

Authority Relations

In a study of communes Zablocki (1980) describes the daily functioning of one:

At Mandala, as in all Eastern spiritual communes, the major ideological problem was the residual autonomy of individual members: each individual ego was to become conscious of its illusory nature and thus was to be subsumed into the collective ego. At a meeting every morning, everyone accounted for how all of his or her time was to be spent. Each person was responsible for fulfilling the contract specified by this morning report and, furthermore, was subject to criticism and pressure from the group if what he or she was intending to do with the day did not seem to meet communal needs.

The Mandalans attempted to govern themselves by consensus, all individuals being bound by decisions made by the group. In addition, individuals were bound by several communal rules built into the charter of the community that could not be changed: absolute prohibition of coffee, alcohol, and drugs; vegetarian limitations on diet; and severe limitations on the access of the commune to visitors.

In its attempt to discover the right path toward spiritual enlightenment, Mandala had placed itself loosely under the care of an absentee guru who served not as an authority but as a source of advice and guidance. Real day-to-day authority over the life of the commune rested in the hands of a young, energetic charismatic leader who was one of the commune's founders. Directly under him in authority was his wife and several other commune founders.

Under them were those members who had made a long-term commitment to the life. The lowest tier in the hierarchy was for new members or those still tentative in their commitment. (p. 210)

An even more extreme example of transfer of the right to control to a single leader is evident in "the Family," Charles Manson's commune, some of whose members later engaged in brutal murders at his command. One member of that commune later described his feelings.¹

1. Despite the extent of authority that Manson held over commune members, Watson's statement indicates that it was not coercive. Watson saw himself as better off inside the commune than in the outside world.

Sometimes I felt as though [Manson] were always with me, thinking my thoughts for me—or *his* through me . . . It was as though Charlie kept pulling me back, slowly but persistently, even though we'd had no contact since I walked out the back door of that Topanga Canyon cabin. I tried to fight it, but it was no use, he wouldn't let go of me. I'd seen the world I was living in and he'd warned me, and I found it just what he'd said it would be. (Watson, 1978, p. 81)

As these passages indicate, social action does not consist merely of transactions among independent individuals within a competitive, or market, context. Individuals often act under another's authority, although generally not in as extreme a form as in these communes. Social structure involves organizations and groups of people which engage in action as entities: nations, families, associations, clubs, and unions. These entities, viewed from the outside, may be regarded as actors no less than individuals are. Nevertheless, viewed from the inside, they may be characterized as authority structures.

The most fundamental question regarding authority structures is the question of how they can exist at all—or how, within the conceptual system developed in the preceding chapters, they can be conceived to exist. How, if the theoretical foundation is of a set of independent individuals, each controlling certain events or resources of interest to others, can there develop a social structure in which certain individuals' actions are not under their control but under the authority of another actor (an individual or a corporate actor)? This question is easily answered if it is recognized that among those resources over which individuals have control are their own actions. Individuals may, under threat or promise or because they otherwise see it as in their best interests to do so, give up the right to control certain of their actions. It is the right to control another's actions that is the usual definition of authority; this is what I will mean by authority in this book. One actor has authority over another in some domain of action when the first holds the right to direct the actions of the second in that domain.

This chapter examines the implications of this answer. A first way of doing so is by returning to the properties of events or resources discussed in Chapter 2. In simple systems of social exchange all events or resources over which actors gain or give up control are alienable. Yet although the classic private goods of economics are ordinarily alienable—that is, they can be physically transferred when an exchange is effected—many goods or events or resources over which actors have control are not. Of these the most important are an actor's own actions. An actor may well have, in his actions, various skills or capabilities or potential services that are of interest to others. Yet an actor cannot physically transfer actions to another actor in the way that he can physically transfer a pound of sugar or a pair of shoes. He can only transfer to others such intangibles as a promise to act in a certain way or the right to control his actions within certain specified limits. Given this conception of rights to control an inalienable resource—one's own actions—an authority relation may be defined: An authority

relation of one actor over another exists when the first has rights of control over certain actions of the other.

Conceiving for the present of rights as being represented by pieces of paper, actor 2 has authority over actor 1 when 2 holds a piece of paper with a statement something like the following: "The actor holding this paper has the right to direct certain actions of actor 1. This right is subject to the following limitations (on classes of actions, time, place, or other dimensions)."² At the outset that right may be held by actor 1, who has *de facto* control of his own actions; in such a case an authority relation arises only when actor 1 transfers that right to actor 2. In some cases, however, the right is held by actor 2 at the outset (as a parent holds rights of control over a child's actions at birth or as the state holds rights of control over certain actions, defined as illegal, of its citizens), and the authority relation exists until revoked by actor 1. (The question of *whether* actor 1 can unilaterally revoke the authority relation, can unilaterally withdraw the right to control, is another question, which goes back to the consensual character of rights, as discussed in Chapter 3. I will turn to that question later in this chapter.)

It may appear odd to begin a discussion of authority, a relation in which a superordinate directs or governs the actions of a subordinate, by describing actions of the actor who becomes the subordinate. Yet this is essential to a conception of authority that is consistent with the theory of this book: Authority must be vested in a superordinate before the superordinate can exercise authority. Authority exists only when the superordinate holds this right.

The Right to Control One's Own Actions

What is the condition under which an individual holds the right to control his own actions? A naive answer to this question might be that the individual always holds this right, unless he has already transferred it to another. But this is not correct, as numerous examples make clear. A child born to a slave in slaveholding Rome or the slaveholding South of the United States was a slave, without the rights of free persons. Any child born in our society lacks certain civil rights; rights of control over certain actions are held by the child's parents. A citizen of a state who has full civil rights nevertheless has those rights circumscribed by law and does not hold an unlimited right to act as he wishes.

More generally, a person may not hold the right to control his actions for either of two reasons: The right may be held by another, even without having been transferred by the person to the other; or the right may not exist. This follows from the definition of a right, as given in Chapter 3. A right exists only when there is general consensus among the relevant actors about which actor holds the right. When that consensus is absent, then the right does not exist. And when that consensus places the right to control actor A's actions in the hands of

2. This is a simplification, of course, since rights are consensual in character, as discussed in Chapter 3. I will examine this simplification later in this chapter.

actor B (as, for example, consensus ordinarily places many rights to control children's actions in the hands of their parents), then actor B holds the right. To the question of which actors are relevant in determining whether there is a consensus, the answer is that power and interest determine relevance: An actor is relevant to the determination of where the right is lodged only if he has an interest in the action or event in question and has the power to support his claim to relevance; and the importance of an actor's voice in determining the locus of the right is determined by the amount of his interest, amplified by his power.

When, in a particular social system, persons are legally regarded as "free," this implies that after childhood (which I will return to shortly) there is a broad class of the person's actions in which no other actor (including the state) has a legitimate interest. This would not be true if the person were regarded by law as "unfree," that is, as the property of another actor. As the other's property, the person's actions would be of legitimate interest to the other; the law would give the other the right to control the person's actions.

Short of legally defined slavery the constitutions (implicit or explicit) of many social systems have legitimized other forms of involuntary subjection to authority. The most common of these is a form involving women. In some societies daughters are held to be subject to the authority of the father, who may sell the daughter to a prospective husband (for what is called a bride price). The wife then becomes the property of the husband, who has a legitimate right to control a broad range of her actions.³

Disregarding slavery, chattelism, and legally defined childhood, the constitutions of many social systems give no actor legitimate interests in a person's actions unless those actions have a clear effect on the other actor. There is an efficiency rationale for this, in that rights of control of actions are placed in the hands of those with strongest interests in the actions, and thus the strongest interest in exercising that control in a way that satisfies those interests. As long as those interests are not in opposition to a widely spread, although weak, interest in the actions on the part of numerous others, there is no strong rationale for placing the right elsewhere than in the person's own hands.

There is a second virtue, from the perspective of a functioning social system, in rights to control actions being held by the actor. This allocation of rights is self-policing, because it places rights of control in the hands of that actor with de facto control. That is not true for any other allocation: Slaveholders must police the actions of slaves; parents must supervise the actions of children; the state must police those actions of citizens over which it holds rights of control (for example, prison inmates). In other words, authority that is not voluntarily vested by an actor in another must be backed by coercive power if it is to be enforced. Consistent with this is the fact that the authority of parents over a

3. It is true, of course, that in some such social systems the interests of women are socially recognized, in that a husband's exercise of authority is limited by the society and he may be subject to social sanctions for overstepping the limits. Nevertheless, the authority, even if circumscribed, is present.

child diminishes over time, as their coercive power over the child—that is, the power to make the child who does not obey worse off—diminishes.⁴

When the principle that rights to control actions are held by the actor unless those actions have a clear effect on other actors is raised to the level of a political philosophy, it is that of liberalism. John Stuart Mill (1926 [1859]) expressed this philosophy:

As soon as any part of a person's conduct affects prejudicially the interests of others, society has jurisdiction over it, and the question whether the general welfare will or will not be promoted by interfering with it becomes open to discussion. But there is no room for entertaining any such question when a person's conduct affects the interests of no persons besides himself, or need not affect them unless they like (all the persons concerned being of full age and the ordinary amount of understanding). In all such cases, there should be perfect freedom, legal and social, to do the action and stand the consequences. (pp. 141–142)

Mill's statement can be regarded as the statement of a political philosophy contending for position in the constitution (implicit or explicit) of a social system. Although Mill's statement is expressed as what "should be," or ought to be, it is merely one political philosophy among others contending for incorporation into a constitution.

There is a close association between the political philosophy of liberalism and a philosophical position that arose in the seventeenth century and holds that all persons are endowed with a set of natural rights. That is, all persons begin with, at minimum, a particular subset of resources, a subset that is labeled "rights" or "natural rights" or "inalienable rights." Such a philosophical position may be seen as motivated by the same aim that leads to inclusion of a bill of rights in constitutions of states—the aim of providing some ultimate grounding for distribution of rights among individuals. Such a grounding, however, must always be based on some external criterion or value outside the constitution of the system. It is the constitution, implicit or explicit, that embodies the social consensus upon which any allocation of rights is based.

Vesting of Authority

As indicated above, an individual may or may not hold the right of control over a particular class of his own actions. Only if the individual holds that right and, in

4. Also consistent with this is the fact that those parents whose coercive power is based on more than relative physical strength, such as on ownership of land or possession of other wealth, are able to maintain authority over their children far beyond the age when the child's strength matches that of the father. When the family has nothing to give or withhold from the child, the family's authority depends almost entirely on physical strength. This also suggests why familial authority is maintained over daughters for a longer time than over sons, especially in those families in which authority must rest principally on physical coercion.

addition, holds the right to transfer that right to another, can he voluntarily vest authority in another. Holding these two rights can be seen as equivalent to holding the piece of paper described earlier containing the words "The actor holding this paper has the right to direct certain actions of actor 1 . . ." The examination of authority throughout this chapter assumes that actors begin with this resource, which may be of some value to others and may therefore be used in exchange. It is also a resource which the actor may prefer to have held by another and thus may voluntarily transfer to another (as a young woman in taking vows to become a nun transfers authority over a large class of her actions to the church).

The assumption that actors hold rights of control over their actions and rights of transfer is never true for all actions of persons in a social system. It is only for those actions (which will differ from system to system) to which actors hold these rights that the vesting of authority is of interest. Before turning to those actions, I will examine briefly authority relations that are involuntary, where rights of control are held not by the actor, but by others.

Involuntary Authority and Divestment

The state retains rights of control over certain actions of even adult persons. In such authority relations the decision to vest authority does not arise, but divestment, or revoking, of authority does arise, as it does for the authority held by parents over children. In both cases the consensus on where rights lie is embodied in the legal system, which circumscribes persons' civil rights and enforces parental authority over children. Because the right to control the action and the right to transfer that right are not held by the actor, the right to divest authority also does not lie with the actor. In such a case, when the right to control the actor's action is constitutionally held not by the actor but by another, divestment cannot be carried out without invoking the coercive power of the state, which enforces the constitutionally defined consensus.

Nevertheless, persons do attempt to divest themselves of that authority: Children run away from home, citizens leave (or attempt to leave) a country, and groups of citizens sometimes engage in revolts. These actions can succeed only when the state, holding coercive power, allows them to (in most states the right of free emigration is held by citizens) or when the state does not have the power to enforce its own or parents' authority. (The case of revoking authority by overthrowing the existing authority structure is of special importance in social systems and is examined in Chapter 18.) Actors may also act to disobey authority, that is, to act contrary to authoritative directives, without withdrawing rights from the authoritative other. Such an action may be a test of the power of enforcement on which authority depends.

As Simmel (1950) points out in his discussion of authority, coercion is never absolute.

Even in the most oppressive and cruel cases of subordination, there is still a considerable measure of personal freedom. We merely do not become aware of it, because its manifestation would entail sacrifices which we usually never think of taking upon ourselves. (p. 183)

Choice always exists even for persons subject to the most despotic authority.⁵ Thus the question of why a given person submits to authority always arises. The answer may in some cases be easily given: because the authoritative other holds sufficiently extensive resources and is sufficiently willing to use them that the alternative would lead to serious negative consequences. As that answer indicates, even coercion may be regarded as a transaction. As Simmel notes, if a despot accompanies an order by a threat of punishment or an offer of reward, this indicates that the despot is willing to be bound by the results. The subordinate thus has a *claim* on the despot, contingent on the subordinate's actions. In authority relations that must be backed by coercion, the exchange is a somewhat special one in that the superordinate agrees to withhold an action that would make the subordinate worse off in return for the subordinate's obeying the superordinate.

It is, of course, true that many authority relations that require coercion for enforcement are ones in which the initial vesting of authority is done voluntarily. The necessity for coercion in such a case is like the enforcement invoked in a long-term contract, entered into voluntarily but binding on the parties. Such authority relations are entered into when, despite the absence of threat, the actor who becomes the subordinate transfers control because he believes he will be better off by doing so. The fief in feudal times exemplifies this relation. Enfeoffment was a contract in which one actor, who became the vassal, put himself under the authority of another, who became his lord. In doing so, the vassal promised absolute loyalty in return for protection. In many cases this relation was established when one man was seen as most powerful in the vicinity; therefore others would enfeoff themselves to him, establishing him in authority over them as vassals. This gave the lord certain rights of control over the vassals' actions, such as the right to collect taxes and to conscript them for military service. But the enfeoffing was done voluntarily, for the prospective vassal saw himself as better off with this protection than without it.

There is another phenomenon that is nearly the opposite of an authority relation entered into voluntarily but observed only when it is enforced. This is the case of involuntary authority (for example, family or state) or pure exercise of power, which, when exercised effectively in directions partially in accord with a subordinate's interests, comes to be accepted by the subordinate as legitimate.

5. Even Max Weber, who does not emphasize the choice involved in the authority relation, says in his definition of authority that "imperative coordination (control) was defined above as the probability that specific commands (or all commands) from a given source will be obeyed by a given group of persons . . . A criterion . . . is a certain minimum of voluntary submission" (1947 [1922], p. 324).

That there is such a phenomenon is widely recognized. The specific conditions under which it occurs are not well known.

Voluntary Vesting of Authority

Not all authority results from a voluntary vesting, as the preceding discussion indicates. However, in most social systems there is a broad class of actions over which rights of control are held by the actor, who also holds the right to transfer those rights. For this broad class of actions, it becomes possible to ignore the consensual character of rights (unless that consensus is called into question) and to treat the rights as though they were a tangible resource held by and usable by the individual. Thus it becomes possible to conceive of the vesting of authority, as was done in the beginning of this chapter, as the transfer of a piece of paper embodying a right.

The answer to the question of why persons vest rights of control over their actions in others differs sharply for two broad classes of authority relations. In the first class one actor vests authority in another because the first actor believes that he will be better off by following the other's leadership. He vests rights of control unilaterally, without extrinsic compensation. In the second class the actor transfers rights of control without holding this belief, but in return for some extrinsic compensation. In the first class the actor's transfer of rights of control over certain actions can be seen as unilateral transfer of the piece of paper described earlier; in the second class the transfer occurs only as part of an exchange.

Conjoint and Disjoint Authority Relations

Authority in the communes described at the beginning of this chapter is seen by the members of the commune to be in accord with their fundamental interests, even though that authority may be exercised to discipline a member or may go against a member's wishes in specific instances. When such vesting of authority occurs, it is ordinarily because the actor making the transfer sees the interests of the person (or corporate actor) to whom the transfer is made to be sufficiently like his own that the exercise of authority will bring benefits. Thus a rational actor makes a transfer in the expectation that he will be better off as a result of the exercise of this authority.

Besides communes, there are many other authority systems in which an actor makes a transfer without an extrinsic payment and with the expectation that the very exercise of authority by the other will bring benefits. Such an authority system is exemplified by an association such as a trade union. Each union member gives up control over certain actions (the right to sign a contract with the employer, for example) along with rights of taxation (union dues) in the expectation that actions on the part of the union will bring benefits (wage negotiations may bring greater income, for example).

It is useful to note that I do not make the distinction here that Max Weber (and others) made between associative groups, which he saw as based on rational common interests, and communal groups, which he saw as based on nonrational attachments. In the conceptual structure being presented here, both what are ordinarily described as communes and what are ordinarily described as associations are authority systems in which actors transfer authority without receiving an extrinsic payment. This is a subjectively rational transfer of authority when it is based on the belief that the exercise of the authority will be in the actors' interests.

The matter is altogether different for another class of authority structures, best illustrated by a formal organization composed of employees working for pay. In such an organization transfer of the right to control is made in exchange for payment of a wage or salary. There is no assumption that authority will be exercised in the interest of the actors (the employees) who have transferred the right—although in the actual workings of such organizations demands are sometimes made that the exercise of authority be made partly in the interest of those subordinates. For example, the closing of a plant and resulting loss of jobs may be protested, and demands for management attention to employee interests with respect to working conditions are often made. It is also sometimes believed by the superordinate in such relations that its long-term interests are in part in common with those of its subordinates.⁶

Weber's conception of bureaucracy as one ideal type of authority system portrays it as a system in which each official or employee exchanges the right to control his actions (in a limited realm of events) for a monetary wage and in which all actions of the organization are taken in the interest of the central authority at the top. Although a bureaucracy contains other attributes, and thus is only one form of authority system in which there is an extrinsic payment to the subordinates, it is a particularly good example of an authority system involving extrinsic payment. The legal system (which for present purposes can be regarded as a set of principles expressing the processes of a largely internally consistent social system) contains another example, in the law of agency. The law of agency defines three parties: principal, agent, and third party. In return for compensation the agent gives the principal the right to control his actions in a well-defined set of events, putting his services at the disposal of the principal.⁷

6. For example, Carl Kaufmann, of the public relations department of E. I. Du Pont de Nemours, describes the renovation of a plant which had made cellophane to produce other products: "Du Pont could have squeezed a bit more profit out of one or two of these newer products by producing them at other locations . . . They were considering the corporation's relationship to long-service employees, and to the community. (Of course, one can respond to this by saying that this policy, followed long-range, is the way to maximize profits, an argument with which I would agree.)" (1969, p. 237).

7. There are two forms of the law of agency: the independent contractor form, and the master-servant form. Only in the latter is a transfer of rights to control action made, and thus an authority relation established. (See Mecham, 1952 [1933]; see also Chapter 7 for a further discussion of agency.)

The law explicitly recognizes that the interests of the agent are different from those of the principal, and much of the law of agency is concerned with adjudication between principal and agent when actions of the latter may have been taken in his own interests rather than in those of the principal.

The two kinds of situations in which actors transfer rights of control over their own actions lead to different types of authority structures, as is illustrated by contrasting communes and trade unions with bureaucratic organizations and agency relations. The first of the two types, in which the transfer is made with an assumption that exercise of authority will benefit the subordinate, I will call a conjoint authority relation. The second, in which there is no such assumption, I will call a disjoint authority relation. Because actors are conceived to be rational, conjoint authority relations are ordinarily established by a unilateral transfer of rights of control, whereas disjoint authority relations are established only when compensation is paid. The terms "conjoint" and "disjoint" refer to the correspondence between the interests of the subordinate and the directives of the superordinate. In a conjoint authority relation the superordinate's directives implement the subordinate's interests. In a disjoint authority relation they do not; the subordinate's interests must be satisfied by extrinsic means.

Before turning to an examination of the properties of conjoint and disjoint authority relations, I want to make a distinction between an authority relation and an authority structure. An authority structure may be composed of a single authority relation or a number of authority relations. An authority relation is brought about by a transfer from one actor to another of the right to control certain actions. Thus, to be precise, it is only individual authority relations that may be described as conjoint or disjoint. Given these complexities, it is nevertheless helpful for the purpose of exposition to apply the terms "conjoint" and "disjoint" not only to authority relations but also to authority structures, as I will do in Chapter 7. Many authority structures consist primarily of one of the two types of authority relations, and as a consequence I will write of authority structures as though they do consist of only one.⁸

The genotypic distinction between conjoint and disjoint authority relations is introduced not only because it corresponds to phenotypically different forms of authority, but because the difference leads to different kinds of behavior and, in particular, to different kinds of problems for these two types of authority relations.

8. In a disjoint authority structure, such as a business firm, subordinates at a given level often have similar interests. It is this similarity of interests among those subject to the same authority that gives rise to joint actions, such as unionization. This similarity also leads to efforts on the part of superordinates to introduce conflicts of interest. One example is a story, possibly apocryphal, that circulated among union organizers in the 1930s, about an employer who paid alternate workers on the assembly line at different wage rates to introduce divergent interests. (See also Dreyfuss, 1952, on hierarchical grading in department stores.)

The Puzzle of Conjoint Authority Relations

When an actor vests the right to control his actions in another in exchange for extrinsic compensation, the potential gain to the actor is self-evident. This is not so when an actor vests rights of control without compensation. If the superordinate directs the subordinate to take actions he would not take voluntarily, then the subordinate would appear to be worse off than if he could act under his own authority. If the superordinate does not direct him to take such actions, then there seems to be no reason to vest authority in the first place.

There are, however, certain cases of conjoint authority relations in which the reason for vesting authority is clear. For example, if I am lost and I believe that another person knows the way, then it is rational for me to vest authority in that person. This appears to be a special case, yet it merits further examination. If I vest authority in another, I believe that the other has some qualities that I do not, qualities that make it possible for him to lead me to take actions that have an outcome more satisfactory to me. This circumstance may arise because social conditions are particularly disordered or confusing, because I am particularly disordered or confused (for example, if I am undergoing great changes), or because the person in whom I vest authority appears to have special qualities—or because of some combination of these.

Social disorganization, personal disorganization, and special qualities of a person are conditions which are seen by social theorists as leading to a phenomenon often regarded as outside the bounds of rational action, the peculiar phenomenon of charismatic appeal. Max Weber emphasizes the personal qualities of the “charismatic person” and overlooks both the characteristics of the person vesting authority and the characteristics of the situation. Following Weber, it has been common to regard charisma as wholly a quality of the person in whom rights of control are vested.⁹ But other theorists have identified social disorganization as a source of the charismatic transfer (Zablocki, 1980; Bradley, 1987). Zablocki (1980) infers from his study of communes that “alienation from a coherent structure of values makes a collective action difficult. Charisma is a collective response to the need for action in the presence of alienation. In the presence of shared articulated values, collectivities are able to mobilize resources to achieve action” (p. 273). The charismatic leader is the instrument through which the members of a commune are able to mobilize one another so that collective action can take place, making each member better off. (Yet even

9. Weber, who developed the concept of charismatic authority, is not clear about whether the charismatic endowment is something the person *has* or something the person is *seen to have*. This confusion is evident in Weber's ambivalence about Joseph Smith, the leader of the Mormons, who, Weber says, “cannot be classified in this way [as a charismatic leader] with absolute certainty since there is a possibility that he was a very sophisticated type of deliberate swindler” (1947 [1922], p. 359). Because it is the actions of the followers that make a charismatic leader, however, what is essential is that the person be *seen* to have the endowment.

if this statement is accepted as true, it expresses a misplaced concreteness. The members do not act as a body, but as individuals. What remains unanswered is why one person will vest authority when he experiences costs by doing so, even though he experiences benefits from others' doing so. I will come back to this question, which at this point must be regarded as unresolved.)

Another condition which can, in principle, lead to extensive vesting of authority in another is personal disorganization or extensive personal change. There are a number of incidental observations that suggest the importance of personal disorganization and change as precursors to the vesting of authority in another. Religious penitents (who vest control over their actions in God) are characteristically seen as persons who are "lost," who cannot find for themselves a satisfactory mode of existence. The members of the Jonestown community, who vested such extensive authority in their leader that they drank a deadly poison at his command, have been described as persons who had little to live for before they joined the community. Persons who are engulfed by romantic love and "give" themselves to another seem characteristically to be at a point of extensive personal change, in particular, the point of leaving childhood and entering adulthood, leaving their families of origin and entering a wider world.¹⁰

These sociopsychological phenomena may also encourage strategic action on the part of those in whom authority is to be vested. That this does occur is suggested by the "stripping" process which often occurs when a person first enters a social order from which authoritative direction will flow, such as a religious order, the military, or a fraternity. Stripping of previous associations and resources encourages the new member to vest total authority in the institution.

Apart from the various research questions which follow from the above points, there remains one puzzle of apparent irrationality. In the case of social disorganization, where the fundamental problem is the inability to carry out collective action (not the inability of the individual to carry out individual action that will prove satisfying), a rational individual, acting individually, will not vest authority in another if others' vesting of authority will lead to collective action without his doing so. Nor will he vest authority if others' vesting of authority will not lead to action even if he does. An individual's vesting of authority is rational only if he is the decisive person, whose vesting of authority makes the difference in whether collective action occurs or not. Yet if all individuals in a system are

10. The existence of such points of extensive personal change suggests potential research hypotheses, for example: (1) if the age of psychological loss of parental authority lowers, the age at which romantic love first occurs will be lowered; (2) children in families with strong social relations and strong parental authority extending into young adulthood will not fall in love as soon or as fully (because physiological changes will have passed by the time parental authority is relinquished); (3) men will fall in love again when they begin to lose their sexual powers, as will women, unless they are absorbed in their children; (4) the less extensive the social ties in a society, the more its members will vest authority in some other, a charismatic person or a love object.

rational in this way, each will wait for the others, and no collective action will take place.

The question of how this puzzle is solved in any particular case is an open one, but there are at least the following four possibilities:

1. The individual's personal disorganization is sufficiently great that, apart from any benefit to be experienced from collective action, he will experience benefit from having his own action directed by another.¹¹ This implies that when there is a vesting of authority in another those first to so vest will be persons whose personal disorganization is great, who are undergoing change, or who have "nothing to lose."

2. Despite the absence of social organization that can bring about collective action, there is sufficient density of social relationships and closure of social networks that individuals can, making their vesting of authority mutually contingent, vest authority together, sanctioning those who do not.¹² (The specific ways in which this might occur are subject to detailed empirical investigation.)

3. Vesting of conjoint authority may be "rationally contagious." That is, if a number of persons have vested authority in a particular other actor, and if vesting authority in *someone* is little or no more costly than retaining authority to oneself, and if all else is equal, then it is rational to vest authority in that same person (to increase the likelihood of effective collective action) rather than another.

4. In a social system the right to control one person's action cannot be withheld by that person if all others have vested authority in an actor and regard the right to control that person's action as also being held by that authoritative actor. (If a subset is socially insulated from the larger system, members of the subset can withhold authority for all activities save those that bring them into contact with the larger society.) Thus the consensual character of a right makes it impossible for a person to unilaterally withhold the right to control his action from another if all others regard that right as held by the other. This point is, of course, relevant only when the vesting of authority in another is nearly universal and cannot account for small charismatic movements within a social system.

The Fundamental Defect of the Subordinate's Actions in a Conjoint Authority Relation

In a conjoint authority relation the subordinate sees his interests as coincident with those of the superordinate. If a number of persons have subordinated

11. Zablocki (1980) gives a case which appears to illustrate this: "If Will told me to do something, even if I may not agree with it, I have to trust that God speaks to me through Will . . . If Will's vetoing whatever this thing is that I want to run out and do, there's a reason that God does not want me to do it . . . God can change your authority if your authority is wrong . . . God will change Will. I don't try to change Will . . . I submit to him [Will] as the authority, as unto God, knowing that God is ultimately in control" (p. 281).

12. See Chapter 12.

themselves to the same superordinate (which may be a corporate actor such as a commune or a person acting as a leader), then each sees his interests as coincident with those of all. This means that the interests of each are as fully satisfied by the actions of another as by his own actions. It means also that the interests of each are as fully satisfied by the actions of those in authority as by his own actions. Thus, if the subordinate's actions in the direction of satisfying his own interests require effort or are in some other way costly, he may be better off not acting for himself, but leaving action to the leader. The authority's actions or those of others under the same authority are just as effective in satisfying the subordinate's as are his own, and they achieve this result without cost to him. A subordinate may, of course, have transferred away the right to direct his own action, and therefore be subject to the authority that he has given up. Yet in many conjoint authority structures, such as communes or associations of persons with similar interests, the general transfer of authority does not carry with it the prescription of what to do in each circumstance. It will be to the interest of each in any specific circumstance to let the leader do all the work.¹³ If authority has been transferred to a collectivity such as a commune, it will be to the interest of each to let the others do all the work. It will be, on the other hand, to the interest of each to encourage others to further the collective goals and to support norms which encourage all to work in the public interest. Thus such kinds of authority structures should exhibit the greatest divergence between public norms concerning corporate goals and private behavior aimed toward those goals.

Casual observation suggests that one can find such divergence in many conjoint authority structures. In large conjoint collectivities such as nation-states, there is ordinarily a widely held norm that it is desirable to become informed about politics and to vote, yet most persons remained uninformed and many do not vote. In trade unions, composed of members with common interests with respect to their employers, there are similar norms concerning participation in union affairs, yet there is generally little participation by average members. More generally, it is in conjoint authority structures that what has come to be known as the free-rider problem is found extensively. As shown in Chapter 11, this free-rider problem might be overcome when norms supporting the common interest develop. The norms, however, can lead to *excessive* action in the direction of the common interest, as shown in Chapter 11.

There is another possible defect of the subordinate's actions in conjoint authority relations, one that has been little explored. This is the possibility that common interests, leading to mutual support for actions that further those interests, will lead each individual to transfer greater rights of control to a central authority than is in his interest. There may thus come to be in conjoint authority

13. This is the character of some religions, in which the transfer of authority to God is accompanied by an assumption that "God will take care of all" and thus one can merely "leave oneself in the hands of God."

structures a systematic bias from this source, in the direction of more rights being vested in a central authority than each individual, acting independently, would find it in his interest to vest. (This is explored more fully in Chapter 13, where the rational basis for deciding what rights to vest in a collectivity is examined.)

A serious limitation of conjoint authority relations is that they depend on a coincidence of goals between the actor who makes the transfer of authority and the actor who becomes the superordinate. Although this transfer may be valuable to the actor who thereby becomes a subordinate, it has severe limitations. The creation of an authority structure consisting of many such relations depends on the coincidence of many actors' interests, as well as consensus about who can best further those interests. By definition, all the components necessary for the structure must be intrinsic to the particular interests in question. No use of extrinsic payments is made to build the complex structure of interdependent actions that in a disjoint authority structure furthers achievement of corporate goals. Thus conjoint authority structures tend to be rather simple, consisting of few levels and having little internal differentiation.

The Fundamental Defect of the Subordinate's Actions in a Disjoint Authority Relation

In an authority relation the subordinate has transferred to the superordinate the right to control his actions. But because actions are an inalienable resource, the subordinate cannot transfer the actual performance of the action. It is the dependence of outcomes on both the directive given by the superordinate and the performance of the subordinate that makes an authority relation different from a transient exchange of goods and gives it some continuity in time.

The fundamental defect of the disjoint authority relation is that the outcomes of actions are dependent in part on actors (subordinates) who have no intrinsic interest in those outcomes. The broad usefulness of disjoint authority relations in social systems depends on this fact, but the defect also lies there. Thus, unless authority can be exercised over every detail of the actions or unless there is some easily observable indicator of the degree to which the subordinates' actions pursue the interest of the superordinate, the subordinates may fail to perform in the direction of the superordinate's interests. In some cases outcomes of events, that is, the products of the subordinates' actions, provide an easily observable indicator which can be used to monitor the action, but in many cases this is not so. Then policing is necessary, at some cost to the superordinate and with less than total compliance.

Many kinds of behavior in bureaucracies derive from this fundamental defect: stealing from an employer, loafing on the job, featherbedding (in which two persons do the work of one), padding of expense accounts, use of organizational resources for personal ends, and waste. There are other kinds of actions which are not as obviously derivative from this source but which nevertheless stem

from it. The behavior of the so-called bureaucratic personality, which focuses on rules rather than organizational goals, is an example (Merton, 1968, p. 249). Rigidity and attention to rules are pursued by a bureaucrat as a policy that is safe, because, whatever the outcome, he is protected by having followed the rules; an action against the rules but having a better expected outcome for the organization would expose the bureaucrat to loss of position or other discipline if it was not successful.

Here, as in the more obvious cases, the defect results from the fact that the performance of the subordinate remains in his own hands, and his own interests have not been eliminated by transferring the right to control his actions to the superordinate. When these interests would lead to performance inimical to the interests of the superordinate and when policing by the superordinate is ineffective, then the actions taken will not be those that pursue the superordinate's interests. Incentive systems in formal organizations and work in economics on agency are directed to attempting to overcome this fundamental problem of disjointness, which is that performance remains in the hands of an actor whose interests are unrelated to the superordinate's interests. (Work in this direction is discussed more fully in Chapters 7 and 16.)

The defects of a subordinate's behavior in conjoint and disjoint authority relations show some similarity. In both cases the subordinate's interests lead, in the absence of special correctives, to reduced levels of performance. But other aspects of the behavior differ markedly. In conjoint authority structures the subordinates' interests lead to public support of norms encouraging high performance, even though private behavior may not accord with these norms; in disjoint authority structures subordinates' interests lead to no such norms, except in the presence of special incentive structures, such as group piece rates. In fact, if there is a class of subordinates having similar interests and among whose performances the superordinate makes comparisons, those interests, disjoint with the interests of the superordinate, often lead to support of norms that discourage high performance.¹⁴ Thus conjoint and disjoint authority relations generate distinctive forms of behavior by subordinates, which constitute defects to the relations.

Defects in the Behavior of Superordinates

The defects described above for conjoint and disjoint authority relations concern failures of performance on only one side of the relation—the side of the subordinate. There are defects on the side of the superordinate as well. Some are inherent in any authority relation, and others are specific to conjoint or disjoint authority relations.

The source of the defects in the superordinate's behavior is the fact that authority relations are contracts (implicit or explicit) extending over time, thus

14. See, for example, the extensive work in industrial sociology on limitation of output, including the classic work by Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939).

giving to the superordinate a set of continuing rights. A result is that these rights of control, once transferred, can sometimes be used to bring about further aggrandizement of control. When private goods are exchanged in a one-time transaction, the goods given up in the exchange are physically transferred and are not connected to other resources still held. But in authority relations the right to control certain actions continues over time and is not so easily separable from other rights. It may sometimes be used to gain other rights against the subordinate's will. The subordinate is to some extent "under the power" of the superordinate as a result of the original transaction.

An example of this process is evident in what is called sexual harassment on the job. The most common form that sexual harassment takes is that of a male superior using his position of authority (in which the domain of rights vested by the subordinate is explicitly limited to work-related actions) to make demands outside the range of that authority, in the area of sexual behavior, on a female subordinate, explicitly or implicitly threatening her with loss of her job. It is the close relationship between the actions over which rights have been transferred and those over which rights have not been transferred that facilitates such demands. It is the continuity over time of the authority relation that makes the threat possible. This example only illustrates a very general process, evident in both conjoint and disjoint authority relations. The rights to control actions gained by the superordinate give the superordinate the opportunity to extend that control.

The defects specific to conjoint and disjoint authority relations are not in principle different from nonperformance in other kinds of transactions. The superordinate in a conjoint authority relation may act in ways inimical to the subordinate's interest rather than in ways beneficial to that interest, and the superordinate in a disjoint authority relation may fail to make the extrinsic payments promised as part of the transaction. These failures of performance are possible in any transaction that requires future payments; because an authority relation always does so, such failures are always possible.

Transfer of One Right or Two: Simple and Complex Authority Relations

A second fundamental distinction concerning types of authority relations lies in the difference between those in which one right is transferred and those in which two rights are transferred. Earlier in this chapter I indicated that an actor could vest in another actor rights of control over a certain class of actions only when the first actor held two rights: the right to control his own actions in that class, and the right to transfer that right.¹⁵ If the right to control certain of one's actions

15. The case in which the first right but not the second is held is exemplified in some socialist countries, where a citizen may employ his own labor but does not have the right to exchange that labor for pay with a prospective employer other than the state, unless that employer has less than a certain number of employees (such as twenty).

is transferred to another, this makes possible the *exercise* of authority by the resulting superordinate over the subordinate. If, however, the subordinate transfers the second right, the right to transfer the first right, this gives the superordinate the possibility of an additional action, that of *delegating* the first right to another actor, a lieutenant.

The possibility of transferring the right to control a subordinate's actions creates two types of authority relations. In the first, authority is exercised by the same actor in whom it is vested. In the second, authority is exercised by an actor (the lieutenant) other than actor in whom it is vested (the superordinate). I will call the first of these two types, that requiring only two actors, a simple authority relation, and the second, requiring three actors, a complex authority relation. Simple and complex authority relations are subsets, respectively, of simple and complex social relations, discussed in Chapter 2.

Examination of the differences between these two types of authority relations is deferred until the examination of authority systems in Chapter 7, because the principal differences lie in the kinds of structures these two types of authority relations generate.

Limitations on Authority

Although no restrictions or limitations on authority have yet been discussed, they exist in every authority relation and may take a number of different forms.

A first restriction, shared by nearly all authority relations that are voluntarily entered into, is that the subordinate retains the right to revoke the authority over his actions held by the superordinate. Those relations for which this is not true are rather special, as a few examples will illustrate.

In social systems of the past it was more often true that subordinates could not terminate an authority relation. Throughout the Middle Ages and for some time after, most persons did not have the right to revoke a vesting of authority, whether that of the family or of larger social units, but could do so only by going outside the law, becoming an outlaw. In nearly any society today a citizen or subject may revoke the authority of a subunit within it by changing residence and may revoke the authority of the nation-state itself by leaving its territory.¹⁶ Until quite recently women in most societies not only were subject to the broad authority of their fathers or husbands but lacked the right to revoke the authority by terminating the relation. That structure continues to be found in large parts of the less developed world. Children have always been in such an authority relation with respect to their parents, without the right of revoking it, although the age at which this authority relation is terminated continues to decline.¹⁷ It is true

16. A few nation-states, most notably those organized on Marxist-Leninist principles, forcibly prevent exit, and some others require citizens to go through formalities when leaving.

17. An unusual case illustrating this phenomenon is that of a lawsuit brought in Chicago on behalf of a 12-year-old boy who wanted to remain in the United States despite his parents' intention to take him with them back to the Soviet Union. The judge ruled in favor of the boy's

in the case of children that parents' authority is not unlimited; however, the limitations give rights to usurp parental authority not to the child but to the larger society.¹⁸

Aside from exceptions of the sort just described, a subordinate in any authority relation retains the right to revoke the authority. When that right is wholly absent, the general principles discussed in this chapter concerning the divesting of authority do not hold.

The limitations on authority relations may take any of several forms:

1. *Limitations on the domain or scope of activities over which authority is to be exercised.* For example, in an employer-employee relation, the kinds of activities for which the employer has the right to direct the employee's actions are ordinarily limited to those directly related to the purpose of employment. Some collective bargaining agreements limit the tasks that skilled workers may be asked to do to those directly in their trade. As a result of the women's movement, some secretaries refuse to bring coffee to their bosses.

2. *Limitations on the time at which authority may be exercised.* Again, in most employment relations the right of the employer to exercise authority over an employee is limited to specific times, or working hours. The authority of a school system over a child attending school is limited to the period of the day during which school is in session. In contrast, a family's authority over a child or the authority of the state over a citizen is not time limited in this way.

3. *Limitations according to the physical location of the subordinate.* The hegemony of nation-states is defined both by the persons who are citizens and by geographical territory covered. That is, a state's authority is exercised over all persons within its territory, although certain authority is also exercised over citizens outside that territory. A physical or geographic scope of authority may in some cases override a time limitation. For example, an employee may be subject to certain authority of his employer while on the employer's property, even outside of working hours, or a student may be subject to the authority of the school system on school property, even outside of school hours.

4. *Limitations on the prescriptiveness of authority.* In general, the vesting of authority gives to the superordinate either the right to prescribe that the subordinate obey certain commands or the lesser right to proscribe certain actions on the part of the subordinate. The authority of a purposive organization is ordinar-

right to revoke his parents' authority and remain in the United States. It appears quite likely, however, that the judge's decision had less to do with the general principle of parent-child relations than with the fact that the boy was choosing the United States and his parents the Soviet Union. If the choices had been reversed, it is hard to imagine the American judge ruling in favor of the boy's right to go against his parents' choice.

18. The threshold at which the right to usurp parental authority arises differs in different societies. In Western societies that threshold has recently been moving downward. In Sweden, for example, a law was recently passed removing from parents the right to physically punish their children. Chapter 22 examines this broad change in the structure of rights held within families.

ily prescriptive, and that of a state over its citizens is largely proscriptive. Hayek (1973, p. 124) contrasts the prescriptiveness of some parts of public law, which command citizens to carry out certain actions such as paying taxes and sending their children to school, with the proscriptive character of private law, which is designed merely to maintain order among citizens.¹⁹

Although limitations on authority can arise from any of the sources described above (as well as possibly others; I do not claim that these are exhaustive), the principal dimensions on which different authority systems differ are the first and the fourth, the domain of activity over which authority is exercised and the prescriptiveness of authority.²⁰ Authority within organizations designed to accomplish a purpose is ordinarily very narrow with respect to the domain of activity covered but highly prescriptive within that domain. At the other extreme, the authority of a nation-state over its citizens covers a very broad domain of activity but is largely proscriptive. Disjoint authority relations are ordinarily narrow and prescriptive, whereas conjoint authority relations may cover either a narrow domain of activity (as in the case of those collectivities called associations) or a much broader domain of activity (such as the proscriptive authority found in a society and embodied in laws or norms which express the common interests of members).

Hayek (1973, pp. 35–39) distinguishes sharply between two sources of order that correspond to these two different forms of limitation on authority. The first he calls organization, or “made order,” and the second he calls “spontaneous order.” The first, as he points out, is ordinarily constructed for a purpose, whereas the second arises out of the continuing activities of different actors in contiguity with one another. Although the accomplishment of a purpose requires prescriptive commands, the maintenance of a spontaneous order generally requires nothing more than that the relevant actors abstain from certain actions. Hayek’s distinction between spontaneous order and made order corresponds closely to the distinction made in Chapter 2 between organization based on simple social relations, constituting the natural social environment, and organization based on complex social relations, constituting the built social environment.

19. Hayek (p. 176) quotes J. C. Carter (1907, p. 234): “Legislative commands thus made, requiring special things to be done, are part of the machinery of government, but a part very different from that relating to the rules which govern ordinary conduct of men in relation to each other. It is properly described as *public law*, by way of distinction from private law.”

20. The forms of limitation of authority listed in the text are limitations on what is exercised, not on how it is exercised or on who is exercising it. Limitations on how authority is exercised consist principally of limitations on the sanctions that can be used to ensure compliance, with the extreme being the use of force or violence. Limitations on who will exercise authority take a variety of forms and are designed primarily to prevent the accretion of excessive power in any one actor’s hands. Among these are the balance of power among branches in many governments and limitations on the period during which a single person can occupy a position of authority. As another example, in republican Rome two consuls governed simultaneously, each subject to the other’s veto. I will not discuss these limitations in this chapter.

Although these two forms of limitation on authority give rise to two phenotypically characteristic kinds of authority systems, the logical independence of prescriptiveness as one dimension and the domain of activities over which authority is exercised mean that there are in fact four extremes rather than two, as expressed in Table 4.1. Authority systems of types 2 and 3 have limitations of one kind, not of the other. Type 3 is the purposive organization as described by Hayek, and type 2 is Hayek's spontaneous order, exemplified by a society or liberal state (although such a society also has limitations on the domain of activities its authority covers and is thus between type 1 and type 2). Authority systems of types 1 and 4 differ in the *amount* of limitation on authority, type 4 having very little limitation on authority and type 1 having authority limited on both dimensions. Type 4 is exemplified by a purposive commune of the sort described by Zablocki at the beginning of this chapter, although a society with an activist state, operating under Rousseau's principle of general will, moves toward this extreme. Type 1 is exemplified by the authority system governing a customer who has entered a store which has certain rules of conduct.

Thus the existence of these two major means by which authority is limited does not imply that authority systems all have similar degrees of limitation and differ only in type of limitation. There is immense variation in the limitations on authority. The statement by Charles Watson about the Manson commune quoted earlier in this chapter indicates that some authority systems are both broad and prescriptive. They can pervade every aspect of a person's activities and prescribe every action. A novice, on entering a religious commune, often goes through a ritual which symbolizes a total shedding of any interest in things outside and a total giving of control over oneself to the will of God (as that will is manifested through the community).

At the other extreme, authority over one's dress may be lodged in a multilevel implicit authority structure that is both narrow and nonprescriptive, involving

Table 4.1 Four types of authority systems formed by two types of limitations on authority.

		Domain of activities	
		Narrow	Broad
Prescriptiveness	Proscriptive	1	2
	Prescriptive	3	4