

1. What is a relationship of authority?

2. A relationship of authority is necessarily an unequal relationship or a relationship of inequality, because "an authority is always a superior of some kind, to be obeyed in some cases, in other cases to be followed, consulted, attended to, deferred to, or conformed to" (7).

3. In other words, a relationship of authority is a relationship of "compliance of one person with another without coercion or threats, without persuasion or bargaining" (8).

4. Such an unequal relationship of compliance is not intelligible either to participants or to observers, "unless they understand the reasons or the rules that go with it" (9).

5. Since "authority, in all its forms, is found only where a number of people are gathered together in some activity which depends upon their several roles," "it is by reference to some [such] activity that every instance of authority may be understood, and, where justification is needed, justified" (105).

6. If each kind of authority did not normally have some kind of justification, it would never be possible to speak of authority's being exceeded or abused.

7. In actuality, however, justification of a particular kind of authority is "usually by reference to the importance (at least to the participants) of the activity with which the authority is associated, and to the importance of the authority if the activity is to be carried on" (106).

8. But at least some rough notion of the proper limits of any kind of authority is part of understanding the reasons or the rules that justify it in the context of the activity or the institution with which the authority is associated.

9. Even an authority which is justified in principle, however, may be abused or exceeded in fact, with the result that "an authority may hinder the pursuit of the very objectives on which its justification rests" (107).

10. Consequently, it is always appropriate to refer every authority back to the objectives by reference to which it is recognized, understood, and justified.

11. But it is not appropriate to rail indiscriminately against authority, since it is not only various but also ubiquitous and indispensable to so many human activities that are themselves indispensable.