

Brümmer argues that "two factual presuppositions are constitutive of all prescriptives. First, every prescriptive is based on the presupposition that the hearer is free (and therefore able) to do or decline to do what is requested of him. 'Ought' implies freedom. Second, every prescriptive is based on the presupposition that there is an (often unspoken) 'convention' or 'agreement' subscribed to by both the speaker and his hearer and obliging the hearer to do what is requested of him" (*Theology and Philosophical Inquiry*: 112).

My problem with this argument is with the second presupposition. To my mind, it is not "*subscription*" to some "convention," or "agreement," that is a necessary condition of all prescriptives, but rather *subjection* thereto. That I am indeed bound by any "convention," or "agreement," to which I subscribe is true enough. But I may also be bound by norms to which I am subject even though I do not subscribe to them.

Significantly, the Founders of the American republic were quite clear about this. For although, in their view, civil society and government are the result of a voluntary association of equals, and thus of a compact, or agreement, of each to be responsible to and for all, and of all to be responsible to and for each, they were just as convinced that the divine government of the universe is not the result of any such voluntary agreement. Even as no human being is by nature subject to the rule of another, every human being is by nature subject to the rule of God.

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