I cite this last example to make a general point: that an ethnocentric question—'Under what conditions did the individual emerge'—can yield a rich variety of compelling and rigorous indigenous answers.

# PART II

# 6
# Power and Authority*

Tracing the history of power and authority poses peculiar problems. The history of political theory and of sociology is in part a history of unending disagreement as to how power and authority are to be conceptualized and how they relate to one another. Moreover, that disagreement is endemic, and it is so for deep reasons. These concepts are not labels for discrete phenomena: they have distinct roles in social and political theorizing and in social and political life. Different and contending theories and world views yield different ways of conceiving power and authority and the relations between them. Thus an adequate history of power and authority would have to include an account of those theories and world views and their basis in social and political life.

Consider the following questions. Is power a property or a relationship? Is it potential or actual, a capacity or the exercise of a capacity? By whom, or what, is it possessed or exercised: by agents (individual or collective?) or by structures or systems? Over whom or upon what is it exercised: agents (individual or collective?) or structures or systems? Is it, by definition, intentional, or can its exercise be partly intended or unintended? Must it be (wholly or partly) effective? What *kinds* of outcomes does it produce: does it modify interests, options, preferences, policies, or behaviour? Is it a relation which is reflexive or irreflexive, transitive or intransitive, complete or incomplete? Is it asymmetrical? Does exercising power by some reduce the power of others? (Is it a zero-sum concept?) Or can its exercise maintain or increase the total of power? Is it demonic or benign? Must it rest on or employ force or coercion, or the threat of sanctions or deprivations? (And, if so, what balance of costs and rewards must there be between the parties for power to exist?) Does the concept only apply where there is conflict of some kind, or resistance? If so, must the conflict be manifest, or may it be latent:

* This chapter was first published in 1979.

must it be between revealed preferences or can it involve real interests (however defined)? Is it a behavioural concept, and, if so, in what sense? Is it a causal concept?

Parallel questions arise in relation to authority, along with others such as these: Is authority by definition legitimate? Is it by definition consensual? (And are these two questions the same question?) Can it (or must it) be coercive? Is it exercised over belief or over conduct or both? Is it a concept whose use is 'normative' or 'empirical'; is it 'quasi-performative' or 'neutral'? Is it *de jure* or *de facto* or both? Does it indicate a causal or an 'internal' relation? Does it presuppose a normative relationship? Can it be accounted for in individualist and behavioural or influence terms? Does it presuppose inequality? Is submission to authority compatible with the exercise of reason? Is it a denial, or sometimes a condition, of freedom and autonomy?

And what of the relationship between power and authority? Is authority a form of power? Or are only some forms of authority forms of power? Or does power (always or sometimes?) underlie authority? Or is there a radical opposition between power and authority? Or perhaps 'power is essentially tied to the personality of individuals' whereas 'authority is always associated with social positions or roles'?[1]

The alternative answers offered to questions such as these have wider theoretical and often philosophical import and they cannot be systematically treated here. What I propose to do instead is to offer a formal and abstract account of the *concepts* of power and authority respectively which inhere within the many *conceptions* of power and authority that have been used by particular thinkers within specific contexts, in development from and in reaction to one another. Any given conception of power and of authority (and of the relation between them) can be seen as an interpretation and application of its concept. The various conceptions of power and authority are, as John Rawls writes of conceptions of justice, 'the outgrowth of different notions of society against the background of opposing views of the natural necessities and opportunities of human life'. To understand any such conception fully, 'we must make explicit the conception of social co-operation from which it derives.'[2] I shall classify and indicate something of the range of alternative conceptions. I shall then sketch the outlines of a number of traditions of conceptualizing power and authority, and the relations between them, within political and social theory. I shall conclude by indicating a number of contemporary controversies in which alternative conceptions are at issue.

[1] R. Dahrendorf, *Class and Class Conflict in an Industrial Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), p. 166.

[2] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 9–10.



## I

First, the concept of power. The absolutely basic common core to all conceptions of power is the notion of the capacity to bring about consequences, with no restriction on what the consequences might be or what brings them about. When used in relation to human beings in social relations with one another, it is attributed to persons or collectivities or, sometimes, to systems or structures within which they act. It is, therefore, no surprise that any given conception of power will necessarily incorporate a theory of that to which it is attributed: to identify the power of an individual, or a class, or a social system, one must, consciously or unconsciously, have a theory of the nature—that is, the causal powers—of individuals, classes, or social systems. In applying this basic notion to the understanding of social and political life, however, something further is required than the mere idea that persons, groups, or systems generate causal consequences: namely, the idea that such consequences are non-trivial or significant in some way. Clearly, we all affect the world and one another in countless ways all the time; any given use of the concept of power—and related concepts such as authority, influence, coercion, force, violence, manipulation, and so on—picks out ranges of such consequences that are held to be significant in specific (and related) ways. A conception of power useful for understanding social relationships must incorporate a criterion of significance—that is, it must imply an answer to the question: What makes the consequences that can be brought about by *A* significant in such a way as to count as power?

A wide range of answers is to be found—answers which dictate specific responses to some or all of the questions raised in the second paragraph of this chapter. For some, what is essential to power is the realization of a will or desire. This will yield an intentional conception of power, which may be *potential*, as in Hobbes's view that 'the POWER *of a man*' is 'his present means to obtain some future

apparent good',[3] or *actual*, as in Voltaire's view that 'power consists in making others act as I choose',[4] or, even more simply, Bertrand Russell's 'the production of intended effects'.[5] In intentional conceptions, the focus is on individual agents, and on collective agents only in so far as intentions can be attributed to them (hence, in this view, groups such as élites will not have or exercise power unless they are united and consciously pursue their goals). Other conceptions do not take intention, or the realization of will, to be essential to power; such conceptions broaden the application of the concept to cover the actions, and perhaps inaction, of (individual or collective) agents which further their interests (which may or may not coincide with their intentions, if such they have).

Such an approach allows in not just unintended effects but various forms of individual and collective power (class power, state power) which the former conceptions do not. Some writers go so far as to see power as a variant of systemic or structural determinism (whether this be in the context of structural functionalism, systems theory, or structuralist Marxism). However, there is, it seems to me, much to be said for the view that this is an overextended and confusing use of the concept: power (and its cognate concepts) would seem to be an 'agency' notion (though, of course, views differ about what constitutes an 'agent'). Thus it is held and exercised by agents (individual or collective) within systems and structural determinants.[6] There are, however, as we shall see, conceptions of power that deny this (or appear to).

It seems that conceptions of power may be divided into two very broad categories. On the one hand, there are those which are asymmetrical and tend to involve (actual or potential) conflict and resistance.[7] Such conceptions appear to presuppose a view of social or political relations as competitive and inherently conflictual; as

[3] T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. 1, chap. 10.

[4] Cited in H. Arendt, *On Violence* (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 36.

[5] Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1938), p. 35.

[6] See S. Lukes, 'Power and Structure', in *Essays in Social Theory* (London: Macmillan and New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1977).

[7] This is sometimes described, as by Talcott Parsons, as a zero-sum notion of power. This is, however, confusing, since 'zero-sum' is a term from the theory of games, where its use presupposes a closed system confined to the players and the measurability of power on a single scale. It is, moreover, unclear *what* is supposed to sum to zero—the pay-offs to the players or their power. By 'asymmetrical' I mean simply that, in virtue of his power, *A* can or does affect *B*, in some given respect, more than *B* affects *A*.



Hobbes remarked, 'because the power of a man resisteth and hindereth the effects of the power of another: power simply is no more, but the excess of the power of one above that of another'.[8] On the other hand, there are those conceptions which do not imply that some gain at others' expense but rather that all may gain: power is a collective capacity or achievement. Such conceptions appear to rest on a view of social or political relations as at least potentially harmonious and communal. As Montesquieu observed, quoting the seventeenth-century Italian jurist Gravina, 'the combining of all power held by individuals . . . constitutes what is called the political state'; the 'power of individuals', he maintained, 'cannot be united without the conjunctions of all their wills.'[9]

The first category may, in turn, be seen as composed of three closely related but analytically distinct ways of conceiving power. First are those conceptions which focus on the *securing of compliance*, on the (attempted or successful) *control* by some of others.[10] Among these, some take the prevailing of some men's wills over others, and thus overt conflict and resistance, as essential to power. From Hobbes to those behaviourist political scientists in the contemporary community-power debate who identify power by discovering 'who prevails in decision-making', this is the most clear-cut and also the narrowest of all conceptions of power. Some writers analyse power in terms of the concept of force (Cartwright),[11] others follow Georg Simmel in stressing the aspect of voluntary compliance in all superordinate–subordinate relations, the 'spontaneity and coefficiency of the subordinate subject'[12] (force, unlike power, being a non-social relation which destroys the subordinate's freedom). Some see the securing of compliance as achieved by the manipulation of utility functions or incentive systems (Karlsson;[13] others (Riker,

[8] Hobbes, *Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, pt. 1, chap. 8, sects. 3 and 4.

[9] Montesquieu, *L'Esprit des lois*, bk. 1, chap. 3.

[10] Cf. A. Etzioni's definition of compliance as 'a relationship consisting of the power employed by superiors to control subordinates and the orientation of subordinates to this power', in his *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations* (New York: Free Press, 1961), p. xv. This work advances a comprehensive typology of compliance relations.

[11] D. Cartwright, 'A Field Theoretical Conception of Power', in id. (ed.), *Studies in Social Power* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1959).

[12] G. Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. K. H. Wolff, (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1950), p. 183.

[13] G. Karlsson, 'Some Aspects of Power in Small Groups', in J. H. Criswell, H. Salomon, and P. Suppes (eds.), *Mathematical Methods in Small Group Process* (Stanford, Calif. Stanford Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 193–202.

Shapley, and Shubik)[14] locate power by identifying the last-added member of a minimum winning coalition. Within systems theory, power as control can be conceptualized (as by Niklas Luhmann)[15] as a medium of communication by means of which one party makes more probable selections of action alternatives by another party than would otherwise be less probable. Among those who stress the conflict of wills, it is commonly assumed that power must involve the use or threat of deprivations. Thus for Lasswell and Kaplan, power is 'the process of affecting the policies of others with the help of (actual or threatened) deprivations for nonconformity with the policies intended.'[16] Blau is even more specific, defining power as

> the ability of persons or groups to impose their will on others despite resistance through deterrence either in the form of withholding regularly supplied rewards or in the form of punishment inasmuch as the former, as well as the latter, constitute, in effect, a negative sanction.[17]

Others follow Machiavelli, seeing power as social control that is made the more effective by the averting of conflict and the economizing of the use and the threat of sanctions. For such writers, power is asymmetrical but need not involve manifest conflict and resistance.

Distinct from the notion of securing compliance by exercising power is the closely related idea of power as *a relation of dependence*, in which B conforms to A's will or interests not by virtue of any discernible actions or threats of A, but by reason of the very relationship between A and B. This way of conceiving power could be seen as a variant of the first, on the argument that it is simply a matter of A securing B's compliance *indirectly* and at low cost to himself. But it seems more perspicuous to see it as constituting a distinct range of conceptions, since there are many cases where B may be dependent on A, irrespective of A's actions, purposes, or even knowledge. James Mill had this idea in mind when he defined power as 'security for the conformity between the will of one man and the

[14] W. Riker, 'Some Ambiguities in the Notion of Power', *American Political Science Review*, 58 (1964), pp. 341–9; L. S. Shapley and M. Shubik, 'A Method for Evaluating the Distribution of Power in a Committee System', *American Political Science Review* 48 (1954), pp. 787–92.

[15] Luhmann, *Macht* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1975).

[16] H. Lasswell and A. Kaplan, *Power and Society* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1950), p. 76.

[17] P. M. Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), p. 117.



acts of other men.'[18] Such security is typically a function of social and economic relations and institutional arrangements rather than, or as well as, the action, and inaction, of individuals and groups. Perhaps the most clearly articulated and worked-out version of this idea is to be found in the literature on dependency theory, which pictures development and underdevelopment as interdependent within a single global system. Thus, Dos Santos writes:

> dependence is a *conditioning situation* in which the economies of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others. A relationship of interdependence between two or more economies or between such economies and the world trading system becomes a dependent relationship when some countries can expand through self-impulsion while others, being in a dependent position, can only expand as a reflection of the expansion of the dominant countries, which may have positive or negative effects on their immediate development.[19]

A third way of conceiving asymmetric power is again very closely related to the second, but distinct from it; this is the notion of power as *inequality*—that is, a distributive notion which focuses on the differential capacities of actors within a system to secure valued but scarce advantages and resources. Power as control and as dependence are measured by determining A's net advantage and B's net loss from B's compliance; power as inequality is measured by determining who gains and who loses—that is, A's ability to gain at B's expense.[20] Power in this sense may be held or exercised without A securing B's compliance and with B being dependent on A: consider the power of organized *vis à vis* unorganized workers (though, of course, inequality, dependence, and control are very often likely to

[18] James Mill, *An Essay on Government*, ed. E. Barker, sect. IX (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1937), p. 17.

[19] T. Dos Santos, 'The Crisis of Development Theory and the Problem of Dependence in Latin America', in H. Bernstein (ed.), *Underdevelopment and Development* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), p. 76. 'In either case', writes Dos Santos, 'the basic situation of dependence causes these countries to be both backward and exploited. Dominant countries are endowed with technological, commercial, capital and socio-political predominance over dependent countries—the form of this predominance varying according to the particular historical moment—and can therefore exploit them, and extract part of the locally produced surplus. Dependence, then, is based upon an international division of labour which allows industrial development to take place in some countries while restricting it in others, whose growth is conditioned by and subjected to the power centres of the world' (pp. 76–7).

[20] See B. Barry, 'Power: An Economic Analysis', in id. (ed.), *Power and Political Theory: Some European Perspectives* (London: John Wiley, 1976), pp. 67–101.

coexist empirically). It is in this sense that power is often used by stratification theorists. Max Weber evidently had this conception of power in mind when he observed that '"classes", "status groups" and "parties" *are phenomena of the distribution of power within a community*.'[21] Lenski argues that

> if we can establish the pattern of [the distribution of power] in a given society, we have largely established the pattern for the distribution of privilege, and if we can discover the causes of a given distribution of power we have also discovered the causes of the distribution of privilege linked with it.[22]

Frank Parkin has articulated this conception of power as inequality with the greatest clarity:

> to speak of the distribution of power could be understood as another way of describing the flow of rewards; the very fact that the dominant class can successfully claim a disproportionate share of rewards vis-à-vis the subordinate class, is in a sense a *measure* of the former's power over the latter. In other words, power need not be thought of as something which exists over and above the system of material and social rewards; rather it can be thought of as a concept or metaphor which is used to depict the flow of resources which constitutes the system. And as such it is not a separate dimension of stratification at all.[23]

In sum, control, dependence, and inequality represent three major ways of conceptualizing power, understood as an asymmetric relation. It is, perhaps, worth noting that Max Weber's celebrated definition of power as 'the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests'[24] is compatible with all three.

Conceptions of power as a collective capacity or achievement tend to stress the benign and communal rather than the demonic and competitive aspect of power: power is exercised with rather than over others. Benjamin Constant remarked that the ancient, as opposed to the modern, citizen engaged in 'the active and constant participation in collective power.'[25] For Plato and Aristotle, according to Franz Neumann, 'political power is the total power of the community'.[26] Cicero said that 'in no other city except in one where the people has the supreme power, can liberty find its abode', and he distinguished between '*potestas in populo*' and '*auctoritas in senatu*'.[27] Similarly, the *Digest* of Justinian's code of Roman Law (*Corpus Iuris Civilis*) derives the legal force of the prince's decision from the fact that 'the people has conferred to him and upon him the whole of its government and power'.[28] These republican and imperial conceptions of collective power were succeeded in the Middle Ages by more hierarchical conceptions; for Aquinas 'order principally denotes power' and 'power properly denotes active potentiality, together with some kind of pre-eminence.'[29] There is Burke's Whiggish conception that 'liberty, when men act in bodies, is *power*'[30] and the distinctive liberal conception of collective power according to which reciprocal and complementary activities promote the individual good as part of the common good. Thus, for Humboldt, human powers are to be cultivated and developed through 'the mutual freedom of activity among all the members of a nation' (an idea taken up by Rawls),[31] while T. H. Green defined 'freedom in the positive sense' as 'the liberation of powers of all men equally for contributions to a common good' and 'a power which each man exercises through the help or security given him by his fellow-men.'[32] Marxism also contains a collective conception in application to the task of building socialism: Soviet power, wrote Lenin,

> paves the way to socialism. It gives those who were formerly oppressed the chance to straighten their backs and to an ever-increasing degree to take the whole government of the country, the whole administration of the economy, the whole management of production, into their own hands.[33]

[21] Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich, 2 vols. (New York: Bedminster, 1968), ii. p. 927.
[22] G. Lenski, *Power and Privilege* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 45.
[23] Parkin, *Class, Inequality and Political Order* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1971), p. 46.
[24] Weber, *Economy and Society*, i. p. 53.
[25] B. Constant, *De la liberté des anciens comparée á celle des modernes*, in his *Œuvres Politiques*, ed. C. Louandre (Paris: 1874), p. 260.
[26] Neumann, 'Approaches to the Study of Political Power', in *The Democratic and Authoritarian State* (New York: Free Press, 1964), p. 5.
[27] Cicero, *De Re Publica*, bk. i, art. 31.
[28] *Digesta Justiniani Augusti*, vk. i, chap. 4, sect. 1.
[29] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, pt. iii (suppl.), q. 34, art. i.
[30] E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Everyman edn. (London: Dent, 1910), p. 7.
[31] W. von Humboldt, *The Sphere and Duties of Government*, trans. J. Coulthard (London: Trubner, 1854), pp. 189–90. Rawls refers to Humboldt on pp. 523–4 of his *Theory of Justice*.
[32] Green, 'Lecture on Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract', in *Works*, 6th imp. (London: Longmans Green, 1911), iii. pp. 370–3.
[33] V. I. Lenin, 'What is Soviet Power?' in *Selected Works* (in 1 vol.) (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1969), pp. 476–7.

Among contemporary theorists, as we shall see, Hannah Arendt and Talcott Parsons advance collective conceptions, the former by reference to a classical, republican conception of politics in which the essence of power does 'not rely on the command-obedience relationship' but corresponds rather to 'the human ability to . . . act in concert';[34] while for the latter power is a system resource, being the 'capacity to mobilize the resources of the society for the attainment of goals for which a general "public" commitment has been made, or may be made.'[35] Conceptions such as these are, it will be clear, at the other end of the spectrum from the Hobbesian and the Weberian.

Of course, asymmetric and collective conceptions of power are not, in any simple way, exclusive of one another. What some may see as an asymmetric relation, others may see merely as a collective capacity, simply by confining their analytic focus to a given collectivity abstracted from its relations with others. Conversely, a system (such as capitalism) may be seen as having certain collective capacities (for instance, productive power) in virtue, at least in part, of its internal and conflictual power relations.

The concept of authority, as the common core of all the various conceptions of authority, has a more complex structure than the concept of power. That structure is basically two-tiered.[36] On the one hand, authority involves the non-exercise of private judgement. He who accepts authority accepts as a sufficient reason for acting or believing something the fact that he has been so instructed by someone whose claim to do so he acknowledges. To accept authority is precisely to refrain from examining what one is being told to do or believe. It is to act or believe not on the balance of reasons, but rather on the basis of a second-order reason that precisely requires that one disregard the balance of reasons as one sees it. Likewise, to exercise authority is precisely not to have to offer reasons, but to be obeyed or believed because one has a recognized claim to be. Aquinas made the

[34] Arendt, *On Violence*, pp. 40, 44.

[35] T. Parsons, *Structure and Process in Modern Societies* (New York: Free Press, 1960), p. 221.

[36] I owe much in the following analysis to the very fine paper by 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. 121–46, and to my colleague Joseph Raz, who let me see his paper, 'On Legitimate Authority', since incorporated into his book *The Authority of Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), discussed in the next chapter, and from which I derived much profit.



point in relation to authority over belief as follows: the 'decisive factor is who it is whose statement is assented to; by comparison the subject matter which is assented to is in a certain sense secondary.'[37] And Hobbes made the point in relation to authority over conduct by drawing the following distinction between advice (counsel) and authority (command):

> counsel is a precept, in which the reason of my obeying it is taken from the thing itself which is advised; but command is a precept, in which the cause of my obedience depends on the will of commander. For it is not properly said . . . I command, except the will stands for reason. Now when obedience is yielded to the laws, not for the thing itself, but by reason of the advisor's will, the law is not a counsel but a command . . .[38]

The first component of the concept of authority, then, is the giving and acceptance of a reason which is both a first-order reason for action and/or belief and a second-order reason for disregarding conflicting reasons. A number of points are worth noting here. First, the giving of such a reason (i.e., the exercise of authority) need not be intentional: I may accept as authoritative what you intend, say, as advice. Second, whether a given case counts as an instance of authority will depend on the point of view from which it is being identified. I may be using the term in a 'normative' or non-relativized way: in such a case I am judging whether an authoritative reason has been given (against standards which, however, I may claim to be objective). Alternatively, I may (as a sociologist, say) be using the term in a 'descriptive' or relativized way (see next chapter). Here there are at least two possibilities. I may identify which reasons are authoritative by reference to the beliefs and attitudes of those subject to authority (this being what is called *de facto* authority), or I may do so by reference to a set of rules prevalent in a given society, whatever the parties to a particular relationship might believe (this being *de jure* authority).[39] This is the standpoint of legal theorists—and also that of Max Weber. 'In a concrete case', Weber writes,

> the performance of the 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'

[37] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2nd pt. of the 2nd pt. II. i, cited in Friedman, 'On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy'.

[38] Hobbes, *De Cive*, chap. 14, pt. 1, cited Friedman, 'On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy'.

[39] See R. S. Peters, 'Authority', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 32 (1958).

custom, or by a desire to obtain some benefit for himself. Sociologically these differences are not necessarily relevant.

The sociologist

will normally start from the observation that 'factual' powers of command usually claim to exist 'by virtue of law'. It is exactly for this reason that the sociologist cannot help operating with the conceptual apparatus of the law.[40]

The third point worth noting is that a considerable range of variation is possible with respect to the *range* of conflicting reasons which the authoritative reason excludes. If subject to authority, I might be permitted to act on my conscience or on certain of my interests (e.g. survival, as in Hobbes, or self-regarding actions, as in John Stuart Mill) or indeed on the basis of another authority, as for instance that of the king should he be present within a feudal lord's jurisdiction. Authority, in this analysis, is not a matter of one reason *overriding* other, conflicting reasons because it is weightier; rather, it excludes them by kind not weight.[41] Some very weighty reasons might be excluded: the point is that authority excludes action or belief on the balance of reasons. Of course, those who accept authority assume that authoritative utterances contain, as Friedrich puts it, 'the potentiality of reasoned elaboration'.[42] Authority, like intuition, is thus seen as a short cut to where reason is presumed to lead. The point is that authority dispenses with the elaboration of the reasons; the short cut is taken (sometimes on entirely rational grounds, as when one accepts the authority of an expert). With every attribution of authority there goes an assumption about the circumstances under which it applies and the kinds of reasons which it excludes. (Accordingly, authority can be absolute in two ways: applying to all circumstances and excluding all conflicting reasons).

This first component of authority is sometimes described as the

[40] Weber, *Economy and Society*, iii. pp. 946–7, 948.

[41] This is Raz's formulation.

[42] 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. Diderot's *Encyclopédie* gives a more graphic picture of authority as a useful human contrivance for leading us to rational ends: reason is 'a torch lit by nature, and destined to enlighten us'; authority is 'no more than a walking-stick made by human hands, which has the virtue of helping us, when weak, along the road shown us by reason' (art. on '*Autorité*').



'surrender of private judgement.' This, however, supposes that a distinction already exists between the 'individual's private judgement' and the dictates of authority. But in some traditional authority relationships, such a distinction, which presupposes that the individual is able to stand outside custom and tradition in order to apply critical standards to them, may not, or may not yet, exist. Authority may be accepted unconditionally and uncritically because the culture may not provide the individual with alternatives to the established mode of thought: the preconditions for moral autonomy and independent 'private' judgement may not have appeared. Moreover, one could say that what counts as 'private judgement' does not relate to a distinction between 'private' and 'public' drawn elsewhere but is itself determined by the scope of authority—private judgement being precisely that judgement which is non-authoritative—that is, based on reasons that are excluded when authority prevails. When authority goes unquestioned, private judgement does not exist.[43]

The second component of the concept of authority is the identification of the possessor or exerciser of authority as having a claim to do so. Any use of the concept must presuppose some criterion for identifying the source (as opposed to the content) of authoritative utterances. Since accepting authority excludes evaluation of the *content* of an utterance as the method of identifying whether it is authoritative, there (logically) must be some means of identifying its source as authoritative—a criterion which picks out, in Hobbes's words, not 'the saying of a man' but 'his virtue'. Thus Hobbes wrote of 'marks whereby a man may discern in what men, or assembly of men, the sovereign power is placed and resideth',[44] and Bentham, of 'a common signal . . . notorious and visible to all'.[45] It is instructive to consider the wide range of such marks or signals there have been in different historical periods and kinds of community. These may be age; gender; status, whether of kinship, occupation, caste, or race;

[43] See Friedman, 'On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy, and Robin Horton, 'African Traditional Thought and Western Science', *Africa*, 37 (1967), pp. 50–71 and 155–87, repr. (in abridged from) in B. R. Wilson (ed.), *Rationality*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970).

[44] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Oakeshott (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, n.d.), chap. 7, pp. 41–2; chap. 18, p. 118; Cf. chap. 26, p. 178. Cited in Friedman, 'On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy'.

[45] J. Bentham, *A Fragment on Government*, ed. W. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1948) p. 99. Cited in Friedman, 'On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy'.

wealth; property; military prowess; religious claims, whether traditional or charismatic; honour or esteem of all kinds; credentials; functional role; office—and, not least, power itself. Such an identifying criterion for designating the source of authoritative utterances requires that there must be some mutually recognized norms or 'rules of recognition' (in H. L. A. Hart's phrase)[46] which enable the parties to distinguish who is authoritative from who is not. Such accepted rules of recognition need not be formalized; they may indeed amount to unarticulated norms that are subject to highly personal interpretation. So in *King Lear* there is this exchange:

KENT. . . . you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.
LEAR. What's that?
KENT. Authority.[47]

And sometimes the interpretation may be innovative, even revolutionary, as in Weber's case of charismatic authority.

The ways in which alternative conceptions of authority derive from alternative 'notions of society' and 'conceptions of social co-operation' and indeed philosophical presuppositions may be briefly illustrated. We may distinguish three broad ways of conceptualizing authority.

In the first place, authority may be seen as exercised *over belief*, as opposed to conduct (a distinction often indicated by contrasting being 'an authority' and 'in authority'). To accept authority understood this way is to assent to propositions as true or valid because their source is recognized as an authority. This covers a continuum of cases from that blind faith (as in priests or prophets) to rationally grounded acceptance (as of expert opinion).

Originally, *auctoritas* for the Romans and throughout the Middle Ages signified the possession by some of some special status or quality or claim that added a compelling ground for trust or obedience, and this could derive from some special relation to some founding act or past beginning or to a sacred being, or some special access to or knowledge of some set of truths. The Roman senate had authority in this sense, as did Augustus.[48] In Matthew it says that Jesus taught the people 'as one having authority and not as the scribes'.[49] Augustine distinguished God's 'divine authority',

[46] Hart, *The Concept of Law* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), chap. 6.
[47] I. iv.
[48] See L. Krieger, 'Authority', in P. P. Wiener (ed.), *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* (New York: Scribners, 1973), i. pp. 141–62.
[49] Matt. 7:29.



'Christ's authority', 'scriptural authority', 'patristic authority', and 'church authority', observing in relation to the last that 'I would not believe the Gospel if the authority of the Catholic Church did not impel me to it.'[50] And Hooker wrote that by 'a man's authority we here understand the force which his word hath for the assurance of another's mind that buildeth upon it'.[51]

In all these cases, authority is claimed over belief on the grounds of some special wisdom, revelation, skill, insight, or knowledge. This, of course, requires the epistemological assumption that such knowledge is to be had. Pre-Reformation Christians and, say, nineteenth-century positivists and twentieth-century technocrats have supposed that such knowledge is available but that access to it is restricted —for medieval Christians, to the papacy or the Church; for August Comte and his followers, to the spiritual leaders of society; for modern technocrats, to the scientific and administrative élites. It is evident that such conceptions are inherently inegalitarian, since those who have restricted access to such knowledge are, by virtue of that very fact, superior to others and entitled to their deference and submission. On the other hand, where there is no assumption of restricted access to religious or scientific truths (whether on grounds of revelation or status or office or natural ability) authority may be accepted as a pragmatic matter of convenience or economy of effort, as in the intellectual division of labour. The notion of 'moral authority' perhaps only makes sense in a community which shares values and principles about which some persons are assumed to be capable of greater knowledge than others; such a notion loses its sense where such values and principles come to be seen not as objects of knowledge but as subject to individual choice.[52]

One may contrast with authority as a compelling ground for belief, based on special and accepted claims, two further broad ways of conceiving authority.

The first of these is authority *by convention*. Here authority is seen as a matter of binding decisions compelling obedience, the source of which is assumed to be voluntarily accepted as authoritative by those

[50] St Augustine, *Contra epistolam quam vocat fundamenti*, cited in Krieger, 'Authority'.
[51] Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, vol. II, chap. VII, bk. 2, cited in Friedman, 'On the Concept of Authority in Political Philosophy'.
[52] See A. MacIntyre, *Secularisation and Moral Change* (London: Oxford Univ. Press for the Univ. of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1967).

subject to it. Here authority is the solution to a predicament: a collectivity of individuals wish to engage in some common activity or activities but cannot agree on what is to be done. Co-ordinated action is necessary but unachievable if everyone follows his own judgement. As James Fitzjames Stephen put it: 'No case can be specified in which people unite for a common object from making a pair of shoes up to governing an empire in which the power to decide does not rest somewhere; and what is this but command and obedience?'[53] The claim to obedience by a person or persons *in authority* does not rest of any claim to connection with traditional origins or sacred beings or special knowledge, but rather on their having been put in authority by some agreed procedure. Those subject to such authority are obliged by individual decisions (within given limits), whatever their merits in any given case, because the pursuit of their common activity requires this sacrifice of their individual private judgements. Note, however, that unlike authority over belief, which necessarily compels the assent of those subject to it (i.e., if I believe an opinion on authority, I cannot at the same time dissent from it), this kind of authority simply requires that the subject refrains from *acting* on his own judgement: he remains free to dissent privately from the particular command whose authority he accepts.

Conceptions of voluntarily accepted authority by convention are, of course, extremely widespread in the post-medieval world. For Hobbes and Spinoza, the very existence of society was held to require the acceptance of such authority in order to provide the requisite security for social life to be possible, while the liberal tradition from Locke onward has taken the requirements of co-ordination to be more specific, imposing a more limited sacrifice of individuals' right to follow their own judgement. Sometimes, as in social-contract and state-of-nature theories, the predicament and its solution are hypothetical (people are to be regarded 'as if' they had accepted authority); alternatively, people are assumed to have registered their voluntary acceptance by, for instance, voting, possessing property, etc. For others—radical democrats since Rousseau, anarchists, Marxists, and socialists of many kinds—authority by convention, at least in society as a whole and in particular the political sphere, has yet to be achieved.

[53] Stephen, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1874), p. 234.



The third way of conceiving authority is as authority *by imposition*—and that is how these last thinkers tend to see authority in the past and present though not in possible future societies. In this view, the acceptance of both authoritative reasons and the rules of recognition is imposed by means of power. Notions such as 'hegemony', 'legitimation', and indeed 'ideology' as used by neo-Marxist writers and 'the mobilization of bias' and 'false consensus' as used by radical critics of liberal democracy all signify the idea that in contemporary societies authority is (at least in part) imposed by power, either directly by control, or indirectly, through dependence relations.

More generally, 'realist' thinkers from Thrasymachus to Machiavelli to the neo-Machiavellian élite theorists and beyond have argued as though authority over belief and the voluntary acceptance of authority by convention are *always* largely illusory, and that behind the authoritative reasons and rules of recognition ('derivations', 'political formulas') there always lies the *force majeure* of the ruler or rulers.[54] Hobbes is a key figure here too, since his view ingeniously straddles the views of authority by convention and authority by imposition. (Compare Hobbes's own distinction between sovereignty by institution and sovereignty by acquisition.[55]) For he assumed that the sovereign, once voluntarily established as the solution to the predicament of the war of all against all, would thereafter be the continuing source of all authority relations through the exercise of will: hence his theory of law as command (taken up by Bentham and Austin) and his view of the sovereign as the Great Definer, whose power extends to assigning the very meanings of words and the enforcement of their definitions.[56] Combining a voluntarist and a power analysis of authority, he thus stands both in the liberal and the 'realist' traditions.

## II

I now turn to a sketch of various broad traditions within political theory and sociology. Such categorization is not, of course, intended

[54] See Dahrendorf, 'In Praise of Thrasymachus', in *Essays in the Theory of Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968).

[55] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. II, chap. 17.

[56] See S. S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), pp. 265–72.

to capture the total positions of the thinkers referred to, only the background and the thrust of their ways of conceiving power and authority and the relations between them.

First are all those who take it for granted that social order is constituted, largely or wholly, by shared beliefs, held for the most part on authority—whether divinely inspired, as for the French counter-revolutionary theocrats; or traditional, 'as if in the presence of canonized forefathers', as for Burke;[57] or anchored in science, as for Saint-Simon and Comte; or in a central value system, as for normative functionalists. In such conceptions, authority over belief is central to the explanation both of social cohesion and political order; power is conceptualized in relation to this central role of authority—partly as functional, even integral to it, and partly as threatening, in so far as it is abused or diffused in such a way as to jeopardize its continuance.

In medieval thought, authority and power (seen as institutionalized social control involving coercion) became ever more closely linked. Aquinas used the term 'the authorities' to refer both to 'the principle of origins . . . in divine matters' and to the agency of 'coercive force' in public affairs: 'all those who govern' follow a plan derived from 'the eternal law' and are part of the order 'Divine Providence' imposes 'on all things'.[58] Within the Church, *auctoritas* and *potestas* came to be used interchangeably, conflating the right to evoke assent and the right to compel obedience. And from the thirteenth century onward, authority, both within and without the Church, came to be seen as the basis for coercive power; thus, for both the papalists and the conciliarists, 'the idea of authority in Church–State relations . . . became inseparable from coercive dominion.'[59] Similarly, the main Protestant reformers (as opposed to the radical sects) preached individual submission to the authority of the churches and, unless they grossly violated God's word, to the temporal authorities, who facilitated the operation of the true Church.

Perhaps the most pronounced linkage of divinely inspired authority over belief and power in the modern era is to be found among the Catholic counter-revolutionaries of the early nineteenth century. For

[57] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Dent, 1910, p. 32.
[58] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, pt. III (suppl.) q. 34, art. 2, ad. 2.
[59] Krieger, 'Authority', p. 149.



de Maistre, 'religion and patriotism' are 'the great and solid bases of all possible institutions' and a 'powerful binding force . . . in the state'; they know 'only two words, *submission and belief*; with these two levers they raise the world.' What is more, in politics, 'we *know* that it is necessary to respect those powers established we know not how or by whom'; indeed, the most extreme form of coercive power becomes integral to political authority and social cohesion: 'all grandeur, all power, all subordination rests on the executioner: he is the horror and bond of human association. Remove this incomprehensible agent from the world, and at that very moment order gives way to chaos, thrones topple, and society disappears'.[60]

For Bonald, bitter opponent of 'atheism and anarchy' and of 'that doctrine which substituted the reason of each for the religion of all, and the calculations of personal interest for the love of the Supreme Being and of one's fellows', there was 'a religion for social man, just as there is a political constitution for society': the 'power and force of religion' achieving 'the repression of [man's] depraved desires' and 'the power and force of political society' achieving the 'repression of the external acts arising from those same desires.' Authority, in the form of the 'power of God' and power in the form of the 'power of man' formed an 'intimate, indissoluble union'.[61] Thomas Carlyle, similarly, proclaimed that, man being 'necessitated to obey superiors',

> Aristocracy and Priesthood, a Governing Class and a Teaching Class: these two, sometimes separate, and endeavouring to harmonise themselves, sometimes conjoined as one, and the King a Pontiff-King:—there did no Society exist without these two vital elements, there will none exist.[62]

Other conservatives, reacting to the ideas, practice, and consequences of the French Revolution, identified authority over belief at least as much in terms of submission to precedent and tradition as to divinely revealed truths. For Burke, 'we procure reverence to our civil institutions . . . on account of their age, and on account of those from whom they are descended'; the bond which 'holds all physical

[60] J. de Maistre, *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, bk. I, chaps. 10, 12, trans. in J. Lively (ed.), *The Works of Joseph de Maistre* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1965), pp. 108–11; and *Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg, Ier. entretien*, trans. ibid., p. 192.
[61] L. de Bonald, *Théorie du pouvoir politique et religieux, Œuvres* (Paris, 1854), i. pp. 122, 494–5, 157, 159.
[62] Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1888), p. 207.

and moral natures, each in their appointed place' and prevents society dissolving into 'an unsocial, uncivil, unconnected chaos of elementary principles' is 'a necessity to which men must be obedient by consent or force.' Accordingly, 'We fear God; we look up with awe to Kings: with affection to Parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility.' Such social authority, inculcating 'this mixed system of opinion and sentiment', all these 'pleasing illusions' made 'power gentle and obedience liberal'. This was a much less harsh doctrine than de Maistre's. Authority restrained the use of power: 'All persons possessing any portion of power ought to be strongly and awfully impressed with an idea that they act in trust' on behalf of 'the one great Master, Author and Founder of Society'. On the other hand, when 'ancient opinions and rules of life are taken away', power will 'find other and worse means of its support'; the 'present French power is the very first body of citizens, who, having obtained full authority to do with their country what they pleased, have chosen to dissever it', acting 'as conquerors' of the French and destroying 'the bonds of their union'. Power thus escapes from the gentling constraints of traditional authority.[63]

These conservative and traditionalist ideas lend support to R. A. Nisbet's claim that the French Revolution's impact upon traditional society generated a 'seminal distinction between authority and power': 'the image of *social authority* is cast from materials drawn from the old regime; the image of *political power*—rational, centralized and popular—from the legislative pattern of the Revolution.[64] Thus, as Carlyle said, 'we worship and follow after Power', and Burckhardt attributed to the diffusion of the doctrine of human perfectibility 'the complete disintegration of the idea of authority in the hands of mortal men, whereupon, of course, we periodically fall victims to sheer power.'[65]

[63] Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 32, 93–4, 83, 73, 74, 89–90, 75, 179. According to Burke, 'society requires not only that the passions of individuals should be subjected, but that even in the mass and body, as well as in the individuals, the inclinations of men shall frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection. This can only be done by *a power out of themselves*; and not, in the exercise of its function, subject to that will and to those passions which it is its office to bridle and subdue. In this sense the restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights' (ibid. 57–8).

[64] Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition* (New York: Basic Books, 1966), p. 112.

[65] Cited ibid. 109, 108.



On the other hand, nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers developed a very wide range of conceptions of authority over belief which were not, as Nisbet seems to suppose, exclusively, or even primarily, tied to traditional conceptions. Nisbet writes:

> Social authority *versus* political power is precisely the way in which the issue was drawn, first by the conservatives and then all the way through the century to Durkheim's reflections on centralization and social groups and Weber's on rationalization and tradition. The vast and continuing interest in social constraint, social control and normative authority that the history of sociology reveals, as well as its own special distinction between authority and power, has its roots in the same soil that produced its interest in community.

Although Nisbet acknowledges that it 'would be false to think of this distinction between social authority and political power as one resting solely in conservative thought', his account of nineteenth-century sociological theories of authority focuses entirely on 'the rediscovery of custom and tradition, of patriarchal and corporate authority, all of which, it is argued, are the fundamental (and continuing) sources of social and political order.'[66]

Here, on the contrary, it is argued that a range of alternative conceptions to traditional authority over belief form a central part of the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century sociology. Montesquieu had already treated the 'Spirit of the Laws' under republican, monarchical, and despotic governments as distinct. Republican governments and monarchies were 'moderate' forms, but only the latter involved 'preeminence and ranks'; despotism, by contrast, put 'mankind . . . all upon a level', so that 'all are slaves'. As these types of government differed, so also did 'the manner of obeying'.[67]

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, authority over belief came to be seen in a number of non-traditionalist ways and in ways that combined the traditional and the modern in a number of different mixtures, relating both the nature of authoritative utterances and the rules of recognition to specifically modern conditions of life. For Saint-Simon, the new political system suitable for an industrial society would be based on 'positive knowledge', on

> a state of enlightenment with the consequence that Society, aware of the means it must employ to improve its lot, can be guided by principles, and no longer has any need to give arbitrary powers to those whom it entrusts with the tasks of administering its affairs.

[66] Ibid. 112, 114, 116.

[67] Montesquieu, *L'Esprit des lois*, bk. III.

No longer need society find its leaders among the 'nobility and the clergy'; the new system would be 'conceived and organized according to principles derived from a healthy morality and a true philosophy.' This would consist in 'scientific opinions clothed in forms which make them sacred.' It would be recognized that 'all government will be arbitrary so long as its leaders are taken from military men and metaphysicians'; by contrast, 'scientists, artists and industrialists and the heads of industrial concerns are the men who possess the most eminent, varied and most positively useful ability for the guidance of men's minds at the present time.' These would henceforth exercise authority over men's minds, administration would replace 'the governmental machine' and the functions of government would be 'limited to maintaining public order'. A wholly new principle of authority and type of social integration, a quite new social structure, based on the functional requirements of industrial production, would replace the old system of hierarchy and subordination. The government of men would give way to the administration of things, and power, in the form of political action, would be 'reduced to what is necessary for establishing a hierarchy of functions in the general action of men on nature'. Thus 'the desire to dominate' would be 'harnessed to the collective good'.[68]

Auguste Comte saw the new 'positive philosophy' as justifying a new form of 'social subordination', a 'positive hierarchy' to replace the old order. The new 'spiritual power' would 'set up morality' to guide society: its role would be 'the government of opinion, that is the establishment and maintenance of the principles that must govern the various social relations.' It would exercise an authority which would be effective 'on account both of its educational function and of its regular intervention in social conflicts'. 'Moral' would prevail over 'political solutions'. Comte clearly believed that this would be a *new* principle of authority, a 'modern spiritual power'. T. H. Huxley was to call this 'Catholicism without Christianity', but Comte wrote that 'the allegiance of the people to their new scientific leaders would be of quite a different character from the unreasoning obedience to priests in the theological phase'. Comte's motto was, after all, 'order and progress'; we need, he argued, 'equally the inheritance of de Maistre and Condorcet . . . a doctrine equally

[68] Saint-Simon, *Œuvres de Saint-Simon et d'enfantin* (Paris: Dentu, 1865–78), xx. pp. 38–43; i. 219; vol. xxxix. pp.125–32.



progressive and hierarchic.' The *savants* 'alone as regards theory exercise an uncontested authority'; they are 'exclusively invested with the moral force essential to secure [the new organic doctrine's] recognition'. The '*savants* in our day possess, to the exclusion of all other classes, the two fundamental elements of spiritual government, capacity and authority in matters of theory.'[69]

Tocqueville likewise contrasted traditional and modern forms of social authority, though for him the latter was democratic and based on equality. All societies needed 'common belief'—'opinions that men receive on trust and without discussion'. In aristocratic periods, men are 'naturally inclined to shape their opinions by the superior standard of a person or class of persons'; in 'ages of equality', the individual's 'readiness to believe the multitude increases' and 'common opinion' becomes 'the only guide which private judgment retains among a democratic people.' Tocqueville's contrast was not, as Nisbet claims, between traditional authority and political power, but between traditional and democratic authority. The former imposed all kinds of obligations, responsibilities, and constraints upon superiors in their relations to inferiors, thus limiting their power and directing it to the national interest. In a democracy, the links of the chain binding all 'from the peasant to the King' were broken, the individual turned in on himself and was threatened by the tyranny of public opinion ('acting on the will as much as on the actions of men and preventing both opposition and the desire to oppose') and by the political coercion of a centralizing state—a new kind of despotism or 'democratic dictatorship', which 'cramps, represses, enervates, deadens, dulls and finally reduces every nation to a flock of timid and industrious animals, whose shepherd is the government.' For Tocqueville, this form of authority, backed by centralized power and ramifying administration, was a real danger. It could be contained by institutional safeguards, regional diversity, and, above all, by 'the gradual development of democratic institutions and attitudes', by freedom of association and 'democratic liberty'. One of Tocqueville's aims was precisely to show traditionalists that 'society was advancing and sweeping them each day toward the equalization of

[69] *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, trans. H. Martineau (London: Trubner, n.d.), ii. pp. 480–3, 485–7; Saint-Simon, *Œuvres*, xx. p. 156; Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, p. 397; G. Lenzer (ed.), *Auguste Comte and Positivism; The Essential Writings* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1975), pp. 26–7.

conditions: the task was to find ways to achieve 'a democratic society advancing . . . with order and morality'.[70]

Durkheim similarly came to see all societies as integrated, indeed partially constituted by shared beliefs authoritatively communicated —*représentations collectives* whose content and manner of transmission varied with different types of social order. The components of authority—authoritative reasons for belief and action and rules of recognition—in modern societies were distinctive. Modern society required a 'religion' in the sense of a 'system of collective beliefs and practices that have a special authority'. Its priests were to be the schoolteachers of the nation and, more generally, the intellectuals, who would themselves be brought by instruction to an understanding of the morality determined and required by society. Its content was, in a word 'individualism'—a 'social product, like all moralities and all religions'. Individualism, Durkheim maintained, against the anti-Dreyfusards, was 'henceforth the only system of beliefs which ensure the moral unity of the country.' It was a religion of which man is 'both believer and God', in which the 'rights of the person are placed above the State', glorifying 'not the self' but 'the individual in general', committed to 'sympathy for all that is human' and to economic and social justice. Interestingly, Durkheim claimed that his 'religion', 'faith', or 'cult' whose social authority was necessary to modern society's cohesion was entirely compatible with reason and autonomy. Indeed, it had 'for its first rite freedom of thought'. Liberty of thought, he argued, was entirely compatible with respect for authority when that authority was rationally grounded. Conversely, and in a neat circle, he saw liberty as 'the fruit of regulation', defining it as self-mastery—'the ability to act rationally and do one's duty'; while he defined autonomy as having 'as clear and complete an awareness as possible of the reasons for our conduct' when 'deferring to a rule or devoting ourselves to a collective ideal'. As for power, Durkheim (in contrast to Weber) had nothing to say about power as an asymmetric relation between individuals and groups. Like Saint-Simon, he saw not class conflict, but an emerging functional hierarchy, and, like Comte, he foresaw the prevalance of 'moral' over 'political' solutions.[71]

[70] A. de Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique* (1835), bk. II, pt. I, chap. II; bk. II, pt. II, chap. II; bk. II, pt. III, chap. XXI; bk. I, pt. I, chap. III; bk. II, pt. IV, chap. VI; 'Lettre à Eugene Stoffels', in *Œuvres et correspondance inédite*, ed. G. de Beaumont (Paris, 1861), i. pp. 427–49.



These various visions of authority over belief under modern conditions—technocratic, democratic, individualist—could be supplemented by many others advanced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There are, for instance, those forms of nationalist doctrine which identified authority with the expression of the national culture, or the *Volksgeist*, or the 'spirit of the people'. From Herder onward, the idealist background of such theories provided the assumption that there was something to be known and authoritatively transmitted by those able to discern and interpret it; as Savigny, the leader of the German historical school of law, observed, 'the common consciousness of the people is the peculiar seat of law'.[72] Various forms of socialist doctrine have likewise implied the dependence of social order and progress upon the authoritative transmission of certain beliefs taken to be true. Thus, for example, Fabian socialists supposed the 'nascent science of and art of democratic institutions', offering 'greater knowledge of the successful working of social institutions', gave authority to the public-spirited leaders of the socialist commonwealth.[73] And the state socialist societies of Eastern Europe since Lenin were ruled on the officially unquestionable assumption that the Party is the authoritative interpreter and inculcator of the truths that Marxist–Leninist theory has discovered.

Again, technocratic theorists of all kinds see authority as deriving from newly indispensable knowledge and skills. Thus, for Daniel Bell, the 'axial principle' of 'postindustrial society' is 'the centrality of and codification of theoretical knowledge'. 'Engineering and economics become central to the technical decisions of the society', and we see 'a new social order based, in principle, on the priority of educated talent'. Bell defines authority as

> a competence based upon skill, learning, talent, artistry, or some similar attribute. Inevitably it leads to distinctions between those who are superior and those who are not. A meritocracy is made up of those who have earned

[71] E. Durkheim, 'L'Individualism et les Intellectuels', *Revue bleue*, 4th ser., (1898), pp. 7–13; *L'Education morale* (Paris, 1925), pp. 62, 136–7.

[72] F. C. von Savigny, *Vom Beruf unserer Zeit für Gesetzgebung*, ed. J. Sern (Berlin: Thibaut & Savigny, 1914), p. 78.

[73] Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1920), pp. 350–6.

their authority. An unjust meritocracy is one which makes these distinctions invidious and demeans those below.

Power, by contrast, is 'the ability to command, which is backed up, either implicitly or explicitly, by force'; it 'allows some men to exercise domination over others'; but, says Bell, 'in the polity at large, and in most institutions, such unilateral power is increasingly checked'.[74]

The functionalist consensus theories of recent American sociology and political science are simply the generalized and relativized form of all these conceptions of authority over belief. Here what counts as authoritative or 'legitimate' is simply what any given society's value system is taken (or imputed) to be. Thus Parsons writes: 'Without the attachment to the constitutive common values the collectivity tends to dissolve'; these values are 'the commitments of individual persons to pursue and support certain *directions* or types of action for the collectivity as a system and hence derivatively for their own roles in the collectivity.'[75] (Lipset similarly defines legitimacy as 'the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society'.[76]) For Parsons, the shared values and norms specify what and who is authoritative: authority amounts to 'the complex of institutionalized rights to control the actions of members of the society with reference to their bearing on the attainment of collective goals'—the rights being those of 'leaders to expect support from the members of the collectivity'. Given Parsons's view of power as the '*generalized capacity of a social system to get things done in the interest of collective goals*',[77] it will be clear how for him power derives from authority.

In general, it may be said of all these conceptions of authority over belief that they take the authority relation as primary. Power is seen as integral to or derivative from it but also as a threat when abused so as to weaken or destroy consensual beliefs and thus social and political order. Under consensual conditions, power tends to assume a non-asymmetric, non-conflictual form, at least internally to the

[74] Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 118, 426, 453, 455.

[75] Parsons, *The Social System* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 41; 'Authority, Legitimation and Political Action', in Friedrich, *Authority, Nomos I*, p. 199.

[76] S. M. Lipset, *Political Man* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960), p. 77.

[77] Parsons, 'Authority, Legitimation and Political Action', pp. 210, 206.



society in question, and the notion of 'leadership' is emphasized. Individuals are seen as moulded, even constituted, by the authority relation. Their role identifications, their self-perceptions, indeed their very identity is seen as dependent on it. Conflicts of interest between individuals and groups, at least in a well-functioning society, are understressed—partly because the very existence of authority is taken to create and promote an identity of interests between those exercising it and those subject to it.

A quite different tradition of conceptualizing authority developed in reaction to the early forms of the first tradition, the later form of which in turn reacted against it. This tradition sees authority as conventional and power as asymmetric, indeed coercive. It assumes a natural conflict of interests between individuals, whose identities are unaffected and whose freedom is limited by authority, which is, in turn, seen as exercised over conduct, even in the absence of shared beliefs and values. Their ends are private and conflicting, and the task of authority is to co-ordinate their actions so that common enterprises are possible. This view tends to focus on the authority of the state *vis-à-vis* individuals, who are taken to be given, with (conflicting) private ends, values, and opinions; rules of conduct are needed to enable such individuals to pursue their respective ends. Authority does not produce shared beliefs but rather a common framework within which individuals pursue their interests—and neither the identity of the individuals nor that of their interests is modified by the exercise of authority.[78] Authority in this sense produces co-ordinated action rather than common belief. Indeed, it allows for a gap to open up between private belief and public action. The individual may submit to authority while privately dissenting. As Hobbes saw it, though men obey the sovereign, 'belief and unbelief never follow men's commands',[79] and as Spinoza said, 'No man's mind can possibly lie wholly at the disposition of another, for no man can willingly transfer his natural right of free reason and judgment, or be compelled to do so.'[80]

'What manner of life would there be', asked Hobbes, 'where there were no common power to fear?' The Hobbesian predicament, the

[78] See Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, chap. 9, and S. Lukes, *Individualism* (Oxford: Blackwell, and New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

[79] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. XLII.

[80] Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, chap. XX.

state of nature, consists in the equal powers of individuals with irreducibly conflicting interests: 'equal powers opposed, destroy one another; and such this opposition is called contention.' The price of peace is to erect a 'common power', for men 'to confer all their strength and power upon one man, or upon one assembly of men that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will.' Thus a 'multitude of men, are made *one* person, when they are by one man, or one person represented; so that it be done with the consent of every one of that multitude in particular.' Here lies Hobbes's innovatory theory of authority. The covenant is an agreement of 'every one with every one' to obey the commands of the sovereign as if they were his own; the sovereign is 'authorized' to command them as he wills, since they have, given their irreducibly conflicting interests, agreed to 'own and be reputed author' of all the sovereign's decisions. Authority is 'a right of doing any act; and *done by authority*, done by commission, or licence from him whose right it is.' Thus: 'Every particular man is author of all the sovereign doth.'[81]

Two points are to be noted here. First, though the sovereign's authorized power is (almost) absolute, in the sense of excluding all conflicting reasons for action (save self-preservation), it is only applicable in a selected range of human activities: 'In all kinds of actions by the laws praetermitted, men have the liberty of doing what their own reasons shall suggest, for the most profitable to themselves', such as 'the liberty to buy and sell, and otherwise contract with one another'. Second, and relatedly, in contrast with the claims of tradition and divine right, and indeed all the views of authority so far considered, Hobbes did not require any sense of public involvement or active support by the citizen for the sovereign, nor did the latter's authority confer any communal or collective benefits upon the citizens—their nature and purposes were unaffected by it. The 'body politic' was simply a 'multitude of men, united as one person by a common power, for their common peace, defence and benefit'. Fear and insecurity held them together and authority was exercised simply to secure a framework within which they could pursue their unending search for 'felicity':

> The use of laws, which are but rules authorised, is not to bind the people from all voluntary actions; but to direct and keep them in such a motion, as not to hurt themselves by their own impetuous desires, rashness or indiscretion; as hedges are set, not to stop travellers, but to keep them in their way.[82]

[81] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. XIII; *The Elements of Law*, I, VIII, 4; pt. I, chap. 19, sect. 8; *Leviathan*, chaps. XVII, XVI.



This conception of authority by convention, as derived from the consent of individuals with conflicting interests who agree to obey a public power whose role is to guarantee their continued pursuit of private interests, runs like a thread through the whole history of liberalism. It is Locke's theory of contract, however, which pointed the direction in which liberal theories developed, by drawing tighter bounds around the scope of authority. The Lockean predicament to which authority is the solution was less drastic than the Hobbesian: it was a matter of 'inconveniences', the 'fears and continual dangers' caused by 'the corruption and viciousness of degenerate men'. The 'remedy' of 'civil government' had as its 'chief and great end' the 'preservation of property'. As with Hobbes, the new authority had no communal or integrative function; on the contrary, 'the commonwealth' was 'a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving and advancing their own civil interests'. Political authority was bounded by the terms of the original compact: 'there remains still in the people a supreme power to remove or alter the legislative, when they find the legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them'.

This should, however, not be misunderstood. Men are described as agreeing in the contract to resign their natural powers to the community which in turn puts the legislative power into the hands of those it trusts; moreover, each agrees to submit to 'the determination of the majority'. Furthermore, the language of 'express consent' shifts to that of 'tacit consent', and this comes to be seen as registered by the mere possession of property.[83] Authority based on consent thus becomes inverted into the imposition of authority over the holders of property. There was no recurrent renewal of consent, but rather the establishment of a way of thinking about government and authority which suggested a basis of consent, setting indeterminate

[82] Id., *Leviathan*, chap. XXI; *Elements of Law*, pt. I, chap. 19, sect. 8; *Leviathan*, XXX. Spinoza took this authority conferred by consent to be more absolute (with regard to its circumstances of application) than did Hobbes: the individual 'has determined to obey' the sovereign 'in everything without exception'. Authority, in his view, yields 'supreme power to coerce all', though with the ultimate aim of freeing men from fear, thereby enabling them 'to develop their minds and bodies in security, and to employ their reason unshackled' (*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, chap. XVI).

[83] J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: Second Treatise.*

and flexible limits to the power of governments. Society came to be seen as 'civil society'—the 'natural' arena in which individuals pursued their 'civil interests', which it was the function of authority to secure. And power was seen by Locke, as by Hobbes, as personal and coercive control. Hence the liberal project of both restraining the coercive power of government while claiming its authority to be based on consent and to promote the general interest.

The history of liberalism has been the history, among other things, of this combination of ideas. Authority is granted by individuals whose conflicting interests have free play in the economic sphere (society) but which require co-ordination and control (whose extent varies with different thinkers and periods) from the political. Government maintains the conditions for an effectively competitive order, maintaining 'law and order'. Authority is based on voluntary consent to this necessary co-ordination and control; the resulting coercions are seen as 'interferences' to be minimized. As Locke put it, 'the community comes to be umpire by setting standing rules, indifferent and the same to all parties'.[84] though Adam Smith was nearer the bone when he observed that 'Civil government, so far as it is instituted for the security of property, is in reality instituted for the defence of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all.'[85] Scottish classical economists, French Liberals, English radicals and utilitarians, and American constitutional democrats all reasoned in this way. In Paine's words, 'Society is produced by our wants and government by our wickedness . . . Society, in every state, is a blessing, Government, even in its best state is but a necessary evil.'[86] While for Bastiat the choice lay between '*société libre, gouvernement simple*' and '*société constrainte, gouvernement compliqué*',[87] Smith advocated leaving 'nature'—that is, the economic life of society (whose constraints were, unlike the government's, impersonal)—alone, as did Jefferson and liberals of all kinds down to Herbert Spencer and beyond to von Mises, Hayek, and Milton Friedman.

All these views offer a contrast between authority and power

[84] Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: Second Treatise.*

[85] Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Everyman edn. (London: Dent, 1961), ii. p. 203.

[86] T. Paine, *Common Sense*, in *The Political and Miscellaneous Works of Thomas Paine in Two Volumes*, (London: R. Carlile, 1819), i. p. 5.

[87] F. Bastiat, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, 1862–78), i. p. 427, cited in Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, q.v. for an excellent discussion of this mode of thinking.



different from those previously considered. Authority is here restricted to the 'standing rules' of Locke's umpire and rests on consent; power is coercive and personal and threatens the 'natural' order of society. As Diderot's *Encyclopédie* put it, '*authority* is communicated by the laws; power by those in whose hands they are placed'. Thus:

> The prince derives from his subjects the authority he holds over them; and this authority is limited by the laws of nature and of the state. The laws of nature and of the state are the conditions under which they have or are supposed to have submitted themselves to his rule. One of these conditions is that, having no power or authority over them except by their choice and their consent, he can never use this authority to break the act or contract by which it has been conferred on him . . .

His 'authority can only subsist by the entitlement that established it', and he 'cannot therefore dispose of his power or his subjects without the consent of the nation and independently of the choices indicated in the contract of submission'.[88]

This did not, however, mean that authority set any determinate limits to power's exercise. The story of how consent, seen as self-assumed obligation, was actually registered was always sufficiently mysterious for the limits it set upon the exercise of power to be very flexible.[89] We have already noticed Locke's shift from express to tacit consent. Adam Ferguson offered an even less constraining account of how consent was registered:

> The consent, upon which the right to command is founded may not be prior to the establishment of government; but may be obtained under the reasonable exercise of an actual power, to which every person within the community, by accepting of a customary protection, becomes bound to pay the customary allegiance and submission. Here is a compact ratified by the least ambiguous of all signs, the whole practice, or continued observance of an ordinary life.[90]

All liberal-democratic thinkers assume that authority is, in one way or another, a form of voluntary, self-assumed obligation. But *who* assumed it and how is it assumed? The social-contract tradition

[88] Diderot, *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris, 1752–72), i.

[89] I have been much helped on this topic by Carole Pateman, *The Problem of Political Obligation* (Chicester: Wiley, 1979).

[90] A. Ferguson, *Principles of Moral and Political Science* (London, 1792), ii. pp. 245–6.

offered an account of the *creation* of such obligations by voluntary agreement, and the various forms of consent theory an account of how individuals' action, or inaction, might be taken to signify continuing consent to them. Thus for Madison, the 'people' are the sole legitimate source of political power, its authority grounded through the 'elective mode' (and its power limited through checks and balances, federalism, and the 'vigilant and manly spirit' of the American people).[91] Bentham likewise sought to prevent the abuse of power by government, the 'exercise of its powers' consisting in 'the giving of directions or commands, positive and prohibitive, and incidentally in securing compliance through the application of rewards and punishments', and the basis of its authority lying in the expression of 'the will of the governed' manifested at periodic elections.[92] James Mill took a similar view.[93]

John Stuart Mill's views, however, were more complex. He had learnt much from Comte, Tocqueville, and Coleridge. A 'permanent political society' required 'the feeling of allegiance or loyalty', '*something* which is settled, something permanent, and not to be called in question'. There was not, and had never been 'any state of society in which collisions did not occur between immediate interests and passions of powerful sections of the people'.

> What, then, enables society to weather these storms . . . that however important the interests about which men fall out, the conflict did not affect the fundamental principles of the system of social union which happened to exist; nor threaten large portions of the community with the subversion of that on which they had built their calculations, and with which their hopes and aims had become identified.

Mill, like other liberals, naturally saw power as coercive and associated it with the deprivation of liberty, but he also, like Tocqueville, saw the individual as needing protection against 'the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling'. As for the basis of political authority, his views were similarly complex. Democratic authority was based on consent but, ideally, consent in the form of

[91] A. Hamilton, J. Madison, and J. Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, ed. I. Kramnick (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987).

[92] Bentham, 'The Constitutional Code', in *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. J. Bowring (Edinburgh, 1843), ix.

[93] See James Mill, *Essay on Government*. In fact, it is most plausible to date Bentham's conversion to democracy from about 1809, when he came under the influence of James Mill.



universal participation, in other words, 'the whole people participate'. Moreover, as with Hobbes, Locke, Madison, and Bentham, government must not merely provide the framework for the pursuit of individual interests; the government must seek to 'promote the general mental advancement of the community' and 'organise the moral, intellectual and active worth already existing'. Mill himself recognized that he was thus led toward a 'qualified socialism', as were his successors in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, such as Green and Hobhouse.[94]

The entire liberal-democratic tradition gave a voluntarist account of authority by convention and a coercive account of asymmetric power. Liberal democracy, as Rawls has put it, comes 'as close as society can to being a voluntary scheme . . . its members are autonomous and the obligations they recognise self-imposed'.[95] The 'selves' who impose such obligations upon themselves are mutually disinterested and conflicting, and the authority over their conduct to which they are said to consent sets them free to pursue their otherwise mutually incompatible and unrealizable interests.

An alternative tradition begins exactly at this point, similarly aiming at a reconciliation of autonomy and authority, but rejecting the picture of conflicting, mutually disinterested selves as given. Thus Rousseau transformed the notion of the social contract and the idea of authority as based upon consent into a wholly new perspective. Ancient and medieval thinkers had often derived political authority from the consent of subjects, alongside traditional and divine sources. With the rise of individualistic theories of contract and consent and opposition to divine-right theories of absolutism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, authority came to be seen as based on an agreement to protect the rights and pursuit of the conflicting interests of autonomous individuals.

Rousseau's view of authority was a new departure, aiming to retain the gains of individualism—the autonomous individual—while uniting him in community with others to achieve a collective will, as among the ancients. The basic problem to which the social contract provides the solution is to find 'a form of association' as a result of which 'the whole strength of the community will be enlisted

[94] See *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, ed. F. R. Leavis (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), p. 123; J. Mill, *On Liberty: Principles of Political Economy*, 3rd edn.

[95] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 13.

for the protection of the person and property of each constituent member, in such a way that each, when united to his fellows, renders obedience to his own will, and remains as free as he was before.' Citizenship confers 'moral freedom', which 'alone makes a man his own master': 'to obey the laws laid down by society is to be free'. The key to Rousseau's notion of community-with-autonomy is the idea of freedom from the *power* of others: 'dependence on men, being out of order, gives rise to every kind of vice, and through this master and slave become mutually depraved.' The *impersonal authority* of a community of individuals, whose identity and interests have become moralized and harmonized, derives from the expression of those individuals' general will. 'Each in giving himself to all gives himself to none'; in conditions of social equality and direct democracy, everyone becomes both ruler and subject. Asymmetric power, as control, dependence, and inequality, is abolished, and authority, being self-prescribed, is compatible with equality, autonomy, and reason.[96].

Hegel took this explosive combination of ideas further. Like Rousseau's, Hegel's idea of the state implies that its laws

> are not something alien to the subject. On the contrary, his spirit bears witness to them as to its own essence, the essence in which he has a feeling of own self-hood, and in which he lives on in his own element which is not distinguished from himself. The subject is thus directly linked to the ethical order by a relation which is more like an identity than even the relation of faith or trust.

The state unites subjective consciousness and objective order, and in such conditions, 'to say that men allow themselves to be ruled counter to their own interests, ends and intentions is preposterous'. In a manner strongly recalling Rousseau, Hegel observed that 'in the state, as something ethical, as the interpenetration of the substantive and the particular, my obligation to what is substantive is at the same time the embodiment of my particular freedom'. The 'essence of the modern state is that the universal is bound up with the complete freedom of its particular members and with private well-being'. Hegel rejected the restoration thinkers (Haller, Müller, Savigny) who had sought to rest the authority of the state on tradition and on power. He also disagreed with the liberal view of the state as

[96] J. J. Rousseau, *Le Contrat social, passim*; *Émile*, trans. B. Foxley (London and New York: Dutton, 1911), p. 149.



inherently coercive and at best providing a framework for the pursuit of self-interest. On the contrary, he saw the state as the positive embodiment of man's self-consciousness—the 'actuality of the substantial will'—the basis of the state's authority being the rational wills of individuals who are precisely not mutually disinterested in that they will each others' goals—that is, the common good. For Hegel, the 'individual finds his liberation' in the differentiated spheres of 'ethical life'—the family, civil society (the interdependent sphere of economic self-interest) and the state. Civil society, left to itself, leads to 'physical and ethical degeneration'. However, the state can only fulfil its role as the concrete rational manifestation of human will by containing within itself a differentiated civil society.[97]

Rousseau envisaged the self-annihilating authority of consensual rational wills in an ideal community, fit, as he remarked, only for gods. For Hegel, such authority was to be exercised in the public domain in the post-Napoleonic constitutional state.[98] Others—from Fichte onward—saw such authority, arising from united, rational wills, in the context of the nation. Most varieties of nationalism have made use of this idea in some form.[99] Power is seen as derivative from such authority—a collective capacity harnessed to transcendent ends. Fascist doctrine carried this idea further. Elaborating 'the fascist theory of authority'. Mussolini proclaimed the fascist state to be 'a will to power and to government'. It has 'a consciousness of its own, a will of its own'; on this account it is called an 'ethical state' and it is 'strong, organic and at the same time founded on a wide popular basis'.[100]

Ideas of authority and power (deriving from interpretations and misinterpretations of Rousseau and Hegel) basing the former on united rational wills and the latter on the former had a very wide impact in the nineteenth century. Apart from the history of nationalism, they entered into liberalism at various points (notably with Green in England and Croce in Italy) and into both conservative and socialist thought. The anarchist tradition too sought to transcend

[97] G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* § 147, Addition to § 281, §261, § 260 and Addition.

[98] See *Hegel's Political Writings*, ed. Z. A. Pelczynski (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964).

[99] See E. Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson, 1960).

[100] B. Mussolini, 'The Doctrine of Fascism' trans. in *The Social and Political Doctrines of Contemporary Europe*, ed. M. Oakeshott (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1940), pp. 175–9.

both the tradition of authoritative belief and the liberal tradition of conventional authority guaranteeing a market society by postulating an ideal community of consensual wills. But the anarchists saw this not as the realization of authority but rather as its removal.

Proudhon's project was 'to live without government, to abolish all authority, absolutely and unreservedly'; 'industrial organization' would be substituted for government, contracts for laws, 'economic forces' for 'political powers', and 'identity of interests' for police.[101] Bakunin, aiming at 'the most complete liberty of individuals and associations', rejected 'the establishment of regulative authority of whatever kind';[102] and Kropotkin similarly saw progress as '*the abolition of all the authority of government, as a development of free agreement* for all that was formerly a function of church and state, and *as a development of free initiative* in every individual and every group.'[103] It is distinctive of the anarchist tradition to denounce both authority over belief ('the old system', said Proudhon, stood on 'authority and Faith')[104] and *political* authority over conduct. Anarchist society would be free of politics, though it would still require co-ordination and thus the performance of administrative functions. Also, anarchists have tended to respect the authority of science. They see power in all hitherto existing societies as asymmetrical and inherently coercive, and as having its natural home in the state; as Rudolph Rocker said, 'the modern state' was 'the organ of political power for the forcible subjugation and aggression of the nonpossessing classes'.[105] However, power was also potentially collective and benign: as Bakunin put it, in the people 'there is a great deal of elemental power, more power indeed than in the government, taken together with all the ruling classes; but an elemental force lacking organisation is not a real power.'[106]

The Marxist tradition also sees the authority and power typical of class societies as destined to be historically surpassed, though it

[101] P. J. Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. J. B. Robinson (London: Freedom Press, 1923), pp. 245–77.

[102] M. Bakunin, *Œuvres* (Paris: P. V. Stock, 1895), pp. 54–9.

[103] P. Kropotkin, *Modern Science and Anarchism* (London: Freedom Press, 1912), repr. in I. L. Horowitz (ed.), *The Anarchists* (New York: Dell, 1964), p. 163.

[104] Proudhon, *General Idea of the Revolution*, pp. 245–7.

[105] Rocker, 'Anarchism and Anarcho-Syndicalism', repr. in Horowitz, *The Anarchists*, p. 190.

[106] Bakunin, 'Science and the Urgent Revolutionary Task', repr. in Horowitz, *The Anarchists*, p. 132.



offers a much more complex account of their nature and interrelation. In the first place, power is class power (political power Marx and Engels defined as 'merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another'), and authority is a form of it. Both are exercised within, and in turn reinforce, the economic constraints set by the mode of production. These are imposed by economic relations whose 'dull compulsion . . . completes the subjection of the labourer to the capitalist'. The nature of these exploitative relations of production is concealed from the agents of production by ideology —a whole web of 'conceptions which arise about the laws of production in the minds of agents of capitalist production and circulation' which 'will diverge drastically from the real laws'.[107] In general, the dynamics and possibilities of transformation of class society are concealed from subordinate classes by the ruling ideas of any age, these being 'the ideas of the ruling class'. In this way, authority over belief—whether it be religion or political economy or social science—is successfully imposed by class power. Moreover, the illusion of authority by convention, voluntarily granted to the government by free and equal citizens, is similarly imposed as the ideology of bourgeois democracy. To this must be added a whole arsenal of instruments of rule—though it must be said that Marxism in general lacks a properly worked out theory of domination. The most one has is a series of historically located aperçus in Marx and Engels, a few rudimentary generalizations in Engels and Lenin, and the only (flawed) attempt at a more developed theory in Gramsci.

For Marx and Engels, class power (of its very nature asymmetric) is exercised by superordinate over subordinate classes in a variety of ways, ranging from ideological mystification through all the various forms of inducement, persuasion, influence, and control—through the family, in the educational and legal system, in the labour market and the labour process—to outright coercion and force, typically exercised by the state. There are of course considerable variations among capitalist states, with respect both to the extent of the state's control of civil society and to the state's relative autonomy from class control. This has posed a crux for Marxist thinkers. Were these just different forms of class domination, or were certain forms—namely, bourgeois parliamentary democracy—based on the (genuine rather

[107] K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*; Marx, *Capital* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), i. p. 737; iii. p. 307.

than imposed) consent of the working class to advanced capitalism? If so, clearly the 'parliamentary road to socialism' was on the cards. In other words, was bourgeois democracy merely a way of keeping people in subjection by deception and concession, as Lenin thought ('concessions of the unessential, while retaining the essential')[108] or was it, as Engels and at times Marx came to suspect, a framework within which class power could be peacefully transferred to the working class?

Central to this discussion has been the work of Gramsci, whose theorizing about power and authority is encapsulated in his much-discussed concept of 'hegemony', the suggestive complexities of which can only be hinted at here. Beginning from a traditional, if rather simple, dichotomy between 'force and consent' characteristic of Italian thought (found in Machiavelli, in the élitist Machiavellians, and in Gentile), Gramsci added the parallel contrasts 'domination and hegemony', 'violence and civilization', and he spoke of hegemony as 'intellectual and moral direction', and also as 'the moment of consent, of cultural direction' as opposed to 'the moment of force, of constraint, or of state-legislative or police intervention'. When speaking thus, he was thinking of class power as cultural and ideological and exercised within civil society ('through so-called private organisations, like the church, trade unions, schools, and so on'). Elsewhere, he spoke of hegemony as 'a combination of force and consent which form variable equilibria, without force ever prevailing too much over consent'. In this sense, hegemony was exercised both within the state and civil society; this allowed him to take account of the ideological functions of the state and corrected the earlier exclusive focus on cultural hegemony. In a third version, hegemony is again seen as a mixture of force and consent, but exercised within the state, which is now seen as incorporating both political and civil society—'not merely the governmental apparatus, but also the "private" apparatus of hegemony or civil society.'[109] This last, expanded notion of the state was taken over by Louis

[108] Lenin, *Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960–70), xxiv. pp. 63–4.

[109] A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 169–70, 57; *Lettere del Carcere* (Turin: Einardi, 1965), pp. 616, 481; *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 80 n., 242. These quotations are cited by Perry Anderson in his extremely valuable essay, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', *New Left Review*, 100 (1976–7), pp. 5–78.



Althusser, who speaks of the state's 'repressive' and 'ideological' apparatuses.[110] Gramsci's original insight into the consensual dimension of class power operating *outside* the state, and indeed the crucial differences between cases where it lies outside and inside the state, is lost. At all events, Gramsci's inconclusive and shifting treatment of hegemony raised the discussion of the relations between power and authority to a new level within the Marxist tradition. In particular, he raised (though he did not answer) the closely related questions of the relation between the legitimacy of parliamentary institutions in the West and the state's monopoly of force and of the role of consensual direction and coercion in the struggle of the working class, in alliance with others, for power.

The Marxist tradition, like the anarchist, is committed to the proposition that power, as control, dependency and inequality, and authority—in so far as it conflicts with equality, freedom, and reason—are to be eliminated. (This, doubtless, must occur within communist rather than socialist society, though Marx never faced the issue of what power and authority would be like in the latter). In their futuristic projections, there are interesting differences between the Marxist founding fathers.

Marx (especially the early Marx) often spoke as though all forms of superordination and subordination would be abolished. Communism would deprive men of 'the power to subjugate the labour of others by means of . . . appropriation'; and when 'class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character.'[111] Engels echoed this, claiming that

> the political state, and with it political authority, will disappear as the result of the coming social revolution, that is . . . public functions will lose their political character and be transformed into the simple administrative functions of watching over the true interests of society.[112]

Here Engels and Lenin, who followed up these thoughts in *State and Revolution*, rejoin Saint-Simon. As Lenin wrote:

> From the moment all members of society, or at least the vast majority, have learned to administer the state *themselves*, have taken this work into their

[110] See Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971).

[111] Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, sect. II.

[112] F. Engels, 'On Authority', in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, 2 vols. (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962), i. p. 639.

own hands, have organised control over the insignificant capitalist minority, over the gentry who wish to preserve their capitalist habits and over the workers who have been thoroughly corrupted by capitalism—from this moment the need for government of any kind begins to disappear altogether. The more complete the democracy, the nearer the moment when it becomes unnecessary.[113]

But Marx's image of the dissolution of power and authority extended (at times) even to the labour process itself. Under capitalism 'the mass of direct producers is confronted by the social character of their production in the form of strictly regulating authority and a social mechanism of the labour process organised as a complete hierarchy.' Though 'physical necessity'—that is, nature—set constraints, Marx's image of freedom was of 'socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature.' The need to 'coordinate and unify the labor process' in the workshops of the future would be met as if by 'an orchestra conductor'. Eventually,

> the human being comes to relate more as a watchman and regulator to the production process itself . . . He steps to the side of the production process, instead of being its chief actor. In this transformation, it is neither the direct human labour he himself performs, not the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body—it is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth.[114]

Engels, however, struck a more 'realistic' note, arguing in opposition to the anarchists that it was not possible to have organization without authority (by 'authority' he meant 'the imposition of the will of another upon ours') and claimed that it 'presupposes subordination'. The forces of nature, he argued, require the organization of labour to be settled 'in an authoritarian way'. Thus, 'a certain authority, no matter how delegated, and . . . a certain subordination, are things which, independently of all social organization, are imposed upon us, together with the material conditions under which we produce and make products circulate.' Hence:

[113] Lenin, *State and Revolution*, *Selected Works*, p. 337.

[114] Marx, *Capital*, iii. 859, 800, 376; *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicholaus (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in assoc. with *New Left Review*, 1973), p. 705.



> it is absurd to speak of the principle of authority as being absolutely evil, and of the principle of autonomy as being absolutely good. Authority and autonomy are relative things whose spheres vary with the various phases of the development of society. If the autonomists confined themselves to saying that the social organisation of the future would restrict authority solely to the limits within which the conditions of production render it inevitable, we would understand each other . . .[115]

Thus Engels rejected the anarcho-syndicalist dream (of which there are more than hints in Marx) of the abolition of power (as control) and authority (by imposition) within the sphere of production itself. However, he shared with Marx and all other classical Marxists the belief that elsewhere, especially in the political sphere, such power and authority would disappear—however authoritarian and coercive might be the means necessary to achieve that happy end state.

In contrast with all those—radical democrats, anarchists, Marxists, and others—who contemplate the possibility of such an end state of benign collective power and consensual authority, we may identify what might be called a 'realist' tradition of viewing power and authority, whose prime modern exponents are the neo-Machiavellian élite theorists, notably Pareto, Mosca, and Michels. However, this tradition stands no less in opposition to liberal democracy, lacking its distrust of power and debunking its justification of authority. Again, its attitude to doctrines of authoritative belief, whether traditionalist, religious, or secular, is reductionist: 'ruling classes', Mosca observed, 'do not justify their power solely by de facto possession of it, but try to find a moral and legal basis for it, representing it as the logical and necessary consequence of doctrines and beliefs that are generally recognised and accepted'—though for Mosca such political formulas are not 'mere quackeries aptly invented to trick the masses into obedience'; they answer 'a real need in man's social nature . . . of governing and knowing that one is governed not on the basis of mere material or intellectual force, but on the basis of a moral principle.' 'Every governing class', he remarked, 'tends to justify its actual exercise of power by resting it on some universal moral principle' which 'has come forward in our time in scientific trappings'. Indeed, Mosca asked whether 'a society can

[115] Engels, 'On Authority', pp. 635–9. 'Wanting to abolish authority in large-scale industry', wrote Engels, 'is tantamount to wanting to abolish industry itself, to destroy the power loom in order to return to the spinning wheel' (p. 637).

hold together without one of these "great superstitions"'—whether a universal illusion is not a social force that contributes powerfully to consolidating political organization and unifying peoples or even whole civilizations.[116]

Likewise, Pareto has some splendid debunking paragraphs on authority as a tool of proof and a tool of persuasion. It is 'an instrument for logicalizing nonlogical actions and the sentiments in which they originate'; it is appealed to by the Protestant, the Catholic, 'the humanitarian who swoons over a passage of Rousseau', the 'socialist who swears by the Word of Marx and Engels', and 'the devout democrat who bows reverent head and submits judgment and will to the oracles of suffrage, universal or limited, or what is worse to the pronouncements of parliaments and legislatures.' It holds 'in our present-day societies, not only for the ignorant, and not only touching matters of religion and morality, but even in the sciences, especially in those branches with which a person is not directly familiar.'[117]

Such realist writers agree with Marxists and anarchists in uncovering the asymmetric power dimension behind authority over belief and by convention, and in debunking liberal illusions, but they generalize the attack, seeing control, dependence, and inequality, and authority by imposition as inevitable and ineradicable features of all societies, not least those which purport to be socialist and democratic. Hence Michels's claim that 'the formation of oligarchies within the various forms of democracy is the outcome of organic necessity, and consequently affects every organization, be it socialist or even anarchist'. The government or state 'cannot be anything other than the organization of a minority'. As for the majority, it is 'permanently incapable of self-government':

> Even when the discontent of the masses culminates in a successful attempt to deprive the bourgeoisie of power, this is after all, so Mosca contends, effected only in appearance; always and necessarily there springs from the masses a new organized minority which raises itself to the rank of a governing class. Thus the majority of human beings, in a condition of eternal tutelage, are predestined by tragic necessity to submit to the dominion of a

[116] G. Mosca, *The Ruling Class (Elementi de Scienza Politica)*, trans. H. D. Kahn; ed. A. Livingston (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939), pp. 70, 71, 62, 71.

[117] V. Pareto, *The Mind and Society: A Treatise on General Sociology* (New York: Dover, 1963), §§ 583, 585, 590.



> small minority, and must be content to constitute the pedestal of an oligarchy.[118]

Pareto is harsher still:

> All governments use force and all assert that they are founded on reason. In the fact, whether universal suffrage prevails or not, it is always an oligarchy that governs, finding ways to give to 'the will of the people' the expression which the few desire . . .

He argued that

> one finds everywhere a governing class of relatively few individuals that keeps itself in power partly by force and partly by the consent of the subject class, which is much more populous. The difference lies principally, as regards substance, in the relative proportions of force and consent; and as regards forms, in the manners in which the force is used and the consent obtained.

But Pareto had a most cynical, 'realistic' view of the nature of consent: consent is always manipulated, authority always imposed by means of power. Both consent and force were for Pareto 'instruments of governing'—consent being achieved by the skilful manipulation of 'sentiments and interests'.[119]

Others can be included within the 'realist' tradition who, no less wary of what Michels called 'excessive optimism', offered a more rounded, less reductionist account of power and authority. Thus Simmel sensitively explored the forms of superordination and subordination (under an individual, under a plurality, under a principle), commenting on the 'sociological error of socialism and anarchism'.[120] Freud, too, can be seen as exploring, at the level of the individual, the many forms that social control may take of coercion and dependence and the acceptance of authority, in the face of 'the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction'.[121]

It was, however, unquestionably Max Weber who was the 'realist' who offered the subtlest and richest account of power and authority in the whole history of social and political theorizing. We have already seen that Weber's view of power as asymmetrical covers

[118] R. Michels, *Political Parties*, trans. E. Paul and C. Paul (New York: Dover, 1959), pp. 402, 390.

[119] Pareto, *Mind and Society*, §§ 2183, 2244, 2251, 2252.

[120] Simmel, 'Superordination and Subordination', *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, pp. 282–3.

[121] See S. Freud, *Civilisation and its Discontents* (London: Hogarth Press, 1961).

control, dependence, and inequality—power being 'the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests'. Weber stressed that there was an extremely wide variety of such bases: 'All conceivable qualities of a person and all conceivable combinations of circumstances may put him in a position to impose his will in a given situation.' For this reason, Weber regarded the concept of power as 'sociologically amorphous' and proposed the 'more precise' concept of *Herrschaft*, or domination, which he saw as a 'special case of power'. What, then, did he mean by *Herrschaft*?[122]

He distinguished between 'the most general' and a 'narrower sense'. The former simply designated all structures of power relations: on such a broad definition, dominant positions could

> emerge from the social relations in a drawing room as well as in the market, from the rostrum of a lecture hall as well as from the command post of a regiment, from an erotic or charitable relationship as well as from scholarly discussion of athletics.[123]

Weber therefore drew a distinction between 'domination by virtue of a constellation of interests (in particular: by virtue of a position of monopoly)' and 'domination by virtue of authority, i.e., power to command and duty to obey'. Domination in the narrower sense excluded the former—that is 'domination which originates in the market or other interest constellations' (even though this may 'because of the very absence of rules . . . be felt to be much more oppressive') and was equated with '*authoritarian power of command*'. More specifically, he wrote:

> *domination* will thus mean the situation in which the manifested will (*command*) of the *ruler* or rulers is meant to influence the conduct of one or more others (the *ruled*) and actually does influence it in such a way that their conduct to a socially relevant degree occurs as if the ruled had made the content of the command the maxim of their conduct for its very own sake.[124]

These are, of course, Weberian 'types', and in reality the borderline between them is fluid: 'the transitions are gradual', since 'sharp differentiation in concrete fact is often impossible' (this making 'clarity in the analytical distinctions all the more important'). Hence,

122 Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 53, 941.
123 Ibid. 941, 946, 943.
124 Ibid. 943, 946.



'Any type of domination by virtue of constellation of interests may . . . be transformed into domination by authority', as when economic, market-based dependencies are formalized into norm-governed authority relations; thus a vassal freely enters into the relation of fealty with a feudal lord, who thenceforth acquires authority over him; or contracts 'concluded in the labor market by formally "equal" parties through the "voluntary" acceptance of the terms offered by the employer' become transformed into formalized positions in (public or private) corporate hierarchies. Moreover, 'a certain minimum interest of the subordinate in his own obeying will normally constitute one of the indispensable motives of obedience even in the completely authoritarian duty-relationship.'[125]

There has been much scholarly debate about how *Herrschaft* is to be understood. Parsons (typically interpreting Weber as a pre-Parsonian) translates it (in the narrower sense) as 'authority' rather than 'domination' on the grounds that the latter term suggests that the fact that 'a leader has power over his followers . . . rather than the integration of the collectivity in the interest of effective functioning . . . is the critical factor from Weber's point of view.'[126] By contrast, Bendix, who rightly prefers 'domination', argues that 'as a realist in the analysis of power, [Weber] would have been critical of any translation that tended to obscure the "threat of force" present in all relations between superiors and subordinates.'[127]

It is clear that by *Herrschaft* (in the narrower sense) Weber meant to identify such structured relations between superiors and subordinates in which compliance could be based on a wide variety of motives ('all the way from simple habituation to the most purely rational calculation of advantage') and achieved by a wide variety of means. The primary virtue of his whole approach is its sensitivity to this variety, and the resultant questions it opens up about how such relations are established and maintained. His general hypothesis was that:

> in no instance does domination voluntarily limit itself to the appeal to material or affectual or ideal motives as a basis for its continuance. In addition every such system attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in

125 Ibid. 944, 214, 943, 944–5.
126 Parsons, review art. of R. Bendix's *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*, *American Sociological Review* 25 (1960), p. 752.
127 R. Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1962), p. 482.

its legitimacy. But according to the kind of legitimacy which is claimed, the type of obedience, the kind of administrative staff developed to guarantee it, and the mode of exercising authority will all differ fundamentally.

Hence Weber's decision to classify the types of domination according to the kind of claim to legitimacy typically made by each, since the differences between kinds of claims were held to be basic to, to vary with, and to be explanatory of power relations and forms of administration. In other words, 'the sociological character of domination will differ according to the basic differences in the major modes of legitimation'.[128]

Parsons is therefore quite mistaken in translating *Herrschaft* as 'authority'. Rather, the celebrated 'three pure types of authority' single out prevailing rationales for obedience to authority *within* structures of domination.[129] They do not, moreover, refer to motives of obedience or to structures of power. People, according to Weber, may obey hypocritically, opportunistically, out of material self-interest, or 'from individual weakness or helplessness, because there is no acceptable alternative'. What is important is

> the fact that in a given case the particular claim to legitimacy is to a significant degree and according to its type treated as 'valid': that this fact confirms the position of the person claiming authority and that it helps to determine the choice of means of its exercise.[130]

The types of authority invoke types of norms which specify who and what is to count as authoritative. Thus traditional, rational or legal, and charismatic authority signify publicly advanced types of reasons or 'grounds' for obeying, each of which, according to Weber, tends to prevail under certain conditions and is in turn associated with and explanatory of power relations and forms of administration. Weber postulated that one or another type tends to predominate in any given political association or institutional order: rational-legal authority in the modern state and in bureaucratic forms of organization, private and public; traditional authority in patriarchal, patrimoninial, and feudal societies and in the medieval manor; while charismatic authority erupts (only to be subsequently routinized) in all communities up to the modern world in periods of transition. However, although one type of authority will pre-

[128] Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 212, 213, 947.
[129] See Denis Wrong, introd. to *Max Weber* ed. D. Wrong (Englewood Cliffs, NJ Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 50.
[130] Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 214.



dominate in any given structure of domination, 'the forms of domination occurring in historical reality constitute combinations, mixtures, adaptations or modifications of these "pure" types'.[131]

What, then, was Weber's ultimate view of the relations between power and authority? No simple answer can be given, but four remarks may serve to indicate the essence of his way of seeing the issues.

First, he saw power as extending much further than authority, and, in particular, as covering all cases of domination excluded by the more narrow sense—that is, 'forms of power . . . based upon constellations of interests', of which the 'purest type' is 'monopolistic domination in the market', but which include 'all relationships of exchange, including those of intangibles'. Thus Weber listed, apart from market relations, those produced by 'society'—as, for instance, the position of a *salon*—and those between political entities—as in the role of Prussia within the German Customs Union or New York within the United States. (He might well have included all patron–client relations.) Certainly, Weber was keenly sensitive to the exertion of economic power within 'civil society', through the dictation of the terms of exchange to contractual partners: 'influence derived exclusively from the possessions of goods or marketable skills guaranteed in some way and acting upon the conduct of those dominated, who remain, however, formally free and are motivated simply by the pursuit of their own interests.' His theory of classes was based on this idea.[132]

Second, he did not, as did the neo-Machiavellians, see all consent to authority as imposed by rulers. Thus, for example:

> As a rule . . . the political patrimonial ruler is linked with the ruled through a consensual community which also exists apart from his independent military force and which is rooted in the belief that the ruler's powers are legitimate insofar as they are traditional.

On the other hand, he naturally inclined to a 'realistic' power analysis, especially of 'democratic' forms of authority. 'Direct democratic administration' he saw as a 'marginal type case', 'unstable', and manifesting a tendency 'to turn into rule by notables', and, like Michels and the other élite theorists, he accepted 'the law of the small number'—namely, the principle that (because of complexity, the

[131] Ibid. 954.
[132] Ibid. 946, 943, 947, 943.

need for specialized skills and organizational dynamics) ruling minorities, whether collegial or monocratic, are indispensable to the very existence of organization. Thus he was systematically doubtful about the claims of democracy, direct or indirect:

> the fact that the chief and his administrative staff often appear formally as servants or agents of those they rule does nothing whatever to disprove the quality of dominance . . . a certain minimum of assured power to issue commands, thus of domination, must be provided for in nearly every conceivable case.

And, more generally, he spoke of the acceptance of the 'myth' of the natural superiority of the highly privileged by negatively privileged strata 'under conditions of stable distribution of power and, consequently [*sic*], of status order.' Indeed, 'the continued exercise of every domination . . . always has the strongest need of self-justification through appealing to the principles of its legitimation.'[133]

Third, as we have seen, he assumed that the type of authority ('the ultimate grounds of the validity of a domination') is, in any particular case of domination, basic to, and to a significant extent explanatory of, 'the kind of relationship between the master or masters and the apparatus, the kind of relationship of both to the ruled, and . . . its specific *organizational* structure, i.e. its specific way of distributing the powers of command.'[134]

Finally, Weber stressed the ultimate role of power, in the form of coercion, or the threat of force, as an indispensable underpinning for the exercise of authority: for

> the political community, even more than other institutionally organized communities, is so constituted that it imposes obligations on the individual which many of them fulfill only because they are aware of the probability of physical coercion backing up such obligations.[135]

## III

There is little in modern debates about the concepts of power and authority that is not implicit in their history. I shall here refer to four such debates, the first of which is between a collective and an asymmetric conception of power; the second and third, between

[133] Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 1020, 949, 950, 952, 215, 953, 954.
[134] Ibid. 953. [135] Ibid. 903.



different asymmetric conceptions; and the fourth, between alternative collective conceptions.

The disagreement between Talcott Parsons and C. Wright Mills is a double disagreement. Its two aspects are contained in Parson's statement that

> to Mills, power is not a facility for the performance of function in, and on behalf of, the society as a system, but is interpreted exclusively as a facility for getting what one group, the holders of power, wants by preventing another group, the 'outs,' from getting what it wants.[136]

The first disagreement centres on the very question of whether power is or is not asymmetric—or, as Parsons (but not Mills) puts it, 'zero-sum'. Here Mills follows Weber and other asymmetric theorists of power, identifying it with control, dependence, and inequality; 'By the powerful', he writes, 'we mean, of course, those who are able to realize their will, even if others resist it.'[137] For Parsons, by contrast, this view is 'highly selective' and serves to 'elevate a secondary and derived aspect of a total phenomenon into the central place'.[138] Power is comparable to money: it becomes a facility for the achievement of collective goals through the agreement of members of a society to legitimize leadership positions whose incumbents further the goals of the system. Thus the amount of power in the system can be increased by analogy with credit creation in the economy. This view of power and authority deflects attention from all cases where power is exercised over and authority imposed upon others, and in general from power differentials and conflicts of interest. It is not a relation between individuals and groups, but a system property—the capacity to use authoritative decisions to further agreed-upon, collective goals.

This leads to the second disagreement, which is over whether power is attributed to systems or to social actors. Parsons sees power as a system resource—'a generalized facility or resource in the

[136] Parsons, 'The Distribution of Power in American Society', a review of C. Wright Mills's *The Power Élite*, *World Politics* (Oct. 1957) repr. in *C. Wright Mills and The Power Élite*, ed. G. W. Domhoff and H. B. Ballard (Boston: Beacon, 1968), p. 82.
[137] C. Wright Mills, *The Power Élite* (New York and London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1956), p. 9.
[138] Parsons, 'The Distribution of Power in American Society', pp. 82 *et seq.* Cf. A. Giddens, 'Power', on the writings of Talcott Parsons in his *Studies in Social and Political Theory* (London: Hutchinson, 1977).

society'.[139] Authority is 'the institutionalization of the "rights" of leaders to expect support from the members of the collectivity.' It is, in other words, the set of rights enabling leaders to command support and hence the precondition for the system's power to be exercised. Thus authority is not a form of power (e.g., legitimate power), but rather a *basis* of power, indeed the *only* basis of power. There is therefore no such thing as 'illegitimate power'; power is by definition legitimate. Thus, 'the threat of coercive measure, or of compulsion, without legitimation or justification, should not properly be called the use of power at all . . .'[140]

By contrast, Mills attributes power to social actors. 'Power', he writes,

> has to do with whatever decisions men make about the arrangements under which they live, and about the events which make up the history of their times . . . in so far as such decisions are made, the problem of who is involved in the making of them is the basic problem of power. In so far as they could be made but are not, the problem becomes who fails to make them.

Like other élite theorists, Mills sees power as exercised by individual or collective actors—who today 'have the power to manipulate and manage the consent of men.' Authority, in this view, is one of the forms of power—'power that is justified by the beliefs of the voluntarily obedient', alongside manipulation ('power that is wielded unknown to the powerless') and coercion.[141]

The debate within the Marxist tradition between Nicos Poulantzas and Ralph Miliband is in some ways parallel to that between Parsons and Mills. In this debate too, the disagreement is partly over whether power is attributable to agents or to the structures and systems within which they act. According to Poulantzas, Miliband had

> difficulties . . . in comprehending social classes and the the State as *objective structures*, and their relations as an *objective system of regular connections*, a structure and a system whose agents, 'men', are in the words of Marx, 'bearers' of it—*Träger*. Miliband constantly gives the impression that for him social classes or 'groups' are in some way reducible to *inter-personal*

[139] Parsons, 'The Distribution of Power in American Society', p. 83.

[140] Id. 'Authority, Legitimation and Political Action', p. 181; 'On the Concept of Political Power', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 107 (1963), p. 250.

[141] Wright Mills, 'The Structure of Power in American Society', in *Power, Politics and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills*, ed. I. L. Horowitz (New York and London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963), p. 23.



> *relations*, that the State is reducible to inter-personal relations of the members of the diverse 'groups' that constitute the State apparatus, and finally that the relation between social classes and the State is itself reducible to inter-personal relations of 'individuals' composing social groups and 'individuals' composing the State apparatus.

This conception, Poulantzas continues,

> seems to me to derive from a *problematic of the subject* which has had constant repercussions in the history of Marxist thought. According to this problematic, the agents of a social formation, 'men', are not considered as the 'bearers' of objective instances (as they are for Marx), but as the genetic principle of the levels of the social whole. This is a problematic of *social actors*, of individuals as the origin of *social action*: sociological research thus leads finally, not to the study of the objective co-ordinates that determine the distribution of agents into social classes and the contradictions between these classes, but to the search for *finalist* explanations founded on the *motivations of conduct* of the individual actors.[142]

Miliband, in response to this, maintains that Poulantzas

> is here rather one-sided and that he goes much too far in dismissing the nature of the state élite as of altogether no account. For what his *exclusive* stress on 'objective relations' suggests is that what the state does is in every particular and at all times *wholly* determined by these 'objective relations': in other words, that the structural constraints of the system are so absolutely compelling as to turn those who run the state into the merest functionaries and executants of policies imposed upon them by 'the system'.

Poulantzas, writes Miliband, substitutes 'the notion of "objective structures" for the notion of a "ruling" class', and he falls into

> a 'hyperstructuralist' trap, which deprives 'agents' of any freedom of choice and manœuvre and turns them into the 'bearers' of objective forces which they are unable to affect. This perspective is but another form of determinism—which is alien to Marxism and in any case false, which is much more serious. Governments can and do press against the 'structural constraints' by which they are beset.[143]

Also at issue between Poulantzas and Miliband is whether all power is class power. Indeed, Poulantzas *defines* power as '*the capacity of a social class to realise its specific objective interests.*'[144]

[142] N. Poulantzas, 'The Problem of the Capitalist State', *New Left Review*, 58 (Nov.–Dec. 1969), p. 70.

[143] R. Miliband, 'The Capitalist State: Reply to Nicos Poulantzas', *New Left Review*, 59 (Jan.–Feb. 1970), p. 57; and *Marxism and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 73. Cf. S. Lukes, 'Power and Structure'.

[144] Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, trans. T. O'Hagan (London: New Left Books and Sheed & Ward, 1973), p. 104.

Miliband, on the other hand, seeks to allow a (historically variable) place for (relatively autonomous) state power: he seeks to avoid any 'confusion between *class power* and *state power*, a distinction which it is important not to blur'.[145] Both writers, however, agree in seeing the 'legitimation' of authority as a form of power, though Poulantzas follows Althusser and Gramsci's third model of hegemony in speaking of this as occurring within the 'state ideological apparatuses', while Miliband argues that

> there is absolutely no warrant for speaking of 'state ideological apparatuses' in regard to institutions which, in bourgeois democratic societies, are not part of the state; and much which is important about the life of these societies is lost in the obliteration of the distinction between ideological apparatuses which are mainly the product of 'civil society' and those which are the product and part of the state apparatus.[146]

The 'community power debate' within recent American political science is a debate between disputants who share a general conception of asymmetric power as control, or the securing of compliance, but who disagree about how it is to be identified and measured. More specifically, they agree in seeing power as exercised when A affects B in A's but against B's interests, but they disagree about how this idea is properly to be understood and applied in research—and this disagreement largely stems from differing conceptions of what are to count as interests and how they may be adversely affected, which stems from fundamental differences of philosophical and methodological positions and ultimately of world view.

Robert Dahl, Nelson Polsby, and their colleagues employ a 'one-dimensional' view of power which involves a focus on behaviour in the making of decisions on (key) issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests, seen as express policy preferences revealed by political participation. Thus Polsby writes that

> one can conceive of 'power'—'influence' and 'control' are serviceable synonyms—as the capacity of one actor to do something affecting another actor, which changes the probable pattern of specified future events. This can be envisaged most easily in a decision-making situation.

And he argues that identifying 'who prevails in decision-making' seems 'the best way to determine which individuals and groups have "more" power in social life, because direct conflict between actors

[145] Miliband, *Marxism and Politics*, p. 54. [146] Ibid. 57.



presents a situation most closely approximating an experimental test of their capacities to affect outcomes.'[147] Thus Dahl's central method in *Who Governs?* was to

> determine for each decision which participants had initiated alternatives that were finally adopted, had vetoed alternatives initiated by others, or had proposed alternatives that were turned down. Their actions were then tabulated as individual 'successes' or 'defeats'. The participants with the greatest proportion of success out of the total number of successes were then considered to be the most influential.[148]

Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz criticize this view of power as restrictive and, by virtue of that fact, as giving a misleadingly sanguine pluralist picture of American politics. Power, they claim, has two faces. The first face is that examined by Dahl and his colleagues, according to which 'power is totally embodied and fully reflected in "concrete decisions" or in activity bearing upon their making.' But, they maintain, it is also exercised

> when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A's set of preferences.

The second face of power exists 'to the extent that a person or group—consciously or unconsciously—creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts' by 'non-decision making' —that is, decision-making that 'results in suppression or thwarting of a latent or manifest challenge to the values or interests of the decision-maker'. Such power, however, only shows up where there is conflict, overt or covert; in the absence of such conflict, 'the presumption must be that there is consensus on the prevailing allocation of values'.[149] In sum, the two-dimensional view of power involves a qualified critique of the behavioural focus of the one-dimensional (qualified because it still assumes that non-decision-making is a form of decision-making), and it allows for consideration of the ways in

[147] N. W. Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 3–4.

[148] R. A. Dahl, *Who Governs?: Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1961), p. 336.

[149] P. Bachrach and M. S. Baratz, *Power and Poverty in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 7, 8, 44, 49.

which decisions are prevented from being taken on potential issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests, seen as embodied either in express policy preferences revealed by political participation, or in covert or deflected subpolitical grievances.

I have, in turn, criticized this two-dimensional view[150] as being both too behaviourist and too individualistic, and because of its insistence that for power to exist there must be observable conflict and the existence of grievances, albeit covert. A three-dimensional view of power can be elaborated which incorporates the first two but allows for consideration of the subtler and less visible ways in which potential issues are kept out of politics through the behaviour of groups and practices of institutions (which may not be analysable in terms of individuals' decision-making and may indeed be manifested by individuals' inaction). Moreover, such power may be exercised in the absence of observable conflict and grievances; is it not the supreme exercise of power to avert conflict and grievance by influencing, shaping, and determining the perceptions and preferences of others? Such a view requires the hypothesis of a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those who silently acquiesce. Doubtless, such a hypothesis raises several acute difficulties of theory and research; but such difficulties are not solved by adopting the alternative, and methodologically easier, hypothesis that power of this kind cannot exist.

As for authority, proponents of the first view tend to see political authority as authority by convention in classical liberal-democratic terms: it is voluntarily given in the form of renewed consent at regular elections (which also enable the electorate to exercise 'indirect influence on the decisions of leaders').[151] Bachrach and Baratz, however, are equivocal on the topic of authority. They see it as one of the means of control, or securing compliance (along with the threat of sanctions, influence, force, and manipulation), where 'B complies because he recognises that [A's] command is reasonable in terms of his own values', because either its content or the procedure by which it is reached is legitimate and reasonable. Yet they seem unsure about whether it is a form of power, involving a 'possible conflict of values', or an 'agreement based upon reason'.[152] Consideration of the third

[150] Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (London: Macmillan, and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1974). [151] Dahl, *Who Governs?* p. 101.
[152] Bachrach and Baratz, *Power and Poverty*, pp. 34, 37, 20.



dimension of power opens up the whole question of how and to what extent the internal acceptance of rules, of authoritative reasons and rules of recognition may be imposed by the superordinate upon the subordinate.

Finally we may refer to an interesting difference of view between two thinkers with much in common by way of intellectual background—Hannah Arendt, who is a postclassical political theorist and Jürgen Habermas, a neo-Marxist social philosopher. This dispute occurs within the collective or communal family of conceptions of power.

Arendt denies that 'Power, strength, force, authority, violence . . . are but words to indicate the means by which man rules over man.' She rejects the tradition of thinking that reduces 'public affairs to the business of domination' and appeals rather to 'another tradition and another vocabulary no less old and time honoured', common to the Athenians, the Romans, and the eighteenth-century revolutionaries, a tradition which employed 'a concept of power and law whose essence did not rely on the command–obedience relationship and which did not identify power and rule or law and command.' For Arendt, power

> corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of the individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together. When we say of somebody that he is 'in power' we actually refer to his being empowered by a certain number of people to act in their name.[153]

Authority, Arendt believes, 'has vanished from the modern world'; it 'grew out of the Roman experience of foundation and was understood in the light of Greek political philosophy', and it has 'nowhere been re-established', indeed, all modern revolutions since the French are failed attempts to re-establish it. It involved 'the religious trust in a sacred beginning' and 'the protection of tradition and therefore self-evident standards of behavior'. Its hallmark was 'unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey; neither coercion nor persuasion is needed'.[154]

[153] Arendt, *On Violence*, pp. 43, 44, 40, 44.
[154] Ead., 'What is Authority?', in Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York: Viking Press, 1968 edn.), pp. 91, 141; *On Violence*, p. 45. Arendt remarks that if authority is to be defined, 'it must be in contradistinction to both coercion by force and persuasion through arguments' ('What is Authority?' p. 93).

Habermas recognizes Arendt's conception of power as denoting 'not the instrumentalisation of *another's* will, but the formation of a *common* will directed to reaching agreement'—the 'power of agreement-oriented communication to produce consensus.' This is reminiscent of Habermas's own notion of 'consensus brought about in unconstrained communication', in which 'those involved are oriented to reaching agreement and not primarily to their respective individual successes'. But he differs from Arendt with respect to the way he grounds this 'communication concept of power' and the historical and political significance he attaches to it. For Arendt, such power derives from a view of a non-deformed 'public realm' based on classical political models, which in the modern world finds its expression in revolutionary attempts to establish political liberty (American town-hall meetings in 1776, the Parisian *sociétés populaires* between 1789 and 1793, sections of the Paris Commune in 1871, the Russian Soviets in 1905 and 1917, the *Rätedemokratie* in Germany in 1918) and its antithesis in totalitarian rule. Habermas sees this position as based on an anachronistic image of the Greek polis, 'inapplicable to modern conditions'. Arendt's view of politics excludes 'strategic action', the 'struggle for political power', and is unconnected to the economic and social environment in which it is embedded through the administrative system. For her, politics is identified with 'the praxis of those who talk together in order to act in common'. On the other hand, Habermas values in her thesis the idea that legitimate power is generated (as opposed to acquired, maintained, and employed) through 'common convictions in unconstrained communication'.[155]

For Habermas, political rule has rarely been the expression of such unconstrained consensus. Rather, systematically restricted communication and illusory ideologies have served to legitimate power, through 'convictions subjectively free from constraint, convictions which are however illusionary'.[156] This neo-Marxist twist to the old tale of power and authority comes as no surprise. For a complex set of reasons, Habermas holds that late capitalism faces a legitimation crisis as the state, whose class character becomes increasingly transparent, is increasingly unable to maintain its legitimacy. For him,

[155] Habermas, 'Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power', *Social Research*, 44/1 (Spring 1977), pp. 4, 5, 6, 14, 17, 21, 18.

[156] Ibid. 22.



legitimate power, based on undistorted communication, represents a counterfactual ideal of emancipation at the basis of critical theory.[157] Like other contemporary conceptions of power and authority, this embodies a view of 'the natural necessities and opportunities of human life' and a 'conception of social cooperation' whose roots lie deep in the history of social and political theory.

[157] See Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. T. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975; London: Heinemann, 1976).