

Authorization or Authority

A minimal statement

1. Definitions

A system is a structure in which actions occur. An action is a state transition.

Authorization is a condition that permits an action.

Authorization is explicit if it is attributable to a specific origin, valid at the time of action, bounded in scope, and revocable by its origin. Authorization is implicit otherwise.

Authority is the capacity of a system to permit or prevent actions without requiring contemporaneous authorization from their origin.

2. Invariant

If an action occurs without contemporaneous authorization from its origin, permission has been retained by the system.

Retained permission is implicit authorization. Implicit authorization accumulates. Accumulated implicit authorization is authority.

3. Observation

Implicit authorization arises whenever permission is derived from anything other than contemporaneous authorization.

This includes cases where permission is inferred from persistence over time, position or system state, prior events, or outputs of a process.

In each case, action is permitted without fresh authorization.

4. Consequence

Where implicit authorization exists, authority exists.

Authority does not require intent. It follows from retained permission.

Systems that permit implicit authorization tend toward asymmetry in control, privileged positions, and accumulation of power. These are structural outcomes.

5. Condition

A system avoids authority only if every action requires explicit authorization.

Explicit authorization must be attributable, contemporaneous, bounded, and revocable.

Revocation must dominate prior authorization. If prior authorization survives revocation, authority remains.

6. Corollary

Any permission that remains valid without reauthorization transfers control from the origin to the system.

Final

There are two classes of systems: those that require explicit authorization for every action, and those in which authority emerges.