

According to E. M. Adams, "[t]o be a man . . . is, as it were, to have an office, a position, defined by the imperative to live so that one would stand justified under rational criticism"; and in this connection he speaks of "the office of a human being" ("The Philosophical Grounds of the Present Crisis of Authority": 13 f.).

This seems to me to be only another way of saying that to be a human being is to be called to obedience—obedience to reality as it is, understanding oneself realistically and, therefore, authentically, and leading one's life accordingly. This assumes, of course, that to live rationally, so that one would stand justified under rational criticism, and to obey reality in one's self-understanding and life-praxis come to the same thing.

But what is it, actually, to live rationally? Whatever else it is, I should say that one cannot so live as to stand justified under rational criticism unless one both declares, explicitly and implicitly, to every human being that she or he exists under the same imperative and directly calls her or him to understand her- or himself and to lead her or his life accordingly. In the same way, I should say that one cannot obey reality as it is without carrying out the responsibility of bearing witness to it to one and all and calling each and every one to the same obedience, including in turn bearing witness and, as a necessary condition of bearing it validly, doing philosophy by critically reflecting on the meaning of bearing witness and on its claims to validity.

It occurs to me that talk of human beings as such having an office, and thus of one's office as a human being, is entirely of a piece with talk about "the authority of reason or of facts" (Richard T. De George). It is improper, nonliteral, or, possibly, analogical or symbolic talk—in essentially the same way in which talk of reality in general as a "society," or as a "polis," "commonwealth," or "kingdom," involves using the terms in quotation marks in improper, nonliteral, extended senses. Thus, for example, God is not properly "*an* authority," not even the highest or supreme authority, because God is properly the primal *source* of all authority. Likewise, my being a child of God and authorized by God to live as

such is not properly or literally a matter of my being appointed to an "office." True, as it is that there can be no office, properly so-called, without authorization, it is not true that any authorization must be an authorization to some office, again, in the proper, literal sense. In other words, there is an exact parallel here with the statement that, although every authority, properly so-called, is as such also a source of authority, the converse is false: not every source of authority is itself properly *an* authority.

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