position to print whatever it wants to without challenge, the truth becomes irrelevant.

The main mode I can see that can force the mainstream media to assume responsibility and better exemplify participatory authority is to seek the proverbial "second opinion." Grassroots magazines and alternative media are becoming more and more prominent in America. These types of news media serve to mediate the information monopoly that mainstream media has occupied. The Internet also poses an interesting new challenge to traditional forms of information dissemination, though only time will tell how prominent a role it assumes as far as this goes. The information that is available on the Internet regarding any specific issue is enough to make any journalist think twice about stretching the truth or omitting relevant facts or stories from publication. It will be

[5] Edward S. Herman, and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 3.

interesting to track the future development of the Internet and the mainstream news media as authorities of news.

Each of the relationships discussed (and the many which were not even mentioned) deserves special attention in order to understand how participatory authority works in day to day interactions. Only then can we seek to understand where participatory authority operates, where it falls short, and how we can address this. Now that we hopefully have a more comfortable understanding of how participatory authority can and does work through these specific examples, we can begin to examine it in terms of its particular characteristics. This will give participatory authority the necessary theoretical basis that will make it a concept applicable to all relationships of authority.

Chapter 3
Characteristics of Authority

So far I have first attempted to address common assumptions regarding authority which I believe are erroneous, and second have pointed out how a model of participatory authority can and does operate, to varying extents, in most areas of human interaction. Now I will attempt to flesh out the theoretical characteristics of formal and participatory authority in greater detail. This will both help the reader understand the specific nature of participatory authority and give a more general understanding of it so as to better be able to apply this concept to myriad situations.

Necessary

We will first seek to establish a strong theoretical basis for what I call formal authority. This is the very basic authority that is inherent in how we interact socially. It has both *de facto* and *de jure* components, each of which we must address in order to be able to then expand to the definition of participatory authority.

de facto:

Authority is an integral part of how people interact whether we recognize it or not. The preceding chapter clarifies a few obvious interactions of authority, but authority extends its roots even deeper into our social fabric. Virtually every decision we make is affected by some kind of authority. We drive on the right side of the road because authority tells us to. We build our houses to certain specifications, we work at certain times, we view some foods as healthy and some as harmful, we like certain people's opinions better than we like others—the list goes on. All of these are choices we make that are affected by authority. Some of them are so deeply ingrained that we hardly even

think of them as such. Authoritative interactions affect everyone, from a businessperson working in a downtown high-rise office to a Native American family living deep in the reservation, miles from the nearest convenience store, authority still is a formative structure. Even hermits must live with and accept authoritative decisions regarding where they can live and other issues. One does not have to look far to make the case that authority definitely does exist in practice.

de jure:

We must then consider whether this is enough to justify authority in theory. In order to establish a firm theoretical basis for authority, we must outline why authority theoretically must exist. Without this, it could be argued that authority is simply an arbitrary system of interaction that has been widely accepted. I have three primary arguments to justify the theoretical necessity of formal authority. First, it is necessary to deal with certain hierarchical interactions that are inherent in society. Second, it is necessary to direct the common good, whether this is purely organizational or involving complex social structures. Third, authority is the means by which society searches for the truth. Formal authority is the only way that humankind can advance from generation to generation regarding the truth or knowledge. I will address each of these separately for clarity.

The first argument has already been covered to a large extent. Formal authority acts as a basis for mediation between two parties with differing levels of expertise, training, or skill in a particular area. A relationship of formal authority exists between the doctor and patient because the doctor has a great deal more training and skill regarding the functioning of the human body than the patient does. Authority acts to mediate this

hierarchical difference by establishing the roles that each party plays in the relationship. This is the first necessary role of formal authority.

Second, there is a need for social organization. Human beings live together, and evolutionarily must. We are a social species, and could not survive and propagate in the world without forming groups. The most basic role of organization that formal authority plays is that of arbitrary decision making to replace the need for unanimity in a group. In some small groups, unanimity is a feasible option in arbitrary decision-making, but as the size of the group expands, we must rely on other decision-making processes such as majority rule, representative democracy, or arbitrary power assignment.

For example, one decision that must be made for a community to function in modern times is that of which side of the road to drive on. Since this is an arbitrary issue, we do not need to consider personal disagreements or moral issues yet in this concept of formal authority. The decision can either be made by a majority vote, a representative elected to represent many individuals, or someone entrusted to make this decision (either by popular mandate or by allowing a ruler to be dominant.) Though this is the authority to make decisions regarding the good of the group, we must attempt to address how this would function when the good of the group is not an arbitrary issue such as which side of the road to drive on. How does formal authority serve the common good when we have trouble even agreeing on what the common good is?

This is a difficult topic, and I feel that attention to it is often lacking in society. It is however, central to establishing formal authority. Most people have an innate sense of what the common good entails. For instance, most are swayed by the argument that it is

justifiable for a starving person with no other options to steal a loaf of bread to avoid starvation. Simon quotes St. Thomas' analysis of this as " in the case of necessity, all things become common."[1] Chomsky points out that though these feelings are often masked by political of corporate propaganda, they are integral to how most people think: "Although most people think the government has a responsibility to ensure reasonable, minimal standards for poor people, they're also against welfare, which is what the government efforts to ensure reasonable, minimal standards for poor people are called."[2] To begin, we must understand that there is a common good within groups of people, and that it is dictated by the members of the group's needs.

The most obvious example of how formal authority relies on the common good relates to the relationship of a community to its governing body. When an authoritative relationship is present, there must be some common good that is to be addressed. If there is no common good, the relationship is a partnership of individuals seeking only their self-interest. To clarify this, let us refer again to Simon. "In contradistinction to mere partners, the members of a community—family, factory, football team, army, state, church…—are engaged in a common action whose object is qualitatively different from a sum of interdependent goods."[3] The role of formal authority is to facilitate this common good. Authority can take the form of a person (boss, coach, ruler, etc.) or can be some kind of collective decision-making unit (family meeting or parental discussion, community council, etc.) From this basic, formal model, either coercive (illegitimate) or participatory authority can develop.

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[1] Simon, 36.
[2] Noam Chomsky, *The Common Good: Interviews by David Barsamian*, Compiled and Edited by Arthur Naiman (Chicago: Odonian Press, 1999), 26.

To summarize the importance of the common good as it relates to formal authority, we can say that the action of the common good calls for authority. Since there is a need for action regarding the common good, the concept of authority must act to mediate and unify this. An individual alone, no matter how socially conscious, is simply not in a position to be able to see the scope of a problem and implement an appropriate course of action. This must be carried out by some type of authoritative body which will better be able to collect the relevant information, determine an appropriate course of action and implement that action. We will see that, in participatory authority, the authoritative body must be willing and able to justify the determination and implementation of any course of action through dissemination of the collected information. In more non-alliterative terms this means that the authority has the responsibility to be the source of knowledge of the common good and the source of action on it. An individual is simply not in a position to be able to perform these vital functions.

The final argument for the necessity of formal authority is closely related to the idea of the common good, but deserves separate attention. Authority must exist in order to facilitate the search for the truth. It plays a very different role than the authority discussed in the previous examples, however. Authority is the collective mass of knowledge that various authorities appeal to. As was discussed with the doctor/patient relationship, the doctor is required to refer to the medical literature as an authority. Once again this is a fundamental basis for formal authority in society. The formal authority of the truth can either be treated as coercive or participatory, depending on how the

[3] Simon. 30.

relationship is conceived. Without the authority of the truth, there can never be progress. Without the authority of historical truth, we can never learn the lessons history has to teach us. Without the authority of scientific truth, we will be caught in a cycle where every generation must independently "rediscover the wheel." Truth is the foundation that attempts to allow society to grow in both knowledge and wisdom from generation to generation

The *de jure* conditions requiring formal authority call upon it to act to mediate social hierarchies, to recognize and act on the common good, and to search for the truth. Formal authority can then be seen as not only a social construct evidenced in many aspects of life, but a relationship central to and essential to how people interact with each other and how society develops. In short the existence of society requires formal authority in order to function and progress. Participatory authority is uniquely able to address this necessity of authority and still allow people to play a meaningful role in the decisions that affect their lives.

Relational

Now we can begin to move toward a more specific understanding of participatory authority based on formal authority. Let us begin by examining the nature of authority as a relationship more closely. To say that authority is relational is to immediately insist that it depends on both parties involved. There are other types of relationships observable in society, most notably those of mutualism or a partnership. The type of relationship we will consider participatory authority to fall under is one where two parties must relate on an unequal level in some respect (a hierarchy) and share a common goal.

A mutualist relationship is one where each party has comparable assets to offer and benefits to reap from the relationship. This relationship requires a shared goal, but the participants relate to each other as equals—there are no hierarchical elements. This type of relationship is demonstrated by a series of compromises and discussions. Decisions are made mutually, and no force or method of control is necessary. For example, we would not think of a healthy marriage as having to make use of authority—it is a relationship of mutual interest and benefit.

The partnership is a relationship where there is a social inequality to address, but there are also independent interests at stake, according to Yves Simon.[4] As was discussed in the first chapter, the self-interest of either party can make for a tenuous relationship of participatory authority. If the source party's self interest comes first, the common goal will be lost, and if the receiving party's self interest becomes first, the response to authority will be based on individual's well being rather than an understanding of the necessity of the authority. In a partnership, the social hierarchical relationship is in place, but there is no shared goal. An example of the partnership is seen in most business relationships. Here the common goal does not need to be and often is not the exchange of merchandise. The customer seeks to gain a commodity or service, and the retailer seeks a profit. Certainly there are exceptions to this in some businesses where the retailer has an honest interest in supplying the needs of the consumer, but surely the executives of "Wal-Mart" have no interests beyond gaining a profit for the company. The partnership where there are individual interests at stake for each party involved fails to live up to the relational requirements for participatory authority because there is no common goal.

[4] Simon, 29 *f.*

Participatory

Along with the concept of participatory authority as a relationship, we must examine what it means to even say that it is based on an element of participation. This is the element that demands responsibility from both parties. As discussed in the previous chapter, the source must be able to justify its judgement and the receiving party must demand that the source do so. (e.g. The doctor justifies the diagnosis with medical reasons, and the patient must understand and accept this diagnosis or seek the advise of another doctor.) Both parties in this participatory relationship have a weighty burden of responsibility to the other. To be participatory, the relationship of authority demands this. If the responsibility of either is shirked, authority becomes sheer domination. If the source party is allowed to refuse or fail to justify a judgement, they can in theory demand anything from the receiving party—hence domination. If the receiving party does not question or seek justification from the authoritative source, even if the source is able to justify the judgment, it is domination. When there is no accountability from either one or both of the sides, participatory authority is replaced with domination.

We have already touched on the historical cogency of participatory authority in terms of the Roman Senate, but it deserves elaboration to spell out just what participation meant in this context. The Senate was able to council the popular assembly by the use of *auctoritas*. Their recommendations were understood to be well informed and made by intelligent people. The popular assembly was then able to accept or reject the Senate's judgement, but usually accepted, understanding the Senate's better position to make a decision. Carter quotes Momsen's interpretation of this relationship as "more than advice

and less than a command"[5] It is important to point out that this is a relationship that usually results in compliance, but only voluntarily so. This is the essence of modern participatory authority. I do not think that this concept of authority is compromised by the fact that, as Hannah Arndt[6] and April Carter[7] point out, there has never been anything quite like the system of Roman government since that time. Modern participatory authority begins as a day to day understanding of social interactions that will eventually condition how people view government, rather than evidencing itself first in a Roman style government. This will be elaborated on in the conclusion.

Referent

There is another characteristic of participatory authority that has been alluded to in this chapter, but not spelled out explicitly yet—that of its referent nature. By this I mean that it refers to some other authoritative source. This is closely related to the discussion on the infallibility of authority. No authority is complete in and of itself. All authorities must refer to another authority in areas of non-specialty. A plumber accepts the authority of the doctor in medical issues, the doctor accepts the authority of the teacher in educational issues, and the teacher accepts the authority of the plumber in issues of sewage. This is not however any kind of cyclical relationship, but an intricate net of interrelationships. We specialize for the sake of proficiency. In order to make up of the inability of an individual to master all areas of life, we rely on others who have mastered

[5] Carter, *Authority and Democracy*, 17.
[6] Hannah Arndt, "What was Authority?" in *Authority* (Number 1 in the Nomos Series) Carl Friedrich (ed.). (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1958), 110.
[7] Carter, *Authority and Democracy*, 17.

those areas for their authority in that area. Simon bluntly states, "only the union of many can make up for the failure of each."[8]

We must be careful not to slip into the argument that since everyone is an authority there is no authority. Rather, we must accept that participatory authority has many manifestations in our social interactions. Authority is not ultimate, but facultative and contextual. Everyone is an authority in something, and everyone must refer to some authority. (Likewise, every authority must be able to refer to another authority.) I also want to make it very clear that I am not taking the postmodernist stance that every individual is an ultimate authority. Rather the responsibility to respond actively to authority and participate in it lies within every individual.

Varying in Importance

All authorities in participatory authority are also not equal. Greater weight is given to authority of greater importance. An authority can be either varying in degree of importance to the individual, (thus given greater or less weight) or it can also be more or less reliable. As an example of the first, at a time of plumbing crisis, the plumbing authority will carry great weight with the individual, lest the carpet be flooded with unremovable filth. On the other hand, someone who is an authority on twelfth century monasticism will be relatively unimportant. Regarding the second variation of the reliability of authority, the advice of a college professor of British literature regarding Shakespeare will be more highly valued than the advice of a high school theater teacher. Both may be seen as an authority, but the professor claims a higher degree of understanding, and therefore his or her judgements will be more highly respected.

[8] Simon, 28.

Compassionate

A final aspect of participatory authority that is becoming more prominent as of late is its inherent compassion. Once authority ceases to be a strict domination control interaction, and begins to be seen as a relationship that is focused on the common good and understands and embraces both the diversity and commonality of humanity, compassion emerges as an important element. Kathleen Jones and Richard Sennet spell this out distinctly in their respective works. Jones argues that authority gives meaning to human interaction and so must have elements of nurturance and compassion. She views authority as a "contextual, relational process of communication and connection"[9] rather than a simple problem solving process. This strikes at the heart of the issue this paper seeks to address. This is not only a general attitude toward authority, but a specific, contextual one. In a relationship of participatory authority, a patient does not enter the doctor's office with preconceived notions of defiance or of submission, but rather beginning a process of "communication and connection" with the doctor that will work toward the goal of the patient's health.

There is also a sense that compassion itself inherently influences participatory authority. Dostoevsky elaborates on this in the parable of the Grand Inquisitor from *The Brother's Karamazov*. The Inquisitor imprisons Christ because Christ has come and offered people a vision of authority combined with freedom—a world where there is mystery and no ultimate reference or truth. The Inquisitor charges that this is inhumane, that humans cannot bear this contradiction. Sennet quotes:

[9] Kathleen Jones, "On Authority: or Why Women are Not Entitled to Speak" in *Authority Revisited* (Number 29 in the Nomos series) J Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (eds.). (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 159.

> ...Man seeks to worship only what is incontestable, so incontestable indeed, that all men at once agree to worship it together. For the chief concern of these miserable creatures is not only to find something that I or someone else can worship, but to find something that all believe in and worship, and the absolutely essential thing is that they should do it all together.[10]

Christ waits as the Inquisitor pronounces Christ's sin as giving humans a real hope for an existence that can have real freedom. At the end of the speech, Christ kisses the Inquisitor. The Inquisitor, stunned and confused, proceeds to release Christ. The message is confusing. It is not clear what causes this turn apart from the effect of compassion. There was no force or coercion, the action was not planned as an escape attempt, yet the authority of the compassion of Christ was able to overcome the bondage of reason and strictly categorical thinking. Compassion was able to open doors to an understanding of authority in which people are able to question the bonds of its infallibility. Christ's life was a direct attack of the prevailing understandings of authority. His legacy was not as a challenge to the specific actions of authority, but to the concept of authority as unbreakable and dominant. Rodger Shinn argues that Christ appeared in this role as model for both the message and the form of challenge.[11]

The essential nature of participatory authority relies on many characteristics. I believe that these can apply to all types of authority, and comprise a coherent and helpful way of understanding how authority can and should function. It is forst based on necessary, formal authority. Second, it is a participatory relationship. Third, it is always referent to another source and can vary in both degree of importance and competence. Finally, there is a compassionate aspect to participatory authority. This understanding of

[10] Sennet, 194. from Dostoevsky *The Brothers Karamazov*, (New York: North Point Press, 1990).

participatory authority is able to account for and propose an acceptable and beneficial general model for authority. Authority is, then, not a concept to be feared, but one to be used to its full limits in social mediation. Participatory authority becomes the only system capable of humanely balancing the human extremes of skepticism and domination.

[11] Rodger L. Shinn, "The Locus of Authority: Participatory Democracy in the Age of the Expert" in *Erosion of Authority* Clyde L. Manschreck (ed.). (New York: Abingdon Press, 1971), 116 *f.*

Chapter 4
Challenge to Participatory Authority: The Mass Media Culture

Mass media is everywhere. It is billboards, it is the movie theaters, it is the radio, but most importantly, and most pervasively, it is the television. Television is viewed to greater or lesser extents by nearly every person in America. Those who don't watch the TV or watch very little are still assailed with the cultural icons it presents and the attitudes it fosters. It has become a sort of national religion; its images both unite and conform us. It becomes necessary, then, to attempt to understand how the mass media affects or expresses the attitudes of the general population regarding participatory authority.

There are several notable trends in the mass media culture that not only serve to distract or convince the audience, but exhibit a tendency in society to resort to a type of individualist egoism even Ayn Rand would be proud of. The type of egoism I am concerned with, unlike that of Rand, who believed that society would become the most productive when everyone seeks personal betterment, is either inherently or explicitly at the expense of a participatory understanding of authority. In this type of egoism, the common good is not only ignored, but often subverted by the advancement of the individual. This is the kind of "crush those under you in order to get ahead" egoism that is evidenced in many areas of television. Let us examine a few examples of this phenomenon.

The first example touched on in the introduction is the game show "Greed." The encouragement of the reduction of teammates through one on one challenges (i.e. the Terminator) instills the attitude that not only is it acceptable to harm a friend or teammate

in order to get more money, it brings you closer to winning. This show's flaw is not its focus on capitalist greed, but its focus on the destruction of the arbitrarily assembled team in order to win. Contestants, goaded on by an enthusiastic audience, are all too willing to do just that. Columnist Joyce Millman reacted, "If you're the type who believes in the inherent goodness of your fellow man, "Greed" will cure you of that notion pretty quick."[1] The individualist egoism seen on "Greed," however is not a manifestation of the indecencies of humans, but rather another shirked responsibility for individual responsibility for the common good at the hands of an "authority." The show is ultimately responsible for the attitude of egotism by the way in which it is structured. If there is anything more disturbing than the attitudes of harmful individualist egotism, it is the surprising popularity of the show. On its first broadcast, the show swept "Nov. 4 [1999] with a 4.0 rating in the key adults 18-49 demographic."[2] It has been consistently a high rating show for Fox up until the time of submission.

The threat to participatory authority posed in "Greed" is one which not only fails to recognize any understanding of the common good (which is necessary to understand participatory authority) but which actively seeks to counter it. People are encouraged to think in terms of individual advancement above and at the expense of the team. It makes these attitudes seem normal and desirable. These attitudes are then reflected in other social interactions. Instead of building people up to be able to understand and become participants in the structures of authority that involve them, this attitude encourages people to ignore that this is even an issue. By failing to understand the importance of the common good, people become unwitting subjects of the structures in place to address

[1] Joyce Millman, www. salon.com
[2] Tom Bierbaum "Greed is Good for Fox." *Reuters*. November 7, 1999.

issues of the common good. Let us examine another example of how this is accomplished in the mass media culture.

Power for Living is perhaps one of the most recognizable idioms in all of mass media religion. Now that TV evangelists are becoming less and less prominent, the focus of TV religion has shifted from programs to commercials. If a viewer does not want to watch a program, he or she is more likely to change the channel than if he or she does not want to watch a commercial. I would contend (though I have no proof) that virtually every TV viewing American has seen the commercial for *Power for Living*. This goes a long way in itself toward shaping the public's opinion of religion from a mass media standpoint. The book itself almost becomes secondary in the face of the "thirty second evangelizing" reaching every TV set in America several times a day. This said, what exactly is the message that this commercial religion is conveying?

John Updike calls it a "do-it-yourself trend"[3] in religion. This mirrors the distrust of organized religion that Minnesotans and their Governor openly admit.[4] The internet is flooded with pages encouraging surfers to "Get to know God personally." The problem with the theology of these trends is not so much the emphasis as what the emphasis precludes. By stressing so much the personal nature of religion, people become fractured and isolated to a personal belief structure that is different than anyone else's. This not only leads to spiritual isolation, but is an easy way to dismiss serious issues of spirituality that should be addressed. When people accept that they simply must disagree because

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[3] John Updike, "The Future of Faith: Confessions of a Churchgoer," *The New Yorker*, November 29, 1999, 84-91.

[4] Martha Sawyer Allen; Peg Meier; Staff Writers. "Ventura is far from alone in his views on religion, poll shows: The 17 percent who agree that 'religion is a sham' translates to about one-sixth of the Minnesota's adults. [sic]" *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. October 9, 1999: Section 1B.

their personal beliefs are different, Christianity loses the unifying commonality of the community and shared set of beliefs. While these mass media representations do not completely neglect the concept of a Christian community, the emphasis is clearly on the individual and the individualized nature of spirituality.[5] The modern threat of mass media religion is that the neglect of the church community will become so deep that it will lose meaning with regard to Christian spirituality. John Murray calls it a "crisis of community," (playing on the "crisis of authority" tagline.) He sees that the Christian community is so essential to Christian life that ignoring it renders a discussion of authority within the church moot. As this thesis asserts "each of (the functions of authority) is a function of service to the community."[6] When the understanding of community is lost, not only will the important social functions that churches perform in society will be lost, but an attitude of egoist individuality will preclude any public discussion of the common good.

To return to Fox, I think that there is a larger trend of media attitudes toward authority the involve a complete rejection of it. The results of this in practical situations need not be assumed either, thanks to an interesting marketing trend seen with Fox (though I am indebted to Garret Paul for this analysis.) Fox has spent years promoting shows that either explicitly or implicitly have very powerful anti-authority messages. The

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[5] *Power for Living* deals only incidentally with the role of the community as a way to continue to grow in faith on page 89-90 in the 134-page booklet. Jamie Buckingham, *Power for Living*. (Arthur S. DeMoss Foundation, 1983).
The web site has only one five live blurb about church community on the fourth page, with one Old Testament verse. The first four pages have such titles as "GOD LOVES YOU AND CREATED YOU TO KNOW HIM PERSONALLY", and "WE MUST INDIVIDUALLY RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND LORD; THEN WE CAN KNOW GOD PERSONALLY AND EXPERIENCE HIS LOVE." Extensive new testament citation accompanies each section. www.health-today.net/pascal.know-god.htm

[6] John Courtney Murray, "Freedom, Authority, and Community" in *Freedom and Authority in the West*. George N Shuster (ed.). (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 18.

two most successful long-term shows ("The Simpsons" and "The X-Files") are prime examples. "The Simsons'" initial popularity was to a large degree centered on the young rebel Bart. The first few seasons especially, featured Bart as a kid bent on destroying any type of authority. Chants of "eat my shorts," dreams of spending Springfield's money to buy huge robotic ants to eat the school, and wearing a "down with homework" shirt are just a few Bart's antics. Lately Lisa has become an archetype of intelligent rebellion She has become a vegetarian, is very suspicious of the abilities of the school, and constantly is at odds with the town's richest and most evil archetype of domination, Montgomery Burns. "The Simpsons" is a monument to the distrust of authority on both a reactionary (Bart) and rational (Lisa) level.

"The X-Files" is far more overt in its themes of distrust for authority. The show opens every episode with the slogan "the truth is out there." Mulder and Scully are constantly battling against the works of the very powerful global conspiracy that threatens the existence of the entire human race. They are urged to not ever trust anyone, and even the people they know best have turned on them. "The X-Files" is another clear depiction of an attitude of distrust for all authority.

The interesting point is the recent trouble Fox has had with ratings and ratings reporting in its key viewing audience. It launched a massive ad campaign urging young viewers to call in or report that they were watching Fox's shows. This seems to suggest that the themes of these shows had spread to include the viewer's relationship with Fox. By encouraging attitudes against authority, the viewers naturally became to distrust the authority of Fox as well. This suggests that the themes presented in these shows do indeed have an affect on how their viewers perceive the world.

Movies present us with countless themes of government conspiracy and the necessity of distrust for authority. Some of the most recent examples include "The Matrix" and "Enemy of the State." In "The Matrix," people are actually living in tubes and being milked for energy by a robot master race, being fed images of what life is through tubes in their bodies. This suggests that maybe we should distrust everything, even life itself. "Enemy of the State" depicts a view of America where anyone could become the subject of a massive government manhunt, employing high-tech gadgets galore to search for an uncooperative citizen. The government is to be feared, and the only way to avoid it's control is to assume a false identity, live in a cage with no connection to the outside world, and never look at the sky where satellite cameras monitor everything.

Images from the mass media affect how people live their lives in very profound ways. Unless we recognize this and seek to understand the messages we are receiving from the mass media, there is a very serious threat to participatory authority. The attitudes of individualist egotism in "Greed" and *Power for Living* Religion undermine the very basis for participatory authority. When the individual is concerned only with personal advancement, not only is the community harmed, but the individual becomes lost in a sea of isolation, where the boats that were built to sail him or her across it crush and drive the individual under water.

Rejecting authority entirely reduces humans to anger directed toward an immobile source. It serves only to once again isolate the individual from what is supposed to be a cooperative and compassionate interaction. By failing to live up to the expectations of participatory authority the person unwittingly becomes a tool of the oppressor. Rejecting

authority does not make it disappear, but rather become a source of domination. Rather than rejecting authority, the individual must understand authority as reliant on their contribution, and a necessary element of society. Participatory authority is not to be feared and rejected, but embraced and made into an integral part of how people conceive the social interactions integral to their lives.

Conclusion

Society is at a decisive point in history where our social circumstances demand that our concepts of authority be closely examined, reconceptualized, and refined. Authority must be conceived as a participatory relationship in place to mediate certain social interactions in a cooperative, contextual way in order to avoid the threat of domination. Though there are many challenges to this model, it is already beginning to become an important part of how people conceptualize authority. With this understanding, I will seek to address the course of action that I believe will foster the ideals of participatory authority and make a final note about the demand for action.

The Argument

The argument for participatory authority has thus far stated that modern times pose a very unique and scary threat of domination. Even without an analysis of the possibilities of outcomes of domination, most Americans hold the ideal of freedom dearly. The option of unquestioning submission to any institution is simply not one we as a culture are willing to accept.

It has also been argued that several factors necessitate some kind of concept of authority to mediate social interactions. The concept of formal authority can be dealt with in two ways: coercive authority or participatory authority. With coercive authority people simply allow someone else higher in a hierarchy to make decisions regarding what the common good is and how to implement it. With participatory authority, the people dictate what the common good is to an authoritative source, and hold the source accountable for any judgements regarding it.

In order to reconcile these two arguments, we must chose the course of a participatory model for authority. A coercive model is nothing more than domination, and domination is to be avoided. What this means for social interactions is that we must actively seek out how we can develop a system of participatory authority in social interactions, lest we apathetically accept domination.

Making Participatory Authority a Threat

How then, do we transfer the ideology of the freedom of participatory authority into a relevant part of our daily lives? How do we make it a threat to the traditional and sometimes unconsciously or apathetically accepted forms of domination? By rethinking the meaning of authority as participatory, channels are opened up for people to examine their lives and take an active role in shaping the decisions that affect them. The true "crisis of authority" lies in the development of participatory authority. Once those entrenched in power (and coercive authority) become accountable for their actions, the ability to exact unthinking control becomes weaker and is eventually lost. Once participatory authority becomes a threat, systems of domination crumble. This is done by developing authority as a contextual relationship that allows people to interact within necessary hierarchies, forcing authority to be accountable for its actions and judgements and by only exacting voluntarily submission to those judgements.

Systems of power are not eternal—none has ever been. At certain points in history groups of people stand up and recognize that they are worth more than the cannon fodder for those in power. In order to establish a healthy and compassionate model of authority, in which an attitude that individuals have the ability to collectively shape the future

prevails, these attitudes must be brought into people's day to day lives. How do we then begin to make participatory authority a pervasive part of how we perceive the world?

The key to making participatory authority a threat is for it to become an entrenched part of how people understand and interact with institutions of authority. This begins with simple interactions of authority such as with the doctor or with the boss. Participatory authority demands that people take responsibility in the forces that affect their lives. People must unite to promote the common good of employees in the workplace. We must foster neighborhood community networks to represent the interests of the neighborhood. The challenge of participatory authority begins in addressing the interactions of authority that directly affect peoples daily lives. Only from this point can we begin to address the larger institutions of domination in our lives.

By seeking to address the issue of participatory authority and government, we must inevitably enter the discussion of a "threshold" for authority. In more vulgar terms, when can it be said that people should revolt against a government that cannot be molded by the people toward a participatory model? What is the breaking point where people can be said to not be able to demonstrate meaningful participation in the system of authority? When must people openly confront an institution of domination that cannot be reformed through a participatory understanding of authority?

Richard Sennet argues that government is kept in check by a series of revolutions. Stephen Carter argues that the government forms itself around the dissent of the governed. The government is forced to respond when the people express their dissent loudly enough. Both of these views (and many others I feel) are based on a negative model of governmental reform—that government can only be conditioned by how much

people hate it. It really seems far from ideal for the government to be seen as a source of domination that will be tolerated up to a certain point. Participatory authority asserts that unless a government has the goal of the common good of the people and the people play a meaningful role in determining that good, it is an institution of domination. In my view, large government has to a large degree lost the understanding that it is in place only in order to meet certain common needs of people. Special interests and partisan politics essentially control the modern bureaucratic government, leaving little room for individuals to use the system as a unifying source of the pursuit of the common good (as it would be perceived in participatory authority.) Reform of government lies in the reform of its popular conception. Reform of the popular conception of government lies in people's ability to see authority as a source of empowerment, intensely reliant on their participation rather than domination. This can come about only when authority is pervasively reconceived and incorporated into people's lives. Only then will we be able to move away from a world based on domination and subordination and toward one based on mutual fulfillment of the needs of all.

Why Bother?

The threat of domination in modern society demands an equally powerful threat of participation. This is not only an issue that affects people who are involved in our political structure or who claim to follow politics. Authority affects everyone, and everyone must determine how he or she will respond to its challenge. By rejecting it, we unwittingly give in to domination. By submitting to it, we forfeit all personal responsibility for our actions. By ignoring it, we fail to recognize the true freedom that we can experience as human beings amidst our complex social interactions.

Reconceptualizing authority is a difficult task, and requires intense examination of our interactions with other people. It is not, however either impossible or more difficult to accept than the alternative of domination. Participatory authority is becoming more and more prevalent on popular conceptions of many relationships, especially the one between the doctor and patient. Systems of participatory authority already exist in many social and organizational settings. People are coming to realize more and more that they are entitled to play a meaningful role in the decisions that affect their lives; that they should hold the institutions and people who make judgements that affect their lives responsible for those judgements; and that they should follow authoritative judgements out of voluntary compliance rather than coercion.

A second benefit of the struggle toward participatory authority is one I have not really addressed, but that I think is an important result of this struggle. I think that the struggle for participation inevitably results in a sense of personal liberation and fulfillment. America is becoming more and more lackadaisical and trivial in its political involvement. Cult-like religions that claim to provide meaning and purpose to life are becoming more and more popular in this age of disillusionment. I want to offer as a suggestion for continuing discourse that reclaiming a role in the structures and interactions that affect people's lives directly can act as a source of personal empowerment. Understanding authority as a participatory relationship has the potential to allow people to understand the world in terms of cooperative social interactions, where the importance of the individual is understood and respected for his or her unique abilities and experience while maintaining necessary social structures of cooperation.

In short, participatory authority is not a burden, but the path to true freedom. Though it is beset on all sides by attitudes of rejection and indifference (fostered especially by the influence of the mass media) authority will continue to play an important role in our social interaction whether we recognize it or not. Our task then is two-fold: to seek to understand and shape the relationships of authority that affect our lives toward a participatory model, and to identify and confront the challenges to this process. The hope for this thesis is that establishing a model of authority that is relational and participatory can encourage the development of a social network where people are able to recognize and address their common needs, relating to one another as human beings rather than as people occupying fixed roles. When we understand authority as a necessary and mediatory interaction of participation, we can begin to understand and change how systems of domination affect our lives.

Glossary

Authority:

Coercive authority: formal authority with the ability to exact obedience by coercive means including, but not limited to, violence, force, persuasion or bribery. illegitimate authority, *syn.* Domination

Formal authority: a necessary social interaction brought about by the necessity to meet the needs of mediation of social hierarchies and addressing the common good. The ability to exact obedience.

Participatory authority: a specific model for understanding authority where both parties are willing participants in the interaction. It is marked by purely informed voluntary compliance. Contrasted with "authority as participatory" which refers only to the necessity that there be some type of participation in a system of formal authority.

de facto: in fact; regarding specific situations

de jure: in theory; regarding a philosophical justification

Domination: A social interaction where one party unilaterally commands control over another. Either party can be a group or an individual.

Government: A social construct that is established to address the issue of authority in large groups.

Hierarchy: A difference in training, education, knowledge, skill, or proficiency that makes two parties at a difference regarding that specific area.

Individualist Egoism: The philosophy that the individual must be the primary source of concern, even if this must be at the expense of others.

Legitimacy: The recognition of a right of a government to exist; general consent to the rules of the government. *or* An acceptable, appropriate understanding (legitimate authority.)

Noetic: regarding the truth

Pedagogical: for the purpose or goal of instructing or teaching

Referent: based on something else, subject to another source, not ultimate or infallible.

Society: an extensive social network in which people rely on others or the work of others for specific purposes.

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