The Failure of Economic Authority

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Summer MAP Project

Intro

In capitalist societies, there has been a divisive split between conservation and expansion, between traditions and money. These societies are not standing at the crossroads waiting to choose one direction. These choices have faced our parent's parents and will still exist for our children's children. We are constantly making choices, often without recognizing the dichotomy, between existing in harmony with nature or forcing nature to do our bidding. As illusory as our global dominance may be, the fact remains that for many individuals, our socially constructed reality—power, prestige, and entertainment—constitute far more meaning than harmonizing with our natural environmental setting. We live in a society that will always be in danger of legitimating the destruction of nature for perceived economic and social benefits.

There is no human activity where the desire to dominate nature is more evident

> it by virtue of the formal legality of their commands and only within the scope of authority of the office.[1]

The distinguishing characteristic of rational-legal authority is that it is impersonal and can rely upon specialized offices for a ruling that will explain appropriate protocol for any action. Talcott Parsons noted that rational-legal authority provides a system through which all can be quantitatively measured and systematically compared.[2] However, I have opted to not use the terms for the purpose that Weber originally created them.

In order to apply Weber's theoretical framework more appropriately to my study of farmers, I have replaced Weber's rational-legal authority with economic authority. Economic authority eeplaced W 0 l(u4(onomh/Span 7-Tw -2.95 -2.21 Td [(o)-4(f)-1(r)3(i)3.(eb)-4(w /CS0

economic authority becomes so readily apparent when corn is marketed on the open market.

In truth, we are all disciplined by economic authority. Weber defined discipline as "The probability that by virtue of habituation a command will receive prompt and automatic obedience in stereotyped forms, on the part of a given group of persons."[4] We all instinctively know the significance of money and the value of property, so that we will not vandalize or damage property without first overcoming our "automatic obedience" to economic authority.

Weber identifies a third type of authority, charismatic authority. He writes, "[Charismatic authority rests] on [a] devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him."[5] He continues, pointing out that "[Charismatic authority] cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both."[6] I will identify two different ways that charismatic authority expresses itself in my study. The first is the persuasive claim to a moral imperative for farming. The claim of economic authority is that the farmers are producing to feed the world as they simultaneously make a profit, while farmers that follow traditional authority claim a higher quality of food, a closer connection to the people that they are feeding, and a closer connection to the land from which they are profiting.

The other way that charismatic authority expresses itself is when it undergoes what Weber termed routinization, which means that charismatic authority becomes

[4]37 Weber, Max. "Power, Domination, and Legitimacy" from Power in modern societies

I was curious to know how Cargill, when Evert was working for them, would reimburse these countries. He responded:

> They are reimbursed with higher yields. If not, we couldn't stay in business, because the competition among commercial companies is intense. Our hybrids are being compared [to our competition's hybrids] constantly... In our own programs we would always include the existing hybrids that our hybrids are selling against to know how we stand in relation to them so that we can release something equal to or better. This is intense. Otherwise, we wouldn't stay in business. We would just be blowing in the wind. The beneficiary is the farmer of course, but the company has to be profitable in order to give that service to the farmer.

I immediately followed his explanation by asking, “So was Cargill concerned about exploitation of local farmers?”

“You would have to be concerned if you were perceived to be taking advantage of the farmer,” he answered. “There are a dozen other companies that they could go to to buy their seed. There are instances of this happening, but it is short lived, because it is corrected almost instantly.”

“By the market?” I interjected

“By the market,” Evert agreed. “You can go to somebody else to buy your hybrid. The hybrids are competitive, but they are not that much different. I mean there is no major breakaway such that this company embarrasses its competitors. So if you felt that you have been taken advantage of in any way—and there is any number of ways that someone could come to have that feeling—you could jul is no co3(t)-2()4(one)-2(i)-2(on b)-van ty shakl(s)

provide an improved product for the farmer. If the corporations had their access to biodiversity limited, this limit would lessen the added productivity and vigor that they

a part of... Obviously, the transition to the modern world had to have taken place. He couldn't have existed here in isolation any longer than he did, but I wish he could have been made a part of it better. We could have done a much better job." Evert does not acknowledge that the battle for indigenous rights is still ongoing, which allows him to rationalize the continued exploitation of indigenous people. Evert knows that indigenous people have been treated unfairly, but can only lamely assert that their was inevitable. He knows intuitively that indigenous people have been treated neither justly nor morally.

Inbred Line Development

Lance Veldbloom, is a corn breeder for Monsanto in Williamsburg, about an hour north of Grinnell. Lance invited me out to the nursery so that I could see the cross-pollinations in action. Lance has a PhD in plant breeding. I found him to be both engaging and knowledgeable. He also fills in the link between the international research by people like Evert Gerrish, and the local production of commercial hybrid seeds by people such as Al Henderson in Grinnell, the site manager of the local Monsanto plant.

Hybrid seed corn that the farmers in Iowa purchase to plant is the product of two separate inbred varieties. Lance refers to them as "lines," and his official title is "Line Development Breeder." Basically, Lance creates new hybrids that are then self-pollinated to create new inbred lines. His work involves a lot of trial and error. He said, "Typically, we throw away 90% of our work. It is a failure every year. Hopefully, something comes out. But through that process you stao

seed, he can produce enough seed from that acre to plant one hundred and sixty acres of land for precommercial corn, corn seed that is on cross pollination away from being sold to the farmer.. From the one hundred and sixty acres, after his line is crossed with another line, the Grinnell plant can harvest enough hybrid corn seed that they can sell to farmers to plant 32,000 acres. Lance explained:

> The US grows 80,000,000 acres of corn a year. If it was all this production, divided by 32,000[8], you need about 2,500 acres of inbred production a year. So we have about 2,000 probably in breeding. We have about 60% market share, so we have a good chunk of it.

It would only take 2,500 acres to produce all of America's precommercial or inbred corn seed, according to Lance's calculations. Of course, this overlooks all of the capital that is invested in inbreds that never pan out, the six generations of self pollination that are necessary, and many other expenses.

The infrastructure that a corporation such as Monsanto operates with is immense. Lance explained to me some of the resources that are available to him and other breeders:

> We have research stations located throughout the Midwest. We have three stations in Nebraska, three in Iowa, two in Minnesota, one in Wisconsin, two in Indiana, three in Illinois, one in Ohio, one in Ontario, Canada, Leesburg, Georgia. Then we have winter sites where we go [during the winter] so we can get two generations a year to speed up the process in Puerto Rico, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, Hawaii, Chile that we also use for breeding just for North America. Actually, what we are doing now, everything that I select from yield down from this fall goes to winter and gets another cycle on it, so we go through two and in some programs 3 generations in a year of the improvement process. We're quite a large effort, and Monsanto is one of the largest companies doing it.

Lance later explained how Monsanto benefits from growing their corn in different locations:

> When you go to Hawaii it is 85 degrees the day you plant corn. In Iowa, it is 50 degrees that day in May. Corn's maximum growth is 86 degrees, but it grows at 50 degrees. Every degree from 50 to 85 degrees it keeps growing faster. Once it gets over 85 86 degrees it maintains the same growth, because even though you have more heat than that, it needs more moisture to keep hydrated and uses energy that way. It will grow from about 86 degrees on it grows at the same rate.

When you plant corn in Hawaii it is 82 degrees. In two days it is out of the ground. In Iowa in two weeks it is out of the ground. In our winter nurseries we

that. The other sustainability is, we have to feed six billion people and supply fuel

explained what his plant produces: “Monsanto produces over a hundred varieties of seed

crop. And then they plant. We give them planting instructions so that they plant it appropriately for the particular seed variety that they have been assigned." We are witnessing here one instance of the changing role of the farmer. Corporations incorporate farmers as a cog in their system of production. The worker status of the seed producer is not as prevalent in corn production as it is in the hog and chicken industry. Oftentimes, farmers running animal confinement facilities will have no local knowledge and are guided completely by their company's guidelines.

These corporations believe that since their products maximize productivity and efficiency, the only way to effectively farm is by using their products. Like Lance, Al also thinks of sustainability in global terms. He said:

> We're pretty fortunate in the US to not go to bed hungry most nights, the majority of us. And there are places in the US where people go to bed hungry, but also around the world where there is a lot of hunger. I think we need to get these seeds to the rest of the world. One concern I have is some of the third world countries, for whatever reason, haven't adopted or accepted some of the trait seeds, because they think that it is, or their understanding is that it is, not beneficial or could hurt the environment or whatever. At the same time, there's hundreds of their population if not thousands dying every day from starvation and hunger.

To Al, the cure to world hunger is Round-up Ready and Bt Advanced corn. He is convinced that his corporation's products are the best way to maximize productivity and efficiency. He envisions Monsanto in the savior role, coming in and liberating people from their primitive farming methods of the past. These corporations do not just see themselves as justified in selling their seed to other countries, but they also feel a moral imperative to export their seed globally.

Even though traditional and economic authority are ideal types, Al accepts

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> everyday in cars and automobiles. Just wearing clothing that may or may not have come from a third world country that some very poor—there's just so many issues in this world, and for them to pick up on this one and still tolerate the others [is frustrating]. It's kind of similar if you go to an Amish community. They drew the line at where they wanted to develop, and they will pull a bailer through the field with a team of horses, but they'll have a gasoline motor on running the bailer. Why do they accept this but they don't accept that? I just struggle with how people draw the line.

Al uses examples of people smoking cigarettes, driving cars, and wearing clothes that were made in sweat shops as parallel to his operations, because they are all justified by economic authority. According to Al, an individual can not reject immorality in one part of the system and still accept immorality in other parts. The all inclusive nature of economic authority is why the Amish are particularly confounding to Al, who struggles to understand people that follow traditional authority more than economic authority.

The Industrial Farmer

The size of farms has increased steadily since the end of the Great De(, bu)-10(t)-2(t)-2(he)--6(n)-14(

truly a blessing from technology. As much as I appreciate traditions, I was only too happy to avoid sweating it out in the sweltering 95 degree heat of Iowa in late July. I was also surprised at the maneuverability of Mark's tractor. Though huge, the tractor was far from lumbering. All we were doing today, Mark said, “is just custom work.” He was baling 27 acres of hay, and we chatted while he worked.

Mark works through the tractor and a combine that is attached to the back of his tractor. They augment the amount of work that he can accomplish. Without his tractor there is no way that he could farm anywhere near the number of acres that he farms today. The work can at times become monotonous. Mark said, “Cell phones are a wonderful invention. Especially when you are out here with nobody else to talk to. You can only listen to the radio so long.” Baling the 27 acres with him seemed a breeze. We were done in under an hour and a half.

Other than farming his own acres, Mark mentioned that he does custom work to make sure that he can make ends meet:

> The last few years I still work for Monsanto picking seed corn in the fall. I mean that is still farm work, but at least it is not my [farm]. I get to work for somebody else for once, which is kind of nice. I know you don't think so, but every once in a while in unde004 Tc 0.004 me in8e in8etveleverou [(T)1()3(or)3(onn)-2( )-1K Tww 8.86 0(k)-1K

communities, and alienation is more present in individuals that express solidarity with economic authority than individuals that express solidarity with traditional authority. By Marx's definition, alienation is apparent in the product of an individual's labor having power over them, which is a type of alienation that Mark experiences acutely when he markets his corn. The other kind of alienation is apparent when a worker's activity becomes alien to them. I believe that Mark experiences this kind of alienation as well, although not to the same degree, because he works with sophisticated technology that, especially when it malfunctions, operates as a foreign and alien force.

At one point, Mark elaborated on the difficulties and benefits of the technology that he uses:

> Planning and spraying is even worse. I have got monitors thrown all over. A lot of people who don't embrace technology, they just don't like that sort of thing. That's why they hire professional applicators to apply their herbicides. Also, it is very expensive to have that equipment. It is just like your guys's computers and stuff. They only last two, three, or four years and then there is something out there that is so much better you don't even want to use the old stuff, because the new stuff will pay for itself. But the new stuff is here to stay. There is absolutely no doubt. I don't need a tractor that steers itself, because I still have to be in here to operate it. We don't have fields like they have in California and Kansas where it is the same length, every row, every pass is the same length. But I do need to know where I am at on the satellite. If I run out of product I come right back to that spot. And yeah I got, not in this tractor, but I carry flags so that I can put a flag down. But to be honest with you, since I have got GPS I don't want to do it. GPS takes me back within a few feet. That is good enough for me. goni(f)-7(e)4(e)4(tlu2(oni(f)-7(eke)4( )e)4(e)4y)20(7

standing as a farmer. Mark said of farming:

> It's a really crazy business, because the guys you are having lunch with are the same guys you are bidding against to buy a farm after lunch or they are trying to sell you seed for one price and you are trying to buy it for another. You're still friends. The only way that you end up not being friends is if you lie or cheat. Only once and then it is over.

Mark's description of farming portrays farmers as competing businessmen, certainly not your idyllic farmer. Along with a moral responsibility to be honorable in business, Mark also believes that maintaining soil fertility is more important than maximizing profit. He said:

> There are things that I could be doing that would save me a lot more money, but they are not necessarily the right things. You know, if I rent your farm, for example, cash rent, and you live in Washington state, you only see me once every two years. You are happy as long as I send you a check, but in the meantime I am

getting in the groundwater and its negative health and ecological effects.[12] Economic authority legitimizes the use of Atrazine, which makes it hard for a farmer in Mark's situation to reject it for health and environmental reasons. The main reason that Mark finds for rejecting economic authority is the farmer's ethic of doing honest business and maintaining soil fertility for future farming.

At the end of the interview, Mark expressed his bitterness about marketing corn as opposed to producing it. He said, “I would much rather talk to you all day long about

By listening to Mark talk about his corn, I can tell that he empathizes with it.

Mark says that he gets “hung up” when he is “not motivated to sell any corn or beans.”

"People are paid according to the fruits of their labor. In agriculture, for example, the harvesting of crops requires the highest possible intensity of labor field by field."[14] Today, farmers use fertilizers, genetically manipulated seeds, and chemicals in an attempt to get the highest possible number of bushels per acre. Weber's observations from more than a hundred years ago are eerily prophetic today.

The easiest way to explain traditional authority is by contrasting it with economic authority. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno explain how economic authority asserts itself under the guise of rationality that in turn becomes a myth that can be irrational. In their book, Dialectic of Enlightenment they argue that Odysseus replaced the traditional Gods and became his own myth of rationality.[15] They write, "From the standpoint of the developed exchange society and its individuals, the adventures of Odysseus are no more than a depiction of the risks which line the path to success.[16] Although the mythical places and creatures that Odysseus encounters make a compelling narrative, the manner in which Odysseus comes to embody rationalism is an important underlying storyline. Horkheimer and Adorno write, "The formula for Odysseus's cunning is that the detached, instrumental mind, by submissively embracing nature, renders to nature what is hers and thereby cheats her."[17] Exploiting nature is a mandate for economic authority. The history of colonization as well as the history of technological innovation and heavy industrialization in America prove that economic authority conceptualizes land as instrumental, to be used and manipulated for the economic benefit of the owner of the land

Aldo Leopold, a staunch conservationist, asserts that the land has inherent value

regardless of any economic perspective. In the famous chapter called "The Land Ethic" from his 1949 book A Sand County Almanac, he argues that "There is as yet no ethic dealing with man's relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it. Land, like Odysseus' slave-girls, is still property. That land-relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges but not obligations."[18] Leopold was attune to the fact that the environment is an externality to the economic system, which means that unless they are incorporated they will continue to be exploited. More than half a century later, the environment is still an externality, and farmers today can apply as many chemicals as they want with a few exceptions.

The disregard for creatures, plants, or objects by economic authority is what prompted Aldo Leopold, who was born in Iowa, to write:

> One basic weakness in a conservation system based wholly on economic motives is that most members of the land community have no economic value. Wildflowers and songbirds are examples. Of the 22,000 higher plants and animals native to Wisconsin, it is doubtful whether more than 5 per cent can be sold, fed, eaten, or otherwise put to economic use. Yet these creatures are members of the biotic community, and if (as I believe) its sustainability depends on its integrity, they are entitled to continuance.[19]

Leopold has illuminated one of the core beliefs of traditional authority, that we are all members of a "biotic community" and that members of that community "are entitled to continuance." The interconnectedness of our ecosystems and social life creates a reverence for all life. While economic authority pictures man as the conqueror of mother nature, traditional authority sees man as and working with mother nature.

Wendell Berry has been arguing against economic authority throughout his career. In his 1977 book, The Unsettling of America, Berry writes:

Generation after after generation, those who intended to remain and prosper

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[18] p.203 Leopold Aldo. A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There. Oxford University Press 1949. Reprinted 1987

[19] p.220 Leopold, Aldo. A Sand County Almanac: And Sketches Here and There. Oxford University Press 1949. Reprinted 1987.

> where they were have been dispossessed and driven out, or subverted and exploited where they were, by those who were carrying out some version of the search for El Dorado. Time after time, in place after place, these conquerors have fragmented and demolished traditional communities, the beginnings of domestic cultures. They have always said that what they destroyed was out-dated, provincial, and contemptible. And with alarming frequency they have been believed and trusted by their victims, especially when their victims were other white people.[20]

Berry's reference to "some version of the search for El Dorado" is synonymous with economic authority. Berry shows how traditional authority is dominated by economic authority, and he paints a picture of a crisis, similar to the crisis of the family farmer.

Vandana Shiva, an outspoken proponent of the rights of indigenous people, writes in her book Biopiracy that "biodiversity is converted from a local commons into an enclosed private property." She continues, "Central to the privatization of knowledge and biodiversity is the devaluation of local knowledge, the displacement of local rights, and simultaneously, the creation of monopoly rights to biodiversity utilization through the claim of novelty."[21] Here again, we have another example of traditional authority being dominated by economic authority. Shiva condemns the exploitation of indigenous people because of how their knowledge is commodified and exploited by corporations.

Exposing the way that traditional authority is exploited is far easier than defining

into that black hole called the economy."[23] To Jackson, traditional authority means growing roots and cultivating a connection to the land instead of being submissive to economic authority.

I have meditated long and hard on these thinkers and the best way to define traditional authority. Economic authority is not modern and traditional authority is not antiquated, because both have been coexisting since the development of systematic quantitative monetary systems. Traditional authority harmoniously respects the rights of all members of our biotic community. Traditional authority is qualitative in that it values emotions and feelings. Traditional authority believes in family dinners around a dining room table not microwave dinners around a television. Critics will mention that

value while economic authority believes in an external value that is derived from our monetary system.

The Biological Farmer:

Bryan Davis is a local farmer in Grinnell. He farms 900 acres, 300 of which he is working to get certified organic. Bryan used to be a conventional farmer has since switched over to being what he calls “biological farming.” He explained to me what precipitated his transition away from conventional farming methods:

> We farmed conventionally for the first 20 years that we farmed, hardcore conventional. We actually had 11 years of that where we were following Iowa State's recommendations. We were hardcore no-tillers the way I put it. We were going out into bean stubble, not working the soil, planting or no-tilling our corn crop into the bean stubble. The same way with the corn ground. We were no-tilling beans into it. We were using a lot of commercial fertilizers, lots and lots of chemicals. What got us looking in a different direction is when her dad died of non-Hodgkins lymphoma in 1986, because there was a doctor from Sweden that was in Iowa City at the University of Iowa hospital that contributed her dad's illness to farm chemicals. The doctor had done a 7 year study in Europe and when her dad got sick he was in his third year of study here in the United States. The largest population in the world that had non-Hodgkins lymphoma were farmers that applied chemicals. And his study still stands today. We were wanting to get away from that [coughs]. It took us a few years to find another way, because I was trained the other way. My experiences were with chemicals and with c

externality that is not valued by economic authority.[24] The transition away from

techniques are marginalized by public institutions such as colleges and environmental agencies. In this passage, Bryan challenges the techniques that are promoted by the dominant way of farming:

> I have less erosion now doing what I'm doing than I used to have when I was one of those hardcore no-tillers, because my soils are permeable. They will let water in instead of making water run off. Everybody looks at residue as being the factor that eliminates erosion. I've got pictures to prove [that is not true]. I have a neighbor up north that was hardcore no-till right across the road. And I had a cover crop of oats started in March. This was 3 years ago. One night, we had a seven inch rain. You couldn't even see any gullies where I had washed. The neighbor lost his waterways and the water came down and actually washed his fence out. I use those pictures in some of the presentations that I give. Now, if residue controls erosion, why did my water go in the ground and his didn't? That's where I fight [dominant farming techniques]. It's an inner struggle for me, because everybody thinks that they're doing right. But the whole concept of change, change comes hard. I mean it really does. It's hard for people [to understand me], because they keep wanting to look at a lot of the things that I am doing as being old fashioned instead of progressive. Well, I grew 186 bushel corn last year on 16 pounds of nitrogen. ISU says it takes 1.2 pounds of nitrogen per bushel. So if you take 186 bushel of corn times 1.2 I should have needed about 200 pounds of nitrogen or a little more. I grew that 186 bushel on 16 pounds of nitrogen. Now is that old fashioned to you? To me, I don't know of anybody else... Of all of the people that I know, I don't know of anybody that has been able to do that.

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> I hate to sit here and totally talk against science, but I think science has been able to create some good things, and yet I'm not too sure science hasn't been able to create some monsters that we don't have any idea what they are going to be. Thirty-five years ago when they first came out with a chemical called atrozine, everybody thought it was the greatest thing since sliced bread. They had no idea that is was going to contaminate every shallow well we have got in the state of Iowa and probably in the Midwest. Now, you can't go around a shallow well and pull water out that doesn't have atrozine.

Another example of a farm chemical that seriously damaged the health of our ecosystem is DDT, which is still produced in America but is exported and not sold domestically

Ulrich Beck, a renowned German sociologist, echoes Bryan's scrutiny of science. He writes, “An ethical renewal of the science, even if it were not to become entangled in the thicket of ethical viewpoints, would be like a bicycle brake on an intercontinental jet, considering the autonomization of technological development and its interconnections with economic interest.”[26] Farmers must choose which technologies to abstain from using, because they are constantly marketed the latest products. Bryan has chosen to remove himself entirely from the market of chemicals and genetically modified products, which removes him entirely from the system of dependence, marketing, and consumption that exists between farm corporations and farmers.

Not only is Bryan saving money and raising safer crops, he is also raising higher quality crops. Bryan explained:

> I am trying to raise a higher quality produce, something that has got more minerals in it that has more food value. The funny part about it is now I am also finding out that I not only have a highly mineralized crop, something that has got a higher food value, but it also stores longer. It is just better quality... I think that we need to be looking at all crops that way, whether it be broccoli or carrots or cabbage or soybeans or corn. No matter what it is I think we need to [value our food qualitatively.] I think as a society, I think as a producer we need to look at it that way. But unfortunately, the marketplace doesn't care whether you have got a higher mineralized product. They are only going to pay you for a 56 pound corn or a 60 pound bean. They really don't care what it has got in it-2(ne)4(r)3hicou er pr(r)3hou r

> Just like my hay. I mean the better quality hay I got the less of it the horses have got to eat.

Bryan succinctly illuminates many of the failures of economic authority, specifically that it does not value quality. Economic authority only values quantities. Qualities are only valued when they can be commodified, which is why Bryan is getting 300 acres of his

and go back to the natural side of it.

If the high costs of farm inputs and low quality of our food is ignored, America has the most productive farmers in the world. Our industrial food production system is also highly subsidized by the government, a luxury that many countries can not afford.

For Bryan, the recent consolidation of farms is also explained by a larger shift in society towards personal economic interest at the expense communal values. He explained:

> There are a lot of guys out there who are doing a lot of yields but no quality... Back in the 70's, the thought process was that there were people starving to death all over this world so we had to grow all of these bushels so we could feed people. Well, there's still people starving to death in this world and there's always going to be people starving to death in this world, unfortunately. But I think the biggest reason that you see people starving in countries, it's because of their government. If the governing body of their country cared as much about their people then they'd find a way to keep them from starving. It isn't because there's not enough food in the world to feed them. It's because the governing body of that country is not taking care of it's people. And that's what worries me is that the United States could come back to that. We've got two three generations of people here that have never known what being hungry was. Back in the depression when [my wife's] grandfather bought this farm, if your neighbors didn't have something to eat you shared what you had. Today, it worries me that if it gets to the point where people are hungry again, there won't be any sharing. Somebody will shoot you or stick you in the back with a knife to steal what you have. Which there again, I think it is a reflection of where our society has degraded to, which is sad. That really bugs me. And I got a grandson that just turns a year old the 6th of August. It bugs me to think, “What is it going to be like when he is 25 years old?” And he's just a year old.

Bryan questions the security of our food supply. More importantly, he shows how in America the farmer is taken for granted. Even though individuals in our country have no need to ever meet a farmer, everyone survives off of the food that they produce. Several farmers expressed to me a feeling of neglect, that they are under appreciated. Even though Bryan rejects the global mandate to feed the world, he is still feeding people in America. Although traditional authority is an ideal type, Bryan embodies many characteristics of traditional authority, working with mother nature and worrying about his grandchildren.

The Direct Marketer

I met with Barney Barenfuse and Suzanne Castello at a local pizzeria in Grinnell

pollinated corn, because the people that are developing open pollinated corn “are more

> Wisconsin, they have had more of a livestock economy. It looks to me that their small towns seem to be much more prosperous than our small towns.

Farming, as a way of life and community formation, has become debased by specialization and the resulting consolidation. Confinement facilities that have made growing hogs and chicken economically unviable unless the farmer can commoditize the health of their product or direct market to the consumer.

Suzanne and Barney believe that technological advances in farming have contributed to the disassembly of the family farm and farming communities. Suzanne said, "[Increased size] also effects the whole family. When you were baling with small bales, you needed three people to do the baling. Now, you can do it with one person. You have lots of things like that. On a grain farm, who needs a wife? Who needs a child? Who needs anybody? Just bachelor farmers. You can just do it all up yourself."

"It's kind of the opposite of the Amish philosophy," Barney commented. "Where they have to have a lot of people to do everything. That helps to keep the community together. If you have to have all three of your kids and two of your neighbors to do the project, that helps to keep the community together. You keep in contact with your neighbors better than when you have got a twelve row combine and a thousand bushel grain cart and a couple of semis of your own. You don't need anybody," he laughed. "You don't need to see them until you go to the coffee shop."

In contrast to Al Henderson, who derided that Amish for being inefficient, Barney praises the Amish. The Amish are a medium through which both Al and Barney express their feelings for traditional farming. Al does not value their techniques and Barney does, which accurately reflects their placement on the continuum between economic and traditional authority. Barney expresses more solidarity with traditional authority and Al expresses more solidarity with traditional authority.

of the things that are recommended. I just have tried them myself for so many years. If I'm trying a new crop, I try it on a very small amount of acres at first. I do 10 to 40 acres of something new and then if it works why I go with it." Howard has learned what works best for his so

direct relationship. Skillful navigation of the market will make a farmer richer than if he farms well.

Howard Raffety was the second farmer with which I talked, and he has an indelible sense of the market. We met at his house, which is located on the same ground that his father first started to farm in 1929. Howard's farm is under a corporate umbrella, Raffety Farms Inc., and Howard holds the position “secretary of treasurer,” and is the only full-time employee.

Both Howard Raffety and Howard McDonough raise cattle, and it seems to me that they identify more closely with their cattle than with their corn. When I asked them, “What crops and livestock do you raise on your farm?,” Howard Rafetty responded, “The cowherd is mine, not the corporations. Today, I have twenty-four cows, a bull, two heifers that have not calved, not been bred, and nineteen calves on the ground, five more to go.”

“What crops?”

“And in the past I've raised hogs,” Howard continued to talk about livestock. “I grew up with chickens and that's about it... Milk cows, I milked grade A for the first three years, because dad still milked. Grade A means fluid milk for the table versus grade B milk, which is in ice cream and manufactured processed products.” Howard was very eager to talk with me about livestock, and even gave me a detailed description of his cow herd. Howard's enthusiasm goes back to Barney Bahrenfuse, who said that he thinks of traditional farming as having livestock.

Howard elucidates the point that farmers are disciplined by economic authority similar to all individuals in our society. He said:

> Farming's a way of life. It's also a business, and you need to have some financial acumen to be successful, because there is the marketing of the crop. There is the

> purchasing the inputs. Within the purchase of the inputs there is the purchase of the machinery. You don't always have to have brand new paint all of the time. You need to make good financial decisions in terms of what each operation needs. In my operation, my paint has has grown old. I don't apologize for any of the equipment, because it is well maintained and kept up. Certainly does the job for me every year. At 65, we're beginning to get into a race of whether I'm going to quit before the machinery quits. I have made some new purchases of smaller stuff, but I don't have brand new tractors.

Howard has aged along with his tractors, and he is now at the point in his career where purchasing a sleek new machine, such as the one that Mark Dimit uses, is not realistic. Howard mused with me about the future of farming and GPS technology. He said, “I mean it's fun for me to look at, but I'm not going to get it. If I was younger it would be [a possibility], and especially if I had enough acreage to support it.” In many ways, Howard Raffety is content. He is content with the farming techniques that he uses, the productivity of his land, and how he markets his product, and yet he still expresses more solidarity with economic authority than traditional authority.

Howard describes corn in an instrumental way. He said, “I have referred to the corn plant as a factory, but if the corn root worm is there and eating all of the roots off of the factory, the corn can't take in the inputs to make that new ear of corn as efficiently. [Rootworm resistant corn] should pay for itself in a better factory, because otherwise the factory is hampered without enough inputs enough supply.” The highest form of expression that we have are our actions and the overwhelming majority of farmers are use practices similar to Mark Dimit and Howard Raffetty. Despite the inclination towards using these techniques, farmers are still on a continuum between economic and traditional authority that involves many factors. However, all of these farmers are subject to the specific context of Iowa, which has pressures exerted upon them from the government, corporations, familial ties, and local communities that may not be present in other contexts.

> pool, those who are left have to do more acres per hour of time. Fewer young people want to go to college and come back and farm and take this risk. There's a cause and effect of course. Which came first? Was it that the people didn't want to come back because other people were left to seek bigger equipment? Or was it the manufacturers made bigger equipment because someone was asking for it and then they charged more for it too? We've gone from what was the norm in 1980 is not economically viable in 2005.

Mark illustrates the coercive power of technology. We are at a point where industrial farmers are limited by how much land they have, not how much land they can farm. A farmer that attempted to use the same techniques as farmers such as Mark Dimit on less acreage would find that they are not competitive.

Another important aspect of farming in Iowa is the subsidies. The more land a farmer cultivates, the more subsidies he receiver

because they are being reduced to a number. There are several other numbers that would

Monsanto can invest in the genetic modification of corn seeds, because they are assured that there will always be demand for more corn. Other corporations profit because they are able to buy corn at a deflated cost. One farmer who asked to remain anonymous explained:

intending to purchase, and for most purchasers of organic, they want a product that is more safe, healthy, and environmentally responsible.

I believe that organic products purchased from Wal-Mart will have some of these characteristics, but not all. The food will not be contaminated by synthetic chemicals or fertilizers. However, the taste, nutrition, and ecological sustainability may not be near the value that one can get from their local farmers. Supermarkets are forced to store their products for days, sometimes weeks, which means that the products are not riped on the stalk, causing their produce to loose nutritional value as well as taste value. In addition, food that is purchased through the industrial food system has often traveled thousands of miles, from the farm, to a distributor, and then finalelln, s7he fatupe3(m)-2(, t)-u2(bu5na)-6(l)-t(7)6(n)2(d)2(

them.