

1. We could not understand or recognize an authority for which there were not reasons of some kind.

2. But we do not expect to see these reasons given or explained at length on every occasion when the authority is consulted, deferred to, followed, or obeyed.

3. Moreover, in some cases authority cannot function once there has been a complete explanation of the reasons for it: a person who understands a pronouncement completely, with all the reasons for it, can no longer accept it on authority (even though she or he may still accept it).

4. It is also true that if an authority did not normally have some reasons for it, and therefore some justification, it would not be possible to speak of its being exceeded or abused.

5. Still, there is always an element of arbitrariness in any arrangement of roles or offices, and it is nearly always arguable that some different set of arrangements would enable an important activity to be carried out equally effectively, or even more effectively, or an important institution to function at least as well or even better.

6. And yet, if very much attention is given to alternative possible arrangements, any activity or institution will be disrupted; consequently, in practice, the pursuit of any activity or the work of any institution is possible only among those who are not paralyzed in the face of an indefinite range of alternatives, but are prepared to follow one procedure, one set of roles, one arrangement of offices, and the authority that goes with it.

7. But even an authority that is justified may be abused or used inappropriately, thereby hindering the pursuit of the very objectives on which its justification rests.

8. Therefore, it is appropriate constantly to refer every authority back to the objectives by reference to which it is understood and justified, even though it is not appropriate to rail indiscriminately against authority and to

overlook its ubiquity and indispensability to all the human activities that are themselves not only important but indispensable.

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