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## Perspectives on Authority

What is authority? It is an old question. Indeed, Hannah Arendt in the first *Nomos* volume asked 'what *was* authority?' somewhat nostalgically, fearing that even the answer might be lost in the mists of antiquity. But the question goes on being asked and has recently received much renewed attention from political and legal philosophers.

The question is, on the face of it, at least two questions. It could be the analytical question: what are the elements of the concept of authority and how are they structured? What are the criteria by which we may recognize the possession, exercise, and acceptance of authority? How is it to be distinguished from other forms of influence over persons and from, say, persuading, threatening, advising, and requesting? Or it could be the normative question: what is legitimate authority? What is it that renders authority legitimate? What justifies the claims of authority as being worthy of acceptance? When should utterances be treated as authoritative?

Discussions of authority divide over the issue of how the analytical question relates to the normative question. Some hold that the questions are quite distinct: that we can elucidate the concept of authority and as a separate matter ask when, if ever, submission to it is justified. They may well go on to say that this latter question is not a timeless one; that what is justified in one context and from one point of view may not be so in and from another. Others hold that the questions cannot be divorced in this way. They hold that to do so is to advance a 'relativized' notion of authority, according to which 'we simply state what authority is had by whom from a certain point of view'<sup>1</sup> and that this 'severs the connection between authority and practical reason'.<sup>2</sup> For them the non-relativized notion is primary

and is presupposed by the relativized notion. On this view of the matter, to analyse authority is to analyse legitimate or justified authority, to which different people in different times and places lay claim and submit, some rightly, some wrongly. It is on this view not a matter of meaning that a person can have authority, be an authority or in authority only if his authority is recognized by some people whose identity will vary with the nature of his authority (though in practice, especially in political contexts, it will be contingently true that such recognition will be a condition of his exercising his legitimate authority effectively). On this second approach, establishing the grounds on which an authoritative utterance should be recognized as such is prior to all empirical inquiry into beliefs and practices. On the first, it is not. Indeed, on the first view, what is authoritative will not, in any given case, be independent of a whole web of beliefs, some explicit and some implicit in practices. Of course, not anything can be a ground or reason for treating an utterance as authoritative (e.g., that it is loud—though that could be a sign that there is such a reason). But what counts as such a reason will be internal to a web of beliefs.

Both approaches, however, concur in the aim of enabling us to identify relations of authority and distinguish them from others. What I seek to suggest in this chapter is that such identification is an even more complex matter than is often supposed and always involves a process of interpretation. More particularly, I claim that every way of identifying authority is relative to one or more perspectives and is, indeed, inherently perspectival, and that there is no objective, in the sense of perspective-neutral, way of doing so. This feature of attributions of authority has, I think, been far too little attended to in the voluminous literature on the topic, including that compatible with its recognition.

Without analysing or exploring the notion of 'perspective' here,<sup>3</sup> I mean it to refer to a point of view, a more or less integrated set of ways of seeing and judging matters of fact and practical questions, not excluding basic moral and political questions, and incorporating beliefs about the possibilities and necessities of social life, and about how the self, its relation to society, and its manner of reasoning are to be conceived. In this domain, of course, the reality upon which

<sup>1</sup> This chapter was first published in 1987.

<sup>2</sup> J. Raz, *The Authority of Law* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Cf. Hannah Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 280 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See my 'Relativism in its Place', in M. Hollis and S. Lukes (eds.), *Rationality and Relativism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982).

perspectives bear is itself in part constituted by contending perspectives. To speak thus of perspectives is not in itself to embrace any deep form of relativism: some will be, for example, more perspicuous or comprehensive or consistent than others. Typically, different perspectives—and at what points and how much they differ will in turn be variously interpretable—are associated with different positions within a social relation (such as an authority relation), with different social and political roles (e.g., the judicial, the bureaucrat's, and the citizen's perspectives) and with different activities (e.g., the actor's and observer's perspectives). How to individuate perspectives is a complex question into which I cannot go here. The question of whether differences of belief and judgement are variations within one perspective or demarcations between two cannot be answered in the abstract and in general. The answer will depend on the reasons for which perspectives are being discriminated, I do not of course mean to suggest that any one person ever adopts only one perspective. We all engage in multiple relations, roles, and activities and accordingly adopt and negotiate multiple perspectives.

For the purposes of what follows, I shall distinguish a number of potentially different perspectives. First, with respect to the authority relation itself, we can distinguish between the exerciser or holder of authority and those who accept or are subject to it. I shall, in the time-honoured philosophical fashion, call the first *A* and the second *B* and thus speak of *perspective A* and *perspective B*. I shall call the observer (who may or may not be internal to the authority relation or to the society in which it occurs) *C* and his perspective *perspective C*. Authority relations generally occur within a wider framework of social norms and conventions, legal and customary. Some of these are officially and definitely interpreted by judges, courts, and representatives of the state. I will call this perspective society's official perspective or *perspective SO*. This is likely to diverge at various points from prevalent, unofficial, and informal understandings of such norms, rules, and conventions. I shall call such unofficial ways of understanding *perspective SU*—and, on the plausible assumption that these will be various and conflicting, *SU<sub>1</sub>*, *SU<sub>2</sub>* ... *SU<sub>n</sub>*. It is, however, often suggested that there is, in some or most societies, an underlying consensus that will be implicit in, though distinct from, *SO* and *SU<sub>1</sub>* ... *SU<sub>n</sub>*, which may be elicited by a sensitive interpretation or reconstruction of a society's beliefs and practices. This notion of consensus has long played a role in contemporary sociology and

has recently surfaced in political philosophy. It is what Michael Walzer relies on in order to determine the criteria that demarcate his 'spheres of justice'.<sup>4</sup> And it is what John Rawls supposes will result from the confrontation of a society's unreconstructed beliefs with theoretical criticism through 'reflective equilibrium'. Let us call this third, consensual social perspective *perspective SC*. (We can see it as an amalgam of perspectives *SO* and *SU* interpreted from perspective *C*.) Finally, we may postulate a putative impersonal, 'objective' and 'archimedean' perspective from which all other perspectives may be assessed. Rawls calls it a standpoint that is 'objective and also expresses our autonomy', which 'enables us to be impartial, even between persons who are not contemporaries but who belong to many generations'. To 'see our place in society from the perspective of this position' is, he eloquently continues, 'to see it *sub specie aeternitatis*: it is to regard the human situation not only from all social but from all temporal points of view'. It is 'the perspective of eternity'—not 'a perspective from a certain place beyond the world, nor the point of view of a transcendent being; rather it is a certain form of thought and feeling that rational persons can adopt within the world'.<sup>5</sup> Thomas Nagel calls it 'a conception of the world which as far as possible is not the view from anywhere within it'.<sup>6</sup> Let us call this perspective *perspective O*. One central question this chapter seeks to address is whether there is indeed any such perspective.

I now turn to consider some attempts to analyse the nature of authority. All mark out a distinctive mode of securing compliance which combines in a peculiar way power over others and the exercise of reason. On the one hand, authority appears to be part of that network of control concepts that includes power, coercion, force, manipulation, persuasion, etc. As Hobbes said, 'command is a precept in which the cause of the obedience depends on the will of the commander' and 'the will stands for the reason'. Even authority over belief appears to involve an influence that bypasses rational argument. On the other hand, reason is plainly involved: authority offers a reason and operates through reasoning. Moreover, only rational agents are capable of claiming, recognizing and accepting authority. As Friedrich observed, it involves 'a very particular kind

<sup>4</sup> Walzer, *Spheres of Justice* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 587.

<sup>6</sup> Nagel, *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), p. 208.

of relationship to reason', namely 'the potentiality of reasoned elaboration'.<sup>7</sup>

I shall first consider three accounts exemplifying the first, 'relativized' approach presented above, in order to illustrate the different perspectives that they exemplify. I shall then turn to a further account that illustrates the second approach in order to show that even an account that explicitly seeks to avoid perspective dependence fails and must fail to do so.

Consider first Max Weber's celebrated account of authority. Weber was, of course, concerned with *Herrschaft*, or domination, but he was interested specifically in 'the authoritarian power of command', as against 'domination by virtue of a constellation of interests (in particular by virtue of a position of monopoly?). Domination in Weber's preferred sense indicated the securing of compliance which occurs 'as if the ruled had made the content of the command the maxim of their conduct for its very own sake'.<sup>8</sup> He wrote, 'The merely external fact of the order being obeyed is not sufficient to signify domination in our sense; we cannot overlook the meaning of the fact that the command is accepted as a "valid" norm.'<sup>9</sup>

Of course, Weber was well aware that commands may be obeyed for a wide variety of reasons: 'the command may have achieved its effect upon the ruled either through empathy or through inspiration or through persuasion by rational argument or through some combination of these three principal types of influence of one person over another'.<sup>10</sup> Indeed,

In a concrete case the performance of a command may have been motivated by the ruled's own conviction of its propriety, or by his sense of duty, or by fear, or by 'dull' custom, or by a desire to obtain some benefit for himself.<sup>11</sup>

Yet it is a striking fact that Weber's sociology of domination never explores these possibilities by investigating the question 'When and why do men obey?' or looks at authority relations from below, that is, from perspective B. On the contrary, his classification of authority is exclusively from perspective A, in terms of prevailing rationales for

7. C. J. Friedrich, 'Authority, Reason and Discretion', in id. (ed.), *Authority, NOMOS I, The American Society of Political and Legal Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), p. 35.

8. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich, 2 vols. (New York: Bedminster, 1968), ii, pp. 943, 946.

9. *Ibid.* ii, 946.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.* ii, 946-7.

obedience—claims typically made by those in command. As Parkin observes, Weber never asks 'whether the legitimations put out by traditional, charismatic and legal-rational authorities differed in the degree to which they were actually endorsed by the masses'.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, he proceeds throughout 'as though widespread endorsement of all three types of legitimation was typically found among all and sundry'. It is 'as if Weber simply assumed the correctness of Marx's dictum that the prevailing ideas in any society are the ideas of its ruling class'.<sup>13</sup> I suspect this may be because Weber, as a cynical 'realist' concerning power, and despite his talk of the 'voluntary' acceptance of maxims, basically saw prevailing principles of legitimation (especially democratic ones) as 'myths' injected into the masses by élites. At all events, the Weberian approach, while offering an illuminating classification of authority claims, succeeds in identifying authority relations by only taking account of perspective A. Authority on this view is the securing of compliance by command on the basis of claims, of the three indicated types, assumed to be accepted by the commanded.

Consider next the illuminating analysis of the authority relation offered by Richard Friedman, as consisting in two tiers: first, 'that special and distinctive kind of dependence on the will or judgment of another so well conveyed by the notion of a "surrender of private judgment";' and second, 'the recognition and acceptance of certain criteria for designating who is to possess this kind of influence'.<sup>14</sup> This analysis is intended to cover both the cases of 'an authority' and 'in authority'.

In both cases, 'we have to see the notion of authority in connection with the idea of a very special sort of reason for action (or belief); one difference being that belief in authority calls for internal assent, whereas the notion of acting in conformity to the commands of authority allows for the dissociation of thought and action'.<sup>15</sup>

A claim to the former, Friedman suggests, rests on the ground of 'superior knowledge or insight, that makes belief, and not merely external conformity, the appropriate response to authority'.<sup>16</sup> It

12. F. Parkin, *Max Weber* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 78.

13. *Ibid.*

14. R. B. Friedman, 'On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy', in R. Flathman (ed.), *Concepts in Social and Political Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 131, 134.

15. *Ibid.* 135.

16. *Ibid.* 143.

presupposes an inequality of knowledge, insight, or wisdom prior to the authority relation itself; and it presupposes the epistemological claim that such superior knowledge, insight or wisdom is in principle available. It presupposes, in short, 'a world of common beliefs and the recognition of inequality in the capacity of men to understand those beliefs'.<sup>17</sup>

By contrast, the relation of those 'in authority' to those who defer to them presupposes a world in which there is

a complex *recognition* of dissensus and equality at the substantive level over against which men are prepared to step up to the procedural level and abide by the decisions of the person designated as being 'in authority,' whether or not those decisions happen to coincide with their 'private' opinions.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, authority serves to mark off the distinction between private and public in this sense. Such authority is a response to a 'predicament' in which 'a collection of individuals wish to engage in some common activity requiring a certain degree of coordinated action but they are unable to agree on what the substance of their common behavior should be.'<sup>19</sup> In general, according to Friedman, both forms of authority imply

some mutually recognized relationship giving the one the right to command or speak and the other the duty to obey. Authority thus involves a form of influence that can only be exercised from within a certain kind of normative arrangement accepted by both parties.<sup>20</sup>

Friedman's account is decidedly an improvement on Weber's. It hinges on the notion of mutual recognition: what is essential is that perspectives A and B agree in 'a certain kind of "recognition" that the person to whom one defers is entitled to this sort of submission'.<sup>21</sup> Legitimation claimed and the according of legitimacy coincide in a shared recognition of entitlement. That recognition may be based on a very wide range of possible 'marks' of credentials of authority — 'office, social station, property, "great" power, pedigree, religious claims, "miracles" (Augustine), etc.'<sup>22</sup>

A number of problems are raised by this account. Less seriously, it seems obvious that many cases of 'an authority' over belief need not involve mutual recognition of that authority; such authorities can go unrecognized and they can be seen as authorities

<sup>17</sup> Friedman, 'On the Concept of Authority', p. 146.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 145–6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 140.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 134.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 131.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 133.

unwittingly or posthumously. Similarly, persons 'in authority' may sometimes properly be said to have it even if those subject to it fail to endorse it, as parents and teachers know well. Second, Friedman's discussion of the 'marks' of authority does not successfully distinguish between *signs* and *grounds*: the crown and sceptre are the former, the regal office they betoken the latter. But two more serious problems arise. First, what are the criteria by which these 'marks' are recognized as marks of authority? Is it just up to the parties in an authority relationship to fix on anyone they wish to recognize as authoritative? And second, what is the nature of that recognition? Is it like a 'cue' triggering off 'blind obedience' and the 'surrender of judgement'? Or is a process of rational judgement involved?

These last two questions are addressed by the third account we will consider, namely that of Richard Flathman. He answers the first by placing the authority relation within a wider 'practice' of authority in which shared values and beliefs prevalent in a community play a constitutive part. And he answers the second by firmly resisting the notion of a 'surrender of private judgement', maintaining this notion to be 'at the very least, seriously misleading'.<sup>23</sup>

For Flathman, both 'in authority' and 'an authority' relations are 'grounded in shared values and beliefs to which we are referring as the authoritative'.<sup>24</sup> the 'partly constitutive character of the values, beliefs, actions and so forth of subscribers ... to a set of rules, institutions, etc.' is 'a central feature of our entire theory of authority'.<sup>25</sup> But how are these to be identified and just how do they bear on the authority relation? Sometimes, Flathman seems to be referring to perspective SO, as when he, rather oddly, assumes that 'the values and beliefs which make up Marxism–Leninism are now among the constitutive features' of the practice of authority in the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup> Sometimes, he seems to be referring to SU, without any real sensitivity to the systematic divergences it embraces—as when, rather baldly, he remarks that 'if we are trying to determine whether Ivan had authority in sixteenth-century Russia we must ascertain the criteria that had standing among sixteenth-century Russians and we must determine whether sixteenth-century Russians thought those criteria were satisfied.'<sup>27</sup> Sometimes, as when

<sup>23</sup> Flathman, *The Practice of Political Authority* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 124.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 26.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 231–2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 87.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 228.

discussing the shared values and beliefs of modern liberal democracies, as allowing for disagreement and the practice of civil disobedience, he seems to be embracing a version of perspective SC.

But a further and deeper problem is raised by his rejection of the notion of the surrender of private judgement and his insistence that participants in the practice of authority are making 'judgments grounded in evidence and reason', that there is within the authoritative 'a basis both for grounded, reasoned judgments concerning it and for grounded reasoned disagreements concerning those judgments'.<sup>28</sup> and his call for a 'critical justificatory theory of authority'.<sup>29</sup> Do such judgements transcend the confines of prevailing authoritative beliefs and values? Or, to make the same point conversely, does the 'authoritative' in part determine what counts as convincing evidence or a good reason? What kind of a constraint does 'evidence and reason' place upon the constitutive character of the 'authoritative'? Flathman rejects what he calls 'collectivistic subjectivism' but we need to know more about why he does so.

So I turn finally to an account of authority that fearlessly avoids such dangers and temptations by offering a straightforwardly rationalist 'critical justificatory theory of authority' on the assumption that this can be done independently of and prior to any 'relativized' way of conceiving it, while acknowledging that 'the relativized notion is useful because it reveals the views of people or societies concerning non-relativized authority'.<sup>30</sup> The account in question is that developed in a number of writings by Joseph Raz. I shall refer here to his 1979 book *The Authority of Law* and to his 1985 article 'Authority and Justification'<sup>31</sup> in which the relation between authority and reason and the justification of authority are systematically explored.

Raz, starting from the 'basic insight' that 'authority is ability to change reasons for action',<sup>32</sup> sees authority as 'a species of normative power' which changes such reasons by exclusion. Thus, orders are both first-order reasons (for acting) and 'exclusionary reasons' which 'exclude by kind and not by weight': their impact is 'not to

change the balance of reasons but to exclude action on the balance of reasons'.<sup>33</sup> Accepting authority involves 'giving up one's right to act on one's judgment on the balance of reasons',<sup>34</sup> the authority is legitimate if such exclusionary reasons are valid.

When, then, is authority legitimate? What renders its exclusionary reasons valid? Raz advances what he calls the 'dependence thesis', namely that 'All authoritative directives should be based, in the main, on reasons which already independently apply to the subjects of the directives and are relevant to their action in the circumstances covered by the directive'.<sup>35</sup> The 'normal' and 'primary' way to show that one person should be acknowledged to have authority over another is given by what he calls the 'normal justification thesis': it is to show 'that the alleged subject is likely better to comply with reasons which apply to him (other than the alleged authoritative directives) if he accepts the directives of the alleged authority as authoritatively binding and tries to follow them, rather than by trying to follow the reasons which apply to him directly'.<sup>36</sup> These reasons need not be confined to the furthering of his interests (as when a military officer orders soldiers to defend their country, against their personal interests). Other justifications for accepting authority—such as consent, or respect for the law, or identification with a community—are merely secondary. They are valid only if they accompany the primary reason. Typical of situations where the normal justification holds are those presenting co-ordination problems, including prisoner's dilemma type situations. Indeed, Raz argues, solving co-ordination problems is one of the important tasks of political and many other practical authorities. The key idea (especially in relation to politics) is what Raz calls 'the service conception of the function of authorities'—namely, that 'their role and primary normal function is to serve the governed', which they do when they 'help them act on reasons which bind them'.<sup>37</sup>

Raz's attempt is to 'explain the notion of legitimate authority

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 22, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 26. However, 'there is no reason for anyone to restrain their thoughts or their reflections on the reasons which apply to the case' ('The Justification of Authority', p. 10) and one may always challenge a putatively authoritative directive on jurisdictional grounds by questioning whether it has violated the conditions of its rightful power.

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through describing what one might call an ideal exercise of authority'. It is through their 'ideal functioning' that the practice of authorities must be understood. This is given by how they publicly claim that they attempt to function, which is 'the normal way to justify their authority'.<sup>38</sup>

This is an unwarrantably rapid summary of Raz's complex account, which is the most perspicuous analysis of the concept to date and the most systematic attempt I know of to escape the problems we have been investigating, by presenting an analysis of authority relations that purports explicitly not to be an account of 'what authority is had by whom from a certain point of view'.<sup>39</sup> Does it do so?

I doubt it. For Raz, 'the normal and primary way of justifying the legitimacy of an authority is that it is more likely to act successfully on the reasons which apply to its subjects';<sup>40</sup> accepting legitimate authority offers the advantage of having found 'a more reliable and successful guide to right reason'.<sup>41</sup> But how are we to ascertain what the reasons that apply to authority's subjects are and in what 'success' in acting on them or guiding us to them consists?

There is a whole range of cases where the answers to these questions seem obvious and uncontroversial. The traffic policeman, the tax authorities, legislators, judges, military officers, parents can all be seen as 'in the main', at least in certain areas, directing us to act on reasons that independently apply to us, so that we may properly see them as having the right to replace people's own judgement on the merits of the case. Of course the legitimacy of such authorities is (in perhaps ascending order of frequency) questioned, on particular occasions, over whole ranges of cases, and (as with anarchists, pacifists, and revolutionaries) in general. It may be questioned in various ways. They may be held to have a false or misconceived idea of the 'reasons which apply to [their] subjects'. Lawmakers and judges may be denounced for being out of touch with the interests and needs of those they purport or are claimed to protect and guide (as they have been by blacks in the United States or opponents of abortion). Military leaders may appeal to duties and commitments that both soldiers and citizens reject (as in the United States during the Vietnam War or Israel during the later stages of the invasion of

<sup>38</sup> Raz, 'The Justification of Authority', p. 27.  
<sup>40</sup> 'The Justification of Authority', p. 20.

<sup>39</sup> *The Authority of Law*, p. 11.  
<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 25.

Lebanon). Secondly, the legitimacy of authorities may be questioned on grounds of 'reliability' and 'success', the reasons applying to their subjects being taken as given. Corrupt policemen and incompetent military regimes (rarely) lose their legitimacy in this way. But either way, Raz would probably argue, questioning the legitimacy of particular authorities, even in general, in these ways does not show that they would not be legitimate if the conditions set by the normal justification thesis were to be met.

I fail to see how the reasons that apply to authority's subjects, on which authoritative directives should be based, are to be ascertained in a perspective-neutral manner. The objectives an authority is to further are not determinable a priori and are often matters of intense controversy. On the other hand, it is plausible to suggest that, once such objectives are agreed, the question of a given authority's 'reliability' and 'success' (like that of an investment consultant) could be seen as a matter of fact, yet even this is not obvious. What is being judged: the institution or its agents, and over what period of time? Raz's phrase 'in the main' leaves leeway here too for judgement and interpretive dispute.

The sorts of cases we have considered are plainly those on which this account of legitimate authority is centrally based and to which it is most obviously applicable. The most obviously applicable cases are those in which authority establishes or helps sustain conventions, seen as solutions to co-ordination problems, or enables people to escape prisoner's dilemma type situations. More generally, this account works best for all those cases where there is what we might call an extrinsic relation between authoritative directives and reasons they depend on and replace. Authority on this view is an invaluable device to achieve, more reliably and successfully, independently given and agreed objectives that would otherwise be less easy or impossible to attain. Even here, as we have seen, there is much room for interpretive dispute as to which objectives are relevant and what constitutes success.

But what of cases where the relation between authority and reason is intrinsic: where the objectives authority serves are internal to, that is shaped and sustained by, the authority relation itself. The examples that come most naturally to mind here are religious, though the point is far wider than that. The role of the priesthood is, in part, to lead men along the path of righteousness or truth, as it is interpreted by the priesthood—to show the way to destinations that



people might not have conceived apart from it (that is, apart from the institution and tradition it embodies)—and may not even be characterizable without presupposing it (e.g., living according to the Torah). The fundamentalist preacher, say, and his congregation are in a relationship of self-reinforcing authority, in which the word of God (as he interprets its expression in the Bible) gives them reasons for actions concerning which he is, in turn, the authoritative guide.

Religious examples demonstrate this intrinsic relation with clarity. Here the 'primary normal function' of authority is not always best described as 'serving the governed'. Of course, religions often do have instrumental functions, promising (as magic typically does) to bring benefits in the here and now or (more probably) in the hereafter. But they also have sociological functions and Durkheimian social functions, both of which involve *transforming* rather than serving their adherents—by leading them to salvation, imbuing them with faith, giving meaning to their lives, and so on. In such cases, the legitimacy of authority does not lie in its reliability and success in securing independently given objectives, as measured against some objective standard, since it itself defines the objectives and sets the standard. And this applies, beyond religious cases, to all cases of intrinsic authority, where Raz's picture of an exclusionary reason justifiably pre-empting the balance of reasons does not really fit. A better picture might be that of a dominant reason that reduces the significance of other reasons that would otherwise prevail, and removes the point of weighing them. Thus (to take disparate examples at random): charismatic leaders define their followers' goals, the legitimacy resting on 'the belief in and devotion to the extraordinary, which is valued because it goes beyond the normal human qualities' and 'transvalues everything';<sup>42</sup> the Party prescribes certain objectives as primary; psychoanalysts (on one view of what they do) transform their patients' self-understanding; women exhibit patriarchal attitudes. In all these cases, it seems that if authority is justified, it is justified from a point of view, namely that of the authority itself, which becomes that of the subject.

It may, of course, be replied that only extrinsic authority is legitimate: only if putative authorities guide their subjects extrinsically to 'right reasons' can their claims be justified. In this case, we are

<sup>42</sup> Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948), pp. 296, 250.

owed a doctrine of 'right reason', indicating which *are* the 'reasons which bind them'. Moreover, it is not clear why, on principle, this reply should be given. Are there no cases of legitimate intrinsic authority? More generally, it may be suggested that the analysis proposed is, in principle, neutral between different perspective-dependent accounts within which different reasons, or sorts of reasons, can be judged to be 'right reasons'. This suggestion would bring Raz's analysis much closer to the position this paper seeks to advocate, since it leaves the answer to the question, 'When is authority legitimate? perspective-dependent. However, for the reason indicated in the previous paragraph, it is not clear that the analysis itself, with its 'service conception' of authority's function, successfully captures the nature of authority as understood in all contexts and cultures.

We are, it is clear, back to the problem with which we began. We are offered a test by which claims to authority that are imposed (à la Weber), mutually recognized (à la Friedman) or culturally given (à la Flathman) are to be judged genuine or spurious. Could such a test be perspective-neutral?

The very idea of such a test is central to our cultural tradition. Since the Enlightenment, we have believed that some such test should be available, distinguishing 'right' from spurious reasons, autonomy from heteronomy, self- from other-directedness, and providing a bedrock for practical judgement. This strand of our tradition is deeply hostile to priestly power, paternalism, and mystifying ideologies of all kinds. Basic to it is the image of an autonomous rational individual. Consider now the metaphor at the heart of Raz's account. 'Exclusionary reasons', excluding by kind rather than changing the balance of reasons, conjure up the old image of the scales of justice, and therewith an underlying and specific conception of the subject of authority. It suggests, in a word, a distinctly judicial conception of the individual, weighing and balancing, in an impartial spirit, the reasons that present themselves, in order to reach an independent judgement as to what to do or think 'all things considered'—but on occasion allowing 'binding' reasons to prevail. Yet this picture of the individual is not unique. Other pictures exist to which other styles of reasoning are central:<sup>43</sup> Talmudic, Confucian, Buddhist, etc.—

<sup>43</sup> See M. Carrithers, S. Collins, and S. Lukes (eds.), *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985).

whose relevance to the testing of authority claims merits investigation. Indeed, the thought suggests itself that Raz's aspiration to perspective-neutrality shapes his very notion of the subject, and that this aspiration and notion are no less perspective-dependent than any other.

Indeed, Raz freely admits that his argument is 'inescapably a normative argument', 'part of an attempt to make explicit elements of our common traditions', a 'partisan' account 'furthering the cause of certain strands in the common tradition by developing new or newly recast arguments in their favour'.<sup>44</sup> The critical justificatory theory of authority he develops is true to 'our' concept of authority and behind it to 'our' notion of the reasoning subject. It offers a test for legitimacy that is tailor-made for Friedman's 'second world', riven by conflicting interests and opinions but with a shared interest in the procedural resolution of co-ordination problems. It is, unquestionably, worth defending and propagating, in a world in which authoritarian and obscurantist notions of authority are rife and growing. But it is, while compelling, 'our' view, gaining its plausibility from the web of beliefs in which it is embedded. For this reason, I agree with Flathman's suggestion that 'caution is appropriate in posing—as for example Joseph Raz does—a "non-relativized" notion of authority that is a presupposition of the "relativized" notions we in fact find among this or that historical people'.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Raz, 'The Justification of Authority', p. 27.

<sup>45</sup> Flathman, *The Practice of Political Authority*, p. 77.