

## **God vs. Law**

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In this short draft, we propose to analyze the phenomena of authority and power in the interaction by adopting a CCO perspective.

According to this approach, someone has more or less authority or power over someone else depending on her capacity to represent the elements that matter for this other person, that is, the elements that will cause this other person to act in a certain way.

At the very beginning of the interaction, David briefly manages to have a certain authority (and power) over Kim. When he tells her “Don’t smile at me” (l. 1), Kim replies that she “did not” and, more importantly, that she is not “being respectful to [him]” (l. 2).

The fact that she did or did not smile does not really matter here. The point is that when David tells Kim that he is under the impression that she is being disrespectful to him, she states that she is not, which is another way of saying that she does respect him.

Thus, in this brief interaction, by speaking in the name of the respect that people must have for each other (or that clerks must have for citizens), David causes Kim to state that she respects him, which shows that respect is something that matters to her too.

However, both White and David immediately reject Kim’s understanding of what being respectful means (l.3-4). According to them, refusing to deliver them a marriage license amounts to “treating them as second-class citizens” (l. 5) and “telling them that they don’t deserve the same rights that [she] has (that is, as a heterosexual)” (l. 6).

At this point, White and David attempt to make Kim deliver them a marriage license by speaking in the name of respect and equality between all citizens. This attempt, however, fails. According to Kim, she is “saying that they do (have the same rights)” (l. 8).

This statement is difficult to understand to the extent that it seems to contradict her refusal to deliver the license. The only way to make sense of it is to consider that, for Kim, her refusal is not a matter of law (but, as she will make clear on l. 33-34, a matter of religion).

By disconnecting her refusal from issues of respect and equal rights, she thus takes away the elements through which White and David sought to gain authority (and power) over her.

However, by doing so, she also takes away the elements through which her refusal might gain authority (and power) over White and David. For them delivering a marriage license is first and foremost a matter of law.

In many ways, the rest of the interaction reproduces this opposition. None of the parties manages to gain much authority and (power) over the other.