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Authority in Postmodernity

Victor Ferrao

Rachol Seminary, Salcette, Goa

Today, it has become very fashionable to be a *postie*. To characterise your contribution as 'Post' – something else, appears to be a guarantee for relevance, attention and success," says Anthon A Van Nickerk (1995: 171). In fact the second half of the 20th century, especially the last twenty years, has witnessed a mushrooming growth of the posties. 'Post movements' such as post-industrialism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, post ethics, post-metaphysics, etc., have begun to gain great currency in our contemporary world. Hence, Paul Lakeland declares, "ours is the world that, for better or worse has been labelled as 'Postmodern' (1987: ix). Professor Madan Sarup of South Bank University, London, aptly describes our contemporary scene, when he says:

Postmodernism is being talked and written about everywhere in contemporary western society. The term Postmodern is being used in many artistic, intellectual and academic fields. The figures associated with post-modernism include: Rauschenberg, Baseliz, Schnabel, Kniefer, Warhol and perhaps Bacon in art; Jencks and Venturi in architecture, Artaud in drama, Barth,

Barthelme and Pynchon in fiction, Lynch in film (Blue Velvet), Sherman in photography, Derrida, Lyotard, Baudrillard in philosophy. There are, of course, other subjects that ought to be mentioned: anthropology, geography, sociology ... the list is endless, and the name of those included lead to vigorous and bitter controversies. But one thing is clear: Postmodernism is of great interest to a wide range of people because it directs our attention to the change, the major transformation, taking place in contemporary society and culture. The term is at once fashionable and elusive (1993: 123).

Thus, beyond every cloud of doubt, one must agree that postmodernism has come to stay. Today it is catching rapid fire, and has influenced almost every sphere of our life, challenging almost all our cherished values, ways of thinking and living. Johnson J. Puthenpurackal prophetically points that this millennium calls for a radical shift in our philosophising:

The new millennium calls for a philosophy of complementarity, a philosophy of the meeting of paths, ideologies, thought patterns, cultures, value system etc. No philosophical

*The author teaches philosophy at Goa and may be contacted at Rachol Seminary, Salcette, Raia, Goa-403715.

Abstract: Today, it has become very fashionable to be a postie. To characterise your contribution as 'Post' - something else, appears to be a guarantee for relevance, attention and success," says Anthon A Van Nickerk (1995: 171). In fact the second half of the 20th century, especially the last twenty years, has witnessed a mushrooming growth of the posties. 'Post movements' such as postindustrialism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, post ethics, post-metaphysics, etc., have begun to gain great currency in our contemporary world. Hence, Paul Lakeland declares, "ours is the world that, for better or worse has been labelled as 'Postmodern'.

tradition is so rich that it needs no enrichment from any other tradition, and no philosophical tradition is so poor that it cannot enrich any other. Hence, a merging of the apparently irreconcilable opposite poles is both possible and necessary; the principle of non-contradiction, the either/or structure, can be transcended. The movement has already begun; it has to be accelerated still more, so that the new millennium does not witness stagnation, but a fecundation and creativity in philosophy (1999: 201).

The prefix 'post' suggests an 'end' or boundary. It implies the end of something (that has gone before it) and the beginning of something new. That is, it builds a boundary for the old and bridge for the new. Now in the case of Postmodernism, it announces the end of modernism depicting that modernism is no longer modern. Jean-Francois Lyotard drives this home when he says, "re-writing modernity is what is Postmodernity" (Gregorious 1997: 84). Of course, postmodernism is not a denial of modernity¹ but a reconstruction or a reinterpretation attempt that seeks to give a new meaning to it (Gregorious 1997: 84). It is a denial of the universalist claims of modernity, for postmodernism is summarily viewed as "the incredulity of metanarratives." Thus, the 'meta' in the metanarrative stands on slippery grounds. Anton A. Van Niekerk brings the reconstructivist agenda of postmodernism to light when he writes:

To the universality of modernist accounts of rationality, they juxtapose (and therefore oppose) its irreducible plurality of incommensurable lifeworlds and forms of life, as well

as the irredeemable "local" character of all truth, argument and validity (e.g., Lyotard, invoking the later Wittgenstein). To the apriori (transcendental), they oppose the empirical (immanent); to certainty, irony, and fallibility; to fulfilment, desire; to unity, heterogeneity; to homogeneity, the fragmentary; to semantics, rhetoric; to purposive action, games and play; to hierarchy, anarchy (e.g., Feyerabend); to self-evident givenness ("presence"), universal mediation by differential systems of signs (e.g., Saussure and Derrida), to the "unconditioned," a vehement rejection of ultimate foundations in any form (e.g., Rorty) (Van Niekerk 1995: 172).

All this seemed to have proclaimed that we have reached the *door*² of a *new axial period* (Jaspers 1953: 1-60).³ Today most of our treasured rock-like standards, beliefs, symbols, values and patterns of thought and behaviour are melting away in the light of the movement that we have referred to as postmodernism. We have become more and more aware that we can no longer work with the levers that are already outdated. The new wine demands new wineskins. We are challenged to pass through the *cloud of unknowing*, that is, we are empowered to de-script the hegemonic patterns of thought that we have inherited from the past. This de-scripting is only a re-scripting. The old regime has its place but its hegemonic bearings that filter and blind our thinking are exorcised.

In the context of the challenge of passing though the *cloud of unknowing* we wish to problematize the notion of authority. By subjecting it to serious

reflection we wish to arrive at a new appreciation and a deeper understanding of its meaning and relevance. To set the ball rolling we will first clarify the meaning of authority in short and move on to see how it was understood in the premodern and modern times. This will prepare the ground for a new and a deeper understanding of the same in the light of postmodernity. Finally, we shall strive to seek the relevance of such an understanding to our life.

1.1 The Meaning of Authority

Although no one seems to like it, authority is seen as a necessary evil for the survival of any society. Hence, one can trace the operation of authority or sub authorities at every layer and segment of a given society. Their roles as the centralising and unifying structures seem to be necessary for the stability of our society. Therefore, the study of the meaning and relevance of authority acquires great importance. But unfortunately more often than not authority is studied through the political lens and is seen as “the legitimate capacity to implement and enforce rules governing political institutions” (Taylor and Charles 2001: 23). But this is only one kind of authority. Authority shows itself in diverse forms at various levels of our inter-subjective existence. One can speak of divine authority, religious authority, authority of tradition, personal authority, civil authority, constitutional authority, legal authority, a scholar’s or an author’s authority and so on. All of them share a network of similarities but at the same time there is also a noticeable difference between

them. Hence, our job of coming to an authentic or authoritative understanding of authority becomes even more difficult.

Perhaps, G. Wittgenstein’s notion of ‘family resemblances’ may help us to arrive at a somewhat adequate understanding of authority. Wittgenstein uses the context of games to make his point. He says that there are many types of games, for instance, there are card-games, ball games, board games, etc. They have nothing in common yet all are referred to as games. We call them games because there is a network of similarities and relationships among them. This network is called *family resemblances* (1974: 66). Hence, within the diversity of the collective or individual manifestations of authority, one can find a network of similarities and relationships which allow us to see the diverse manifestations of authority under a general unifying concept, which, of course, leaves room for a specific authority to operate with its individual specificity in its specific context.

This reduces our task to the discovery of the network of similarities and relationships that exists amidst the diverse forms of authorities. In this effort of laying our hands on this network of similarities and relationships, we find the etymological meaning of the word authority as an angel of God. The Latin equivalent of the word authority is *auctoritas*. Now *auctoritas* comes from the word *auctor*, which means cause, sponsor, promoter, and surety (Molinski 1989: 129). Drawing from this etymological meaning we see that the network of similarities and relationships that

operates among the various manifestations of authority is the fact that all of them operate as authenticating or legitimating mechanisms within their specific levels. In this connection it would make one or two ripples in our mind if we listen to Jurgen Habermas, who describes the crises that we face today, as the “crisis of legitimacy” (Taylor and Charles 2001: 23). Hence, we see authority in its most general sense as the ‘ultimate court of legitimacy.’ It is through our appeal to one or the other kind of authority that we legitimise or authenticate all our behaviour. For instance, the written or oral tradition of a religion or a tribe legitimises what is lawful/moral or unlawful/immoral behaviour within its domain.

1.2 Authority Down the Ages

Having arrived at a general understanding of authority, we now move on to find how this authority was seen as the ‘ultimate court of legitimacy’ evolved through the ages. We wish to grapple with the task of finding an authority that legitimated all other forms of authorities down the ages. That is, we take up the task of tracing the privileged meta-authority capable of situating, characterising and evaluating all other forms of authorities. We find this exercise useful because it can evaporate many of our illusions around it, for we will soon discover that the so-called meta-authority is in fact simply one kind of authority among others.

1.2.1. The Premodern Understanding of Authority

The premodern times were the times when religion reigned supreme.

Hence, God was naturally and readily accepted as the ultimate legitimating structure. Authority was mainly understood as extrinsic and monocratic / uni-centred / uni-polar in nature. That is, all other forms of authority derived their legitimacy from God who was understood as an omnipotent and omniscient being who ruled the earth and all the people with a mighty hand. That is why we find kings legitimating their authority on the basis of the so-called divine election (Ullman 1965: 13). Therefore, the premodern period can be seen as the hayday of what we can call the ‘theocratic authority,’ which bestowed limitless power and authority on tradition. Thus, for instance, Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) held that the state, being derived from the nature of humans as social and political animals, is subordinate to the Church in so far as the spiritual nature is supreme (Taylor and Charles 2001: 23).

1.2.2. The Modern Understanding of Authority

Modernism as a movement of liberation from the dead weight of traditions neutralised the ‘theocratic authority’ and thus sowed the seeds of the death of God. Paulos Mar Gregorios says it all when he states, “... the fundamental act of the Modernist is the repudiation of the transcendent as the unifying principle, and its replacement by human rationality as sovereign and as the unifying principle of all experience and all understanding” (Gregorios 1997: 85). Having thus dethroned God, the modernist enthroned the self in his place. The death of God gave birth to the intrinsic authority of a rational self.

The Cartesian *Cogito* brought in the notion of a fully conscious, complete in itself and totally independent self. Hence, Peter Burger says, “the conception of the naked self beyond all institutions and roles as the end realisation of human beings is the very heart of modernity” (Kolb 1986: 7). Thus, modernism gave birth to a concept of self that was thought to be an autonomous, self-authorising and self-evident subject, capable of mirroring the world as it is in itself. It was believed that there is no self-evident truth apart from the self to which it is evident. Thus, the self became the ultimate legitimating agency that legitimated all other forms of authority, and so became the ‘autocratic authority.’ Now with the self at the centre, and the resultant enthronement of reason, one can see a great upsurge in the development of positive science, and as a result science and the scientific method came to be seen as the paradigm of all knowledge and truth. Hence, John Taylor makes a valid point when he says: “the expressions ‘rational’ and ‘scientific’ came to be equivalent in the popular mind” (1998: 163).

1.3 Authority in our Times

Our pilgrimage into the understanding of authority opens the road to the conception of authority in the postmodern world. If modernism announced the death of God, postmodernity appears to put the last nail on the coffin of man. Thus ‘autocratic authority,’ the child of modernism, stands on slippery ground in the wake of postmodernity. Hence, we shall first pass on to some of the transitory

movements, which have come to be identified with postmodernity and see how ‘autocratic authority’ is derailed by them. This short journey will make it easier for us to see how postmodernity inaugurates a new understanding of authority.

1.3.1. The Derauling of Autocratic Authority

a. The Hermeneutical Turn

We know that modernism epitomised a Cartesian ego capable of picturing the world in a monological totalising grasp. Descartes taught that a scientist, philosopher or a critic must by ‘deliberate effort’ rid himself / herself of preconceived notions and start entirely a new ‘building from the foundation up.’ The Cartesian doubt or the Baconian iconoclasm of the four-fold idols demonstrates such a preoccupation. Thus, the knowing self becomes the sole arbiter of all truth and knowledge (Ludin 1985: 4 –5). Hence, Gadamer in his *Truth and Method* rightly points out that ‘the fundamental prejudice of the enlightenment is a prejudice against prejudice’ (Ludin 1985: 5). But with the emergence of hermeneutics, absolute and value neutral knowledge was shown the door. All our knowledge and understanding was shown irreconcilably dependent on preunderstanding. We can know only within a prior structure. All meaning emerges in interaction with the perspective that the individual brings into his act. Hence, we speak of the hermeneutic circle. Perhaps, Richard Rorty best makes this point when he says: “we cannot understand the parts of a strange

culture, practice, theory, language, or whatever, unless we know something about how the whole thing works, whereas we cannot get a grasp on how the whole works until we have some understanding of its parts” (Rorty 1980: 319). Hence, no one may claim an “Archimedean vantage point” from which to peer at truth.

b. The Movement of Structuralism

The 1950’s saw an intellectual movement in France known as structuralism. It was the work of the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and literary critic Roland Barthes that brought this moment to the centre stage. It is difficult to boil structuralism down to a single ‘bottom-line’ position, yet one can point out that its essence is the belief that things cannot be understood in isolation, they have to be seen in the context of the larger structures they form part of (hence the name structuralism). The structures in question here are mainly those imposed by way we perceive the world, rather than objective entities already existing in the external world (Barry 1999: 39). Thus, they teach that meaning is not a kind of core or essence inside things, rather it is always outside. That is, meaning is attributed to things by our mind. Deriving largely from the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) they teach that:

(a) Meanings that we give to words are purely arbitrary, maintained by convention alone.

(b) Meanings of the words are relational, that is, no word can have meaning in isolation from other words.

(c) Language constitutes the world, that is, language does not just record or

label it. Language is the only medium through which we access our world.

Drawing on the arbitrary, relational and constitutive dimensions of language the structuralist contends that the self and the things in the world are intelligible only in a network of relations (Barry 1999: 39). Meaning of a word is not determined by the intention of the individual, but by a network of relations of words in a given language. Hence, the role of self in shaping or ordering meaning is effectively subverted. In fact, they go to the extent of demonstrating that the human subject is a construct. Levi-Strauss, for instance, calls the human subject – the centre of being – ‘the spoilt brat of philosophy’ (Sarup: 1993: 1).

c. Poststructuralism a Radicalisation of Structuralism

Structuralism in itself did not require Poststructuralism but its failure to be radically true to its enterprise gave birth to Poststructuralism in the late twentieth century. Here we can take note of thinkers like Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, who signalled a break off from the structuralist banner. Poststructuralism retained the structuralist’s elimination of the subject as a fountain of reality or knowledge, and the importance of the structure for any kind of analysis, but they demonstrated that structures are themselves controlled by deeper power structures, which the structuralists tend to neglect. Thus, for instance, they teach that language constitutes reality but is itself not free from the conditions that produced it. In the same vein, Michel Foucault

(1926-1984) reduces the 'self' into a social construct. They say that a human being is made a subject. That is, the knowing subject is not merely influenced by external factors but rather it is 'constructed' by them (Charlesworth 1996: 194-197).

Hence, we can see how the poststructuralists lead structuralism to its most radical implications. They teach that we have no access to any fixed landmark or measure of anything beyond linguistic processing. Therefore, there is no foundation of any sort that can guarantee the validity and stability of any system of thought in a linguistically constituted world. Moreover, the structuralist's doctrine of the exteriority of meaning is radicalised when they stress the interaction of the text and the reader as productivity. One must bear in mind that some philosophers like the German Manfred Frank also refers to poststructuralism as neostructuralism (Taylor and Charles 2001: 263).

d. *Psychoanalysis and the Emerging of the Ex-centric Self*

We have already seen that the structuralist and the poststructuralist have deconstructed the substantial conception of self when they taught that the subject is a construct. Something similar was achieved long ago due to the labours of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). The psychoanalysis developed by him dethroned the deluding autonomous notion of self. The Cartesian thought that pictures the self as a subject that is fully conscious and in complete control of itself and the world present to its consciousness, was derailed with the notion

of the unconscious which indicated that an unknown territory influences and controls the conscious self. French psychologist Jaques Lacan (1901-1981) drawing on the structuralist insights led the Freudian discovery of the unconscious to its logical conclusion. He taught that one could not understand psychoanalysis apart from language. This is simply because in investigating the unconscious the analyst is always both using and examining language. Hence, he opined that the unconscious is not a chaotic mass of disparate materials but an orderly network like language, that is, the unconscious is structured like language. It is this unconscious self that is the kernel of our being. Lacan subverts the Cartesian claim that 'I think, therefore I exist' with his dictum 'I am not where I think not.' Thus, the idea of subject as a stable amalgam of consciousness is effectively deconstructed in psychoanalysis (Barry 1999: 96-115).

e. *The Social Construction of Knowledge and Reality*

The modernist held that true knowledge was the result of an act of an unbiased, neutral and autonomous self. But today social epistemologies draw our attention to the fact that the act of knowing takes place in a social context. The individual's conclusions and reactions are assessed, controlled and maintained by this social context. Thus, knowledge is produced and authorised by people in dominant political, social and economic positions. Hence, the view that all knowledge is socially constructed and maintained has become the mantra of the social episte-

mologies (Bloor 1998: 1-2). Philosophers of science like Thomas Khun have amply shown that even science undergoes social construction through paradigm shifts. In the social arena, we have the critical school of Frankfurt that seeks to study not just what explains and maintains society but is very much geared towards that which brings about change towards a higher and more liberative form of rationalisation of our society (Guess 1998: 723-724).

f. *Feminist Deconstruction of the Androcentric Ego*

The 'women's movement' of the 1960's owes its origin and direction to the enlightenment and the environment created by the industrial revolution. The women's movement was grounded in the practical aim of liberating women from the oppressive status and position of women in our patriarchal society. Hence, amidst the diversity of their approach to the main issue all of them seek to de-authorise the male chauvinistic self-authorising ego that epistemology glorified in modernism. They labour hard to demonstrate that the apparent gender neutrality of standard epistemologies which appear to claim that mind has no sex is only an illusion. As against this they assert that the entire epistemological tradition has been clouded by patriarchy, and hence they take it as a sacred mission to restructure the same in the light of the distinctive experience of women.

1.3.2 *The Coming of 'Polycratic Authority'*

The radical critique of the self, emerging from the above and other

similar movements, has indeed derailed our anthropocentric bias which forms the heartbeat of modernism. Hence, postmodernity pounced on the waves made by such movements and declared the death of man.⁴ Schnadelbach beautifully pictures this 'death of man,' as he says:

Farewell to man means the end of the notion that man is the centre of the world, the author of his history and the foundation of all knowledge, including the knowledge of himself. This modern anti-humanism says that man should no longer make himself into a principle but should realise that he is merely an ephiphenomenon of subhuman and superhuman powers and processes.⁵

Besides questioning the notion of self, these movements have successfully critiqued the other aspects of modernity as well. For instance, structuralism and poststructuralism have de-stabilised our conception of history as a linear progression. That is, they boldly presented a de-linearised temporality. Following them, the celebration of the end of history by many of the postmodern thinkers is the confirmation of the advent of what we have termed as the new *axial period*. Hence, we make a humble attempt to arrive a new appreciation of authority in the light of postmodernity.

Authority, as we have already seen, operates as the centralising, legitimating or authenticating centre. But often these so-called centres of unification can seek to be unrivalled and hence become despotic, authoritarian and imperial. Such an elevation of an unrivalled centre necessarily results in the degeneration of the periphery. Thanks

to postmodernity, today no centre can claim to be unrivalled. The postmodern thinkers have effectively shown that the centre is an artificial construct that relies on the marginalization of others for its existence (Taylor and Charles 2001: 48-49). This becomes clear if one considers their attack of the 'metaphysic of presence,' which has tainted all traditional western thought. Western thought equates the primal truth with being and being is equated with presence: to be true is to be originally and fully present. In this light God is seen as the full presence of being. Indebted to Heidegger, who was the first to point out the folly of onto-theological thinking and to present the ontological truth as differential movement of 'un-veiling,' postmodern thinkers investigate the ways in which the manifestation of any presence depends on the concealment of some absence. They teach that because the manifestation of presence is the differential movement presence is not possible apart from absence (Taylor and Charles 2001: 1-2). Hence, in the light of this constitutive dimension of absence, one might say that an authority is born of the suppression or subversion of all other potential authorities. Perhaps the game of chess might clarify this point: in a game of chess at every stage the value of every item on the board depends on the position of every other item on the board. Hence, a shift in a single item can disturb the value equation on the board. Therefore, the power status of any specific authority depends on the relative power position of every other potential authority in the 'circle of radical relationality.'⁶ In other words, an authority acquires its

authoritativeness only on the basis of its position in the 'circle of radical relationality.' It is in the silencing of all other potential authorities in the 'circle of radical relationality' that a specific authority acquires its voice. Perhaps what Burkhardt said of 'great men' might also apply to authority: "they are what we are not" (Mills 2000: 3). This means that the authority seen as the centralising centre is already de-centred. This ex-centricity of the centre allows the possibilities of reversal and *derigidification* of any authority as in the game of chess. Hence, there can be no meta-authority. This does not mean that there is no authority at all. It only means that all authorities are radically webbed in the 'circle of radical relationality.' Thus, authorities become plural, local and immanent. We refer to such an understanding of authority as 'polycratic authority.'

In this connection it is important to touch the heart of the 'circle of radical relationality.' We have already seen that it is in the infantilization of potential authorities that a specific authority is born, hence it becomes important to problematize the power play in the 'circle of radical relationality.' The power play in the 'circle of radical relationality' is not like the turning of the wheel of fortune so that it arbitrarily allows any thing to be anchored as authority at a particular moment. Just as in the game of chess, the pre-set rules govern the power play of the various items on the chessboard, so too along with individual dexterity and charisma other important factors govern the power play in our society. In this con-

text we find that the French Marxist structural thinker Louis Althusser's characterization of the complex relationship between the *base* and the *superstructure*, is quite enlightening. Borrowing from Freud he uses the notion of *overdeterminism* to point out that a variety of linked causes interact together, rather than a simplistic one-to-one correspondence between the *base* and the *superstructure*. He argues that the social formation (*superstructure*) is a multiplicity of practices. The chief among them are the economic, political, ideological and the theoretical. Their multiplicity is irreducible. Hence, he calls them the 'ever-present-given.' These cannot be collapsed into economy. However, they are structured by economy, which is 'determinate in the last instance.' Yet the economy doesn't act alone but always in combination with other practices. Thus, it is the complex play of the base structure that determines the anchoring of a particular authority in the 'circle of radical relationality' (Barry 1999: 163-167).

In a similar vein, the French thinker Bourdieu strives to expose the power relation that maintains social inequality. He teaches that the dominant class does not dominate overtly. It does not force the dominated to conform to its will, nor does it dominate through conspiracy, where the privileged consciously manipulate reality in accordance with their self-interest. Rather, the dominant class is statistically the beneficiary of economic, social and symbolic power, which is embodied in the socio-cultural capital which is operating and is reproduced through the insti-

tutions and practices of the society (Lechte 1995: 45). Thus, the culturally privileged position, also referred to as cultural capital, determines, maintains and reproduces the power relations in a society. It is like taking part in a race where the participants are unequally positioned from the starting point itself.

1.3.3 The Relevance of the 'Polycratic Authority'

G.K.Chesterton is credited with the saying that, "nothing is more practical than a good theory" (Desbruslais 1997: 8). Hence, the all-important question is, how will our understanding of authority lead us to a liberative-praxis? This question is of singular importance because it is charged with a power that can free us from the malady of sanctioning an uncritical rubber stamp to what we might term as mere 'intellectual masturbation.' Therefore following Karl Marx we too believe that our theorization is "not just to interpret the world but to change it" (Murzban Jal 1999: 515).

We believe that our understanding of authority can liberate both those who exercise authority as well as those on whom the authority is exercised. The awareness of the ex-centricity of the authoritativeness of authority can liberate both the 'users'⁷ and the subjects of authority. The users are challenged to move from the 'lording' over model of authority to the 'serving' model, while the subjects are empowered to move from passive / blind submissiveness to an assertive acceptance of authority within its limits. Thus, the 'polycratic authority' that we wish to

present moves towards a radical democratic accountability. The awareness of the radical relationality of their authority evokes the 'users' to a responsible response or face the prospect of fading away in the horizon in the 'circle of radical relationality.' On the side of the subjects of authority they are empowered to seek accountability from authorities and if need be see that despotic authority is de-anchored by touching the 'circle of radical relationality.' Of course this job is not easy but all the same not impossible either! This way the subjects of authorities can indeed work as a constant check on those in authority. This understanding of authority is able to address the needs of our pluralistic world. It shuns a monoformic authority and brings in a polyformic

authority, each understood as authoritative within its restricted domain. We believe that it can be psychologically therapeutic too, for it effectively denaturalizes our sense of worth or worthlessness from the power relations.

Conclusion

Finally hitting our viewpoint on its head we declare that this short review of the meaning of authority derives its authoritativeness within its position in the 'circle of radical relationality.' Of course, on our part, we have taken only the first faltering steps, since postmodernity cannot admit the dogma of immaculate perception due to its suspicion of all metanarrative. Our readers are free to take our finding for what it is worth.

Notes

1. There are also thinkers who hold for a radical break between modernity and Postmodernity but we will follow the opinion that is commonly accepted.
2. A door lets in and lets out, hence the image of the door is apt to indicate that we are at the threshold of a decisive age in the history of humanity.
3. In his book *The Origin and Goal of History*, Karl Jaspers proposes the notion of an *axial period*, a point in our history that gave birth, crystallised, institutionalised and prioritised the standards and the modes of our thought that are operative even today. Jaspers identifies this period as running from 800 BC to 200 BC, with 500 BC being the climactic period.
4. The word *man* in this context is to be understood in its inclusive sense. I suggest that we take it to include both the male and the female.
5. See H. Schnadebach, *The Face in the Sand: Foucault and Anthropological Slumber*. Quoted in Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, "Postmodernity and Its Effects on Metaphysics," a paper presented to the Association of Christian Philosophers of India.
6. Our notion of 'circle of radical relationality' draws inspiration on the Saussurian notions of *langue* and *parole*. These terms receptively signify language as a system or a structure on one hand, and any given utterance in that language on the other hand. Any utterance in any particular language (*parole*) makes sense only if one has the working knowledge of the rules and regulations that govern that language (*langue*). That is, there exists radical relationality between *parole* and *langue*. Similarly a specific authority arises only by castling all other potential authorities related to it. We refer this space or the domain of power-play of the potential authorities as the 'circle of radical relationality.'

7. We prefer the word 'users' of authority as against the 'holders' of authority because it is more open to our contention of the generation of authority as a result of play of potent authorities in the circle of radical relationality.'

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