

If all nonexecutive authority can be legitimate only if it is authorized by the executive authority of reality, on the one hand, and common human experience and reason, on the other, then all legitimate nonexecutive authority is indirectly legitimate executive authority as well. As such, it has an indirect right to command as well as a direct right to be believed, followed, etc., even though it never has a right—even indirect—to coerce.

Of course, whether or not a particular nonexecutive authority *is* legitimate is always open to question, and the same is true of the rights—to teach and to command, to be heard, believed, and followed—that belong to it insofar as it is legitimate. Thus, e.g., *actual* knowledge is one thing, *putative* knowledge, something else; and only the first legitimates an epistemic authority and endows it with the rights in question. It is because this is so, and not, as De George says, because "no knowledge carries with it the right to command" (92), that no authority ever has the right to coerce or force others to act or believe.

This assumes, naturally, the other still more fundamental reason that belief and action as such, as exercises of reason that are distinct, if also inseparable, from external behavior, cannot be coerced.

9 July 1996